



**NO IMAGE
FOUND**

The Story of A Beautiful Girl I Rescued From An Attacker Who Became My Seatmate

Kurata Kouji, who became a second-year high school student, saved a certain girl from a random attacker he encountered on his way home. Unbeknownst to him, that girl happened to be Kirishima Reina, who was in the same class. On the day he returned to school after being discharged from the hospital, there was a seat rearrangement, and Kurata and Kirishima ended up being seatmates.

Kirishima, who harbors some feelings for Kurata, who risked his life to save her, tries to get closer to him. However, due to past traumas, Kurata tries to distance himself from Kirishima.

This is the story of how these two gradually close the distance between them.

1. c1
2. c2
3. c3
4. c4
5. c5
6. c6
7. c7
8. c8
9. c9
10. c10
11. c11
12. c12
13. c13
14. c14
15. c15
16. c16
17. c17
18. c18
19. c19
20. c20
21. c21
22. c22
23. c23
24. c24
25. c25
26. c26
27. c27
28. c28
29. c29
30. c30
31. c31
32. c32
33. c33
34. c34
35. c35
36. c36
37. c37
38. c38
39. c39
40. c40
41. c41
42. c42

c1

The cherry blossoms are scattering, transitioning to cherry trees with leaves.

The new school year has started, and one week has passed.

Within the class, old classmates from the first year and newly formed acquaintances are gradually forming groups.

In the classroom, with the added free time, both boys and girls are lively and cheerful. Upon observation, there is a cluster of people resembling the popular ones in the center. And away from that group, smaller groups have formed.

Now, amidst all this, I have become what they call a “loner.”

It’s probably the natural result. Since I didn’t make an effort to actively make friends.

The stark difference in the atmosphere within this class has made me lose any motivation to try making friends.

“Hey, Kouji, why are you emitting such a gloomy atmosphere? It’s bringing me down too.”

I feel a pain running through my back as I lie facedown on the seat at the back of the classroom. I can immediately guess who the culprit is.

Yes, it’s one of my few friends, Suzuka Youta. We’ve been friends since the first year, or you could even say best friends.

When I entered high school and sat in my seat for the very first time, I got to know him. He was sitting next to me and casually struck up a conversation.

“Hello, Kurata Kouji~san? Can you react to me?”

“Ah, yeah, sorry about that. So, what’s up?”

As I lay face down on the desk, gazing out the window, Youta’s face appears in my field of view. I raise my head.

“Why are you so unfriendly? Even if you don’t have any business, it’s fine to talk, right? ...Well, forget it. You haven’t handed in the math assignment, right? I handed mine in earlier, and the teacher told me to call you.”

“For real? Sorry about the cold response.”

Saying that, I started searching for the math assignment notebook from the materials and notes inside the desk.

“Hey, try making a few more friends. You’re always either facedown on your desk or reading a book.”

“You mean hang out with that group of people? It’s impossible for me.”

While glancing at the mainstream groups in the class, I make my appeal.

“Why do you belittle yourself like that? You barely have any friends in this class, right? Well, I do know about your situation too.”

That’s right. I did make a few friends during the first year. I spent last year with them, but unfortunately, everyone except Youta ended up in a different class.

By the way, Youta is a member (?) of that group. He says he’s like a “quasi-member.” I don’t really get it.

“Well, I’ve already given up on that. Besides, it’s just a waste of time to make friends and sacrifice study time to hang out. We’re already second-year high school students, you know? We should start preparing for university exams.”

“Listen, if you were at the top of the class, I would understand. But what place were you in last year’s final exam?”

I couldn’t find the words to respond. My grades weren’t particularly good. They fluctuated, but I was generally below average. By the way, Youta’s grades were higher than mine, but not significantly different.

“...Ah, I have to hand in the math assignment. Well then.”

“Sigh. See you later.”

Despite Youta’s exasperation, I left the classroom. Actually, I might be late for the next class.

“Thank you.”

“Yeah. Do your best on the upcoming exam!”

I expressed my gratitude to the slightly enthusiastic math teacher and left the staff room.

After school, I had some math problems I didn’t understand, so I went to ask the math teacher.

Unfortunately, I’m not an excellent student, so this kind of thing happens occasionally.

As I descended to the first floor, I opened my shoe locker and took out my indoor shoes. Of course, there was no love letter or anything like that. I have absolutely no interaction with girls.

The sky had turned completely orange. There were few students around. Some pairs could be seen, presumably couples.

Ignoring such people, I made my way home.

On the way home. Suddenly, I felt the urge to urinate, so I decided to go to a nearby convenience store and borrow their restroom. The place where I live is generally considered an urban area, so there are quite a few convenience stores along my 20-minute commute route.

“Welcome~”

The voice sounded unmotivated, but that doesn’t really matter. I quickly headed for the restroom.

Feeling guilty for using the restroom for free, I decided to buy a drink inside the store. Well, I guess that’s part of Japanese culture.

Since I was running out of drinks at home, I bought a large 1.5-liter one.

“That will be 341 yen.”

“I’ll pay with my card.”

I tapped my card on the reader at the cash register.

With a cheerful jingle playing, the payment was complete. Ah, the wonders of modern technology.

“Thank you very much~”

I exited the convenience store and looked left and right.

Then, I noticed a man who seemed out of place in the quiet residential area. He was dressed in black tracksuits with a mask on. Clearly, something was off. Walking in front of him was a girl who seemed to attend the same school as me, reading a book. Unfortunately, I didn’t know her personally, but there was no doubt that she was a beautiful girl based on her appearance.

For some reason, I couldn’t help but be intrigued by the aura of that man, so I stood still a little distance away from the convenience store.

Suddenly, the man pulled something out from his bag. It was clearly visible even in the evening glow of the residential area.

A shiny, pointed object. Yes, it was a knife. I immediately concluded that the man was a random attacker. And then, inexplicably, I found myself running towards the attacker. By the way, the girl still hadn’t noticed the presence of the attacker. My body moved unconsciously. I truly think I’m an idiot. I should just escape from this situation as quickly as possible.

However, the presence of that beautiful girl had unexpectedly imprinted in my mind. I couldn’t just stand by and watch her being attacked.

The cherry blossoms are scattering, transitioning to cherry trees with leaves.

The new school year has started, and one week has passed.

Within the class, old classmates from the first year and newly formed acquaintances are gradually forming groups.

In the classroom, with the added free time, both boys and girls are lively and cheerful. Upon observation, there is a cluster of people resembling the popular ones in the center. And away from that group, smaller groups have formed.

Now, amidst all this, I have become what they call a “loner.”

It’s probably the natural result. Since I didn’t make an effort to actively make friends.

The stark difference in the atmosphere within this class has made me lose any motivation to try making friends.

“Hey, Kouji, why are you emitting such a gloomy atmosphere? It’s bringing me down too.”

I feel a pain running through my back as I lie facedown on the seat at the back of the classroom. I can

immediately guess who the culprit is.

Yes, it's one of my few friends, Suzuka Youta. We've been friends since the first year, or you could even say best friends.

When I entered high school and sat in my seat for the very first time, I got to know him. He was sitting next to me and casually struck up a conversation.

"Hello, Kurata Kouji~san? Can you react to me?"

"Ah, yeah, sorry about that. So, what's up?"

As I lay face down on the desk, gazing out the window, Youta's face appears in my field of view. I raise my head.

"Why are you so unfriendly? Even if you don't have any business, it's fine to talk, right? ...Well, forget it. You haven't handed in the math assignment, right? I handed mine in earlier, and the teacher told me to call you."

"For real? Sorry about the cold response."

Saying that, I started searching for the math assignment notebook from the materials and notes inside the desk.

"Hey, try making a few more friends. You're always either facedown on your desk or reading a book."

"You mean hang out with that group of people? It's impossible for me."

While glancing at the mainstream groups in the class, I make my appeal.

"Why do you belittle yourself like that? You barely have any friends in this class, right? Well, I do know about your situation too."

That's right. I did make a few friends during the first year. I spent last year with them, but unfortunately, everyone except Youta ended up in a different class.

By the way, Youta is a member (?) of that group. He says he's like a "quasi-member." I don't really get it.

"Well, I've already given up on that. Besides, it's just a waste of time to make friends and sacrifice study time to hang out. We're already second-year high school students, you know? We should start preparing for university exams."

"Listen, if you were at the top of the class, I would understand. But what place were you in last year's final exam?"

I couldn't find the words to respond. My grades weren't particularly good. They fluctuated, but I was generally below average. By the way, Youta's grades were higher than mine, but not significantly different.

"...Ah, I have to hand in the math assignment. Well then."

"Sigh. See you later."

Despite Youta's exasperation, I left the classroom. Actually, I might be late for the next class.

"Thank you."

"Yeah. Do your best on the upcoming exam!"

I expressed my gratitude to the slightly enthusiastic math teacher and left the staff room.

After school, I had some math problems I didn't understand, so I went to ask the math teacher.

Unfortunately, I'm not an excellent student, so this kind of thing happens occasionally.

As I descended to the first floor, I opened my shoe locker and took out my indoor shoes. Of course, there was no love letter or anything like that. I have absolutely no interaction with girls.

The sky had turned completely orange. There were few students around. Some pairs could be seen, presumably couples.

Ignoring such people, I made my way home.

On the way home. Suddenly, I felt the urge to urinate, so I decided to go to a nearby convenience store and borrow their restroom. The place where I live is generally considered an urban area, so there are quite a few convenience stores along my 20-minute commute route.

"Welcome~"

The voice sounded unmotivated, but that doesn't really matter. I quickly headed for the restroom.

Feeling guilty for using the restroom for free, I decided to buy a drink inside the store. Well, I guess that's part of Japanese culture.

Since I was running out of drinks at home, I bought a large 1.5-liter one.

“That will be 341 yen.”

“I’ll pay with my card.”

I tapped my card on the reader at the cash register.

With a cheerful jingle playing, the payment was complete. Ah, the wonders of modern technology.

“Thank you very much~”

I exited the convenience store and looked left and right.

Then, I noticed a man who seemed out of place in the quiet residential area. He was dressed in black tracksuits with a mask on. Clearly, something was off. Walking in front of him was a girl who seemed to attend the same school as me, reading a book. Unfortunately, I didn’t know her personally, but there was no doubt that she was a beautiful girl based on her appearance.

For some reason, I couldn’t help but be intrigued by the aura of that man, so I stood still a little distance away from the convenience store.

Suddenly, the man pulled something out from his bag. It was clearly visible even in the evening glow of the residential area.

A shiny, pointed object. Yes, it was a knife. I immediately concluded that the man was a random attacker. And then, inexplicably, I found myself running towards the attacker. By the way, the girl still hadn’t noticed the presence of the attacker. My body moved unconsciously. I truly think I’m an idiot. I should just escape from this situation as quickly as possible.

However, the presence of that beautiful girl had unexpectedly imprinted in my mind. I couldn’t just stand by and watch her being attacked.

The cherry blossoms are scattering, transitioning to cherry trees with leaves.

The new school year has started, and one week has passed.

Within the class, old classmates from the first year and newly formed acquaintances are gradually forming groups.

In the classroom, with the added free time, both boys and girls are lively and cheerful. Upon observation, there is a cluster of people resembling the popular ones in the center. And away from that group, smaller groups have formed.

Now, amidst all this, I have become what they call a “loner.”

It’s probably the natural result. Since I didn’t make an effort to actively make friends.

The stark difference in the atmosphere within this class has made me lose any motivation to try making friends.

“Hey, Kouji, why are you emitting such a gloomy atmosphere? It’s bringing me down too.”

I feel a pain running through my back as I lie facedown on the seat at the back of the classroom. I can immediately guess who the culprit is.

Yes, it’s one of my few friends, Suzuka Youta. We’ve been friends since the first year, or you could even say best friends.

When I entered high school and sat in my seat for the very first time, I got to know him. He was sitting next to me and casually struck up a conversation.

“Hello, Kurata Kouji~san? Can you react to me?”

“Ah, yeah, sorry about that. So, what’s up?”

As I lay face down on the desk, gazing out the window, Youta’s face appears in my field of view. I raise my head.

“Why are you so unfriendly? Even if you don’t have any business, it’s fine to talk, right? ...Well, forget it. You haven’t handed in the math assignment, right? I handed mine in earlier, and the teacher told me to call you.”

“For real? Sorry about the cold response.”

Saying that, I started searching for the math assignment notebook from the materials and notes inside the desk.

“Hey, try making a few more friends. You’re always either facedown on your desk or reading a book.”

“You mean hang out with that group of people? It’s impossible for me.”

While glancing at the mainstream groups in the class, I make my appeal.

“Why do you belittle yourself like that? You barely have any friends in this class, right? Well, I do know about your situation too.”

That’s right. I did make a few friends during the first year. I spent last year with them, but unfortunately, everyone except Youta ended up in a different class.

By the way, Youta is a member (?) of that group. He says he’s like a “quasi-member.” I don’t really get it.

“Well, I’ve already given up on that. Besides, it’s just a waste of time to make friends and sacrifice study time to hang out. We’re already second-year high school students, you know? We should start preparing for university exams.”

“Listen, if you were at the top of the class, I would understand. But what place were you in last year’s final exam?”

I couldn’t find the words to respond. My grades weren’t particularly good. They fluctuated, but I was generally below average. By the way, Youta’s grades were higher than mine, but not significantly different.

“...Ah, I have to hand in the math assignment. Well then.”

“Sigh. See you later.”

Despite Youta’s exasperation, I left the classroom. Actually, I might be late for the next class.

“Thank you.”

“Yeah. Do your best on the upcoming exam!”

I expressed my gratitude to the slightly enthusiastic math teacher and left the staff room.

After school, I had some math problems I didn’t understand, so I went to ask the math teacher.

Unfortunately, I’m not an excellent student, so this kind of thing happens occasionally.

As I descended to the first floor, I opened my shoe locker and took out my indoor shoes. Of course, there was no love letter or anything like that. I have absolutely no interaction with girls.

The sky had turned completely orange. There were few students around. Some pairs could be seen, presumably couples.

Ignoring such people, I made my way home.

On the way home. Suddenly, I felt the urge to urinate, so I decided to go to a nearby convenience store and borrow their restroom. The place where I live is generally considered an urban area, so there are quite a few convenience stores along my 20-minute commute route.

“Welcome~”

The voice sounded unmotivated, but that doesn’t really matter. I quickly headed for the restroom.

Feeling guilty for using the restroom for free, I decided to buy a drink inside the store. Well, I guess that’s part of Japanese culture.

Since I was running out of drinks at home, I bought a large 1.5-liter one.

“That will be 341 yen.”

“I’ll pay with my card.”

I tapped my card on the reader at the cash register.

With a cheerful jingle playing, the payment was complete. Ah, the wonders of modern technology.

“Thank you very much~”

I exited the convenience store and looked left and right.

Then, I noticed a man who seemed out of place in the quiet residential area. He was dressed in black tracksuits with a mask on. Clearly, something was off. Walking in front of him was a girl who seemed to attend the same school as me, reading a book. Unfortunately, I didn’t know her personally, but there was no doubt that she was a beautiful girl based on her appearance.

For some reason, I couldn’t help but be intrigued by the aura of that man, so I stood still a little distance away from the convenience store.

Suddenly, the man pulled something out from his bag. It was clearly visible even in the evening glow of the residential area.

A shiny, pointed object. Yes, it was a knife. I immediately concluded that the man was a random attacker. And then, inexplicably, I found myself running towards the attacker. By the way, the girl still hadn’t noticed the presence of the attacker. My body moved unconsciously. I truly think I’m an idiot. I should

just escape from this situation as quickly as possible.

However, the presence of that beautiful girl had unexpectedly imprinted in my mind. I couldn't just stand by and watch her being attacked.

The random attacker, with a deranged look in his eyes, slowly approached the girl. Of course, he had a knife clenched in his right hand.

I ran towards them, holding the 1.5-liter PET bottle from the shopping bag in my right hand.

“Run away!!!”

I shouted loudly to the girl. However, that choice only worsened the situation.

“Huh?”

“What the hell are you doing?!”

While the girl uttered a bewildered voice, the attacker, upon hearing my voice, abruptly changed his slow pace to a sprint. With his left hand supporting his right hand, he held the knife near his chest. The distance between him and the girl was less than 20 meters. Probably, fearing that she had noticed him and would be able to escape.

I intervened between the girl and the attacker, attempting to grab the attacker’s right hand. However, being completely unfamiliar with hand-to-hand combat techniques, I failed miserably at grabbing his hand.

“Ugh!”

The knife hit my right shoulder and pierced through, but I didn’t lose consciousness from the pain and was able to immediately counterattack. It was probably due to the rush of adrenaline, like a surge of strength in a crisis.

I delivered a knee strike to the attacker’s groin, which is also the most vulnerable spot for a man in an assault.

“Guah!”

The attacker, directly attacked in the groin, stumbled backward, accompanied by a pitiful cry of pain. Seizing that moment, I followed up with another strike to the attacker’s solar plexus using the head of the PET bottle.

The strike to the solar plexus worked well, as the attacker’s movements were already sluggish from the pain in his groin. I felt a definite sensation of impact in his solar plexus.

As expected, the attacker experienced difficulty breathing and staggered, eventually falling down.

I forcefully took the knife out of my right shoulder. The attacker was writhing in pain, unable to offer any resistance.

Looking around, I saw that the girl was still trembling in place. I urged her to run away, as we couldn’t know when the assailant might regain strength and launch another attack.

“Run away quickly!”

“Are you alright?”

“I’m fine! Just hurry up and get away from here!”

Seeing the urgency in my expression, she hurriedly ran off.

After confirming that there was no one in the direction I was about to throw, I threw the knife I had taken from the assailant far away. I wanted to make sure he couldn’t physically hold a knife again, as there was a possibility he would come back to kill with it.

Then, I positioned the man face-down to prevent him from escaping. He was barely breathing, and it seemed that the PET bottle attack to his solar plexus had taken its toll.

Afterward, while enduring the pain in my shoulder, I explained the situation to an adult who seemed to be a passerby, likely a salaryman, and asked them to call the police. Soon, a patrol car arrived with sirens blaring and proceeded to restrain the attacker.

As for me, I was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. Being relieved from the tense situation when the police arrived, I couldn’t bear the pain in my shoulder anymore and fainted.

The fact that I lost consciousness indicates that the pain in my right shoulder had reached its limit. It can be said that I had experienced the most hellish time in my life up until now.

At the scene, there was a knife stained with the assailant’s blood, a novel with a book cover, and a PET bottle inside a shopping bag, all scattered around.

Three weeks after the incident, the stab wound on my right shoulder was mostly healed. Fortunately, there was no damage to blood vessels or nerves, but the wound had to be stitched up.

When I received questioning from the police at the police station, I heard that the assailant had been arrested for attempted murder and violation of the firearms and swords control law. The motive for the crime remained unknown as the assailant had remained silent.

It seems that my actions were captured on the convenience store's security cameras, but "justifiable self-defense" is not immediately recognized. It is said that the judge will objectively assess the situation based on the evidence.

Well, I'll leave the legal matters to a professional lawyer in that field.

My father, who rushed to the scene, praised me, saying, "I'm proud as a father that you protected someone's life." On the other hand, my sister, who came from afar with my mother, told me, "I want you to value yourself more."

Her expression at that moment looked very sad. That expression of my sister is deeply engraved in my heart.

Clatter, clatter

I heard the sound of the hospital room door opening. It was probably the attending doctor or a nurse.

"Kurata-kun, how are you feeling?"

The person who came in was my attending physician. Despite having a strong appearance, he turned out to be unexpectedly kind-hearted, and I realized that appearances can be deceiving.

"Oh, thank you. Thanks to you, the pain has subsided quite a bit."

"That's good to hear. Well, it was an unfortunate incident, but seeing you recover makes it all worthwhile."

"By the way, doctor, when do you think I can be discharged?"

"Well... probably tomorrow or the day after. It may be inconvenient when you take baths at home and such. Also, please refrain from engaging in strenuous activities."

"Thank you."

The doctor explained in my hospital room. In reality, the pain in my shoulder had been subsiding recently. Two days later, the wound on my shoulder, where I had been stabbed with a 15cm blade, had closed up, and it was determined that it didn't interfere with my daily life. I was discharged from the hospital and returned to school after three weeks.

Amidst the noise of the classroom, which I hadn't heard in a while, I quietly entered the classroom.

The random attacker, with a deranged look in his eyes, slowly approached the girl. Of course, he had a knife clenched in his right hand.

I ran towards them, holding the 1.5-liter PET bottle from the shopping bag in my right hand.

"Run away!!!"

I shouted loudly to the girl. However, that choice only worsened the situation.

"Huh?"

"What the hell are you doing?!"

While the girl uttered a bewildered voice, the attacker, upon hearing my voice, abruptly changed his slow pace to a sprint. With his left hand supporting his right hand, he held the knife near his chest. The distance between him and the girl was less than 20 meters. Probably, fearing that she had noticed him and would be able to escape.

I intervened between the girl and the attacker, attempting to grab the attacker's right hand. However, being completely unfamiliar with hand-to-hand combat techniques, I failed miserably at grabbing his hand.

"Ugh!"

The knife hit my right shoulder and pierced through, but I didn't lose consciousness from the pain and was able to immediately counterattack. It was probably due to the rush of adrenaline, like a surge of strength in a crisis.

I delivered a knee strike to the attacker's groin, which is also the most vulnerable spot for a man in an assault.

"Guah!"

The attacker, directly attacked in the groin, stumbled backward, accompanied by a pitiful cry of pain. Seizing that moment, I followed up with another strike to the attacker's solar plexus using the head of the PET bottle.

The strike to the solar plexus worked well, as the attacker's movements were already sluggish from the pain in his groin. I felt a definite sensation of impact in his solar plexus.

As expected, the attacker experienced difficulty breathing and staggered, eventually falling down.

I forcefully took the knife out of my right shoulder. The attacker was writhing in pain, unable to offer any resistance.

Looking around, I saw that the girl was still trembling in place. I urged her to run away, as we couldn't know when the assailant might regain strength and launch another attack.

"Run away quickly!"

"Are you alright?"

"I'm fine! Just hurry up and get away from here!"

Seeing the urgency in my expression, she hurriedly ran off.

After confirming that there was no one in the direction I was about to throw, I threw the knife I had taken from the assailant far away. I wanted to make sure he couldn't physically hold a knife again, as there was a possibility he would come back to kill with it.

Then, I positioned the man face-down to prevent him from escaping. He was barely breathing, and it seemed that the PET bottle attack to his solar plexus had taken its toll.

Afterward, while enduring the pain in my shoulder, I explained the situation to an adult who seemed to be a passerby, likely a salaryman, and asked them to call the police. Soon, a patrol car arrived with sirens blaring and proceeded to restrain the attacker.

As for me, I was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. Being relieved from the tense situation when the police arrived, I couldn't bear the pain in my shoulder anymore and fainted.

The fact that I lost consciousness indicates that the pain in my right shoulder had reached its limit. It can be said that I had experienced the most hellish time in my life up until now.

At the scene, there was a knife stained with the assailant's blood, a novel with a book cover, and a PET bottle inside a shopping bag, all scattered around.

Three weeks after the incident, the stab wound on my right shoulder was mostly healed. Fortunately, there was no damage to blood vessels or nerves, but the wound had to be stitched up.

When I received questioning from the police at the police station, I heard that the assailant had been arrested for attempted murder and violation of the firearms and swords control law. The motive for the crime remained unknown as the assailant had remained silent.

It seems that my actions were captured on the convenience store's security cameras, but "justifiable self-defense" is not immediately recognized. It is said that the judge will objectively assess the situation based on the evidence.

Well, I'll leave the legal matters to a professional lawyer in that field.

My father, who rushed to the scene, praised me, saying, "I'm proud as a father that you protected someone's life." On the other hand, my sister, who came from afar with my mother, told me, "I want you to value yourself more."

Her expression at that moment looked very sad. That expression of my sister is deeply engraved in my heart.

Clatter, clatter

I heard the sound of the hospital room door opening. It was probably the attending doctor or a nurse.

"Kurata-kun, how are you feeling?"

The person who came in was my attending physician. Despite having a strong appearance, he turned out to be unexpectedly kind-hearted, and I realized that appearances can be deceiving.

"Oh, thank you. Thanks to you, the pain has subsided quite a bit."

“That’s good to hear. Well, it was an unfortunate incident, but seeing you recover makes it all worthwhile.”

“By the way, doctor, when do you think I can be discharged?”

“Well... probably tomorrow or the day after. It may be inconvenient when you take baths at home and such. Also, please refrain from engaging in strenuous activities.”

“Thank you.”

The doctor explained in my hospital room. In reality, the pain in my shoulder had been subsiding recently. Two days later, the wound on my shoulder, where I had been stabbed with a 15cm blade, had closed up, and it was determined that it didn’t interfere with my daily life. I was discharged from the hospital and returned to school after three weeks.

Amidst the noise of the classroom, which I hadn’t heard in a while, I quietly entered the classroom.

The random attacker, with a deranged look in his eyes, slowly approached the girl. Of course, he had a knife clenched in his right hand.

I ran towards them, holding the 1.5-liter PET bottle from the shopping bag in my right hand.

“Run away!!!”

I shouted loudly to the girl. However, that choice only worsened the situation.

“Huh?”

“What the hell are you doing?!”

While the girl uttered a bewildered voice, the attacker, upon hearing my voice, abruptly changed his slow pace to a sprint. With his left hand supporting his right hand, he held the knife near his chest. The distance between him and the girl was less than 20 meters. Probably, fearing that she had noticed him and would be able to escape.

I intervened between the girl and the attacker, attempting to grab the attacker’s right hand. However, being completely unfamiliar with hand-to-hand combat techniques, I failed miserably at grabbing his hand.

“Ugh!”

The knife hit my right shoulder and pierced through, but I didn’t lose consciousness from the pain and was able to immediately counterattack. It was probably due to the rush of adrenaline, like a surge of strength in a crisis.

I delivered a knee strike to the attacker’s groin, which is also the most vulnerable spot for a man in an assault.

“Guah!”

The attacker, directly attacked in the groin, stumbled backward, accompanied by a pitiful cry of pain. Seizing that moment, I followed up with another strike to the attacker’s solar plexus using the head of the PET bottle.

The strike to the solar plexus worked well, as the attacker’s movements were already sluggish from the pain in his groin. I felt a definite sensation of impact in his solar plexus.

As expected, the attacker experienced difficulty breathing and staggered, eventually falling down.

I forcefully took the knife out of my right shoulder. The attacker was writhing in pain, unable to offer any resistance.

Looking around, I saw that the girl was still trembling in place. I urged her to run away, as we couldn’t know when the assailant might regain strength and launch another attack.

“Run away quickly!”

“Are you alright?”

“I’m fine! Just hurry up and get away from here!”

Seeing the urgency in my expression, she hurriedly ran off.

After confirming that there was no one in the direction I was about to throw, I threw the knife I had taken from the assailant far away. I wanted to make sure he couldn’t physically hold a knife again, as there was a possibility he would come back to kill with it.

Then, I positioned the man face-down to prevent him from escaping. He was barely breathing, and it seemed that the PET bottle attack to his solar plexus had taken its toll.

Afterward, while enduring the pain in my shoulder, I explained the situation to an adult who seemed to

be a passerby, likely a salaryman, and asked them to call the police. Soon, a patrol car arrived with sirens blaring and proceeded to restrain the attacker.

As for me, I was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. Being relieved from the tense situation when the police arrived, I couldn't bear the pain in my shoulder anymore and fainted.

The fact that I lost consciousness indicates that the pain in my right shoulder had reached its limit. It can be said that I had experienced the most hellish time in my life up until now.

At the scene, there was a knife stained with the assailant's blood, a novel with a book cover, and a PET bottle inside a shopping bag, all scattered around.

Three weeks after the incident, the stab wound on my right shoulder was mostly healed. Fortunately, there was no damage to blood vessels or nerves, but the wound had to be stitched up.

When I received questioning from the police at the police station, I heard that the assailant had been arrested for attempted murder and violation of the firearms and swords control law. The motive for the crime remained unknown as the assailant had remained silent.

It seems that my actions were captured on the convenience store's security cameras, but "justifiable self-defense" is not immediately recognized. It is said that the judge will objectively assess the situation based on the evidence.

Well, I'll leave the legal matters to a professional lawyer in that field.

My father, who rushed to the scene, praised me, saying, "I'm proud as a father that you protected someone's life." On the other hand, my sister, who came from afar with my mother, told me, "I want you to value yourself more."

Her expression at that moment looked very sad. That expression of my sister is deeply engraved in my heart.

Clatter, clatter

I heard the sound of the hospital room door opening. It was probably the attending doctor or a nurse.

"Kurata-kun, how are you feeling?"

The person who came in was my attending physician. Despite having a strong appearance, he turned out to be unexpectedly kind-hearted, and I realized that appearances can be deceiving.

"Oh, thank you. Thanks to you, the pain has subsided quite a bit."

"That's good to hear. Well, it was an unfortunate incident, but seeing you recover makes it all worthwhile."

"By the way, doctor, when do you think I can be discharged?"

"Well... probably tomorrow or the day after. It may be inconvenient when you take baths at home and such. Also, please refrain from engaging in strenuous activities."

"Thank you."

The doctor explained in my hospital room. In reality, the pain in my shoulder had been subsiding recently. Two days later, the wound on my shoulder, where I had been stabbed with a 15cm blade, had closed up, and it was determined that it didn't interfere with my daily life. I was discharged from the hospital and returned to school after three weeks.

Amidst the noise of the classroom, which I hadn't heard in a while, I quietly entered the classroom.

I took my usual seat and prepared for the class.

“Oh, Kouji! Long time no see!”

“Yeah, it’s been a while.”

Hoshino, who was studying something at his desk, approached me with his usual energetic voice. He seemed as lively as ever.

“What have you been up to for the past three weeks?”

“Well, um... a lot of things happened...”

I placed my bag on the desk, sat down, took off my jacket, and took a sip from the water bottle in my bag. Since only family members were allowed to visit during my hospitalization, it had been a long time since I last saw Hoshino. Moreover, we hadn’t been in contact.

“For now, I’ll show you my notes from when I was on break, but before that, tell me what happened.”

I yielded to Hoshino’s relentless expression and began to explain the situation.

“You had that kind of determination. That’s surprising. Well, I’m glad you’re safe.”

“Well, you know... a knife was stabbed into my right shoulder. Haven’t you ever been stabbed by a knife? It was hellishly painful.”

“Well, I sympathize with you on that. But why did you risk your life to help? Was she such a cute girl?”

“Why do you limit it to girls? Well, she was cute, though.”

As I remembered those thoughts, I recalled that the person I helped was a female student from the same school. But well, I didn’t intend to ask for any rewards or anything. It felt kind of lame. So, I pushed that memory to the back of my mind.

“Well, I’m glad you’re feeling better. By the way, today was the day for seat rearrangement.”

“Seat rearrangement, huh? Well, I hope I can be near you again. As someone to talk to.”

“When you say it like that, it feels complicated. Anyway, here, copy the notes.”

“Thanks.”

“Alright, let’s start homeroom!”

The middle-aged homeroom teacher entered the classroom looking sleepy. Well, sleepy or just worn-out, as usual.

I closed my notebook and put it away at my desk for the time being.

The teacher, who had finished marking the attendance in the teacher’s desk, held the chalk with usual slightly messy handwriting.

“We’re going to have seat rearrangement today!”

While saying that, the teacher started writing the seating chart on the blackboard. Now, I wonder what format will be used for the seat rearrangement.

By the way, last year, the teacher used a method of arranging the seats themselves.

“Oh, by the way, my method is completely random. Spare me the complaints.”

The extroverted students in the class began to make a fuss, saying, “Eh!” They probably wanted to group together with their close friends, but it didn’t matter to me. Because I have no acquaintances in this class. ...Somehow, I’m feeling sad thinking about it. But that doesn’t mean I want to become an extrovert.

“Alright, let’s begin. Check your seat according to the random order generated on your smartphones!”

The teacher, holding smartphone, started writing the attendance numbers on the blackboard from the window side of the class. The classroom became noisy as the numbers were being written.

Oh, my number was written quickly. It’s by the window. It’s not the very back seat, but it’s a good spot where I won’t get caught up in the commotion of the extroverted students.

As for the rest of the seating arrangement, there’s hardly anyone I care about other than Hoshino, so I’ll just let it be and continue copying my notes.

“Alright, that’s it. Oh wait, hold on. The first period is about to start, so for today, let’s stick with the usual seating order. We’ll do the seat rearrangement during the closing homeroom. Now, let’s begin with the greetings.”

“Standup!!”

Ignoring the class's resistance, the homeroom teacher abruptly ended the discussion. The female class representative who gave the orders forcefully made everyone stand up with a loud voice. I stood up as well.

"Bow!"

I bowed and sat back in my seat. The classroom is buzzing with talk about the seat rearrangement, but I'm not particularly interested.

"Oh! Kouji, where did you end up sitting?"

Hoshino approached me. It's nice of them to always talk to me.

"I got a seat by the window. Anywhere that's not in the middle of the classroom is fine for me."

"By the window, huh? Don't fall asleep, okay?"

Hoshino made a joke. Well, I have dozed off before, but still.

"Forget it. Where did you end up sitting?"

"Me? I'm second from the left towards the back."

With the drastic change in attendance numbers, there are some unfamiliar seats designated by numbers.

"Speaking of which, isn't the one next to you is Kirishima?"

"Kirishima? Is that your friend?"

As I said that, Hoshino's expression turned astonished. Hmm, did I say something wrong?

"Hey, well... I'll tell you, but there's a genius named Kirishima Reina. Not only that, she's also stunningly beautiful, and her figure is amazing."

"Oh, I see. But does it matter that she's sitting next to me?"

"I know your indifference already, but that's what other guys envy. Got it?"

"Yeah, yeah. Oh, the first period is chemistry, right? I'll return the notes."

I brushed off Hoshino's nonsense. It's not like my likability will increase just because she's sitting next to me.

"Alright. If you missed anything, let me know. I'll show you."

"Thanks as always."

"In that case, treat me to something."

"Please spare me from that."

Although I said that, Hoshino has always been helpful, so I might treat them to something occasionally.

With such thoughts in mind, I took out the chemistry materials from my bag.

The day flew by in an instant, and all of today's classes have ended. The three-week break felt long, and I desperately tried to keep up with the lessons while looking at the blackboard and past notes. This school claims to prioritize both academics and sports (or so they say), so the pace of the classes is fast.

That's why I'm grateful to Hoshino, who teaches me various things.

Well, to be honest, he tends to get carried away, so I'll keep that thought to myself.

"You guys, take your seats once."

The homeroom teacher calls out to the students who are loitering around the teacher's desk, urging them to sit down.

I always wonder why they try to gather together so much.

"Alright. You don't have to greet each other. Let's just do the seat rearrangement we talked about in the morning. Anyone doesn't know their new seat?"

Saying that, the teacher looks around the classroom, but there's no one who fits that description. Or rather, it's impossible for those who were making a fuss during the seat rearrangement to forget.

"Doesn't seem like it. In that case, pack up your belongings and move right away."

The teacher claps the hands, and suddenly the entire classroom becomes noisy.

Since I have no one to make a fuss with, I quietly stand up from my seat and head towards the new one.

With nothing else to do, I decided to read a novel.

Clatter –

It seems someone has taken the seat next to me. It must be the person Hoshino mentioned, Kirishima.

However, I won't initiate a greeting or anything. If the person greets me, I'll just give a casual response.

If they ignore me, that's even better.

"Um, excuse me..."

She's the type to initiate a conversation. In that case, I'll just give a casual response.

Thinking that, I raise my head to look at them.

"Ah..."

It was a face I had seen three weeks ago.

I took my usual seat and prepared for the class.

"Oh, Kouji! Long time no see!"

"Yeah, it's been a while."

Hoshino, who was studying something at his desk, approached me with his usual energetic voice. He seemed as lively as ever.

"What have you been up to for the past three weeks?"

"Well, um... a lot of things happened..."

I placed my bag on the desk, sat down, took off my jacket, and took a sip from the water bottle in my bag. Since only family members were allowed to visit during my hospitalization, it had been a long time since I last saw Hoshino. Moreover, we hadn't been in contact.

"For now, I'll show you my notes from when I was on break, but before that, tell me what happened."

I yielded to Hoshino's relentless expression and began to explain the situation.

"You had that kind of determination. That's surprising. Well, I'm glad you're safe."

"Well, you know... a knife was stabbed into my right shoulder. Haven't you ever been stabbed by a knife? It was hellishly painful."

"Well, I sympathize with you on that. But why did you risk your life to help? Was she such a cute girl?"

"Why do you limit it to girls? Well, she was cute, though."

As I remembered those thoughts, I recalled that the person I helped was a female student from the same school. But well, I didn't intend to ask for any rewards or anything. It felt kind of lame. So, I pushed that memory to the back of my mind.

"Well, I'm glad you're feeling better. By the way, today was the day for seat rearrangement."

"Seat rearrangement, huh? Well, I hope I can be near you again. As someone to talk to."

"When you say it like that, it feels complicated. Anyway, here, copy the notes."

"Thanks."

"Alright, let's start homeroom!"

The middle-aged homeroom teacher entered the classroom looking sleepy. Well, sleepy or just worn-out, as usual.

I closed my notebook and put it away at my desk for the time being.

The teacher, who had finished marking the attendance in the teacher's desk, held the chalk with usual slightly messy handwriting.

"We're going to have seat rearrangement today!"

While saying that, the teacher started writing the seating chart on the blackboard. Now, I wonder what format will be used for the seat rearrangement.

By the way, last year, the teacher used a method of arranging the seats themselves.

"Oh, by the way, my method is completely random. Spare me the complaints."

The extroverted students in the class began to make a fuss, saying, "Eh!" They probably wanted to group together with their close friends, but it didn't matter to me. Because I have no acquaintances in this class.

...Somehow, I'm feeling sad thinking about it. But that doesn't mean I want to become an extrovert.

"Alright, let's begin. Check your seat according to the random order generated on your smartphones!"

The teacher, holding smartphone, started writing the attendance numbers on the blackboard from the window side of the class. The classroom became noisy as the numbers were being written.

Oh, my number was written quickly. It's by the window. It's not the very back seat, but it's a good spot where I won't get caught up in the commotion of the extroverted students.

As for the rest of the seating arrangement, there's hardly anyone I care about other than Hoshino, so I'll just let it be and continue copying my notes.

"Alright, that's it. Oh wait, hold on. The first period is about to start, so for today, let's stick with the

usual seating order. We'll do the seat rearrangement during the closing homeroom. Now, let's begin with the greetings."

"Standup!!"

Ignoring the class's resistance, the homeroom teacher abruptly ended the discussion.

The female class representative who gave the orders forcefully made everyone stand up with a loud voice. I stood up as well.

"Bow!"

I bowed and sat back in my seat. The classroom is buzzing with talk about the seat rearrangement, but I'm not particularly interested.

"Oh! Kouji, where did you end up sitting?"

Hoshino approached me. It's nice of them to always talk to me.

"I got a seat by the window. Anywhere that's not in the middle of the classroom is fine for me."

"By the window, huh? Don't fall asleep, okay?"

Hoshino made a joke. Well, I have dozed off before, but still.

"Forget it. Where did you end up sitting?"

"Me? I'm second from the left towards the back."

With the drastic change in attendance numbers, there are some unfamiliar seats designated by numbers.

"Speaking of which, isn't the one next to you is Kirishima?"

"Kirishima? Is that your friend?"

As I said that, Hoshino's expression turned astonished. Hmm, did I say something wrong?

"Hey, well... I'll tell you, but there's a genius named Kirishima Reina. Not only that, she's also stunningly beautiful, and her figure is amazing."

"Oh, I see. But does it matter that she's sitting next to me?"

"I know your indifference already, but that's what other guys envy. Got it?"

"Yeah, yeah. Oh, the first period is chemistry, right? I'll return the notes."

I brushed off Hoshino's nonsense. It's not like my likability will increase just because she's sitting next to me.

"Alright. If you missed anything, let me know. I'll show you."

"Thanks as always."

"In that case, treat me to something."

"Please spare me from that."

Although I said that, Hoshino has always been helpful, so I might treat them to something occasionally.

With such thoughts in mind, I took out the chemistry materials from my bag.

The day flew by in an instant, and all of today's classes have ended. The three-week break felt long, and I desperately tried to keep up with the lessons while looking at the blackboard and past notes. This school claims to prioritize both academics and sports (or so they say), so the pace of the classes is fast.

That's why I'm grateful to Hoshino, who teaches me various things.

Well, to be honest, he tends to get carried away, so I'll keep that thought to myself.

"You guys, take your seats once."

The homeroom teacher calls out to the students who are loitering around the teacher's desk, urging them to sit down.

I always wonder why they try to gather together so much.

"Alright. You don't have to greet each other. Let's just do the seat rearrangement we talked about in the morning. Anyone doesn't know their new seat?"

Saying that, the teacher looks around the classroom, but there's no one who fits that description. Or rather, it's impossible for those who were making a fuss during the seat rearrangement to forget.

"Doesn't seem like it. In that case, pack up your belongings and move right away."

The teacher claps the hands, and suddenly the entire classroom becomes noisy.

Since I have no one to make a fuss with, I quietly stand up from my seat and head towards the new one.

With nothing else to do, I decided to read a novel.

Clatter –

It seems someone has taken the seat next to me. It must be the person Hoshino mentioned, Kirishima.

However, I won't initiate a greeting or anything. If the person greets me, I'll just give a casual response. If they ignore me, that's even better.

"Um, excuse me..."

She's the type to initiate a conversation. In that case, I'll just give a casual response.

Thinking that, I raise my head to look at them.

"Ah..."

It was a face I had seen three weeks ago.

I took my usual seat and prepared for the class.

"Oh, Kouji! Long time no see!"

"Yeah, it's been a while."

Hoshino, who was studying something at his desk, approached me with his usual energetic voice. He seemed as lively as ever.

"What have you been up to for the past three weeks?"

"Well, um... a lot of things happened..."

I placed my bag on the desk, sat down, took off my jacket, and took a sip from the water bottle in my bag. Since only family members were allowed to visit during my hospitalization, it had been a long time since I last saw Hoshino. Moreover, we hadn't been in contact.

"For now, I'll show you my notes from when I was on break, but before that, tell me what happened."

I yielded to Hoshino's relentless expression and began to explain the situation.

"You had that kind of determination. That's surprising. Well, I'm glad you're safe."

"Well, you know... a knife was stabbed into my right shoulder. Haven't you ever been stabbed by a knife? It was hellishly painful."

"Well, I sympathize with you on that. But why did you risk your life to help? Was she such a cute girl?"

"Why do you limit it to girls? Well, she was cute, though."

As I remembered those thoughts, I recalled that the person I helped was a female student from the same school. But well, I didn't intend to ask for any rewards or anything. It felt kind of lame. So, I pushed that memory to the back of my mind.

"Well, I'm glad you're feeling better. By the way, today was the day for seat rearrangement."

"Seat rearrangement, huh? Well, I hope I can be near you again. As someone to talk to."

"When you say it like that, it feels complicated. Anyway, here, copy the notes."

"Thanks."

"Alright, let's start homeroom!"

The middle-aged homeroom teacher entered the classroom looking sleepy. Well, sleepy or just worn-out, as usual.

I closed my notebook and put it away at my desk for the time being.

The teacher, who had finished marking the attendance in the teacher's desk, held the chalk with usual slightly messy handwriting.

"We're going to have seat rearrangement today!"

While saying that, the teacher started writing the seating chart on the blackboard. Now, I wonder what format will be used for the seat rearrangement.

By the way, last year, the teacher used a method of arranging the seats themselves.

"Oh, by the way, my method is completely random. Spare me the complaints."

The extroverted students in the class began to make a fuss, saying, "Eh!" They probably wanted to group together with their close friends, but it didn't matter to me. Because I have no acquaintances in this class. ...Somehow, I'm feeling sad thinking about it. But that doesn't mean I want to become an extrovert.

"Alright, let's begin. Check your seat according to the random order generated on your smartphones!"

The teacher, holding smartphone, started writing the attendance numbers on the blackboard from the window side of the class. The classroom became noisy as the numbers were being written.

Oh, my number was written quickly. It's by the window. It's not the very back seat, but it's a good spot where I won't get caught up in the commotion of the extroverted students.

As for the rest of the seating arrangement, there's hardly anyone I care about other than Hoshino, so I'll just let it be and continue copying my notes.

“Alright, that’s it. Oh wait, hold on. The first period is about to start, so for today, let’s stick with the usual seating order. We’ll do the seat rearrangement during the closing homeroom. Now, let’s begin with the greetings.”

“Standup!!”

Ignoring the class’s resistance, the homeroom teacher abruptly ended the discussion.

The female class representative who gave the orders forcefully made everyone stand up with a loud voice. I stood up as well.

“Bow!”

I bowed and sat back in my seat. The classroom is buzzing with talk about the seat rearrangement, but I’m not particularly interested.

“Oh! Kouji, where did you end up sitting?”

Hoshino approached me. It’s nice of them to always talk to me.

“I got a seat by the window. Anywhere that’s not in the middle of the classroom is fine for me.”

“By the window, huh? Don’t fall asleep, okay?”

Hoshino made a joke. Well, I have dozed off before, but still.

“Forget it. Where did you end up sitting?”

“Me? I’m second from the left towards the back.”

With the drastic change in attendance numbers, there are some unfamiliar seats designated by numbers.

“Speaking of which, isn’t the one next to you is Kirishima?”

“Kirishima? Is that your friend?”

As I said that, Hoshino’s expression turned astonished. Hmm, did I say something wrong?

“Hey, well... I’ll tell you, but there’s a genius named Kirishima Reina. Not only that, she’s also stunningly beautiful, and her figure is amazing.”

“Oh, I see. But does it matter that she’s sitting next to me?”

“I know your indifference already, but that’s what other guys envy. Got it?”

“Yeah, yeah. Oh, the first period is chemistry, right? I’ll return the notes.”

I brushed off Hoshino’s nonsense. It’s not like my likability will increase just because she’s sitting next to me.

“Alright. If you missed anything, let me know. I’ll show you.”

“Thanks as always.”

“In that case, treat me to something.”

“Please spare me from that.”

Although I said that, Hoshino has always been helpful, so I might treat them to something occasionally. With such thoughts in mind, I took out the chemistry materials from my bag.

The day flew by in an instant, and all of today’s classes have ended. The three-week break felt long, and I desperately tried to keep up with the lessons while looking at the blackboard and past notes. This school claims to prioritize both academics and sports (or so they say), so the pace of the classes is fast.

That’s why I’m grateful to Hoshino, who teaches me various things.

Well, to be honest, he tends to get carried away, so I’ll keep that thought to myself.

“You guys, take your seats once.”

The homeroom teacher calls out to the students who are loitering around the teacher’s desk, urging them to sit down.

I always wonder why they try to gather together so much.

“Alright. You don’t have to greet each other. Let’s just do the seat rearrangement we talked about in the morning. Anyone doesn’t know their new seat?”

Saying that, the teacher looks around the classroom, but there’s no one who fits that description. Or rather, it’s impossible for those who were making a fuss during the seat rearrangement to forget.

“Doesn’t seem like it. In that case, pack up your belongings and move right away.”

The teacher claps the hands, and suddenly the entire classroom becomes noisy.

Since I have no one to make a fuss with, I quietly stand up from my seat and head towards the new one.

With nothing else to do, I decided to read a novel.

Clatter –

It seems someone has taken the seat next to me. It must be the person Hoshino mentioned, Kirishima. However, I won't initiate a greeting or anything. If the person greets me, I'll just give a casual response. If they ignore me, that's even better.

"Um, excuse me..."

She's the type to initiate a conversation. In that case, I'll just give a casual response.

Thinking that, I raise my head to look at them.

"Ah..."

It was a face I had seen three weeks ago.

c4

“No, that’s not right. Maybe you got the wrong person to talk to.”

“I don’t think that’s possible.”

But I never thought Kirishima was the girl from three weeks ago. We were in the same class, to begin with. I had no idea.

I wonder if Kirishima has something to discuss. I thought about that and decided to ask.

“So, what is it? Did something happen at your house, like the police coming? If so, I’m sorry.”

“No, that’s not it. Actually, thank you for helping me.”

“Oh, well, you’re welcome.”

Kirishima is as cute as I heard. But surprisingly, they are also sincere. I thought they were more assertive.

“Hey, can we wrap it up soon?”

The homeroom teacher calms down the noisy classroom. As expected of high school students, it becomes quiet immediately.

“Well, that’s it for the seat rearrangement. The next one will probably be at the beginning of the second term. Um, there’s no special announcement, so let’s end it here for today.”

After the closing greeting, most of the students have already left the classroom.

However, I have to stay behind today. I have three weeks’ worth of catching up to do.

With that in mind, I stood up to go to the self-study room.

“Oh, wait...”

...I felt like someone called out to me, but I’ll just ignore it.

“Sigh...”

After finishing about an hour of self-study, the outside had turned completely red. Time flies by quickly. As I packed up the study materials and notebooks on my desk into my bag, I noticed something.

...I forgot my side bag.

In addition to the school bag, this school allows students to bring an side bag of their choice. I have been using a shoulder bag.

The feeling of sluggishness when I realized I forgot something while trying to leave the classroom is indescribable.

If only I hadn’t noticed the forgotten item, I would still be carefree... I thought as I climbed the deserted staircase again.

Well, of course, there is no one in the hallway. Most people are on their way home by now, after talking a short detour.

Isn’t it written in the school rules that detours are prohibited?

-I had a boomerang stuck in me.

Well, that’s just a physiological phenomenon. It can’t be helped. (shivering)

...Instead of thinking about irrelevant things, let’s hurry up and go home.

-Clatter clatter clatter.

“Oh.”

Kirishima was in the classroom, with the evening sun shining through. Sitting alone in the classroom tinged with red by the sunset, I couldn’t help but find Kirishima beautiful.

“It’s Kurata-kun, right?”

“Yes, but what’s up?”

“I wanted to thank you for what happened before.”

“You don’t have to thank me for that. Whether it was you or someone else in that situation, Kirishima, I would have taken the same action. Besides, I didn’t help you because I wanted something from you. So don’t worry about it.”

That’s my honest feelings. Regardless of whether the person being attacked was Kirishima or another guy, I would have taken the same action without a doubt. And demanding thanks would be uncool to the extreme.

“But still! You’re undoubtedly my lifesaver. If it had continued as it was, I would have been stabbed from behind.”

“Maybe it’s better to think of it as good luck. Anyway, I’m going home.”

I find myself acting quite distant.

I headed towards my seat and retrieved my bag hanging beside the desk.

I left behind the study materials for subjects I don’t study at home. Fortunately, this school turns a blind eye to leaving study materials behind. Am I the only one who thinks it should be openly permitted to leave study materials behind?

“Well then, I’ll go.”

Since I was able to retrieve my bag safely, I decided to head home. Just as I was thinking that...

“Don’t go...”

Kirishima hugged my left arm. Kirishima’s nice body caused my left arm to deform as it was enveloped in something soft.

Huh, why are you saying don’t go? Did I do something?

“Umm what?”

“When going home, will you come with me?”

Huh? Go home together? Why?

“Why do I need to accompany you?”

“Because I’m scared... on the way back since that incident. Until yesterday, I went home with my friends, but today, I was called for a committee meeting, and... my friends have all gone home... Is it not possible?”

Ah, I see. Kirishima must have been traumatized by the incident.

Certainly, almost being killed while walking alone would be a traumatic event.

“Well, I guess it’s fine.”

“Thank you!”

Hmm. Kirishima has a radiant smile. But honestly, the current situation is poison to me. The sensation of the chest on my left arm. There is no healthy high school boy who can withstand this (!!).

So, although I feel a bit reluctant, I should ask Kirishima to let go.

“Um, could you please let go for a moment?”

“Huh? Oh, um, sorry?”

Blushing intensely, Kirishima let go of my arm. I can’t help but feel a slight reluctance, I suppose because I’m also a guy.

“No, that’s not right. Maybe you got the wrong person to talk to.”

“I don’t think that’s possible.”

But I never thought Kirishima was the girl from three weeks ago. We were in the same class, to begin with. I had no idea.

I wonder if Kirishima has something to discuss. I thought about that and decided to ask.

“So, what is it? Did something happen at your house, like the police coming? If so, I’m sorry.”

“No, that’s not it. Actually, thank you for helping me.”

“Oh, well, you’re welcome.”

Kirishima is as cute as I heard. But surprisingly, they are also sincere. I thought they were more assertive.

“Hey, can we wrap it up soon?”

The homeroom teacher calms down the noisy classroom. As expected of high school students, it becomes quiet immediately.

“Well, that’s it for the seat rearrangement. The next one will probably be at the beginning of the second term. Um, there’s no special announcement, so let’s end it here for today.”

After the closing greeting, most of the students have already left the classroom.

However, I have to stay behind today. I have three weeks’ worth of catching up to do.

With that in mind, I stood up to go to the self-study room.

“Oh, wait...”

...I felt like someone called out to me, but I'll just ignore it.

"Sigh..."

After finishing about an hour of self-study, the outside had turned completely red. Time flies by quickly. As I packed up the study materials and notebooks on my desk into my bag, I noticed something.

...I forgot my side bag.

In addition to the school bag, this school allows students to bring a side bag of their choice. I have been using a shoulder bag.

The feeling of sluggishness when I realized I forgot something while trying to leave the classroom is indescribable.

If only I hadn't noticed the forgotten item, I would still be carefree... I thought as I climbed the deserted staircase again.

Well, of course, there is no one in the hallway. Most people are on their way home by now, after talking a short detour.

Isn't it written in the school rules that detours are prohibited?

-I had a boomerang stuck in me.

Well, that's just a physiological phenomenon. It can't be helped. (shivering)

...Instead of thinking about irrelevant things, let's hurry up and go home.

-Clatter clatter clatter.

"Oh."

Kirishima was in the classroom, with the evening sun shining through. Sitting alone in the classroom tinged with red by the sunset, I couldn't help but find Kirishima beautiful.

"It's Kurata-kun, right?"

"Yes, but what's up?"

"I wanted to thank you for what happened before."

"You don't have to thank me for that. Whether it was you or someone else in that situation, Kirishima, I would have taken the same action. Besides, I didn't help you because I wanted something from you. So don't worry about it."

That's my honest feelings. Regardless of whether the person being attacked was Kirishima or another guy, I would have taken the same action without a doubt. And demanding thanks would be uncool to the extreme.

"But still! You're undoubtedly my lifesaver. If it had continued as it was, I would have been stabbed from behind."

"Maybe it's better to think of it as good luck. Anyway, I'm going home."

I find myself acting quite distant.

I headed towards my seat and retrieved my bag hanging beside the desk.

I left behind the study materials for subjects I don't study at home. Fortunately, this school turns a blind eye to leaving study materials behind. Am I the only one who thinks it should be openly permitted to leave study materials behind?

"Well then, I'll go."

Since I was able to retrieve my bag safely, I decided to head home. Just as I was thinking that...

"Don't go..."

Kirishima hugged my left arm. Kirishima's nice body caused my left arm to deform as it was enveloped in something soft.

Huh, why are you saying don't go? Did I do something?

"Umm what?"

"When going home, will you come with me?"

Huh? Go home together? Why?

"Why do I need to accompany you?"

"Because I'm scared... on the way back since that incident. Until yesterday, I went home with my friends, but today, I was called for a committee meeting, and... my friends have all gone home... Is it not possible?"

Ah, I see. Kirishima must have been traumatized by the incident.
Certainly, almost being killed while walking alone would be a traumatic event.
“Well, I guess it’s fine.”

“Thank you!”

Hmm. Kirishima has a radiant smile. But honestly, the current situation is poison to me. The sensation of the chest on my left arm. There is no healthy high school boy who can withstand this (!!).

So, although I feel a bit reluctant, I should ask Kirishima to let go.

“Um, could you please let go for a moment?”

“Huh? Oh, um, sorry?”

Blushing intensely, Kirishima let go of my arm. I can’t help but feel a slight reluctance, I suppose because I’m also a guy.

“No, that’s not right. Maybe you got the wrong person to talk to.”

“I don’t think that’s possible.”

But I never thought Kirishima was the girl from three weeks ago. We were in the same class, to begin with. I had no idea.

I wonder if Kirishima has something to discuss. I thought about that and decided to ask.

“So, what is it? Did something happen at your house, like the police coming? If so, I’m sorry.”

“No, that’s not it. Actually, thank you for helping me.”

“Oh, well, you’re welcome.”

Kirishima is as cute as I heard. But surprisingly, they are also sincere. I thought they were more assertive.

“Hey, can we wrap it up soon?”

The homeroom teacher calms down the noisy classroom. As expected of high school students, it becomes quiet immediately.

“Well, that’s it for the seat rearrangement. The next one will probably be at the beginning of the second term. Um, there’s no special announcement, so let’s end it here for today.”

After the closing greeting, most of the students have already left the classroom.

However, I have to stay behind today. I have three weeks’ worth of catching up to do.

With that in mind, I stood up to go to the self-study room.

“Oh, wait...”

...I felt like someone called out to me, but I’ll just ignore it.

“Sigh...”

After finishing about an hour of self-study, the outside had turned completely red. Time flies by quickly. As I packed up the study materials and notebooks on my desk into my bag, I noticed something.

...I forgot my side bag.

In addition to the school bag, this school allows students to bring an side bag of their choice. I have been using a shoulder bag.

The feeling of sluggishness when I realized I forgot something while trying to leave the classroom is indescribable.

If only I hadn’t noticed the forgotten item, I would still be carefree... I thought as I climbed the deserted staircase again.

Well, of course, there is no one in the hallway. Most people are on their way home by now, after talking a short detour.

Isn’t it written in the school rules that detours are prohibited?

-I had a boomerang stuck in me.

Well, that’s just a physiological phenomenon. It can’t be helped. (shivering)

Well, that’s just a physiological phenomenon. It can’t be helped.

(shivering)

...Instead of thinking about irrelevant things, let’s hurry up and go home.

-Clatter clatter clatter.

“Oh.”

Kirishima was in the classroom, with the evening sun shining through. Sitting alone in the classroom

tinged with red by the sunset, I couldn't help but find Kirishima beautiful.

"It's Kurata-kun, right?"

"Yes, but what's up?"

"I wanted to thank you for what happened before."

"You don't have to thank me for that. Whether it was you or someone else in that situation, Kirishima, I would have taken the same action. Besides, I didn't help you because I wanted something from you. So don't worry about it."

That's my honest feelings. Regardless of whether the person being attacked was Kirishima or another guy, I would have taken the same action without a doubt. And demanding thanks would be uncool to the extreme.

"But still! You're undoubtedly my lifesaver. If it had continued as it was, I would have been stabbed from behind."

"Maybe it's better to think of it as good luck. Anyway, I'm going home."

I find myself acting quite distant.

I headed towards my seat and retrieved my bag hanging beside the desk.

I left behind the study materials for subjects I don't study at home. Fortunately, this school turns a blind eye to leaving study materials behind. Am I the only one who thinks it should be openly permitted to leave study materials behind?

"Well then, I'll go."

Since I was able to retrieve my bag safely, I decided to head home. Just as I was thinking that...

"Don't go..."

Kirishima hugged my left arm. Kirishima's nice body caused my left arm to deform as it was enveloped in something soft.

Huh, why are you saying don't go? Did I do something?

"Umm what?"

"When going home, will you come with me?"

Huh? Go home together? Why?

"Why do I need to accompany you?"

"Because I'm scared... on the way back since that incident. Until yesterday, I went home with my friends, but today, I was called for a committee meeting, and... my friends have all gone home... Is it not possible?"

Ah, I see. Kirishima must have been traumatized by the incident.

Certainly, almost being killed while walking alone would be a traumatic event.

"Well, I guess it's fine."

"Thank you!"

Hmm. Kirishima has a radiant smile. But honestly, the current situation is poison to me. The sensation of the chest on my left arm. There is no healthy high school boy who can withstand this (!!).

So, although I feel a bit reluctant, I should ask Kirishima to let go.

"Um, could you please let go for a moment?"

"Huh? Oh, um, sorry?"

Blushing intensely, Kirishima let go of my arm. I can't help but feel a slight reluctance, I suppose because I'm also a guy.

And so, for some reason, I'm walking home with a beautiful girl. I wonder why.

"Kurata-kun, you're unexpectedly cool."

"Huh... Oh, uh, thank you."

This person suddenly says something outrageous. Huh? How should I react?

Unfortunately, I have no idea.

"By the way, there aren't many people living on this side, right?"

"Yeah, that's right. I think most people either live in the residential area south of the school or commute by train."

This town underwent redevelopment around the station, with the south side developing into a bustling area with large commercial facilities and high-rise apartments. On the other hand, the north side has been slow in its development and still retains a slight scent of the Showa era in its residential area. However, construction of new buildings, including apartments, has recently begun.

"By the way, what do you usually do, Kurata-kun?"

"Well, I guess I cook and do housework while playing games."

"Huh? Do you live alone and do housework?"

"No, I live with my dad."

After that, Kirishima fell silent. She's probably asking where my mother is, right? But it's not an easy question to ask.

However, I have no intention of bringing it up. It's not good to get involved with people unnecessarily. ...It's awkward.

Is it really this awkward when the conversation dies down? For now, let's bring up some topic.

"There really aren't many people around here, huh?"

"Yeah. If you were a transfer student, you would probably go to the residential area in the south, so the development here just started."

That's right. The redevelopment of the north side has just started recently, and amidst the buildings exuding the atmosphere of the Showa era, new buildings are gradually emerging. The scenery is somewhat heterogeneous.

By the way, the convenience store I stopped by earlier was also a result of that redevelopment.

"Why wasn't this side developed along with the rest?"

"I don't know either. But maybe it's because the south side originally had shopping districts and such, so it was given priority?"

"Indeed, that makes sense."

"By the way, where is your house?"

I was surprised when suddenly asked about that. It had nothing to do with the flow of our conversation, right?

"Well, um, you know that tobacco shop? The one run by an old lady."

"Um, uh, oh! Yeah, that one. Got it."

"Turn left at the corner there, and my house is about 200 meters ahead."

"Okay. Then, should I bring some sweets next time?"

Why does it seem like you're so eager to thank me? But I really don't need it. I don't need money, and it would feel sneaky to accept something from a girl in the same grade. As for honor, I don't want my quiet life to change. I don't wish for such things.

"No, you don't have to. I mean it."

"Well... okay. Thank you, though."

"I've said it many times, but really, don't worry about it. I wouldn't have lost my life or anything."

"Yeah. Thanks."

Saying that, Kirishima turned towards me, her chestnut-colored long hair fluttering, and faced me with a complete turn.

What caught my eye was her smile against the backdrop of the setting sun, an innocent smile that I had

never seen at school. She was incredibly cute.

“...W-What? You’re staring at me. Is there something on me?”

Huh! What should I say... I can’t just say that I was looking at your smile.

“N-No, it’s nothing. Is this direction the right one, Kirishima?”

“Yeah. But it’s different direction from the tobacco shop.”

“Understood. Should I accompany you home, or is it fine until we part ways?”

Since she relied on me, I thought I’d ask which option she preferred. I know she has traumas, after all.

“It’s fine until we part ways. It’s surprising that you would ask, Kurata-kun. You’ve changed in my image.”

“Huh? What kind of image did you have of me until now...”

“I won’t tell you. But being kind is something that hasn’t changed from the beginning.”

What is it? It’s quite embarrassing or, well, I don’t know how to describe it. But I’m really happy to be valued in that way.

“Are you blushing, by any chance? Huh? Huh?”

“N-No, I’m not blushing or anything. Come on, let’s hurry before it gets dark.”

“Okay.”

Afterward, we exchanged light small talk and safely escorted Kirishima partway. It turns out that Kirishima and I get along surprisingly well, which is good.

And so, for some reason, I’m walking home with a beautiful girl. I wonder why.

“Kurata-kun, you’re unexpectedly cool.”

“Huh... Oh, uh, thank you.”

This person suddenly says something outrageous. Huh? How should I react?

Unfortunately, I have no idea.

“By the way, there aren’t many people living on this side, right?”

“Yeah, that’s right. I think most people either live in the residential area south of the school or commute by train.”

This town underwent redevelopment around the station, with the south side developing into a bustling area with large commercial facilities and high-rise apartments. On the other hand, the north side has been slow in its development and still retains a slight scent of the Showa era in its residential area. However, construction of new buildings, including apartments, has recently begun.

“By the way, what do you usually do, Kurata-kun?”

“Well, I guess I cook and do housework while playing games.”

“Huh? Do you live alone and do housework?”

“No, I live with my dad.”

After that, Kirishima fell silent. She’s probably asking where my mother is, right? But it’s not an easy question to ask.

However, I have no intention of bringing it up. It’s not good to get involved with people unnecessarily.

...It’s awkward.

Is it really this awkward when the conversation dies down? For now, let’s bring up some topic.

“There really aren’t many people around here, huh?”

“Yeah. If you were a transfer student, you would probably go to the residential area in the south, so the development here just started.”

That’s right. The redevelopment of the north side has just started recently, and amidst the buildings exuding the atmosphere of the Showa era, new buildings are gradually emerging. The scenery is somewhat heterogeneous.

By the way, the convenience store I stopped by earlier was also a result of that redevelopment.

“Why wasn’t this side developed along with the rest?”

“I don’t know either. But maybe it’s because the south side originally had shopping districts and such, so it was given priority?”

“Indeed, that makes sense.”

“By the way, where is your house?”

I was surprised when suddenly asked about that. It had nothing to do with the flow of our conversation, right?

“Well, um, you know that tobacco shop? The one run by an old lady.”

“Um, uh, oh! Yeah, that one. Got it.”

“Turn left at the corner there, and my house is about 200 meters ahead.”

“Okay. Then, should I bring some sweets next time?”

Why does it seem like you’re so eager to thank me? But I really don’t need it. I don’t need money, and it would feel sneaky to accept something from a girl in the same grade. As for honor, I don’t want my quiet life to change. I don’t wish for such things.

“No, you don’t have to. I mean it.”

“Well... okay. Thank you, though.”

“I’ve said it many times, but really, don’t worry about it. I wouldn’t have lost my life or anything.”

“Yeah. Thanks.”

Saying that, Kirishima turned towards me, her chestnut-colored long hair fluttering, and faced me with a complete turn.

What caught my eye was her smile against the backdrop of the setting sun, an innocent smile that I had never seen at school. She was incredibly cute.

“...W-What? You’re staring at me. Is there something on me?”

Huh! What should I say... I can’t just say that I was looking at your smile.

“N-No, it’s nothing. Is this direction the right one, Kirishima?”

“Yeah. But it’s different direction from the tobacco shop.”

“Understood. Should I accompany you home, or is it fine until we part ways?”

Since she relied on me, I thought I’d ask which option she preferred. I know she has traumas, after all.

“It’s fine until we part ways. It’s surprising that you would ask, Kurata-kun. You’ve changed in my image.”

“Huh? What kind of image did you have of me until now...”

“I won’t tell you. But being kind is something that hasn’t changed from the beginning.”

What is it? It’s quite embarrassing or, well, I don’t know how to describe it. But I’m really happy to be valued in that way.

“Are you blushing, by any chance? Huh? Huh?”

“N-No, I’m not blushing or anything. Come on, let’s hurry before it gets dark.”

“Okay.”

Afterward, we exchanged light small talk and safely escorted Kirishima partway. It turns out that

Kirishima and I get along surprisingly well, which is good.

And so, for some reason, I’m walking home with a beautiful girl. I wonder why.

“Kurata-kun, you’re unexpectedly cool.”

“Huh... Oh, uh, thank you.”

This person suddenly says something outrageous. Huh? How should I react?

Unfortunately, I have no idea.

“By the way, there aren’t many people living on this side, right?”

“Yeah, that’s right. I think most people either live in the residential area south of the school or commute by train.”

This town underwent redevelopment around the station, with the south side developing into a bustling area with large commercial facilities and high-rise apartments. On the other hand, the north side has been slow in its development and still retains a slight scent of the Showa era in its residential area. However, construction of new buildings, including apartments, has recently begun.

“By the way, what do you usually do, Kurata-kun?”

“Well, I guess I cook and do housework while playing games.”

“Huh? Do you live alone and do housework?”

“No, I live with my dad.”

After that, Kirishima fell silent. She’s probably asking where my mother is, right? But it’s not an easy

question to ask.

However, I have no intention of bringing it up. It's not good to get involved with people unnecessarily. ...It's awkward.

Is it really this awkward when the conversation dies down? For now, let's bring up some topic.

"There really aren't many people around here, huh?"

"Yeah. If you were a transfer student, you would probably go to the residential area in the south, so the development here just started."

That's right. The redevelopment of the north side has just started recently, and amidst the buildings exuding the atmosphere of the Showa era, new buildings are gradually emerging. The scenery is somewhat heterogeneous.

By the way, the convenience store I stopped by earlier was also a result of that redevelopment.

"Why wasn't this side developed along with the rest?"

"I don't know either. But maybe it's because the south side originally had shopping districts and such, so it was given priority?"

"Indeed, that makes sense."

"By the way, where is your house?"

I was surprised when suddenly asked about that. It had nothing to do with the flow of our conversation, right?

"Well, um, you know that tobacco shop? The one run by an old lady?"

"Um, uh, oh! Yeah, that one. Got it."

"Turn left at the corner there, and my house is about 200 meters ahead."

"Okay. Then, should I bring some sweets next time?"

Why does it seem like you're so eager to thank me? But I really don't need it. I don't need money, and it would feel sneaky to accept something from a girl in the same grade. As for honor, I don't want my quiet life to change. I don't wish for such things.

"No, you don't have to. I mean it."

"Well... okay. Thank you, though."

"I've said it many times, but really, don't worry about it. I wouldn't have lost my life or anything."

"Yeah. Thanks."

Saying that, Kirishima turned towards me, her chestnut-colored long hair fluttering, and faced me with a complete turn.

What caught my eye was her smile against the backdrop of the setting sun, an innocent smile that I had never seen at school. She was incredibly cute.

"...W-What? You're staring at me. Is there something on me?"

Huh! What should I say... I can't just say that I was looking at your smile.

"N-No, it's nothing. Is this direction the right one, Kirishima?"

"Yeah. But it's different direction from the tobacco shop."

"Understood. Should I accompany you home, or is it fine until we part ways?"

Since she relied on me, I thought I'd ask which option she preferred. I know she has traumas, after all.

"It's fine until we part ways. It's surprising that you would ask, Kurata-kun. You've changed in my image."

"Huh? What kind of image did you have of me until now..."

"I won't tell you. But being kind is something that hasn't changed from the beginning."

What is it? It's quite embarrassing or, well, I don't know how to describe it. But I'm really happy to be valued in that way.

"Are you blushing, by any chance? Huh? Huh?"

"N-No, I'm not blushing or anything. Come on, let's hurry before it gets dark."

"Okay."

Afterward, we exchanged light small talk and safely escorted Kirishima partway. It turns out that Kirishima and I get along surprisingly well, which is good.

As usual, I arrived at school and began preparing for class.

However, today, or rather, from today, there was something different.

“Oh, good morning, Kurata-kun.”

Kirishima, who had arrived at school, casually spoke to me. Normally, the only person who would talk to me when I arrived at school was Hoshino, at most. So, I was at a loss for how to respond. In times like these, Hoshino would casually return the conversation, but unfortunately, I couldn’t pull off such a feat.

“What’s wrong? D-Don’t tell me you’re ignoring me?”

I guess I have to say something after all. Let’s at least greet her for now.

“N-No, it’s not like that. Good morning.”

I was really surprised. I could feel the gazes of those around me saying, “What’s up with this guy?”

Please stop. Seriously.

From the boys at the corner of the class, I received glances filled with hatred, envy, and animosity. And from the girls who seemed to be Kirishima’s followers, I received unpleasant stares as if they were assessing me.

Seriously, I want it to stop. What did I do? Why do they give me such looks just for talking to the person next to me? I couldn’t understand it, and I didn’t want to.

“Excuse me for a moment.”

Telling myself to ignore the gazes from those around me, I stood up and left my seat.

I succumb to these gazes. I couldn’t bear being exposed to these gazes. Shutting out the sounds from the outside world, I hastily left the classroom.

I rushed into the restroom and decided to stay in a stall until my pounding heart calmed down.

I felt pathetic about it, but there was nothing I could do. I emptied my mind and body to erase the memory of what just happened.

A few minutes later, my heart calmed down. I thought that the commotion in the classroom had settled, so I left the restroom, and Hoshino was standing in front of it.

“Hey, Kouji. Are you okay?”

“...Hoshino. Why are you here?”

“Why? It’s because I was calling you, and you suddenly left the classroom without noticing. Are you alright?”

“Yeah. I’m fine now.”

Truly, a trustworthy friend is someone you should have.

“Well, let’s go back to the classroom. I think you’re no longer a topic of discussion.”

“Understood. Thanks.”

“Well, I already know that about you. Just take your time and get used to it.”

“...Yeah.”

At that moment, I was grateful for Hoshino’s personality. This might be the reason why Hoshino is popular in the class.

“Let’s go home...”

The classes for today have ended, and it’s time to go home.

The incident from this morning didn’t become a topic of discussion in the class, and there were no gazes from the surroundings. However, Kirishima, the person sitting next to me, kept looking at me frequently during class.

Maybe Kirishima thinks it’s her fault... or maybe I’m wrong... but the truth is, I haven’t fully recovered from my past trauma. She doesn’t need to worry about me that much.

Today, I needed to buy groceries, so I decided to go home early. As some may have already guessed, I don’t live alone... Well, technically speaking, I do. The truth is, I live with my father, but he only comes home late at night and only about three days a week. He works for a foreign company, so he has to work late due to the time difference with the headquarters. In return, he starts work around noon.

That's why I inevitably have to take care of the household chores.

Since it's right after school, many students are gathered around their shoe lockers. To avoid getting in their way, I quietly pass through and swiftly change my shoes.

As I exit through the school gate, I take a different path from most of the students. After a short walk, the surroundings quickly become desolate. However, I find solace in this silence.

As usual, I arrived at school and began preparing for class.

However, today, or rather, from today, there was something different.

"Oh, good morning, Kurata-kun."

Kirishima, who had arrived at school, casually spoke to me. Normally, the only person who would talk to me when I arrived at school was Hoshino, at most. So, I was at a loss for how to respond. In times like these, Hoshino would casually return the conversation, but unfortunately, I couldn't pull off such a feat.

"What's wrong? D-Don't tell me you're ignoring me?"

I guess I have to say something after all. Let's at least greet her for now.

"N-No, it's not like that. Good morning."

I was really surprised. I could feel the gazes of those around me saying, "What's up with this guy?"

Please stop. Seriously.

From the boys at the corner of the class, I received glances filled with hatred, envy, and animosity. And from the girls who seemed to be Kirishima's followers, I received unpleasant stares as if they were assessing me.

Seriously, I want it to stop. What did I do? Why do they give me such looks just for talking to the person next to me? I couldn't understand it, and I didn't want to.

"Excuse me for a moment."

Telling myself to ignore the gazes from those around me, I stood up and left my seat.

I succumb to these gazes. I couldn't bear being exposed to these gazes. Shutting out the sounds from the outside world, I hastily left the classroom.

I rushed into the restroom and decided to stay in a stall until my pounding heart calmed down.

I felt pathetic about it, but there was nothing I could do. I emptied my mind and body to erase the memory of what just happened.

A few minutes later, my heart calmed down. I thought that the commotion in the classroom had settled, so I left the restroom, and Hoshino was standing in front of it.

"Hey, Kouji. Are you okay?"

"...Hoshino. Why are you here?"

"Why? It's because I was calling you, and you suddenly left the classroom without noticing. Are you alright?"

"Yeah. I'm fine now."

Truly, a trustworthy friend is someone you should have.

"Well, let's go back to the classroom. I think you're no longer a topic of discussion."

"Understood. Thanks."

"Well, I already know that about you. Just take your time and get used to it."

"...Yeah."

At that moment, I was grateful for Hoshino's personality. This might be the reason why Hoshino is popular in the class.

"Let's go home..."

The classes for today have ended, and it's time to go home.

The incident from this morning didn't become a topic of discussion in the class, and there were no gazes from the surroundings. However, Kirishima, the person sitting next to me, kept looking at me frequently during class.

Maybe Kirishima thinks it's her fault... or maybe I'm wrong... but the truth is, I haven't fully recovered from my past trauma. She doesn't need to worry about me that much.

Today, I needed to buy groceries, so I decided to go home early. As some may have already guessed, I don't live alone... Well, technically speaking, I do. The truth is, I live with my father, but he only comes home late at night and only about three days a week. He works for a foreign company, so he has to work late due to the time difference with the headquarters. In return, he starts work around noon.

That's why I inevitably have to take care of the household chores.

Since it's right after school, many students are gathered around their shoe lockers. To avoid getting in their way, I quietly pass through and swiftly change my shoes.

As I exit through the school gate, I take a different path from most of the students. After a short walk, the surroundings quickly become desolate. However, I find solace in this silence.

As usual, I arrived at school and began preparing for class.

However, today, or rather, from today, there was something different.

"Oh, good morning, Kurata-kun."

Kirishima, who had arrived at school, casually spoke to me. Normally, the only person who would talk to me when I arrived at school was Hoshino, at most. So, I was at a loss for how to respond. In times like these, Hoshino would casually return the conversation, but unfortunately, I couldn't pull off such a feat.

"What's wrong? D-Don't tell me you're ignoring me?"

I guess I have to say something after all. Let's at least greet her for now.

"N-No, it's not like that. Good morning."

I was really surprised. I could feel the gazes of those around me saying, "What's up with this guy?"

Please stop. Seriously.

From the boys at the corner of the class, I received glances filled with hatred, envy, and animosity. And from the girls who seemed to be Kirishima's followers, I received unpleasant stares as if they were assessing me.

Seriously, I want it to stop. What did I do? Why do they give me such looks just for talking to the person next to me? I couldn't understand it, and I didn't want to.

"Excuse me for a moment."

Telling myself to ignore the gazes from those around me, I stood up and left my seat.

I succumb to these gazes. I couldn't bear being exposed to these gazes. Shutting out the sounds from the outside world, I hastily left the classroom.

I rushed into the restroom and decided to stay in a stall until my pounding heart calmed down.

I felt pathetic about it, but there was nothing I could do. I emptied my mind and body to erase the memory of what just happened.

A few minutes later, my heart calmed down. I thought that the commotion in the classroom had settled, so I left the restroom, and Hoshino was standing in front of it.

"Hey, Kouji. Are you okay?"

"...Hoshino. Why are you here?"

"Why? It's because I was calling you, and you suddenly left the classroom without noticing. Are you alright?"

"Yeah. I'm fine now."

Truly, a trustworthy friend is someone you should have.

"Well, let's go back to the classroom. I think you're no longer a topic of discussion."

"Understood. Thanks."

"Well, I already know that about you. Just take your time and get used to it."

"...Yeah."

At that moment, I was grateful for Hoshino's personality. This might be the reason why Hoshino is popular in the class.

"Let's go home..."

The classes for today have ended, and it's time to go home.

The incident from this morning didn't become a topic of discussion in the class, and there were no gazes from the surroundings. However, Kirishima, the person sitting next to me, kept looking at me frequently during class.

Maybe Kirishima thinks it's her fault... or maybe I'm wrong... but the truth is, I haven't fully recovered from my past trauma. She doesn't need to worry about me that much.

Today, I needed to buy groceries, so I decided to go home early. As some may have already guessed, I don't live alone... Well, technically speaking, I do. The truth is, I live with my father, but he only comes home late at night and only about three days a week. He works for a foreign company, so he has to work late due to the time difference with the headquarters. In return, he starts work around noon.

That's why I inevitably have to take care of the household chores.

Since it's right after school, many students are gathered around their shoe lockers. To avoid getting in their way, I quietly pass through and swiftly change my shoes.

As I exit through the school gate, I take a different path from most of the students. After a short walk, the surroundings quickly become desolate. However, I find solace in this silence.

Saturday. It is known as a day off in general society.

However, in a prestigious school like ours, we still have classes on Saturdays as a matter of course.

Though they are shorter than usual, there's no denying that school goes on until 2:30 in the afternoon.

Hoshino was complaining in the classroom, saying things like, "I want Saturdays off!" But I felt like retorting, "Hey, you have exams next year, you know?" In reality, Hoshino was busy talking with the popular kids, so I couldn't interject with my retort.

"You guys better remember that we have regular assessments coming up. If you slack off just because it's Golden Week, I'll make sure you regret it."

Our homeroom teacher came up with a threat during the closing remarks. I thought to myself, "There's no one who won't study, right?" But Hoshino's image suddenly popped into my mind.

...So, there are indeed people who don't study, huh.

Sorry, that was a tangent. But surprisingly, Hoshino is the type who diligently studies. Since Hoshino has helped me with exam preparation before, I can't speak ill of them.

"Hey, Kouji. Can I come to your house during Golden Week?"

Somehow, the closing remarks seemed to have ended without me realizing it. I absentmindedly stared out the window.

Come to think of it, Hoshino came to my house last year too.

"Ah, well, I guess it's fine. Are you planning to stay overnight?"

"If your dad is okay with it, I want to stay and pull an all-nighter."

"Ah, well, my dad has been absent a lot lately, so it should be fine for that day."

"For real? Your cooking is delicious, so treat me to a feast."

I suppose Hoshino is talking about the fried rice I make. Every time he comes over, I feel like I end up making fried rice.

School is over, and I walk through a sparsely populated residential area. While the other side is thriving, this quiet scenery during the daytime on a holiday is personally very calming.

Now, when I get home, I need to go to the supermarket. The ingredients in the refrigerator are running low, so I know that Hoshino and his gang, I mean, their visit is imminent, so I'll buy extra supplies this time.

The essential ingredient to buy is eggs. I'm making fried rice, so I definitely need more than usual. And also kamaboko. There might be those who say, "I only accept char siu in fried rice!" But the char siu sold at the supermarket is kind of ham-like and not delicious.

However, if I were to make char siu from scratch, I would have to wrap blocks of pork belly with cooking twine and simmer them for a considerable amount of time after searing the surface. Homemade char siu is undoubtedly delicious, but it takes too much time, so I'll pass.

As for the other things to buy, regular pork slices and vegetables. Pork slices are versatile and can be used in curry or stir-fries... they can be used in various dishes.

Among them, my favorite is salted pork rice bowl, with a strong lemon flavor.

While thinking about such things, I suddenly noticed a small park. It's just a park with a slide and a swing. I wouldn't have paid it any attention, normally.

The problem is that there was a familiar face sitting alone on the swing, looking empty.

Yes, it was Kirishima. Moreover, there was a different atmosphere about her than usual.

The usual Kirishima had the image of being the class's soothing presence, always spreading smiles to everyone, but now, the Kirishima I see has none of that aura.

Well, I don't know what happened. But the first thing that comes to mind is heartbreak. She must have been rejected.

So, I decided to ignore it. There's no need for me to meddle in a place where she's presumed to be heartbroken.

"I'm home~. Hm?"

I thought no one was home, but there were leather shoes lined up in the entrance.

"Oh, you're back, Kouji."

"Huh, Dad. Were you supposed to come home this early today?"

"Well, about that, Kouji. Dad has a business trip to Sydney starting today. I came back about an hour ago."

"Huh? Starting today? I didn't hear about that."

"Don't worry. Dad didn't hear about it either. Well, that's how it is. I'm sorry to ruin the Golden Week for us."

Dad looks apologetic. But I have no right to blame him.

But it really is sudden. That's why he's wearing a suit. Anyway, I'll go to the living room and put down the luggage for now.

"Well, there's no helping it. What time is the departure?"

"Let's see. The flight is around 8:30 p.m., so I want to arrive at Haneda around 7:30 p.m. Wait a moment. Let me search for it."

Saying that, he sat on the sofa and started searching on the smartphone that was placed there. He should have looked it up in advance...

"Dad, I'll go change clothes real quick."

"Sure."

Saying that, I headed towards my bedroom on the second floor.

A few minutes later, I came back down to the living room, wearing casual clothes.

"Kouji, it seems like I should take the 5:50 p.m. train. Sorry, but please have dinner by yourself."

If it's the 5:50 p.m. train, he'll have to leave the house around 5:30 p.m., which means he won't be there for dinner.

"Oh, it's fine. Dad, should I make some onigiri or something?"

"Oh? You're willing to make them? In that case, I'll leave it to you. What flavor would you recommend?"

"In that case, the chef's recommendation."

When I imitated a chef, my dad smiled and placed an order.

It's around 3 p.m. right now. But if my dad is going on a business trip, I should help with the preparations. He's probably not finished preparing yet, and he must be tired as well.

"Kouji, are you keeping up with your school studies?"

While preparing the meal in the kitchen, my dad suddenly called out to me.

"W-Well, thankfully Hoshino is helping me out."

"Hoshino-kun is in the same class, right? I see, if you're keeping up, then I can rest assured. When I heard you were hospitalized for three weeks, I was worried. I should thank Hoshino-kun next time."

"W-Well..."

I am grateful to Hoshino, but I wish I could change his easily carried away personality. He can be really troublesome when he gets carried away.

"Oh, I'll leave this month's food expenses and such on your desk."

"Thank you."

Bleep bleep

It seems the rice cooker is done. I immediately open the rice cooker and start mixing the rice.

Then I take out the plastic wrap from the drawer and sprinkle some salt.

I spread the cooked rice on top and place the ingredients in the center.

The fillings for the onigiri are kombu simmered in soy sauce and salmon flakes. The reason is that they were in the refrigerator.

After placing the fillings, I shape them into onigiri. Since the rice is freshly cooked, my hands are hot.

"Dad, I'll leave the onigiri on the table."

"Sure, thanks."

Um, it's around 4:50 p.m. now. Since I'm going shopping anyway, it's a good idea to go together with Dad. I think it's nice to see him off occasionally, and I've already made a shopping list, so I'll just laze around in my room until it's time.

Saturday. It is known as a day off in general society.

However, in a prestigious school like ours, we still have classes on Saturdays as a matter of course. Though they are shorter than usual, there's no denying that school goes on until 2:30 in the afternoon. Hoshino was complaining in the classroom, saying things like, "I want Saturdays off!" But I felt like retorting, "Hey, you have exams next year, you know?" In reality, Hoshino was busy talking with the popular kids, so I couldn't interject with my retort.

"You guys better remember that we have regular assessments coming up. If you slack off just because it's Golden Week, I'll make sure you regret it."

Our homeroom teacher came up with a threat during the closing remarks. I thought to myself, "There's no one who won't study, right?" But Hoshino's image suddenly popped into my mind.

...So, there are indeed people who don't study, huh.

Sorry, that was a tangent. But surprisingly, Hoshino is the type who diligently studies. Since Hoshino has helped me with exam preparation before, I can't speak ill of them.

"Hey, Kouji. Can I come to your house during Golden Week?"

Somehow, the closing remarks seemed to have ended without me realizing it. I absentmindedly stared out the window.

Come to think of it, Hoshino came to my house last year too.

"Ah, well, I guess it's fine. Are you planning to stay overnight?"

"If your dad is okay with it, I want to stay and pull an all-nighter."

"Ah, well, my dad has been absent a lot lately, so it should be fine for that day."

"For real? Your cooking is delicious, so treat me to a feast."

I suppose Hoshino is talking about the fried rice I make. Every time he comes over, I feel like I end up making fried rice.

School is over, and I walk through a sparsely populated residential area. While the other side is thriving, this quiet scenery during the daytime on a holiday is personally very calming.

Now, when I get home, I need to go to the supermarket. The ingredients in the refrigerator are running low, so I know that Hoshino and his gang, I mean, their visit is imminent, so I'll buy extra supplies this time.

The essential ingredient to buy is eggs. I'm making fried rice, so I definitely need more than usual. And also kamaboko. There might be those who say, "I only accept char siu in fried rice!" But the char siu sold at the supermarket is kind of ham-like and not delicious.

However, if I were to make char siu from scratch, I would have to wrap blocks of pork belly with cooking twine and simmer them for a considerable amount of time after searing the surface. Homemade char siu is undoubtedly delicious, but it takes too much time, so I'll pass.

As for the other things to buy, regular pork slices and vegetables. Pork slices are versatile and can be used in curry or stir-fries... they can be used in various dishes.

Among them, my favorite is salted pork rice bowl, with a strong lemon flavor.

While thinking about such things, I suddenly noticed a small park. It's just a park with a slide and a swing. I wouldn't have paid it any attention, normally.

The problem is that there was a familiar face sitting alone on the swing, looking empty.

Yes, it was Kirishima. Moreover, there was a different atmosphere about her than usual.

The usual Kirishima had the image of being the class's soothing presence, always spreading smiles to everyone, but now, the Kirishima I see has none of that aura.

Well, I don't know what happened. But the first thing that comes to mind is heartbreak. She must have been rejected.

So, I decided to ignore it. There's no need for me to meddle in a place where she's presumed to be heartbroken.

"I'm home~. Hm?"

I thought no one was home, but there were leather shoes lined up in the entrance.

"Oh, you're back, Kouji."

“Huh, Dad. Were you supposed to come home this early today?”

“Well, about that, Kouji. Dad has a business trip to Sydney starting today. I came back about an hour ago.”

“Huh? Starting today? I didn’t hear about that.”

“Don’t worry. Dad didn’t hear about it either. Well, that’s how it is. I’m sorry to ruin the Golden Week for us.”

Dad looks apologetic. But I have no right to blame him.

But it really is sudden. That’s why he’s wearing a suit. Anyway, I’ll go to the living room and put down the luggage for now.

“Well, there’s no helping it. What time is the departure?”

“Let’s see. The flight is around 8:30 p.m., so I want to arrive at Haneda around 7:30 p.m. Wait a moment. Let me search for it.”

Saying that, he sat on the sofa and started searching on the smartphone that was placed there. He should have looked it up in advance...

“Dad, I’ll go change clothes real quick.”

“Sure.”

Saying that, I headed towards my bedroom on the second floor.

A few minutes later, I came back down to the living room, wearing casual clothes.

“Kouji, it seems like I should take the 5:50 p.m. train. Sorry, but please have dinner by yourself.”

If it’s the 5:50 p.m. train, he’ll have to leave the house around 5:30 p.m., which means he won’t be there for dinner.

“Oh, it’s fine. Dad, should I make some onigiri or something?”

“Oh? You’re willing to make them? In that case, I’ll leave it to you. What flavor would you recommend?”

“In that case, the chef’s recommendation.”

When I imitated a chef, my dad smiled and placed an order.

It’s around 3 p.m. right now. But if my dad is going on a business trip, I should help with the preparations. He’s probably not finished preparing yet, and he must be tired as well.

“Kouji, are you keeping up with your school studies?”

While preparing the meal in the kitchen, my dad suddenly called out to me.

“W-Well, thankfully Hoshino is helping me out.”

“Hoshino-kun is in the same class, right? I see, if you’re keeping up, then I can rest assured. When I heard you were hospitalized for three weeks, I was worried. I should thank Hoshino-kun next time.”

“W-Well...”

I am grateful to Hoshino, but I wish I could change his easily carried away personality. He can be really troublesome when he gets carried away.

“Oh, I’ll leave this month’s food expenses and such on your desk.”

“Thank you.”

Bleep bleep

It seems the rice cooker is done. I immediately open the rice cooker and start mixing the rice.

Then I take out the plastic wrap from the drawer and sprinkle some salt.

I spread the cooked rice on top and place the ingredients in the center.

The fillings for the onigiri are kombu simmered in soy sauce and salmon flakes. The reason is that they were in the refrigerator.

After placing the fillings, I shape them into onigiri. Since the rice is freshly cooked, my hands are hot.

“Dad, I’ll leave the onigiri on the table.”

“Sure, thanks.”

Um, it’s around 4:50 p.m. now. Since I’m going shopping anyway, it’s a good idea to go together with Dad. I think it’s nice to see him off occasionally, and I’ve already made a shopping list, so I’ll just laze around in my room until it’s time.

Saturday. It is known as a day off in general society.

However, in a prestigious school like ours, we still have classes on Saturdays as a matter of course.

Though they are shorter than usual, there’s no denying that school goes on until 2:30 in the afternoon.

Hoshino was complaining in the classroom, saying things like, "I want Saturdays off!" But I felt like retorting, "Hey, you have exams next year, you know?" In reality, Hoshino was busy talking with the popular kids, so I couldn't interject with my retort.

"You guys better remember that we have regular assessments coming up. If you slack off just because it's Golden Week, I'll make sure you regret it."

Our homeroom teacher came up with a threat during the closing remarks. I thought to myself, "There's no one who won't study, right?" But Hoshino's image suddenly popped into my mind.

...So, there are indeed people who don't study, huh.

Sorry, that was a tangent. But surprisingly, Hoshino is the type who diligently studies. Since Hoshino has helped me with exam preparation before, I can't speak ill of them.

"Hey, Kouji. Can I come to your house during Golden Week?"

Somehow, the closing remarks seemed to have ended without me realizing it. I absentmindedly stared out the window.

Come to think of it, Hoshino came to my house last year too.

"Ah, well, I guess it's fine. Are you planning to stay overnight?"

"If your dad is okay with it, I want to stay and pull an all-nighter."

"Ah, well, my dad has been absent a lot lately, so it should be fine for that day."

"For real? Your cooking is delicious, so treat me to a feast."

I suppose Hoshino is talking about the fried rice I make. Every time he comes over, I feel like I end up making fried rice.

School is over, and I walk through a sparsely populated residential area. While the other side is thriving, this quiet scenery during the daytime on a holiday is personally very calming.

Now, when I get home, I need to go to the supermarket. The ingredients in the refrigerator are running low, so I know that Hoshino and his gang, I mean, their visit is imminent, so I'll buy extra supplies this time.

The essential ingredient to buy is eggs. I'm making fried rice, so I definitely need more than usual. And also kamaboko. There might be those who say, "I only accept char siu in fried rice!" But the char siu sold at the supermarket is kind of ham-like and not delicious.

However, if I were to make char siu from scratch, I would have to wrap blocks of pork belly with cooking twine and simmer them for a considerable amount of time after searing the surface. Homemade char siu is undoubtedly delicious, but it takes too much time, so I'll pass.

As for the other things to buy, regular pork slices and vegetables. Pork slices are versatile and can be used in curry or stir-fries... they can be used in various dishes.

Among them, my favorite is salted pork rice bowl, with a strong lemon flavor.

While thinking about such things, I suddenly noticed a small park. It's just a park with a slide and a swing. I wouldn't have paid it any attention, normally.

The problem is that there was a familiar face sitting alone on the swing, looking empty.

Yes, it was Kirishima. Moreover, there was a different atmosphere about her than usual.

The usual Kirishima had the image of being the class's soothing presence, always spreading smiles to everyone, but now, the Kirishima I see has none of that aura.

Well, I don't know what happened. But the first thing that comes to mind is heartbreak. She must have been rejected.

So, I decided to ignore it. There's no need for me to meddle in a place where she's presumed to be heartbroken.

"I'm home~. Hm?"

I thought no one was home, but there were leather shoes lined up in the entrance.

"Oh, you're back, Kouji."

"Huh, Dad. Were you supposed to come home this early today?"

"Well, about that, Kouji. Dad has a business trip to Sydney starting today. I came back about an hour ago."

"Huh? Starting today? I didn't hear about that."

"Don't worry. Dad didn't hear about it either. Well, that's how it is. I'm sorry to ruin the Golden Week for

us.”

Dad looks apologetic. But I have no right to blame him.

But it really is sudden. That’s why he’s wearing a suit. Anyway, I’ll go to the living room and put down the luggage for now.

“Well, there’s no helping it. What time is the departure?”

“Let’s see. The flight is around 8:30 p.m., so I want to arrive at Haneda around 7:30 p.m. Wait a moment. Let me search for it.”

Saying that, he sat on the sofa and started searching on the smartphone that was placed there. He should have looked it up in advance...

“Dad, I’ll go change clothes real quick.”

“Sure.”

Saying that, I headed towards my bedroom on the second floor.

A few minutes later, I came back down to the living room, wearing casual clothes.

“Kouji, it seems like I should take the 5:50 p.m. train. Sorry, but please have dinner by yourself.”

If it’s the 5:50 p.m. train, he’ll have to leave the house around 5:30 p.m., which means he won’t be there for dinner.

“Oh, it’s fine. Dad, should I make some onigiri or something?”

“Oh? You’re willing to make them? In that case, I’ll leave it to you. What flavor would you recommend?”

“In that case, the chef’s recommendation.”

When I imitated a chef, my dad smiled and placed an order.

It’s around 3 p.m. right now. But if my dad is going on a business trip, I should help with the preparations. He’s probably not finished preparing yet, and he must be tired as well.

“Kouji, are you keeping up with your school studies?”

While preparing the meal in the kitchen, my dad suddenly called out to me.

“W-Well, thankfully Hoshino is helping me out.”

“Hoshino-kun is in the same class, right? I see, if you’re keeping up, then I can rest assured. When I heard you were hospitalized for three weeks, I was worried. I should thank Hoshino-kun next time.”

“W-Well...”

I am grateful to Hoshino, but I wish I could change his easily carried away personality. He can be really troublesome when he gets carried away.

“Oh, I’ll leave this month’s food expenses and such on your desk.”

“Thank you.”

Bleep bleep

It seems the rice cooker is done. I immediately open the rice cooker and start mixing the rice.

Then I take out the plastic wrap from the drawer and sprinkle some salt.

I spread the cooked rice on top and place the ingredients in the center.

The fillings for the onigiri are kombu simmered in soy sauce and salmon flakes. The reason is that they were in the refrigerator.

After placing the fillings, I shape them into onigiri. Since the rice is freshly cooked, my hands are hot.

“Dad, I’ll leave the onigiri on the table.”

“Sure, thanks.”

Um, it’s around 4:50 p.m. now. Since I’m going shopping anyway, it’s a good idea to go together with Dad. I think it’s nice to see him off occasionally, and I’ve already made a shopping list, so I’ll just laze around in my room until it’s time.

After seeing my dad off, I finished shopping at the large supermarket near the station. By the way, I decided to cook at home. So, I'm quite hungry right now.

Man, it's heavy. I bought all the groceries for the holiday period, so it became quite heavy. I should have brought my bicycle after all...

Regretting it won't change the weight, so let's hurry back home. By the way, the bags were so heavy that I couldn't properly use my smartphone while waiting at the traffic light. Seriously, it's heavy.

Sigh

The surroundings have become completely dark, and there are hardly any people around. If this were the southern side, it would be bustling, but it's an undeveloped area.

While my arms were slightly groaning, I walked slowly. Suddenly, I saw the small park I noticed when I walked home from school earlier.

Come to think of it, I wonder if Kirishima is still there. It's already 8 o'clock, isn't it? Good kids should be at home by now.

It's a bit dark, but I could see Kirishima in their school uniform. Does that mean she hasn't gone home yet? Did she have a fight with their parents or something?

There's no helping it, I'll urge her to go home. It's not good for a girl to be alone at this hour, even if she had a fight. Regardless, I think her parents are worried too.

"Hey, Kirishima. Do you know what time it is?"

"...Huh? Why is it Kurata-kun?"

In the darkness, Kirishima was sitting alone on a bench under a dimly lit street lamp.

Kirishima's expression when she faced me was terrible. Where did that usual expression go?

"Well, it's already 8 o'clock. I don't know if you had a fight with your parents or anything, but isn't it better to go home?"

Upon hearing that, Kirishima suddenly fell silent. Huh? Did I hit a nerve?

For now, I need to follow up on that.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to intrude on your personal matters like that, Kirishima. Let's just go home for today, okay?"

"...A home where no one cares?"

Kirishima muttered quietly. It was indeed a low voice, but I heard it clearly.

"A home where no one cares? Huh? What about your parents?"

Oops. I unintentionally blurted it out. Kirishima probably didn't want that topic touched upon.

"My dad doesn't come home from work, and my mom passed away when I was in elementary school.

After that, my dad remarried, but it seems like my stepmother dislikes me."

Oh... I heard quite a harsh story. No wonder she has that expression. In fact, I think it's amazing that she could behave so brightly at school.

In that case, the only option seems to be staying at a friend's house. Does she have a cell phone?

"But, Kirishima, why don't you ask a friend if you can stay over? Do you have a cell phone?"

"...I don't have any close friends like that. It seems like most girls dislike me."

Wow. That's another dark story. It seems like her relationships with other girls are also tough. Although I myself dislike such friendship dynamics.

"Or rather, Kurata-kun, you should understand a bit, right? The pain of not having a mother. Right?"

"Well, um, yeah..."

Sorry, but my mom is alive. She even came to visit me last week.

"Hey! Kurata-kun, are you fine with it!?"

"Kirishima, calm down for a moment."

Kirishima had become hysterical. It's scary.

Anyway, I took out a bottle of tea from the shopping bag. It was originally intended as a companion for when I go out, but oh well.

Kirishima took a sip of the bottled tea and regained their composure.

"I'm sorry, Kurata-kun. For showing you such a sight."

"Well, it doesn't really bother me. I understand that you are going through a tough time, Kirishima." Should I abandon Kirishima in this situation? Or should I help her? Even I couldn't bring myself to abandon Kirishima in this state.

"Um... if you're okay with it, I can treat you to dinner or something."

When I said that, Kirishima raised their downcast face and looked at me.

"Huh. Is that okay?"

"Well, why not? I just bought a bunch of ingredients, after all."

"Thank you!"

Kirishima, who had a gloomy expression earlier, suddenly transformed into a radiant smile. Yes, that's it. This kind of face suits Kirishima.

"Oh, by the way, if I turn into a beast, please protect yourself. Kirishima, you are too cute, and I might lose control, you know?"

I made a joke to change the gloomy atmosphere. I probably had a mischievous expression on my face.

"That, that's not cute at all."

Huh? She seem unexpectedly embarrassed. I thought she would be used to hearing things like that.

Since it's awkward, I forcefully bring the conversation to an end.

"Well then, shall we go?"

"Yeah! Oh, I'll hold one of the shopping bags."

"Huh? Oh, yeah. Thanks."

As I stood up, Kirishima took one of the shopping bags and happily followed me.

After seeing my dad off, I finished shopping at the large supermarket near the station. By the way, I decided to cook at home. So, I'm quite hungry right now.

Man, it's heavy. I bought all the groceries for the holiday period, so it became quite heavy. I should have brought my bicycle after all...

Regretting it won't change the weight, so let's hurry back home. By the way, the bags were so heavy that I couldn't properly use my smartphone while waiting at the traffic light. Seriously, it's heavy.

Sigh

The surroundings have become completely dark, and there are hardly any people around. If this were the southern side, it would be bustling, but it's an undeveloped area.

While my arms were slightly groaning, I walked slowly. Suddenly, I saw the small park I noticed when I walked home from school earlier.

Come to think of it, I wonder if Kirishima is still there. It's already 8 o'clock, isn't it? Good kids should be at home by now.

It's a bit dark, but I could see Kirishima in their school uniform. Does that mean she hasn't gone home yet? Did she have a fight with their parents or something?

There's no helping it, I'll urge her to go home. It's not good for a girl to be alone at this hour, even if she had a fight. Regardless, I think her parents are worried too.

"Hey, Kirishima. Do you know what time it is?"

"...Huh? Why is it Kurata-kun?"

In the darkness, Kirishima was sitting alone on a bench under a dimly lit street lamp.

Kirishima's expression when she faced me was terrible. Where did that usual expression go?

"Well, it's already 8 o'clock. I don't know if you had a fight with your parents or anything, but isn't it better to go home?"

Upon hearing that, Kirishima suddenly fell silent. Huh? Did I hit a nerve?

For now, I need to follow up on that.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to intrude on your personal matters like that, Kirishima. Let's just go home for today, okay?"

"...A home where no one cares?"

Kirishima muttered quietly. It was indeed a low voice, but I heard it clearly.

“A home where no one cares? Huh? What about your parents?”

Oops. I unintentionally blurted it out. Kirishima probably didn't want that topic touched upon.

“My dad doesn't come home from work, and my mom passed away when I was in elementary school. After that, my dad remarried, but it seems like my stepmother dislikes me.”

Oh... I heard quite a harsh story. No wonder she has that expression. In fact, I think it's amazing that she could behave so brightly at school.

In that case, the only option seems to be staying at a friend's house. Does she have a cell phone?

“But, Kirishima, why don't you ask a friend if you can stay over? Do you have a cell phone?”

“...I don't have any close friends like that. It seems like most girls dislike me.”

Wow. That's another dark story. It seems like her relationships with other girls are also tough. Although I myself dislike such friendship dynamics.

“Or rather, Kurata-kun, you should understand a bit, right? The pain of not having a mother. Right?”

“Well, um, yeah...”

Sorry, but my mom is alive. She even came to visit me last week.

“Hey! Kurata-kun, are you fine with it!?”

“Kirishima, calm down for a moment.”

Kirishima had become hysterical. It's scary.

Anyway, I took out a bottle of tea from the shopping bag. It was originally intended as a companion for when I go out, but oh well.

Kirishima took a sip of the bottled tea and regained their composure.

“I'm sorry, Kurata-kun. For showing you such a sight.”

“Well, it doesn't really bother me. I understand that you are going through a tough time, Kirishima.”

Should I abandon Kirishima in this situation? Or should I help her? Even I couldn't bring myself to abandon Kirishima in this state.

“Um... if you're okay with it, I can treat you to dinner or something.”

When I said that, Kirishima raised their downcast face and looked at me.

“Huh. Is that okay?”

“Well, why not? I just bought a bunch of ingredients, after all.”

“Thank you!”

Kirishima, who had a gloomy expression earlier, suddenly transformed into a radiant smile. Yes, that's it. This kind of face suits Kirishima.

“Oh, by the way, if I turn into a beast, please protect yourself. Kirishima, you are too cute, and I might lose control, you know?”

I made a joke to change the gloomy atmosphere. I probably had a mischievous expression on my face.

“That, that's not cute at all.”

Huh? She seem unexpectedly embarrassed. I thought she would be used to hearing things like that.

Since it's awkward, I forcefully bring the conversation to an end.

“Well then, shall we go?”

“Yeah! Oh, I'll hold one of the shopping bags.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah. Thanks.”

As I stood up, Kirishima took one of the shopping bags and happily followed me.

After seeing my dad off, I finished shopping at the large supermarket near the station. By the way, I decided to cook at home. So, I'm quite hungry right now.

Man, it's heavy. I bought all the groceries for the holiday period, so it became quite heavy. I should have brought my bicycle after all...

Regretting it won't change the weight, so let's hurry back home. By the way, the bags were so heavy that I couldn't properly use my smartphone while waiting at the traffic light. Seriously, it's heavy.

Sigh

The surroundings have become completely dark, and there are hardly any people around. If this were the southern side, it would be bustling, but it's an undeveloped area.

While my arms were slightly groaning, I walked slowly. Suddenly, I saw the small park I noticed when I walked home from school earlier.

Come to think of it, I wonder if Kirishima is still there. It's already 8 o'clock, isn't it? Good kids should be at home by now.

It's a bit dark, but I could see Kirishima in their school uniform. Does that mean she hasn't gone home yet? Did she have a fight with their parents or something?

There's no helping it, I'll urge her to go home. It's not good for a girl to be alone at this hour, even if she had a fight. Regardless, I think her parents are worried too.

"Hey, Kirishima. Do you know what time it is?"

"...Huh? Why is it Kurata-kun?"

In the darkness, Kirishima was sitting alone on a bench under a dimly lit street lamp.

Kirishima's expression when she faced me was terrible. Where did that usual expression go?

"Well, it's already 8 o'clock. I don't know if you had a fight with your parents or anything, but isn't it better to go home?"

Upon hearing that, Kirishima suddenly fell silent. Huh? Did I hit a nerve?

For now, I need to follow up on that.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to intrude on your personal matters like that, Kirishima. Let's just go home for today, okay?"

"...A home where no one cares?"

Kirishima muttered quietly. It was indeed a low voice, but I heard it clearly.

"A home where no one cares? Huh? What about your parents?"

Oops. I unintentionally blurted it out. Kirishima probably didn't want that topic touched upon.

"My dad doesn't come home from work, and my mom passed away when I was in elementary school.

After that, my dad remarried, but it seems like my stepmother dislikes me."

Oh... I heard quite a harsh story. No wonder she has that expression. In fact, I think it's amazing that she could behave so brightly at school.

In that case, the only option seems to be staying at a friend's house. Does she have a cell phone?

"But, Kirishima, why don't you ask a friend if you can stay over? Do you have a cell phone?"

"...I don't have any close friends like that. It seems like most girls dislike me."

Wow. That's another dark story. It seems like her relationships with other girls are also tough. Although I myself dislike such friendship dynamics.

"Or rather, Kurata-kun, you should understand a bit, right? The pain of not having a mother. Right?"

"Well, um, yeah..."

Sorry, but my mom is alive. She even came to visit me last week.

"Hey! Kurata-kun, are you fine with it!?"

"Kirishima, calm down for a moment."

Kirishima had become hysterical. It's scary.

Anyway, I took out a bottle of tea from the shopping bag. It was originally intended as a companion for when I go out, but oh well.

Kirishima took a sip of the bottled tea and regained their composure.

"I'm sorry, Kurata-kun. For showing you such a sight."

"Well, it doesn't really bother me. I understand that you are going through a tough time, Kirishima."

Should I abandon Kirishima in this situation? Or should I help her? Even I couldn't bring myself to abandon Kirishima in this state.

"Um... if you're okay with it, I can treat you to dinner or something."

When I said that, Kirishima raised their downcast face and looked at me.

"Huh. Is that okay?"

"Well, why not? I just bought a bunch of ingredients, after all."

"Thank you!"

Kirishima, who had a gloomy expression earlier, suddenly transformed into a radiant smile. Yes, that's it. This kind of face suits Kirishima.

"Oh, by the way, if I turn into a beast, please protect yourself. Kirishima, you are too cute, and I might lose control, you know?"

I made a joke to change the gloomy atmosphere. I probably had a mischievous expression on my face.

“That, that’s not cute at all.”

Huh? She seem unexpectedly embarrassed. I thought she would be used to hearing things like that. Since it’s awkward, I forcefully bring the conversation to an end.

“Well then, shall we go?”

“Yeah! Oh, I’ll hold one of the shopping bags.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah. Thanks.”

As I stood up, Kirishima took one of the shopping bags and happily followed me.

"I'm sorry for intrusion!"

With that, I returned home. I didn't expect things to turn out like this when I left the house.

"Well, go wash your hands. The sink is over there in the corner."

"Got it!"

After showing Kirishima the location of the kitchen sink, I headed to the living room. I placed the shopping bags on the table and started taking out the items that needed to be refrigerated right away. I gathered them all together and headed to the kitchen's refrigerator. However, due to the large quantity, I couldn't carry everything in one go.

Then, before I knew it, Kirishima had finished washing her hands.

"Need any help?"

"Sure."

With Kirishima's assistance, the contents of the shopping bags were quickly emptied.

Now, what should I make? At first, I was thinking of just pouring some retort curry over rice and eating that, but if Kirishima is here, it's better to make a home-cooked meal.

So, I decided to make Shio Butadon (pork bowl) today. The rice is being kept warm in the rice cooker, so it can be ready quite quickly.

I washed my hands and took out a pack of pork slices and a pack of chopped green onions from the refrigerator.

First, I heated some sesame oil in a frying pan.

"Kurata-kun, is there anything I can help with?"

Kirishima, who was sitting at the table, asked me. Honestly, I couldn't think of anything.

"No, it's fine if you just relax on the sofa."

"Well, that would be unfair to you, Kurata-kun, cooking alone."

I think Kirishima is capable of doing anything.

Oh, the frying pan should be heated up by now. Let's add the pork slices.

After a while, with a sizzling sound, the pork started to brown. If it gets too hot, it will lose its juicy texture.

So, I quickly added the seasonings. I used cooking sake, chicken broth powder, and salt. I stir-fried them together. The aroma only increased my hunger.

Meanwhile, I took out bowls from the cupboard and started serving the rice from the rice cooker.

"Hey, Kirishima, how much rice do you usually eat?"

"Mmm... normal portion is fine. Like the portion you get at the school cafeteria."

Okay, then this much should be enough. By the way, I'm very hungry, so I'll serve myself a mountain of rice.

After serving the rice, I arranged the Shio Butadon on top. The excess moisture should have evaporated nicely.

"All right. Looks delicious."

It's complete. I may be praising myself, but it looks really delicious.

However, one thing I thought about is how girls perceive this kind of meat-based dish. I ended up making something that suits my own taste completely.

I took out lemon juice from the refrigerator, placed the bowls on a tray, and carried them to the table.

"Oh, it looks delicious."

"Is it okay if we use disposable chopsticks?"

"Thank you for going through the trouble."

It's great to see Kirishima happy. Since I don't know how Kirishima feels about using chopsticks, I decided to provide them. Girls tend to be conscious of such things.

"Well then, let's dig in."

"Bon appétit."

Hmm. It's delicious again. Consistently tasty.

“Mmm! This is so good.”

While chewing, Kirishima praised the dish. It’s nice to receive compliments, but I’ll respond after Kirishima finishes eating.

“Phew. Kurata-kun, this is incredibly delicious!”

“Thanks. It’s actually one of my favorite dishes.”

“This is the kind of deliciousness that makes you want to have it over and over again. By the way, why do we have lemon juice?”

Oh, they noticed that. Lemon juice is a must-have item for me when it comes to Shio Butadon.

“Well, give it a try. It’s worth a shot.”

“Okay.”

Kirishima’s eyes sparkled as she started drinking the lemon juice. What’s with this innocence?

“Mmm! It’s refreshing and delicious!”

“Right? It’s easy to make and has a devilishly delicious taste.”

“Oh, definitely.”

As I watched Kirishima eagerly devouring the dish, I felt a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. Ahh, so cute. While observing Kirishima, I continued enjoying my Shio Butadon.

“I’m sorry for intrusion!”

With that, I returned home. I didn’t expect things to turn out like this when I left the house.

“Well, go wash your hands. The sink is over there in the corner.”

“Got it!”

After showing Kirishima the location of the kitchen sink, I headed to the living room. I placed the shopping bags on the table and started taking out the items that needed to be refrigerated right away. I gathered them all together and headed to the kitchen’s refrigerator. However, due to the large quantity, I couldn’t carry everything in one go.

Then, before I knew it, Kirishima had finished washing her hands.

“Need any help?”

“Sure.”

With Kirishima’s assistance, the contents of the shopping bags were quickly emptied.

Now, what should I make? At first, I was thinking of just pouring some retort curry over rice and eating that, but if Kirishima is here, it’s better to make a home-cooked meal.

So, I decided to make Shio Butadon (pork bowl) today. The rice is being kept warm in the rice cooker, so it can be ready quite quickly.

I washed my hands and took out a pack of pork slices and a pack of chopped green onions from the refrigerator.

First, I heated some sesame oil in a frying pan.

“Kurata-kun, is there anything I can help with?”

Kirishima, who was sitting at the table, asked me. Honestly, I couldn’t think of anything.

“No, it’s fine if you just relax on the sofa.”

“Well, that would be unfair to you, Kurata-kun, cooking alone.”

I think Kirishima is capable of doing anything.

Oh, the frying pan should be heated up by now. Let’s add the pork slices.

After a while, with a sizzling sound, the pork started to brown. If it gets too hot, it will lose its juicy texture.

So, I quickly added the seasonings. I used cooking sake, chicken broth powder, and salt. I stir-fried them together. The aroma only increased my hunger.

Meanwhile, I took out bowls from the cupboard and started serving the rice from the rice cooker.

“Hey, Kirishima, how much rice do you usually eat?”

“Mmm... normal portion is fine. Like the portion you get at the school cafeteria.”

Okay, then this much should be enough. By the way, I’m very hungry, so I’ll serve myself a mountain of rice.

After serving the rice, I arranged the Shio Butadon on top. The excess moisture should have evaporated nicely.

“All right. Looks delicious.”

It’s complete. I may be praising myself, but it looks really delicious.

However, one thing I thought about is how girls perceive this kind of meat-based dish. I ended up making something that suits my own taste completely.

I took out lemon juice from the refrigerator, placed the bowls on a tray, and carried them to the table.

“Oh, it looks delicious.”

“Is it okay if we use disposable chopsticks?”

“Thank you for going through the trouble.”

It’s great to see Kirishima happy. Since I don’t know how Kirishima feels about using chopsticks, I decided to provide them. Girls tend to be conscious of such things.

“Well then, let’s dig in.”

“Bon appétit.”

Hmm. It’s delicious again. Consistently tasty.

“Mmm! This is so good.”

While chewing, Kirishima praised the dish. It’s nice to receive compliments, but I’ll respond after Kirishima finishes eating.

“Phew. Kurata-kun, this is incredibly delicious!”

“Thanks. It’s actually one of my favorite dishes.”

“This is the kind of deliciousness that makes you want to have it over and over again. By the way, why do we have lemon juice?”

Oh, they noticed that. Lemon juice is a must-have item for me when it comes to Shio Butadon.

“Well, give it a try. It’s worth a shot.”

“Okay.”

Kirishima’s eyes sparkled as she started drinking the lemon juice. What’s with this innocence?

“Mmm! It’s refreshing and delicious!”

“Right? It’s easy to make and has a devilishly delicious taste.”

“Oh, definitely.”

As I watched Kirishima eagerly devouring the dish, I felt a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. Ahh, so cute.

While observing Kirishima, I continued enjoying my Shio Butadon.

“I’m sorry for intrusion!”

With that, I returned home. I didn’t expect things to turn out like this when I left the house.

“Well, go wash your hands. The sink is over there in the corner.”

“Got it!”

After showing Kirishima the location of the kitchen sink, I headed to the living room. I placed the shopping bags on the table and started taking out the items that needed to be refrigerated right away.

I gathered them all together and headed to the kitchen’s refrigerator. However, due to the large quantity, I couldn’t carry everything in one go.

Then, before I knew it, Kirishima had finished washing her hands.

“Need any help?”

“Sure.”

With Kirishima’s assistance, the contents of the shopping bags were quickly emptied.

Now, what should I make? At first, I was thinking of just pouring some retort curry over rice and eating that, but if Kirishima is here, it’s better to make a home-cooked meal.

So, I decided to make Shio Butadon (pork bowl) today. The rice is being kept warm in the rice cooker, so it can be ready quite quickly.

I washed my hands and took out a pack of pork slices and a pack of chopped green onions from the refrigerator.

First, I heated some sesame oil in a frying pan.

“Kurata-kun, is there anything I can help with?”

Kirishima, who was sitting at the table, asked me. Honestly, I couldn’t think of anything.

“No, it’s fine if you just relax on the sofa.”

“Well, that would be unfair to you, Kurata-kun, cooking alone.”

I think Kirishima is capable of doing anything.

Oh, the frying pan should be heated up by now. Let’s add the pork slices.

After a while, with a sizzling sound, the pork started to brown. If it gets too hot, it will lose its juicy texture.

So, I quickly added the seasonings. I used cooking sake, chicken broth powder, and salt. I stir-fried them together. The aroma only increased my hunger.

Meanwhile, I took out bowls from the cupboard and started serving the rice from the rice cooker.

“Hey, Kirishima, how much rice do you usually eat?”

“Mmm... normal portion is fine. Like the portion you get at the school cafeteria.”

Okay, then this much should be enough. By the way, I’m very hungry, so I’ll serve myself a mountain of rice.

After serving the rice, I arranged the Shio Butadon on top. The excess moisture should have evaporated nicely.

“All right. Looks delicious.”

It’s complete. I may be praising myself, but it looks really delicious.

However, one thing I thought about is how girls perceive this kind of meat-based dish. I ended up making something that suits my own taste completely.

I took out lemon juice from the refrigerator, placed the bowls on a tray, and carried them to the table.

“Oh, it looks delicious.”

“Is it okay if we use disposable chopsticks?”

“Thank you for going through the trouble.”

It’s great to see Kirishima happy. Since I don’t know how Kirishima feels about using chopsticks, I decided to provide them. Girls tend to be conscious of such things.

“Well then, let’s dig in.”

“Bon appétit.”

Hmm. It’s delicious again. Consistently tasty.

“Mmm! This is so good.”

While chewing, Kirishima praised the dish. It’s nice to receive compliments, but I’ll respond after Kirishima finishes eating.

“Phew. Kurata-kun, this is incredibly delicious!”

“Thanks. It’s actually one of my favorite dishes.”

“This is the kind of deliciousness that makes you want to have it over and over again. By the way, why do we have lemon juice?”

Oh, they noticed that. Lemon juice is a must-have item for me when it comes to Shio Butadon.

“Well, give it a try. It’s worth a shot.”

“Okay.”

Kirishima’s eyes sparkled as she started drinking the lemon juice. What’s with this innocence?

“Mmm! It’s refreshing and delicious!”

“Right? It’s easy to make and has a devilishly delicious taste.”

“Oh, definitely.”

As I watched Kirishima eagerly devouring the dish, I felt a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. Ahh, so cute.

While observing Kirishima, I continued enjoying my Shio Butadon.

c10

“So, what are we going to do in the end?”

After finishing dinner, we sat on the sofa and watched TV.

“Well, if it’s okay with you, could you let me stay over?”

Hmm. As I expected, that’s how it would turn out. It’s already 8 PM at night, and I don’t have any reason to refuse, but I need to be careful not to pry too much into Kirishima’s personal situation without knowing the details.

By the way, is it ethically acceptable for us to be alone together in a house with no parents? But then again, I’m already crossing that line by inviting her into my house.

“I don’t mind you staying here, but are you sure it’s okay?”

“Yeah. Otherwise, I’d have no choice but to sleep outside.”

Are there really no friends she can rely on in unexpected situations like this? Well, Kirishima is popular in our class, so it wouldn’t be surprising if she had friends with whom she had developed some level of camaraderie.

Looking at Kirishima, I couldn’t help but contemplate the existence of a beautiful girl. She is scrutinized by boys with ulterior motives and viewed with envy by girls.

I’ve heard that girls can be especially insidious when it comes to bullying, and it’s difficult for the victim to speak up about it. It’s not even related to inferiority stemming from appearance. Those who engage in such behavior will ultimately be exposed and criticized by their own partners. I think good-natured people wouldn’t stoop to such base acts but would strive to improve themselves.

And although this is just speculation, Kirishima has probably endured those gazes. Of course, I’m just one of the boys, and what I think may differ from the reality Kirishima experiences.

“Well, it’s fine for you to stay over. The question is, where will you sleep?”

“I’m fine with sleeping on the sofa or something.”

“No, no. I can’t have my guest sleeping on the sofa. We do have a bed in my room and my father’s bedroom. Which one do you prefer?”

“Huh? Um...”

Kirishima seems to be mumbling something. It’s too quiet, so I can’t understand what she’s saying.

“...In your room, Kurata-kun.”

“Sorry, what?”

“In your room!”

Blushing, Kirishima answered. Why is she getting so embarrassed?

In that case, I’ll sleep in my father’s bedroom. It’s a double bed, but he hasn’t been using it much. He’s been too focused on work.

Oh, I shouldn’t have anything inappropriate in my room...

“Got it.”

If Kirishima is sleeping in my bed, I need to change the sheets and everything.

Oh, I forgot to fill up the bath.

“Okay, wait a moment. I’ll go fill up the bath.”

Saying that, I left the living room.

After cleaning the bathroom and turning on the water heater, I went to my room.

The reason goes without saying. I wanted to check the room and change the bed sheets, just in case. By the way, I use the space under the bed for storage.

...It’s not like I’m storing anything indecent. Absolutely not.

After making sure there was nothing inappropriate to be seen, I proceeded to change the bed sheets. I had just changed them recently, but I couldn’t leave the same sheets for a girl to sleep on.

Now that I think about it, why did Kirishima decide to sleep in my bed? It would have been the same if she slept in my father’s bedroom. I really don’t understand girls.

After tossing the replaced sheets into the laundry basket, I returned to the living room.

“Yawn...”

For some reason, Kirishima was sleeping on the sofa, hugging a cushion. She must be tired today. And she probably has various worries too. But is it really okay for her to sleep in a stranger’s house for less than 30 minutes...?

“Hey, Kirishima.”

“Mm, mm... Szzz...”

No good, she’s fast asleep.

But looking at her like this, I think she’s cute. What kind of family environment would make a girl like her dislike her own home? How cold has Kirishima’s parents been toward their own daughter? And what kind of feelings did Kirishima have toward her parents? It seems like Kirishima’s mother has passed away, but if my assumption is correct, is her father treating her this way? If that’s the case, he must be a real scumbag.

No, no, it’s not good. I’m starting to get angry. This is Kirishima’s family matter. I should leave it alone. I thought it would be better not to wake her up and decided to do some household chores for a change of mood. I might as well turn off the lights in the living room.

“Mmm, fwaah... Huh? Did I fall asleep?”

“Oh, you’re awake.”

I finished washing the dishes and was putting away the bowls in the cupboard when it seemed like Kirishima woke up. She must have slept for about an hour.

“Um, about the bath. Who should go first?”

“Huh? The bath?”

Kirishima still seems a bit dazed. Maybe she’s not a morning person. I don’t know.

“Well... do you want to go together?”

“Huh!?”

I think I accidentally let out such a voice. What is she saying? It’s like she’s still half-asleep.

“Um, Kirishima-san, could you wake up a bit?”

Saying that, I turned on the lights in the living room. Kirishima rubbed her eyes, looking a bit dazzled.

After a while, she seemed to remember what she said earlier and suddenly blushed, avoiding eye contact.

“Um, Kurata-kun? Um...”

“No, there’s no way I’m serious. So, in the end, who wants to go first? I’m fine with either.”

“Then let me go first!”

“Alright, cool your head.”

With her face completely red, Kirishima left the living room. This is quite embarrassing. Even I would want to disappear if I were in her shoes.

...But does she even know where the bathroom is?

“So, what are we going to do in the end?”

After finishing dinner, we sat on the sofa and watched TV.

“Well, if it’s okay with you, could you let me stay over?”

Hmm. As I expected, that’s how it would turn out. It’s already 8 PM at night, and I don’t have any reason to refuse, but I need to be careful not to pry too much into Kirishima’s personal situation without knowing the details.

By the way, is it ethically acceptable for us to be alone together in a house with no parents? But then again, I’m already crossing that line by inviting her into my house.

“I don’t mind you staying here, but are you sure it’s okay?”

“Yeah. Otherwise, I’d have no choice but to sleep outside.”

Are there really no friends she can rely on in unexpected situations like this? Well, Kirishima is popular in our class, so it wouldn’t be surprising if she had friends with whom she had developed some level of camaraderie.

Looking at Kirishima, I couldn’t help but contemplate the existence of a beautiful girl. She is scrutinized by boys with ulterior motives and viewed with envy by girls.

I've heard that girls can be especially insidious when it comes to bullying, and it's difficult for the victim to speak up about it. It's not even related to inferiority stemming from appearance. Those who engage in such behavior will ultimately be exposed and criticized by their own partners. I think good-natured people wouldn't stoop to such base acts but would strive to improve themselves.

And although this is just speculation, Kirishima has probably endured those gazes. Of course, I'm just one of the boys, and what I think may differ from the reality Kirishima experiences.

"Well, it's fine for you to stay over. The question is, where will you sleep?"

"I'm fine with sleeping on the sofa or something."

"No, no. I can't have my guest sleeping on the sofa. We do have a bed in my room and my father's bedroom. Which one do you prefer?"

"Huh? Um..."

Kirishima seems to be mumbling something. It's too quiet, so I can't understand what she's saying.

"...In your room, Kurata-kun."

"Sorry, what?"

"In your room!"

Blushing, Kirishima answered. Why is she getting so embarrassed?

In that case, I'll sleep in my father's bedroom. It's a double bed, but he hasn't been using it much. He's been too focused on work.

Oh, I shouldn't have anything inappropriate in my room...

"Got it."

If Kirishima is sleeping in my bed, I need to change the sheets and everything.

Oh, I forgot to fill up the bath.

"Okay, wait a moment. I'll go fill up the bath."

Saying that, I left the living room.

After cleaning the bathroom and turning on the water heater, I went to my room.

The reason goes without saying. I wanted to check the room and change the bed sheets, just in case. By the way, I use the space under the bed for storage.

...It's not like I'm storing anything indecent. Absolutely not.

After making sure there was nothing inappropriate to be seen, I proceeded to change the bed sheets. I had just changed them recently, but I couldn't leave the same sheets for a girl to sleep on.

Now that I think about it, why did Kirishima decide to sleep in my bed? It would have been the same if she slept in my father's bedroom. I really don't understand girls.

After tossing the replaced sheets into the laundry basket, I returned to the living room.

"Yawn..."

For some reason, Kirishima was sleeping on the sofa, hugging a cushion. She must be tired today. And she probably has various worries too. But is it really okay for her to sleep in a stranger's house for less than 30 minutes...?

"Hey, Kirishima."

"Mm, mm... Szzz..."

No good, she's fast asleep.

But looking at her like this, I think she's cute. What kind of family environment would make a girl like her dislike her own home? How cold has Kirishima's parents been toward their own daughter? And what kind of feelings did Kirishima have toward her parents? It seems like Kirishima's mother has passed away, but if my assumption is correct, is her father treating her this way? If that's the case, he must be a real scumbag.

No, no, it's not good. I'm starting to get angry. This is Kirishima's family matter. I should leave it alone. I thought it would be better not to wake her up and decided to do some household chores for a change of mood. I might as well turn off the lights in the living room.

"Mmm, fwaah... Huh? Did I fall asleep?"

"Oh, you're awake."

I finished washing the dishes and was putting away the bowls in the cupboard when it seemed like

Kirishima woke up. She must have slept for about an hour.

“Um, about the bath. Who should go first?”

“Huh? The bath?”

Kirishima still seems a bit dazed. Maybe she’s not a morning person. I don’t know.

“Well... do you want to go together?”

“Huh!?”

I think I accidentally let out such a voice. What is she saying? It’s like she’s still half-asleep.

“Um, Kirishima-san, could you wake up a bit?”

Saying that, I turned on the lights in the living room. Kirishima rubbed her eyes, looking a bit dazzled.

After a while, she seemed to remember what she said earlier and suddenly blushed, avoiding eye contact.

“Um, Kurata-kun? Um...”

“No, there’s no way I’m serious. So, in the end, who wants to go first? I’m fine with either.”

“Then let me go first!”

“Alright, cool your head.”

With her face completely red, Kirishima left the living room. This is quite embarrassing. Even I would want to disappear if I were in her shoes.

...But does she even know where the bathroom is?

“So, what are we going to do in the end?”

After finishing dinner, we sat on the sofa and watched TV.

“Well, if it’s okay with you, could you let me stay over?”

Hmm. As I expected, that’s how it would turn out. It’s already 8 PM at night, and I don’t have any reason to refuse, but I need to be careful not to pry too much into Kirishima’s personal situation without knowing the details.

By the way, is it ethically acceptable for us to be alone together in a house with no parents? But then again, I’m already crossing that line by inviting her into my house.

“I don’t mind you staying here, but are you sure it’s okay?”

“Yeah. Otherwise, I’d have no choice but to sleep outside.”

Are there really no friends she can rely on in unexpected situations like this? Well, Kirishima is popular in our class, so it wouldn’t be surprising if she had friends with whom she had developed some level of camaraderie.

Looking at Kirishima, I couldn’t help but contemplate the existence of a beautiful girl. She is scrutinized by boys with ulterior motives and viewed with envy by girls.

I’ve heard that girls can be especially insidious when it comes to bullying, and it’s difficult for the victim to speak up about it. It’s not even related to inferiority stemming from appearance. Those who engage in such behavior will ultimately be exposed and criticized by their own partners. I think good-natured people wouldn’t stoop to such base acts but would strive to improve themselves.

And although this is just speculation, Kirishima has probably endured those gazes. Of course, I’m just one of the boys, and what I think may differ from the reality Kirishima experiences.

“Well, it’s fine for you to stay over. The question is, where will you sleep?”

“I’m fine with sleeping on the sofa or something.”

“No, no. I can’t have my guest sleeping on the sofa. We do have a bed in my room and my father’s bedroom. Which one do you prefer?”

“Huh? Um...”

Kirishima seems to be mumbling something. It’s too quiet, so I can’t understand what she’s saying.

“...In your room, Kurata-kun.”

“Sorry, what?”

“In your room!”

Blushing, Kirishima answered. Why is she getting so embarrassed?

In that case, I’ll sleep in my father’s bedroom. It’s a double bed, but he hasn’t been using it much. He’s been too focused on work.

Oh, I shouldn’t have anything inappropriate in my room...

“Got it.”

If Kirishima is sleeping in my bed, I need to change the sheets and everything.

Oh, I forgot to fill up the bath.

“Okay, wait a moment. I’ll go fill up the bath.”

Saying that, I left the living room.

After cleaning the bathroom and turning on the water heater, I went to my room.

The reason goes without saying. I wanted to check the room and change the bed sheets, just in case. By the way, I use the space under the bed for storage.

...It’s not like I’m storing anything indecent. Absolutely not.

After making sure there was nothing inappropriate to be seen, I proceeded to change the bed sheets. I had just changed them recently, but I couldn’t leave the same sheets for a girl to sleep on.

Now that I think about it, why did Kirishima decide to sleep in my bed? It would have been the same if she slept in my father’s bedroom. I really don’t understand girls.

After tossing the replaced sheets into the laundry basket, I returned to the living room.

“Yawn...”

For some reason, Kirishima was sleeping on the sofa, hugging a cushion. She must be tired today. And she probably has various worries too. But is it really okay for her to sleep in a stranger’s house for less than 30 minutes...?

“Hey, Kirishima.”

“Mm, mm... Szzz...”

No good, she’s fast asleep.

But looking at her like this, I think she’s cute. What kind of family environment would make a girl like her dislike her own home? How cold has Kirishima’s parents been toward their own daughter? And what kind of feelings did Kirishima have toward her parents? It seems like Kirishima’s mother has passed away, but if my assumption is correct, is her father treating her this way? If that’s the case, he must be a real scumbag.

No, no, it’s not good. I’m starting to get angry. This is Kirishima’s family matter. I should leave it alone. I thought it would be better not to wake her up and decided to do some household chores for a change of mood. I might as well turn off the lights in the living room.

“Mmm, fwaah... Huh? Did I fall asleep?”

“Oh, you’re awake.”

I finished washing the dishes and was putting away the bowls in the cupboard when it seemed like Kirishima woke up. She must have slept for about an hour.

“Um, about the bath. Who should go first?”

“Huh? The bath?”

Kirishima still seems a bit dazed. Maybe she’s not a morning person. I don’t know.

“Well... do you want to go together?”

“Huh!?”

I think I accidentally let out such a voice. What is she saying? It’s like she’s still half-asleep.

“Um, Kirishima-san, could you wake up a bit?”

Saying that, I turned on the lights in the living room. Kirishima rubbed her eyes, looking a bit dazzled.

After a while, she seemed to remember what she said earlier and suddenly blushed, avoiding eye contact.

“Um, Kurata-kun? Um...”

“No, there’s no way I’m serious. So, in the end, who wants to go first? I’m fine with either.”

“Then let me go first!”

“Alright, cool your head.”

With her face completely red, Kirishima left the living room. This is quite embarrassing. Even I would want to disappear if I were in her shoes.

...But does she even know where the bathroom is?

In the end, Kirishima returned to the living room and I explained the location of the bathroom and briefly introduced the facilities in our house.

Afterward, I sent Kirishima off to the bath.

To be honest, imagining Kirishima taking a bath is not good for my mental health. I have a feeling that my excitement wouldn't be able to be contained if I were to hear the sound of the shower. But who knows?

So, in order to restrain myself, I decided to focus on studying. It's the Golden Week holiday, and I have received a bunch of assignments from school. This is what it means to attend a prestigious school. Well, next year is the entrance exam, so I need to study hard and do my best.

"Now, for this one... the root for of this..."

Well, I'm currently tackling a math problem, but at my level, I can't solve it completely without alternating between the textbook and the problem set. I've been working hard to memorize the formulas, but I still don't have a good grasp of which formula to use in which case. Although I often receive lectures from my math teacher, it seems like I still need more practice.

Hmm, first, I need to find the value of z , and then for $z^5 - 5z^3 + 4z^2 + 6z$, I group the front part with z^2 and the back part with $2z$. Huh? Isn't this calculation annoying?

Knock, knock, knock

"Oh, hey. What's up?"

"K-Kurata-kun, I don't have anything to wear."

I could hear Kirishima's faint voice from outside the door. Oh, right, Kirishima is still wearing her school uniform. And she probably didn't have any spare clothes with her. I should have realized that she only had her school bag and didn't have a change of clothes.

"Well... What are you wearing now, Kirishima?"

"...I'm just wrapped in a bath towel, but it's, um, embarrassing. Can you lend me something to wear?"

Oh no, I need to give her something to wear. Let me check the dresser for now. With that thought, I started searching through the dresser.

Okay, I can probably lend her a T-shirt, long pants, or a tracksuit.

"Hey, which one do you want to wear, the T-shirt, long pants, or tracksuit?"

"Huh? Um, for now, the tracksuit. Um... Thank you."

"Got it."

The tracksuit I have is the one I usually bring for training camps and such. I rarely use it, so it's perfect to lend. I think the size should be fine too.

"Um, I'll open the door a little bit and hand the tracksuit through the gap. So, um..."

"O-Okay."

Uh-oh. If there's a beautiful girl in a bath towel standing on the other side of the door, even the calmest person would feel nervous. Anyone who isn't nervous is probably either gay or used to being around girls. I slowly turned the doorknob and gently pulled the door open. Then, I slipped the tracksuit through the gap.

As soon as I finished handing it over, I closed the door.

"Um, I don't have any underwear, so please forgive me for that."

"N-No, it's really okay. Thank you."

I could hear Kirishima's footsteps as she walked away. She seems to be walking rather quickly, and I'm worried that she might trip.

Wow, she's really flustered. I'm also quite shaken, considering that I'm even speaking in Kansai dialect. Perhaps my sister's underwear or something was left at home, but I don't know about that, and I don't know if it would fit.

"Kurata-kun~? I'm done with the bath."

"Alright."

It's a good timing since I just finished a big problem. I closed my notebook, put my eraser and pencil in

my pencil case.

I pulled out my usual sleepwear set and underwear from the dresser and left the room. There, I encountered Kirishima who was drying her hair with a towel.

Maybe because she just finished bathing, Kirishima looks strangely captivating. Moreover, her sleeves are a bit loose, and it's somewhat exciting. And her assets that Kirishima takes pride in are emphasized greatly. I don't know if it's because she's wearing a men's tracksuit, but it's more emphasized than her usual school uniform, and it's amazing.

"Ahuhmm... Please don't stare at me so much.... It's embarrassing."

"Ah, sorry about that. I'll go take a bath."

Kirishima blushed and averted her gaze.

It seems like I was staring at Kirishima. But it can be considered unavoidable. This kind of stimulation is strong for a high school boy.

By the way, when the sleeves of clothes worn by girls are loose, it's called "moe-sode" (literally "budding sleeves"). I remember seeing an illustration on Twitter before, and I even liked and retweeted it, but I never thought I would actually see it in real life.

By the way, as soon as I entered the bathroom, I sensed a different and nice fragrance. You might not understand what I'm saying, but even I didn't know what I was saying...

Thanks to that, I couldn't relax and soak in the bathtub, and I ended up leaving the bath much earlier than usual. I didn't even feel this way when I used the bathroom after my sister...

In the end, Kirishima returned to the living room and I explained the location of the bathroom and briefly introduced the facilities in our house.

Afterward, I sent Kirishima off to the bath.

To be honest, imagining Kirishima taking a bath is not good for my mental health. I have a feeling that my excitement wouldn't be able to be contained if I were to hear the sound of the shower. But who knows?

So, in order to restrain myself, I decided to focus on studying. It's the Golden Week holiday, and I have received a bunch of assignments from school. This is what it means to attend a prestigious school. Well, next year is the entrance exam, so I need to study hard and do my best.

"Now, for this one... the root for of this..."

Well, I'm currently tackling a math problem, but at my level, I can't solve it completely without alternating between the textbook and the problem set. I've been working hard to memorize the formulas, but I still don't have a good grasp of which formula to use in which case. Although I often receive lectures from my math teacher, it seems like I still need more practice.

Hmm, first, I need to find the value of z , and then for $z^5 - 5z^3 + 4z^2 + 6z$, I group the front part with z^2 and the back part with $2z$. Huh? Isn't this calculation annoying?

Knock, knock, knock

"Oh, hey. What's up?"

"K-Kurata-kun, I don't have anything to wear."

I could hear Kirishima's faint voice from outside the door. Oh, right, Kirishima is still wearing her school uniform. And she probably didn't have any spare clothes with her. I should have realized that she only had her school bag and didn't have a change of clothes.

"Well... What are you wearing now, Kirishima?"

"...I'm just wrapped in a bath towel, but it's, um, embarrassing. Can you lend me something to wear?"

Oh no, I need to give her something to wear. Let me check the dresser for now. With that thought, I started searching through the dresser.

Okay, I can probably lend her a T-shirt, long pants, or a tracksuit.

"Hey, which one do you want to wear, the T-shirt, long pants, or tracksuit?"

"Huh? Um, for now, the tracksuit. Um... Thank you."

"Got it."

The tracksuit I have is the one I usually bring for training camps and such. I rarely use it, so it's perfect to

lend. I think the size should be fine too.

“Um, I’ll open the door a little bit and hand the tracksuit through the gap. So, um...”

“O-Okay.”

Uh-oh. If there’s a beautiful girl in a bath towel standing on the other side of the door, even the calmest person would feel nervous. Anyone who isn’t nervous is probably either gay or used to being around girls. I slowly turned the doorknob and gently pulled the door open. Then, I slipped the tracksuit through the gap.

As soon as I finished handing it over, I closed the door.

“Um, I don’t have any underwear, so please forgive me for that.”

“N-No, it’s really okay. Thank you.”

I could hear Kirishima’s footsteps as she walked away. She seems to be walking rather quickly, and I’m worried that she might trip.

Wow, she’s really flustered. I’m also quite shaken, considering that I’m even speaking in Kansai dialect. Perhaps my sister’s underwear or something was left at home, but I don’t know about that, and I don’t know if it would fit.

“Kurata-kun~? I’m done with the bath.”

“Alright.”

It’s a good timing since I just finished a big problem. I closed my notebook, put my eraser and pencil in my pencil case.

I pulled out my usual sleepwear set and underwear from the dresser and left the room. There, I encountered Kirishima who was drying her hair with a towel.

Maybe because she just finished bathing, Kirishima looks strangely captivating. Moreover, her sleeves are a bit loose, and it’s somewhat exciting. And her assets that Kirishima takes pride in are emphasized greatly. I don’t know if it’s because she’s wearing a men’s tracksuit, but it’s more emphasized than her usual school uniform, and it’s amazing.

“Ahuhmm... Please don’t stare at me so much.... It’s embarrassing.”

“Ah, sorry about that. I’ll go take a bath.”

Kirishima blushed and averted her gaze.

It seems like I was staring at Kirishima. But it can be considered unavoidable. This kind of stimulation is strong for a high school boy.

By the way, when the sleeves of clothes worn by girls are loose, it’s called “moe-sode” (literally “budding sleeves”). I remember seeing an illustration on Twitter before, and I even liked and retweeted it, but I never thought I would actually see it in real life.

By the way, as soon as I entered the bathroom, I sensed a different and nice fragrance. You might not understand what I’m saying, but even I didn’t know what I was saying...

Thanks to that, I couldn’t relax and soak in the bathtub, and I ended up leaving the bath much earlier than usual. I didn’t even feel this way when I used the bathroom after my sister...

In the end, Kirishima returned to the living room and I explained the location of the bathroom and briefly introduced the facilities in our house.

Afterward, I sent Kirishima off to the bath.

To be honest, imagining Kirishima taking a bath is not good for my mental health. I have a feeling that my excitement wouldn’t be able to be contained if I were to hear the sound of the shower. But who knows?

So, in order to restrain myself, I decided to focus on studying. It’s the Golden Week holiday, and I have received a bunch of assignments from school. This is what it means to attend a prestigious school. Well, next year is the entrance exam, so I need to study hard and do my best.

“Now, for this one... the root for of this...”

Well, I’m currently tackling a math problem, but at my level, I can’t solve it completely without alternating between the textbook and the problem set. I’ve been working hard to memorize the formulas, but I still don’t have a good grasp of which formula to use in which case. Although I often receive lectures from my math teacher, it seems like I still need more practice.

Hmm, first, I need to find the value of z , and then for $z^5 - 5z^3 + 4z^2 + 6z$, I group the front part with z^2 and the

back part with 2z. Huh? Isn't this calculation annoying?

Knock, knock, knock

"Oh, hey. What's up?"

"K-Kurata-kun, I don't have anything to wear."

I could hear Kirishima's faint voice from outside the door. Oh, right, Kirishima is still wearing her school uniform. And she probably didn't have any spare clothes with her. I should have realized that she only had her school bag and didn't have a change of clothes.

"Well... What are you wearing now, Kirishima?"

"...I'm just wrapped in a bath towel, but it's, um, embarrassing. Can you lend me something to wear?"

Oh no, I need to give her something to wear. Let me check the dresser for now. With that thought, I started searching through the dresser.

Okay, I can probably lend her a T-shirt, long pants, or a tracksuit.

"Hey, which one do you want to wear, the T-shirt, long pants, or tracksuit?"

"Huh? Um, for now, the tracksuit. Um... Thank you."

"Got it."

The tracksuit I have is the one I usually bring for training camps and such. I rarely use it, so it's perfect to lend. I think the size should be fine too.

"Um, I'll open the door a little bit and hand the tracksuit through the gap. So, um..."

"O-Okay."

Uh-oh. If there's a beautiful girl in a bath towel standing on the other side of the door, even the calmest person would feel nervous. Anyone who isn't nervous is probably either gay or used to being around girls. I slowly turned the doorknob and gently pulled the door open. Then, I slipped the tracksuit through the gap.

As soon as I finished handing it over, I closed the door.

"Um, I don't have any underwear, so please forgive me for that."

"N-No, it's really okay. Thank you."

I could hear Kirishima's footsteps as she walked away. She seems to be walking rather quickly, and I'm worried that she might trip.

Wow, she's really flustered. I'm also quite shaken, considering that I'm even speaking in Kansai dialect. Perhaps my sister's underwear or something was left at home, but I don't know about that, and I don't know if it would fit.

"Kurata-kun~? I'm done with the bath."

"Alright."

It's a good timing since I just finished a big problem. I closed my notebook, put my eraser and pencil in my pencil case.

I pulled out my usual sleepwear set and underwear from the dresser and left the room. There, I encountered Kirishima who was drying her hair with a towel.

Maybe because she just finished bathing, Kirishima looks strangely captivating. Moreover, her sleeves are a bit loose, and it's somewhat exciting. And her assets that Kirishima takes pride in are emphasized greatly. I don't know if it's because she's wearing a men's tracksuit, but it's more emphasized than her usual school uniform, and it's amazing.

"Ahuhmm... Please don't stare at me so much.... It's embarrassing."

"Ah, sorry about that. I'll go take a bath."

Kirishima blushed and averted her gaze.

It seems like I was staring at Kirishima. But it can be considered unavoidable. This kind of stimulation is strong for a high school boy.

By the way, when the sleeves of clothes worn by girls are loose, it's called "moe-sode" (literally "budding sleeves"). I remember seeing an illustration on Twitter before, and I even liked and retweeted it, but I never thought I would actually see it in real life.

By the way, as soon as I entered the bathroom, I sensed a different and nice fragrance. You might not understand what I'm saying, but even I didn't know what I was saying...

Thanks to that, I couldn't relax and soak in the bathtub, and I ended up leaving the bath much earlier than

usual. I didn't even feel this way when I used the bathroom after my sister...

c12

When I quickly finished taking a bath and returned to the living room, Kirishima was studying near the sofa.

“Oh, you’re done with your bath? That was fast.”

“W-Well, yeah. That’s how guys are, I guess.”

I couldn’t really say that it’s actually your fault, so I’ll just play along and make something up.

Anyway, Kirishima was doing math. Moreover, it was the exact problem that I was struggling with. No matter how I tried fitting in the symmetric equation, it just didn’t work out.

“Oh, so this is how you solve it.”

“Hmm? Ah, this problem. I think it can be easily solved by reducing the degree.”

Reducing the degree... I didn’t think of that. I had mindlessly substituted values for z .

“If you want, I can teach you. But... it’s already quite late.”

I looked at the clock, and the hands were already past 10 o’clock. Indeed, it was about time for good children to go to sleep. I usually sleep at 11, so I still had some time before sleeping.

“Well, if that’s the case, you can teach me tomorrow. There are quite a few assignments for Golden Week.”

“Yeah, sure. Yawn~”

Well, if that’s the case, I’ll let her teach me tomorrow. Kirishima also seems sleepy, so I’ll call it a day.

With that in mind, I went through the usual routine of brushing my teeth, etc. I gave Kirishima a spare toothbrush (of course, brand new), but she asked, “Do you have any cream or something?”

However, I’m not well-versed in cosmetics. At most, I just wash my face and apply lotion. We resolved this issue by using some of my mom’s cosmetics that were left on the shelf in the bathroom, but I wonder if it was okay for Kirishima to use the ones my mom uses.

And mom, I’m sorry for using your cosmetics without permission. It seems like she occasionally uses them when she comes back here.

In the end, it took Kirishima about 15 minutes to finish the whole skincare routine and come back to the living room. Well, it’s not a big deal, right? Girls probably pay attention to their skin and all.

“Well, I guess it’s time to sleep. As I mentioned, I’ll sleep in the downstairs bedroom.”

“Got it. Goodnight, Kurata-kun.”

Kirishima went upstairs, climbing the stairs. After seeing her off, I also went to the bedroom on the first floor.

Huhhh...

As I rolled onto the bed, I reflected on today’s events.

Come to think of it, on the way back from shopping, I bumped into a beautiful girl from my class, and somehow ended up inviting her over to my house, treating her to a meal, and then the conversation turned to her staying here.

If my classmates were to find out about this, I would undoubtedly become the center of attention. But it wouldn’t be with positive gazes, rather with negative and critical ones.

I have a trauma from past experiences where I received a lot of attention, and it hasn’t improved even now. That’s why I can’t let actions that gather so much attention be exposed.

With that determination in my heart, I shifted positions to get comfortable, but then I remembered that my smartphone was in my pocket.

Ah, I forgot the charger. The charger that should be here in the bedroom was taken by my father on his business trip. The battery is around 15%.

But it should be fine to charge it in the morning. I usually use wireless charging, but I also have a wired charger just in case, and I should be able to fast charge it here.

As I unlocked my smartphone, I saw a LINE notification. I wondered who it was from, and when I checked the notification:

“Hoshino-

You have a new message.”

The moment I saw that notification, my head started to ache. The reason goes without saying—it's because Hoshino is coming to visit this house. Normally, it wouldn't bother me, but this time, there are circumstances.

For now, I thought I should check the message, so I tapped on the notification.

Hoshino: Hey, do you have any plans during Golden Week? I don't want to cause any trouble with your parents when I come.

Hoshino: Oh, and Tanaka and Kazemi also want to come, so let me know.

...Hoshino, why are you casually adding more people? Well, I do know them, and we've hung out at my house before.

Putting that aside. With Kirishima here at my house, I can't hang out with Hoshino and the others. I should politely decline this invitation.

Me: Sorry, something came up. Let's hang out another time.

For now, I'll decline the invitation. The current situation is not suitable for inviting people over.

With the smartphone battery running low, I checked the message sent confirmation, then turned off the screen and covered myself with the blanket.

When I quickly finished taking a bath and returned to the living room, Kirishima was studying near the sofa.

"Oh, you're done with your bath? That was fast."

"W-Well, yeah. That's how guys are, I guess."

I couldn't really say that it's actually your fault, so I'll just play along and make something up.

Anyway, Kirishima was doing math. Moreover, it was the exact problem that I was struggling with. No matter how I tried fitting in the symmetric equation, it just didn't work out.

"Oh, so this is how you solve it."

"Hmm? Ah, this problem. I think it can be easily solved by reducing the degree."

Reducing the degree... I didn't think of that. I had mindlessly substituted values for z .

"If you want, I can teach you. But... it's already quite late."

I looked at the clock, and the hands were already past 10 o'clock. Indeed, it was about time for good children to go to sleep. I usually sleep at 11, so I still had some time before sleeping.

"Well, if that's the case, you can teach me tomorrow. There are quite a few assignments for Golden Week."

"Yeah, sure. Yawn~"

Well, if that's the case, I'll let her teach me tomorrow. Kirishima also seems sleepy, so I'll call it a day.

With that in mind, I went through the usual routine of brushing my teeth, etc. I gave Kirishima a spare toothbrush (of course, brand new), but she asked, "Do you have any cream or something?"

However, I'm not well-versed in cosmetics. At most, I just wash my face and apply lotion. We resolved this issue by using some of my mom's cosmetics that were left on the shelf in the bathroom, but I wonder if it was okay for Kirishima to use the ones my mom uses.

And mom, I'm sorry for using your cosmetics without permission. It seems like she occasionally uses them when she comes back here.

In the end, it took Kirishima about 15 minutes to finish the whole skincare routine and come back to the living room. Well, it's not a big deal, right? Girls probably pay attention to their skin and all.

"Well, I guess it's time to sleep. As I mentioned, I'll sleep in the downstairs bedroom."

"Got it. Goodnight, Kurata-kun."

Kirishima went upstairs, climbing the stairs. After seeing her off, I also went to the bedroom on the first floor.

Huhhh...

As I rolled onto the bed, I reflected on today's events.

Come to think of it, on the way back from shopping, I bumped into a beautiful girl from my class, and somehow ended up inviting her over to my house, treating her to a meal, and then the conversation turned to her staying here.

If my classmates were to find out about this, I would undoubtedly become the center of attention. But it wouldn't be with positive gazes, rather with negative and critical ones.

I have a trauma from past experiences where I received a lot of attention, and it hasn't improved even now. That's why I can't let actions that gather so much attention be exposed.

With that determination in my heart, I shifted positions to get comfortable, but then I remembered that my smartphone was in my pocket.

Ah, I forgot the charger. The charger that should be here in the bedroom was taken by my father on his business trip. The battery is around 15%.

But it should be fine to charge it in the morning. I usually use wireless charging, but I also have a wired charger just in case, and I should be able to fast charge it here.

As I unlocked my smartphone, I saw a LINE notification. I wondered who it was from, and when I checked the notification:

"Hoshino-

You have a new message."

The moment I saw that notification, my head started to ache. The reason goes without saying—it's because Hoshino is coming to visit this house. Normally, it wouldn't bother me, but this time, there are circumstances.

For now, I thought I should check the message, so I tapped on the notification.

Hoshino: Hey, do you have any plans during Golden Week? I don't want to cause any trouble with your parents when I come.

Hoshino: Oh, and Tanaka and Kazemi also want to come, so let me know.

...Hoshino, why are you casually adding more people? Well, I do know them, and we've hung out at my house before.

Putting that aside. With Kirishima here at my house, I can't hang out with Hoshino and the others. I should politely decline this invitation.

Me: Sorry, something came up. Let's hang out another time.

For now, I'll decline the invitation. The current situation is not suitable for inviting people over.

With the smartphone battery running low, I checked the message sent confirmation, then turned off the screen and covered myself with the blanket.

When I quickly finished taking a bath and returned to the living room, Kirishima was studying near the sofa.

"Oh, you're done with your bath? That was fast."

"W-Well, yeah. That's how guys are, I guess."

I couldn't really say that it's actually your fault, so I'll just play along and make something up.

Anyway, Kirishima was doing math. Moreover, it was the exact problem that I was struggling with. No matter how I tried fitting in the symmetric equation, it just didn't work out.

"Oh, so this is how you solve it."

"Hmm? Ah, this problem. I think it can be easily solved by reducing the degree."

Reducing the degree... I didn't think of that. I had mindlessly substituted values for z .

"If you want, I can teach you. But... it's already quite late."

I looked at the clock, and the hands were already past 10 o'clock. Indeed, it was about time for good children to go to sleep. I usually sleep at 11, so I still had some time before sleeping.

"Well, if that's the case, you can teach me tomorrow. There are quite a few assignments for Golden Week."

"Yeah, sure. Yawn~"

Well, if that's the case, I'll let her teach me tomorrow. Kirishima also seems sleepy, so I'll call it a day.

With that in mind, I went through the usual routine of brushing my teeth, etc. I gave Kirishima a spare toothbrush (of course, brand new), but she asked, "Do you have any cream or something?"

However, I'm not well-versed in cosmetics. At most, I just wash my face and apply lotion. We resolved this issue by using some of my mom's cosmetics that were left on the shelf in the bathroom, but I wonder if it was okay for Kirishima to use the ones my mom uses.

And mom, I'm sorry for using your cosmetics without permission. It seems like she occasionally uses

them when she comes back here.

In the end, it took Kirishima about 15 minutes to finish the whole skincare routine and come back to the living room. Well, it's not a big deal, right? Girls probably pay attention to their skin and all.

"Well, I guess it's time to sleep. As I mentioned, I'll sleep in the downstairs bedroom."

"Got it. Goodnight, Kurata-kun."

Kirishima went upstairs, climbing the stairs. After seeing her off, I also went to the bedroom on the first floor.

Huhhh...

As I rolled onto the bed, I reflected on today's events.

Come to think of it, on the way back from shopping, I bumped into a beautiful girl from my class, and somehow ended up inviting her over to my house, treating her to a meal, and then the conversation turned to her staying here.

If my classmates were to find out about this, I would undoubtedly become the center of attention. But it wouldn't be with positive gazes, rather with negative and critical ones.

I have a trauma from past experiences where I received a lot of attention, and it hasn't improved even now. That's why I can't let actions that gather so much attention be exposed.

With that determination in my heart, I shifted positions to get comfortable, but then I remembered that my smartphone was in my pocket.

Ah, I forgot the charger. The charger that should be here in the bedroom was taken by my father on his business trip. The battery is around 15%.

Ah, I forgot the charger.

The charger that should be here in the bedroom was taken by my father on his business trip. The battery is around 15%.

But it should be fine to charge it in the morning. I usually use wireless charging, but I also have a wired charger just in case, and I should be able to fast charge it here.

As I unlocked my smartphone, I saw a LINE notification. I wondered who it was from, and when I checked the notification:

"Hoshino-

You have a new message."

The moment I saw that notification, my head started to ache. The reason goes without saying—it's because Hoshino is coming to visit this house. Normally, it wouldn't bother me, but this time, there are circumstances.

For now, I thought I should check the message, so I tapped on the notification.

Hoshino: Hey, do you have any plans during Golden Week? I don't want to cause any trouble with your parents when I come.

Hoshino: Oh, and Tanaka and Kazemi also want to come, so let me know.

...Hoshino, why are you casually adding more people? Well, I do know them, and we've hung out at my house before.

...Hoshino, why are you casually adding more people?

Well, I do know them, and we've hung out at my house before.

Putting that aside. With Kirishima here at my house, I can't hang out with Hoshino and the others. I should politely decline this invitation.

Me: Sorry, something came up. Let's hang out another time.

For now, I'll decline the invitation. The current situation is not suitable for inviting people over.

With the smartphone battery running low, I checked the message sent confirmation, then turned off the screen and covered myself with the blanket.

c13

—Beep Beep Beep Beep—

Morning, huh?

The alarm on my smartphone goes off. I groggily stop the alarm.

“...Ugh.”

I sit up and check my phone. So sleepy. I’m really, really sleepy.

Let’s see. The current time is 7:00.

Hmm? Today is Golden Week, right? I didn’t need to wake up at this hour. The alarm was still set for when I have school.

Alright. I’ll sleep until 8:00... It’s fine to take a nap once in a while... Who knows.

With that conclusion, I decided to cover myself with the blanket again. The blanket is truly great, after all.

“...Kurata-kun.”

Huh? I feel like someone is calling me. Well, let’s just go back to sleep. I’m tired, after all.

“Kur...a...ta...kun! Wake up!”

“Huh?”

Startled by the loud voice, I instinctively jumped out of bed.

“Oh. Ki-Kirishima. Good morni—“

“Yes. Good morning, Kurata-kun. What time do you think it is?”

“Huh? It’s around 8:00, I guess.”

I start searching with my right hand for my smartphone, but it’s not there. It’s nowhere to be found.

“Hm? Your smartphone? It was rolling around under the bed. Here you go.”

Apparently, it had somehow rolled and fallen under the bed. I don’t think I toss and turn that much in my sleep, though.

“Oh?”

I press the power button of my smartphone, but there’s no response whatsoever.

I try holding down the button, and the screen displays an empty battery icon. It seems that the battery has run out.

“Um, Kirishima-san, what time is it now?”

“It’s 9:30. Even though school is off, it’s not good to sleep this late, you know?”

“Oh, right. Sorry about that.”

For some reason, I’m being lectured by a beautiful girl early in the morning. Well, it’s my fault for oversleeping. I wish she had woken me up with a sweet voice, though.

“Well, I’ll be studying in the living room. If you go back to sleep...you know what will happen, right?”

“Yes, I understand. Of course.”

“Alright then.”

The door closes with a click. I think only someone really determined would go back to sleep or rather, take a third nap. Maybe people with unique fetishes might be like that, but I’m just normal. I don’t want to get scolded anymore, so I better wake up quickly.

After changing from my sleepwear to regular clothes, I went to my room for now and plugged in my smartphone with the charging cable. After waiting for about a minute, I turned it on.

I have a friend named Shiina, who is one of my few friends. He always goes on a passionate rant like,

“You should keep your smartphone powered on. Thinking of charging with the power off is naive, you know? Whether the screen is on or off, the power consumption doesn’t change much, and you might miss important notifications. So keep it on!”

He has a typical fast-talking style that otakus have.

Once I confirmed that the power was on, I picked up my study materials from the desk and went downstairs. Based on past experience, I think I can charge it up to about 80 percent in probably two hours. Rapid charging is the best.

“A very good morning.”

“...Morning.”

Kirishima had opened her notebook on the table and was studying silently. I wanted to ask her to help me with the parts I didn't understand from last night, but I didn't want to disturb her, so I decided to leave it for later.

For now, let's have breakfast. Usually, I just add some jam to my slice of bread, but it wouldn't be good to serve something so simple to Kirishima.

"Kirishima, I'm going to make breakfast. Is there anything you want to eat?"

"Huh? I'm fine with whatever you make."

"Okay. By the way, I know it's late to ask, but do you have any allergies?"

"I'm fine."

Now, what should I make?

I'm trying to recall what's in the refrigerator... and frozen corn comes to mind. I bought corn, but I don't use it much.

So, let's have corn mayo toast for breakfast today. It's quick to make, and it's a foolproof recipe.

I took out two slices of bread and generously spread mayonnaise on them. After I covered them in mayo, I added the corn.

And then, I added another layer of mayo. I'm not particularly a mayo lover, but I think it's a no-no to be stingy with this kind of thing. Also, I sprinkled plenty of black pepper. Using pre-ground pepper is being lazy. I'm the type who uses freshly ground pepper.

All that's left is to put them in the toaster and wait for about 3-4 minutes.

—Ding—

"Kirishima, breakfast is ready!"

"Thank you!"

Kirishima came to the kitchen. It seems she had finished studying.

I took out a square plate from the cupboard and placed the toast on it.

"Ouch!"

"Are you okay?"

I had forgotten that I hadn't used the toaster for a while, and it was seriously hot, enough to cause a burn.

"Phew. Here you go."

"Is this corn mayo?"

"Yes. Haven't you tried it before?"

"No, I haven't. I usually just have croissants or something for breakfast."

That's right, everyone is like that. Everyone's breakfast is usually casual. It doesn't seem like the kind of household where she has extravagant meals in the morning.

"Let's eat."

"We dig in."

It's a recipe I've made many times before, but it's consistently delicious.

"How is it?"

"It's delicious!"

"I thought so."

Kirishima had a smile on her face. She ate it with a really satisfied expression, and as the one who made it, it made me a little happy.

However, since it's just one slice of toast, she finished it in an instant. Maybe I should use two slices of bread from tomorrow...

—Beep Beep Beep Beep—

Morning, huh?

The alarm on my smartphone goes off. I groggily stop the alarm.

"...Ugh."

I sit up and check my phone. So sleepy. I'm really, really sleepy.

Let's see. The current time is 7:00.

Hmm? Today is Golden Week, right? I didn't need to wake up at this hour. The alarm was still set for

when I have school.

Alright. I'll sleep until 8:00... It's fine to take a nap once in a while... Who knows.

With that conclusion, I decided to cover myself with the blanket again. The blanket is truly great, after all.

"...Kurata-kun."

Huh? I feel like someone is calling me. Well, let's just go back to sleep. I'm tired, after all.

"Kur...a...ta...kun! Wake up!"

"Huh?"

Startled by the loud voice, I instinctively jumped out of bed.

"Oh. Ki-Kirishima. Good morn—"

"Yes. Good morning, Kurata-kun. What time do you think it is?"

"Huh? It's around 8:00, I guess."

I start searching with my right hand for my smartphone, but it's not there. It's nowhere to be found.

"Hm? Your smartphone? It was rolling around under the bed. Here you go."

Apparently, it had somehow rolled and fallen under the bed. I don't think I toss and turn that much in my sleep, though.

"Oh?"

I press the power button of my smartphone, but there's no response whatsoever.

I try holding down the button, and the screen displays an empty battery icon. It seems that the battery has run out.

"Um, Kirishima-san, what time is it now?"

"It's 9:30. Even though school is off, it's not good to sleep this late, you know?"

"Oh, right. Sorry about that."

For some reason, I'm being lectured by a beautiful girl early in the morning. Well, it's my fault for oversleeping. I wish she had woken me up with a sweet voice, though.

"Well, I'll be studying in the living room. If you go back to sleep...you know what will happen, right?"

"Yes, I understand. Of course."

"Alright then."

The door closes with a click. I think only someone really determined would go back to sleep or rather, take a third nap. Maybe people with unique fetishes might be like that, but I'm just normal. I don't want to get scolded anymore, so I better wake up quickly.

After changing from my sleepwear to regular clothes, I went to my room for now and plugged in my smartphone with the charging cable. After waiting for about a minute, I turned it on.

I have a friend named Shiina, who is one of my few friends. He always goes on a passionate rant like,

"You should keep your smartphone powered on. Thinking of charging with the power off is naive, you know? Whether the screen is on or off, the power consumption doesn't change much, and you might miss important notifications. So keep it on!"

He has a typical fast-talking style that otakus have.

Once I confirmed that the power was on, I picked up my study materials from the desk and went downstairs. Based on past experience, I think I can charge it up to about 80 percent in probably two hours. Rapid charging is the best.

"A very good morning."

"...Morning."

Kirishima had opened her notebook on the table and was studying silently. I wanted to ask her to help me with the parts I didn't understand from last night, but I didn't want to disturb her, so I decided to leave it for later.

For now, let's have breakfast. Usually, I just add some jam to my slice of bread, but it wouldn't be good to serve something so simple to Kirishima.

"Kirishima, I'm going to make breakfast. Is there anything you want to eat?"

"Huh? I'm fine with whatever you make."

"Okay. By the way, I know it's late to ask, but do you have any allergies?"

"I'm fine."

Now, what should I make?

I'm trying to recall what's in the refrigerator... and frozen corn comes to mind. I bought corn, but I don't use it much.

So, let's have corn mayo toast for breakfast today. It's quick to make, and it's a foolproof recipe.

I took out two slices of bread and generously spread mayonnaise on them. After I covered them in mayo, I added the corn.

And then, I added another layer of mayo. I'm not particularly a mayo lover, but I think it's a no-no to be stingy with this kind of thing. Also, I sprinkled plenty of black pepper. Using pre-ground pepper is being lazy. I'm the type who uses freshly ground pepper.

All that's left is to put them in the toaster and wait for about 3-4 minutes.

—Ding—

"Kirishima, breakfast is ready!"

"Thank you!"

Kirishima came to the kitchen. It seems she had finished studying.

I took out a square plate from the cupboard and placed the toast on it.

"Ouch!"

"Are you okay?"

I had forgotten that I hadn't used the toaster for a while, and it was seriously hot, enough to cause a burn.

"Phew. Here you go."

"Is this corn mayo?"

"Yes. Haven't you tried it before?"

"No, I haven't. I usually just have croissants or something for breakfast."

That's right, everyone is like that. Everyone's breakfast is usually casual. It doesn't seem like the kind of household where she has extravagant meals in the morning.

"Let's eat."

"We dig in."

It's a recipe I've made many times before, but it's consistently delicious.

"How is it?"

"It's delicious!"

"I thought so."

Kirishima had a smile on her face. She ate it with a really satisfied expression, and as the one who made it, it made me a little happy.

However, since it's just one slice of toast, she finished it in an instant. Maybe I should use two slices of bread from tomorrow...

—Beep Beep Beep Beep—

Morning, huh?

The alarm on my smartphone goes off. I groggily stop the alarm.

"...Ugh."

I sit up and check my phone. So sleepy. I'm really, really sleepy.

Let's see. The current time is 7:00.

Hmm? Today is Golden Week, right? I didn't need to wake up at this hour. The alarm was still set for when I have school.

Alright. I'll sleep until 8:00... It's fine to take a nap once in a while... Who knows.

With that conclusion, I decided to cover myself with the blanket again. The blanket is truly great, after all.

"...Kurata-kun."

Huh? I feel like someone is calling me. Well, let's just go back to sleep. I'm tired, after all.

"Kur...a...ta...kun! Wake up!"

"Huh?"

Startled by the loud voice, I instinctively jumped out of bed.

"Oh. Ki-Kirishima. Good morn—"

"Yes. Good morning, Kurata-kun. What time do you think it is?"

"Huh? It's around 8:00, I guess."

I start searching with my right hand for my smartphone, but it's not there. It's nowhere to be found.

“Hm? Your smartphone? It was rolling around under the bed. Here you go.”

Apparently, it had somehow rolled and fallen under the bed. I don’t think I toss and turn that much in my sleep, though.

“Oh?”

I press the power button of my smartphone, but there’s no response whatsoever.

I try holding down the button, and the screen displays an empty battery icon. It seems that the battery has run out.

“Um, Kirishima-san, what time is it now?”

“It’s 9:30. Even though school is off, it’s not good to sleep this late, you know?”

“Oh, right. Sorry about that.”

For some reason, I’m being lectured by a beautiful girl early in the morning. Well, it’s my fault for oversleeping. I wish she had woken me up with a sweet voice, though.

“Well, I’ll be studying in the living room. If you go back to sleep...you know what will happen, right?”

“Yes, I understand. Of course.”

“Alright then.”

The door closes with a click. I think only someone really determined would go back to sleep or rather, take a third nap. Maybe people with unique fetishes might be like that, but I’m just normal. I don’t want to get scolded anymore, so I better wake up quickly.

After changing from my sleepwear to regular clothes, I went to my room for now and plugged in my smartphone with the charging cable. After waiting for about a minute, I turned it on.

I have a friend named Shiina, who is one of my few friends. He always goes on a passionate rant like,

“You should keep your smartphone powered on. Thinking of charging with the power off is naive, you know? Whether the screen is on or off, the power consumption doesn’t change much, and you might miss important notifications. So keep it on!”

He has a typical fast-talking style that otakus have.

Once I confirmed that the power was on, I picked up my study materials from the desk and went downstairs. Based on past experience, I think I can charge it up to about 80 percent in probably two hours. Rapid charging is the best.

“A very good morning.”

“...Morning.”

Kirishima had opened her notebook on the table and was studying silently. I wanted to ask her to help me with the parts I didn’t understand from last night, but I didn’t want to disturb her, so I decided to leave it for later.

For now, let’s have breakfast. Usually, I just add some jam to my slice of bread, but it wouldn’t be good to serve something so simple to Kirishima.

“Kirishima, I’m going to make breakfast. Is there anything you want to eat?”

“Huh? I’m fine with whatever you make.”

“Okay. By the way, I know it’s late to ask, but do you have any allergies?”

“I’m fine.”

Now, what should I make?

I’m trying to recall what’s in the refrigerator... and frozen corn comes to mind. I bought corn, but I don’t use it much.

So, let’s have corn mayo toast for breakfast today. It’s quick to make, and it’s a foolproof recipe.

So, let’s have corn mayo toast for breakfast today

. It’s quick to make, and it’s a foolproof recipe.

I took out two slices of bread and generously spread mayonnaise on them. After I covered them in mayo, I added the corn.

And then, I added another layer of mayo. I’m not particularly a mayo lover, but I think it’s a no-no to be stingy with this kind of thing. Also, I sprinkled plenty of black pepper. Using pre-ground pepper is being lazy. I’m the type who uses freshly ground pepper.

All that’s left is to put them in the toaster and wait for about 3-4 minutes.

—Ding—

“Kirishima, breakfast is ready!”

“Thank you!”

Kirishima came to the kitchen. It seems she had finished studying.

I took out a square plate from the cupboard and placed the toast on it.

“Ouch!”

“Are you okay?”

I had forgotten that I hadn’t used the toaster for a while, and it was seriously hot, enough to cause a burn.

“Phew. Here you go.”

“Is this corn mayo?”

“Yes. Haven’t you tried it before?”

“No, I haven’t. I usually just have croissants or something for breakfast.”

That’s right, everyone is like that. Everyone’s breakfast is usually casual. It doesn’t seem like the kind of household where she have extravagant meals in the morning.

“Let’s eat.”

“We dig in.”

It’s a recipe I’ve made many times before, but it’s consistently delicious.

“How is it?”

“It’s delicious!”

“I thought so.”

Kirishima had a smile on her face. She ate it with a really satisfied expression, and as the one who made it, it made me a little happy.

However, since it’s just one slice of toast, she finished it in an instant. Maybe I should use two slices of bread from tomorrow...

c14

After finishing the toast, I immediately decided to ask Kirishima to help me study. Since I couldn't find the answers on my own, I asked her to start from the very beginning.

"Well, let's start by figuring out x and y ."

First, I rationalize the given fractions to find the integer part and the decimal part. These are the values for x and y , respectively.

Got it. $x = 3$ and $y = 2 - 1$.

"Good, now let's find the value of z . It's $z = x - 1/y$. Just substitute the values."

Sigh. I have to rationalize again. Having a square root in the denominator makes me slightly dizzy.

"Now that we have the value of z , do you know what to do next?"

"Huh? Don't we just substitute z into (1) and (2)?"

"Well... this problem involves reducing the degree. Let's try rearranging it by moving 2 to the other side."

Following her instructions, I rearrange the equation. It becomes $z - 2 = -2$. When I square both sides, it becomes $z^2 - 4z + 4 = 2$.

"So, when we move the right side to the left side, we get $z^2 = 4z - 2$. Now, substitute these values one by one."

"Do we really have to do it that way? Can't we simply substitute $z^2 = (2 - 1)^2$?"

"If you do that, we'll still end up with a square root when substituting z^2 , right? The essence of this problem is to keep reducing the degree to simplify the calculations. For example, (2) with $z^2 - 5z^3 + 4z^2 + 6z$, if you try solving it conventionally, it's a nightmare. I think we covered this last year, by the way."

Even if she says that, I'm really bad at math. I'd rather deal with English or contemporary literature.

Anyway, let's do the calculations...

Kirishima's guidance continued until around noon. Thanks to her, I was able to solve many problems that I couldn't figure out before. I'm grateful.

Since Kirishima had something to do in the afternoon, I decided to have lunch on my own. I don't know what she's busy with, and I don't particularly care.

So, for lunch, I ate something random from the refrigerator. Since breakfast was late, I didn't need a heavy meal.

"I'm back!"

As the sun was starting to set and I was starting to prepare dinner, Kirishima came home.

"Just wait a little longer for dinner."

"Okay!"

She was carrying a large paper bag. Did she go shopping somewhere? Well, it doesn't matter.

Now, for dinner tonight, it's ginger pork. Simple is best. I already coated the meat with potato starch and put it in the refrigerator, so all that's left is to cook it. I also prepared the sauce.

"I'm back, Kurata-kun."

"Yeah, welcome back. Is it okay if we have dinner soon?"

"Yeah! Can I help with anything?"

"Sure, can you dish out the rice?"

Kirishima, who had washed her hands, came to help. So, I started cooking the meat that had been in the refrigerator. First, I put salad oil in the frying pan and heated it on high heat.

"Today is ginger pork, right?"

"That's right. Huh? Don't you like it?"

"No, no, it's not like that. I love everything you make, Kurata-kun. It's always delicious."

"T-Thank you."

Why is that? The word "like" makes my heart race. Is it because Kirishima is cute, or do I have some personal feelings about it?

Well, the situation itself is abnormal. Kirishima being at my house and standing together in the kitchen. Especially since we're not officially dating and there's this delicate distance between us. Honestly, just thinking about the possibility of it being exposed in class makes my stomach ache.

"I'd love to learn your cooking, Kurata-kun... Are you okay...? The frying pan is really hot."

"Oh, yeah, I'm fine. Let's start cooking soon."

Close call. My mind was completely wandering. It's not good to lose focus while cooking.

I place the pork slices one by one into the frying pan. After adding the pork, I try not to move it too much. I want to give the pork a nice sear.

Once everything is in the pan, I wait for a bit. I occasionally peek under the meat to check the cooking progress. When it looks good, I flip them over.

My preferred ginger pork has well-seared meat with the onions absorbing the meat juices. Crispy onions could be nice too, but I personally prefer them soft and tender.

Once both sides have a nice color, I add the sliced onions that were prepared beforehand.

Then, I quickly stir-fry and add the sauce, ensuring the meat and sauce are well coated.

"It looks really delicious. The aroma is amazing too."

"Could you bring a plate? It's almost done."

"Sure!"

When the ginger pork has a nice glaze, I plate it. Tonight's dinner is complete with this. Kirishima has already served the rice, so I just need to bring the plate with the ginger pork. I'm grateful.

After finishing the toast, I immediately decided to ask Kirishima to help me study. Since I couldn't find the answers on my own, I asked her to start from the very beginning.

"Well, let's start by figuring out x and y ."

First, I rationalize the given fractions to find the integer part and the decimal part. These are the values for x and y , respectively.

Got it. $x = 3$ and $y = 2 - 1$.

"Good, now let's find the value of z . It's $z = x - 1/y$. Just substitute the values."

Sigh. I have to rationalize again. Having a square root in the denominator makes me slightly dizzy.

"Now that we have the value of z , do you know what to do next?"

"Huh? Don't we just substitute z into (1) and (2)?"

"Well... this problem involves reducing the degree. Let's try rearranging it by moving 2 to the other side."

Following her instructions, I rearrange the equation. It becomes $z - 2 = -2$. When I square both sides, it becomes $z^2 - 4z + 4 = 2$.

"So, when we move the right side to the left side, we get $z^2 = 4z - 2$. Now, substitute these values one by one."

"Do we really have to do it that way? Can't we simply substitute $z^2 = (2 - 1)^2$?"

"If you do that, we'll still end up with a square root when substituting z^2 , right? The essence of this problem is to keep reducing the degree to simplify the calculations. For example, (2) with $z^2 - 5z^3 + 4z^2 + 6z$, if you try solving it conventionally, it's a nightmare. I think we covered this last year, by the way."

Even if she says that, I'm really bad at math. I'd rather deal with English or contemporary literature.

Anyway, let's do the calculations...

Kirishima's guidance continued until around noon. Thanks to her, I was able to solve many problems that I couldn't figure out before. I'm grateful.

Since Kirishima had something to do in the afternoon, I decided to have lunch on my own. I don't know what she's busy with, and I don't particularly care.

So, for lunch, I ate something random from the refrigerator. Since breakfast was late, I didn't need a heavy meal.

"I'm back!"

As the sun was starting to set and I was starting to prepare dinner, Kirishima came home.

"Just wait a little longer for dinner."

"Okay!"

She was carrying a large paper bag. Did she go shopping somewhere? Well, it doesn't matter.

Now, for dinner tonight, it's ginger pork. Simple is best. I already coated the meat with potato starch and put it in the refrigerator, so all that's left is to cook it. I also prepared the sauce.

"I'm back, Kurata-kun."

"Yeah, welcome back. Is it okay if we have dinner soon?"

"Yeah! Can I help with anything?"

"Sure, can you dish out the rice?"

Kirishima, who had washed her hands, came to help. So, I started cooking the meat that had been in the refrigerator. First, I put salad oil in the frying pan and heated it on high heat.

"Today is ginger pork, right?"

"That's right. Huh? Don't you like it?"

"No, no, it's not like that. I love everything you make, Kurata-kun. It's always delicious."

"T-Thank you."

Why is that? The word "like" makes my heart race. Is it because Kirishima is cute, or do I have some personal feelings about it?

Well, the situation itself is abnormal. Kirishima being at my house and standing together in the kitchen. Especially since we're not officially dating and there's this delicate distance between us. Honestly, just thinking about the possibility of it being exposed in class makes my stomach ache.

"I'd love to learn your cooking, Kurata-kun... Are you okay...? The frying pan is really hot."

"Oh, yeah, I'm fine. Let's start cooking soon."

Close call. My mind was completely wandering. It's not good to lose focus while cooking.

I place the pork slices one by one into the frying pan. After adding the pork, I try not to move it too much. I want to give the pork a nice sear.

Once everything is in the pan, I wait for a bit. I occasionally peek under the meat to check the cooking progress. When it looks good, I flip them over.

My preferred ginger pork has well-seared meat with the onions absorbing the meat juices. Crispy onions could be nice too, but I personally prefer them soft and tender.

Once both sides have a nice color, I add the sliced onions that were prepared beforehand.

Then, I quickly stir-fry and add the sauce, ensuring the meat and sauce are well coated.

"It looks really delicious. The aroma is amazing too."

"Could you bring a plate? It's almost done."

"Sure!"

When the ginger pork has a nice glaze, I plate it. Tonight's dinner is complete with this. Kirishima has already served the rice, so I just need to bring the plate with the ginger pork. I'm grateful.

After finishing the toast, I immediately decided to ask Kirishima to help me study. Since I couldn't find the answers on my own, I asked her to start from the very beginning.

"Well, let's start by figuring out x and y ."

First, I rationalize the given fractions to find the integer part and the decimal part. These are the values for x and y , respectively.

Got it. $x = 3$ and $y = 2 - 1$.

"Good, now let's find the value of z . It's $z = x - 1/y$. Just substitute the values."

Sigh. I have to rationalize again. Having a square root in the denominator makes me slightly dizzy.

"Now that we have the value of z , do you know what to do next?"

"Huh? Don't we just substitute z into (1) and (2)?"

"Well... this problem involves reducing the degree. Let's try rearranging it by moving 2 to the other side."

Following her instructions, I rearrange the equation. It becomes $z - 2 = -2$. When I square both sides, it becomes $z^2 - 4z + 4 = 2$.

"So, when we move the right side to the left side, we get $z^2 = 4z - 2$. Now, substitute these values one by one."

"Do we really have to do it that way? Can't we simply substitute $z^2 = (2 - 2)^2$?"

"If you do that, we'll still end up with a square root when substituting z^2 , right? The essence of this problem is to keep reducing the degree to simplify the calculations. For example, (2) with $z^3 - 5z^2 + 4z + 6z$, if you try solving it conventionally, it's a nightmare. I think we covered this last year, by the way."

Even if she says that, I'm really bad at math. I'd rather deal with English or contemporary literature.

Anyway, let's do the calculations...

Kirishima's guidance continued until around noon. Thanks to her, I was able to solve many problems that I couldn't figure out before. I'm grateful.

Since Kirishima had something to do in the afternoon, I decided to have lunch on my own. I don't know what she's busy with, and I don't particularly care.

So, for lunch, I ate something random from the refrigerator. Since breakfast was late, I didn't need a heavy meal.

"I'm back!"

As the sun was starting to set and I was starting to prepare dinner, Kirishima came home.

"Just wait a little longer for dinner."

"Okay!"

She was carrying a large paper bag. Did she go shopping somewhere? Well, it doesn't matter.

Now, for dinner tonight, it's ginger pork. Simple is best. I already coated the meat with potato starch and put it in the refrigerator, so all that's left is to cook it. I also prepared the sauce.

"I'm back, Kurata-kun."

"Yeah, welcome back. Is it okay if we have dinner soon?"

"Yeah! Can I help with anything?"

"Sure, can you dish out the rice?"

Kirishima, who had washed her hands, came to help. So, I started cooking the meat that had been in the refrigerator. First, I put salad oil in the frying pan and heated it on high heat.

"Today is ginger pork, right?"

"That's right. Huh? Don't you like it?"

"No, no, it's not like that. I love everything you make, Kurata-kun. It's always delicious."

"T-Thank you."

Why is that? The word "like" makes my heart race. Is it because Kirishima is cute, or do I have some personal feelings about it?

Well, the situation itself is abnormal. Kirishima being at my house and standing together in the kitchen. Especially since we're not officially dating and there's this delicate distance between us. Honestly, just thinking about the possibility of it being exposed in class makes my stomach ache.

"I'd love to learn your cooking, Kurata-kun... Are you okay...? The frying pan is really hot."

"Oh, yeah, I'm fine. Let's start cooking soon."

Close call. My mind was completely wandering. It's not good to lose focus while cooking.

I place the pork slices one by one into the frying pan. After adding the pork, I try not to move it too much. I want to give the pork a nice sear.

Once everything is in the pan, I wait for a bit. I occasionally peek under the meat to check the cooking progress. When it looks good, I flip them over.

My preferred ginger pork has well-seared meat with the onions absorbing the meat juices. Crispy onions could be nice too, but I personally prefer them soft and tender.

Once both sides have a nice color, I add the sliced onions that were prepared beforehand.

Then, I quickly stir-fry and add the sauce, ensuring the meat and sauce are well coated.

"It looks really delicious. The aroma is amazing too."

"Could you bring a plate? It's almost done."

"Sure!"

When the ginger pork has a nice glaze, I plate it. Tonight's dinner is complete with this. Kirishima has already served the rice, so I just need to bring the plate with the ginger pork. I'm grateful.

“Goodnight~”

“Goodnight.”

It was already 11 PM in the afternoon. Kirishima seemed sleepy, so I urged her to go to bed.

However, it’s Golden Week, and I want to enjoy it to the fullest. I’ll pretend I didn’t hear anything about studying for exams as a second-year high school student.

“Hello~”

“Oh, Kouji.”

“Hey! I’ve been waiting.”

“Hey, Hoshino, Shiina.”

It wasn’t a sudden cancellation, but our plans to hang out got canceled, so we decided to play together online instead.

Today, we’re going to play a game recommended by Shiina, a hardcore gamer. Shiina is also my friend, and we often team up and play various games.

“Alright, let’s play Apex Legends.”

“Okay. I’m starting up the game, so wait a moment.”

I turned on the TV in the living room and the PlayStation. Normally, the PlayStation is connected to my monitor in my room, but since Kirishima is using it as her sleeping area, I brought it downstairs.

“Alright, we’re good to go.”

“Yeah, let’s play Ranked.”

“Of course. Casual or playing with randoms is fine too. We’re already using voice chat.”

“Oh, there’s an enemy at 230 degrees.”

“Roger that. Can I snipe?”

“Got it. It’s a disadvantageous range, so I want to engage before they get closer.”

“Yeah, let’s secure that building for now.”

There are two remaining squads. None of us have died yet. We’re in a situation where we can aim for victory.

I have an SR (Sniper Rifle) and a shotgun as my weapons. I use the SR for medium-long-range sniping and switch to the shotgun for close-quarters combat. However, I’m not very good at close-quarters combat, so I have to rely on my teammates.

“Oh, there’s an enemy.”

“Alright, I’ll shoot.”

I carefully aim at the enemy peeking out from behind a rock and shoot.

“Nice, I broke the armor of the front guy.”

“Okay.”

I adjust my aim to the exposed enemy’s head and shoot.

“Good, headshot.”

“All right, let’s push while they’re distracted.”

“Roger.”

Due to the shrinking zone and it being the endgame, the area damage is significant, so we quickly move. We chose a spot behind a fence.

I look through the scope, observing the enemy’s movements.

“Oh, watch out.”

At that moment, we came under concentrated fire from the enemy. I didn’t get knocked down, but my armor is almost depleted.

I quickly hide in a safe spot and recharge my armor.

“Hey, the next zone is on our side. You know what to do, right?”

“Yeah, got it. Let’s win this.”

We patiently wait for the zone to shrink. The voice chat becomes silent, and tension fills the air.

“They’re here!”

I look through the scope and quickly align my aim. The enemy is moving, so I also consider bullet drop and pull the trigger.

"I hit the body."

"Nice. Okay, one down."

Once the cooking was done, I aimed for another headshot.

"Damn it, I missed."

"Don't worry. Ah, I lost sight of them."

"I have three sniper bullets left. I'll make sure to hit him this time."

I peered through the scope, keeping an eye on the fence, ready for the enemy to appear at any moment.

"Ah!"

Reflexively, I pulled the trigger, and the bullet hit the enemy's head perfectly.

"You're a genius, man! Let's push!"

"Yeah, let's go!"

The entire party rushed towards the enemy.

I switched my weapon to the shotgun and sprinted alongside them.

"Yes, we did it!"

"Nice!"

The kill feed showed that Shiina had eliminated the final enemy.

The screen displayed the words "YOU ARE THE CHAMPION."

"Wow, Kouji, your aiming skills are incredible."

"Well, Shiina managed to get 5 kills too."

In this match, I got 3 kills, Hoshino got 2 kills, and Shiina got 5 kills. Shiina is indeed a hardcore gamer. Shiina is one rank higher than me. However, in ranked matches, the matchmaking is based on the highest rank within the party, so we are forced into high-level battles. Can't be helped.

"Well, it's already 1 AM, so I'm going to bed."

"Oh, really? Let's stay up a bit longer."

"Yeah, you're right. It's still Golden Week after all."

It was already past 1 AM, and I was starting to feel tired. Considering Kirishima waking me up in the morning, I probably couldn't stay up much longer.

"Sorry, but I'm tired, so I'm going to sleep."

"I see. Well then, see you."

"Yeah, good night."

I turned off the PlayStation and began to prepare for bed.

"Oh, I forgot to bring the charger again. I should charge it tonight..."

As I tried to check my phone notifications, I noticed that the battery logo on my mobile turned red.

Since I had been on a call throughout the game, my phone's battery had depleted to around 10%. I didn't want it to run out of charge. Although it did happen yesterday.

So, I decided to go to my room to get the charger. However, Kirishima was sleeping in my room... I mustn't make any mistakes.

"Goodnight~"

"Goodnight."

It was already 11 PM in the afternoon. Kirishima seemed sleepy, so I urged her to go to bed.

However, it's Golden Week, and I want to enjoy it to the fullest. I'll pretend I didn't hear anything about studying for exams as a second-year high school student.

"Hello~"

"Oh, Kouji."

"Hey! I've been waiting."

"Hey, Hoshino, Shiina."

It wasn't a sudden cancellation, but our plans to hang out got canceled, so we decided to play together online instead.

Today, we're going to play a game recommended by Shiina, a hardcore gamer. Shiina is also my friend, and we often team up and play various games.

"Alright, let's play Apex Legends."

"Okay. I'm starting up the game, so wait a moment."

I turned on the TV in the living room and the PlayStation. Normally, the PlayStation is connected to my monitor in my room, but since Kirishima is using it as her sleeping area, I brought it downstairs.

"Alright, we're good to go."

"Yeah, let's play Ranked."

"Of course. Casual or playing with randoms is fine too. We're already using voice chat."

"Oh, there's an enemy at 230 degrees."

"Roger that. Can I snipe?"

"Got it. It's a disadvantageous range, so I want to engage before they get closer."

"Yeah, let's secure that building for now."

There are two remaining squads. None of us have died yet. We're in a situation where we can aim for victory.

I have an SR (Sniper Rifle) and a shotgun as my weapons. I use the SR for medium-long-range sniping and switch to the shotgun for close-quarters combat. However, I'm not very good at close-quarters combat, so I have to rely on my teammates.

"Oh, there's an enemy."

"Alright, I'll shoot."

I carefully aim at the enemy peeking out from behind a rock and shoot.

"Nice, I broke the armor of the front guy."

"Okay."

I adjust my aim to the exposed enemy's head and shoot.

"Good, headshot."

"All right, let's push while they're distracted."

"Roger."

Due to the shrinking zone and it being the endgame, the area damage is significant, so we quickly move. We chose a spot behind a fence.

I look through the scope, observing the enemy's movements.

"Oh, watch out."

At that moment, we came under concentrated fire from the enemy. I didn't get knocked down, but my armor is almost depleted.

I quickly hide in a safe spot and recharge my armor.

"Hey, the next zone is on our side. You know what to do, right?"

"Yeah, got it. Let's win this."

We patiently wait for the zone to shrink. The voice chat becomes silent, and tension fills the air.

"They're here!"

I look through the scope and quickly align my aim. The enemy is moving, so I also consider bullet drop and pull the trigger.

"I hit the body."

"Nice. Okay, one down."

Once the cooking was done, I aimed for another headshot.

"Damn it, I missed."

"Don't worry. Ah, I lost sight of them."

"I have three sniper bullets left. I'll make sure to hit him this time."

I peered through the scope, keeping an eye on the fence, ready for the enemy to appear at any moment.

"Ah!"

Reflexively, I pulled the trigger, and the bullet hit the enemy's head perfectly.

"You're a genius, man! Let's push!"

"Yeah, let's go!"

The entire party rushed towards the enemy.

I switched my weapon to the shotgun and sprinted alongside them.

“Yes, we did it!”

“Nice!”

The kill feed showed that Shiina had eliminated the final enemy.

The screen displayed the words “YOU ARE THE CHAMPION.”

“Wow, Kouji, your aiming skills are incredible.”

“Well, Shiina managed to get 5 kills too.”

In this match, I got 3 kills, Hoshino got 2 kills, and Shiina got 5 kills. Shiina is indeed a hardcore gamer. Shiina is one rank higher than me. However, in ranked matches, the matchmaking is based on the highest rank within the party, so we are forced into high-level battles. Can’t be helped.

“Well, it’s already 1 AM, so I’m going to bed.”

“Oh, really? Let’s stay up a bit longer.”

“Yeah, you’re right. It’s still Golden Week after all.”

It was already past 1 AM, and I was starting to feel tired. Considering Kirishima waking me up in the morning, I probably couldn’t stay up much longer.

“Sorry, but I’m tired, so I’m going to sleep.”

“I see. Well then, see you.”

“Yeah, good night.”

I turned off the PlayStation and began to prepare for bed.

“Oh, I forgot to bring the charger again. I should charge it tonight…”

As I tried to check my phone notifications, I noticed that the battery logo on my mobile turned red.

Since I had been on a call throughout the game, my phone’s battery had depleted to around 10%. I didn’t want it to run out of charge. Although it did happen yesterday.

So, I decided to go to my room to get the charger. However, Kirishima was sleeping in my room… I mustn’t make any mistakes.

“Goodnight~”

“Goodnight.”

It was already 11 PM in the afternoon. Kirishima seemed sleepy, so I urged her to go to bed.

However, it’s Golden Week, and I want to enjoy it to the fullest. I’ll pretend I didn’t hear anything about studying for exams as a second-year high school student.

“Hello~”

“Oh, Kouji.”

“Hey! I’ve been waiting.”

“Hey, Hoshino, Shiina.”

It wasn’t a sudden cancellation, but our plans to hang out got canceled, so we decided to play together online instead.

Today, we’re going to play a game recommended by Shiina, a hardcore gamer. Shiina is also my friend, and we often team up and play various games.

“Alright, let’s play Apex Legends.”

“Okay. I’m starting up the game, so wait a moment.”

I turned on the TV in the living room and the PlayStation. Normally, the PlayStation is connected to my monitor in my room, but since Kirishima is using it as her sleeping area, I brought it downstairs.

“Alright, we’re good to go.”

“Yeah, let’s play Ranked.”

“Of course. Casual or playing with randoms is fine too. We’re already using voice chat.”

“Oh, there’s an enemy at 230 degrees.”

“Roger that. Can I snipe?”

“Got it. It’s a disadvantageous range, so I want to engage before they get closer.”

“Yeah, let’s secure that building for now.”

There are two remaining squads. None of us have died yet. We’re in a situation where we can aim for victory.

I have an SR (Sniper Rifle) and a shotgun as my weapons. I use the SR for medium-long-range sniping

and switch to the shotgun for close-quarters combat. However, I'm not very good at close-quarters combat, so I have to rely on my teammates.

"Oh, there's an enemy."

"Alright, I'll shoot."

I carefully aim at the enemy peeking out from behind a rock and shoot.

"Nice, I broke the armor of the front guy."

"Okay."

I adjust my aim to the exposed enemy's head and shoot.

"Good, headshot."

"All right, let's push while they're distracted."

"Roger."

Due to the shrinking zone and it being the endgame, the area damage is significant, so we quickly move.

We chose a spot behind a fence.

I look through the scope, observing the enemy's movements.

"Oh, watch out."

At that moment, we came under concentrated fire from the enemy. I didn't get knocked down, but my armor is almost depleted.

I quickly hide in a safe spot and recharge my armor.

"Hey, the next zone is on our side. You know what to do, right?"

"Yeah, got it. Let's win this."

We patiently wait for the zone to shrink. The voice chat becomes silent, and tension fills the air.

"They're here!"

I look through the scope and quickly align my aim. The enemy is moving, so I also consider bullet drop and pull the trigger.

"I hit the body."

"Nice. Okay, one down."

Once the cooking was done, I aimed for another headshot.

"Damn it, I missed."

"Don't worry. Ah, I lost sight of them."

"I have three sniper bullets left. I'll make sure to hit him this time."

I peered through the scope, keeping an eye on the fence, ready for the enemy to appear at any moment.

"Ah!"

Reflexively, I pulled the trigger, and the bullet hit the enemy's head perfectly.

"You're a genius, man! Let's push!"

"Yeah, let's go!"

The entire party rushed towards the enemy.

I switched my weapon to the shotgun and sprinted alongside them.

"Yes, we did it!"

"Nice!"

The kill feed showed that Shiina had eliminated the final enemy.

The screen displayed the words "YOU ARE THE CHAMPION."

"Wow, Kouji, your aiming skills are incredible."

"Well, Shiina managed to get 5 kills too."

In this match, I got 3 kills, Hoshino got 2 kills, and Shiina got 5 kills. Shiina is indeed a hardcore gamer. Shiina is one rank higher than me. However, in ranked matches, the matchmaking is based on the highest rank within the party, so we are forced into high-level battles. Can't be helped.

"Well, it's already 1 AM, so I'm going to bed."

"Oh, really? Let's stay up a bit longer."

"Yeah, you're right. It's still Golden Week after all."

It was already past 1 AM, and I was starting to feel tired. Considering Kirishima waking me up in the morning, I probably couldn't stay up much longer.

"Sorry, but I'm tired, so I'm going to sleep."

“I see. Well then, see you.”

“Yeah, good night.”

I turned off the PlayStation and began to prepare for bed.

“Oh, I forgot to bring the charger again. I should charge it tonight...”

As I tried to check my phone notifications, I noticed that the battery logo on my mobile turned red.

Since I had been on a call throughout the game, my phone’s battery had depleted to around 10%. I didn’t want it to run out of charge. Although it did happen yesterday.

So, I decided to go to my room to get the charger. However, Kirishima was sleeping in my room... I mustn’t make any mistakes.

I cast aside any distractions and headed towards my second-floor room.

I went upstairs and arrived in front of my bedroom door. Right now, Kirishima should be sleeping here. I decided to knock on the door and enter the room. She's probably asleep and won't notice, but it's just to be considerate.

I slowly opened the door, intending to rely on the light from my phone to retrieve the charger in the darkness, but...

"Oh, Mom... Please don't go. Please..."

I heard Kirishima's voice, as if she was sobbing. I briefly directed the light from my phone towards the bed and saw Kirishima sleeping, wrapped in the blanket and hugging the pillow.

Why is she crying? Is she having a sad dream? Or has she always been like this? I won't know the exact reason unless I ask, but even when I saw her at the park, I caught a glimpse of the darkness in her family situation.

However, Kirishima acts cheerful in public. Isn't she forcing herself? I worry that one day her mental state might collapse. I'm really concerned.

While thinking that I should continue to pay attention to Kirishima, I left the room.

"Good morning!"

"Morning!"

The next morning, the alarm on my phone went off as planned, and I woke up at 9 o'clock.

"Oh, I should go grocery shopping soon."

As I peeked into the refrigerator to prepare breakfast, I noticed that the ingredients were running low. It's not like we're financially struggling, but providing meals for Kirishima as well would double the consumption, which means I have to go shopping more often.

"Hey, can I come with you for grocery shopping? Or rather, let me come with you."

"Why? Do you want something to eat?"

"No, it's just that you've been letting me stay here and even cooking for me. I should do something in return, including covering the food expenses."

Ah, I guess she does feel indebted. Maybe I would do the same. But after seeing her last night (technically, earlier today), it doesn't really matter anymore.

"It's fine. Kirishima, you have been helping me with studying, so it's not financially burdensome."

"Do you receive an allowance that can cover double the food expenses...? That's nice."

"Well, I do earn my own money. I can't have a part-time job, so I have to find other ways."

Oh, was it okay to say that? Well, it should be fine. I don't think Kirishima has the personality to spread that around.

"It's impressive that you're earning money at your age. Well, it might be presumptuous for me to say that as someone who's being allowed to stay here."

"Well, don't worry about it. So, shall we go grocery shopping before noon?"

"Yeah, sounds good."

With the grocery shopping plan settled, I immediately started studying. Kirishima has been helping me with studying throughout Golden Week. I'm really grateful. Her way of teaching is easy to understand, and I think she would be suited for a career in education.

"So, what do you want to eat today?"

Kirishima and I were at the shopping mall near the station. I don't know why, but she had changed into a more elegant and refined outfit rather than her usual style. When did she bring that outfit? Her whole aura has changed, and she looks really cute.

As for me, I'm wearing my usual tracksuit. I don't have any clothes for going out. Hey, don't call me an introvert.

"Hey, hey. Can I cook dinner tonight?"

"Huh? Oh well, if you're willing to cook..."

Kirishima's homemade meal... I hope no one in class finds out. Ah, but from an outsider's perspective, it's probably too late to hide the fact that we're living together. It's not like Kirishima has fallen for me or anything, and I'm the only one agonizing over it every day.

It's just that I couldn't bear to see Kirishima in that state. That's really all there is to it.

"If I remember correctly, you're making fried rice for lunch. So maybe I'll make hamburger steak for dinner."

As she said that, Kirishima added ground meat and onions to the basket. To be honest, I don't make hamburger steak or similar dishes very often. They're just too much of a hassle. With fried rice, which I often eat, you just throw the ingredients into the frying pan and cook them. But when it comes to hamburger steak, you have to sauté the onions, let them cool, mix them with the ground meat, shape them into patties... It involves several steps.

"Do we have nutmeg?"

"Ah, yeah, I think we do."

In the end, I ended up buying a considerable amount of groceries, enough to last for about half the week. Under the warm sunshine, the two of us were heading back home.

"Hmm?"

Suddenly, Kirishima hugged me from behind. Caught off guard by her sudden action, I turned around briefly and saw a look of fear on Kirishima's face.

"What's wrong?"

"S-Sorry, Kurata-kun. Just let me hide for a moment..."

"Huh? Um..."

I wondered what was going on as I looked around. This place is near the station, and there are quite a few people around. I don't think there's anything to be scared of.

"Are you okay?"

"Y-Yeah, I'm fine now."

With doubts about Kirishima's behavior, we decided to head back home.

Little did I know that someone was following closely behind me.

I cast aside any distractions and headed towards my second-floor room.

I went upstairs and arrived in front of my bedroom door. Right now, Kirishima should be sleeping here.

I decided to knock on the door and enter the room. She's probably asleep and won't notice, but it's just to be considerate.

I slowly opened the door, intending to rely on the light from my phone to retrieve the charger in the darkness, but...

"Oh, Mom... Please don't go. Please..."

I heard Kirishima's voice, as if she was sobbing. I briefly directed the light from my phone towards the bed and saw Kirishima sleeping, wrapped in the blanket and hugging the pillow.

Why is she crying? Is she having a sad dream? Or has she always been like this? I won't know the exact reason unless I ask, but even when I saw her at the park, I caught a glimpse of the darkness in her family situation.

However, Kirishima acts cheerful in public. Isn't she forcing herself? I worry that one day her mental state might collapse. I'm really concerned.

While thinking that I should continue to pay attention to Kirishima, I left the room.

"Good morning!"

"Morning!"

The next morning, the alarm on my phone went off as planned, and I woke up at 9 o'clock.

"Oh, I should go grocery shopping soon."

As I peeked into the refrigerator to prepare breakfast, I noticed that the ingredients were running low. It's not like we're financially struggling, but providing meals for Kirishima as well would double the consumption, which means I have to go shopping more often.

“Hey, can I come with you for grocery shopping? Or rather, let me come with you.”

“Why? Do you want something to eat?”

“No, it’s just that you’ve been letting me stay here and even cooking for me. I should do something in return, including covering the food expenses.”

Ah, I guess she does feel indebted. Maybe I would do the same. But after seeing her last night (technically, earlier today), it doesn’t really matter anymore.

“It’s fine. Kirishima, you have been helping me with studying, so it’s not financially burdensome.”

“Do you receive an allowance that can cover double the food expenses...? That’s nice.”

“Well, I do earn my own money. I can’t have a part-time job, so I have to find other ways.”

Oh, was it okay to say that? Well, it should be fine. I don’t think Kirishima has the personality to spread that around.

“It’s impressive that you’re earning money at your age. Well, it might be presumptuous for me to say that as someone who’s being allowed to stay here.”

“Well, don’t worry about it. So, shall we go grocery shopping before noon?”

“Yeah, sounds good.”

With the grocery shopping plan settled, I immediately started studying. Kirishima has been helping me with studying throughout Golden Week. I’m really grateful. Her way of teaching is easy to understand, and I think she would be suited for a career in education.

“So, what do you want to eat today?”

Kirishima and I were at the shopping mall near the station. I don’t know why, but she had changed into a more elegant and refined outfit rather than her usual style. When did she bring that outfit? Her whole aura has changed, and she looks really cute.

As for me, I’m wearing my usual tracksuit. I don’t have any clothes for going out. Hey, don’t call me an introvert.

“Hey, hey. Can I cook dinner tonight?”

“Huh? Oh well, if you’re willing to cook...”

Kirishima’s homemade meal... I hope no one in class finds out. Ah, but from an outsider’s perspective, it’s probably too late to hide the fact that we’re living together. It’s not like Kirishima has fallen for me or anything, and I’m the only one agonizing over it every day.

It’s just that I couldn’t bear to see Kirishima in that state. That’s really all there is to it.

“If I remember correctly, you’re making fried rice for lunch. So maybe I’ll make hamburger steak for dinner.”

As she said that, Kirishima added ground meat and onions to the basket. To be honest, I don’t make hamburger steak or similar dishes very often. They’re just too much of a hassle. With fried rice, which I often eat, you just throw the ingredients into the frying pan and cook them. But when it comes to hamburger steak, you have to sauté the onions, let them cool, mix them with the ground meat, shape them into patties... It involves several steps.

“Do we have nutmeg?”

“Ah, yeah, I think we do.”

In the end, I ended up buying a considerable amount of groceries, enough to last for about half the week. Under the warm sunshine, the two of us were heading back home.

“Hmm?”

Suddenly, Kirishima hugged me from behind. Caught off guard by her sudden action, I turned around briefly and saw a look of fear on Kirishima’s face.

“What’s wrong?”

“S-Sorry, Kurata-kun. Just let me hide for a moment...”

“Huh? Um...”

I wondered what was going on as I looked around. This place is near the station, and there are quite a few people around. I don’t think there’s anything to be scared of.

“Are you okay?”

“Y-Yeah, I’m fine now.”

With doubts about Kirishima’s behavior, we decided to head back home.

Little did I know that someone was following closely behind me.

I cast aside any distractions and headed towards my second-floor room.

I went upstairs and arrived in front of my bedroom door. Right now, Kirishima should be sleeping here.

I decided to knock on the door and enter the room. She's probably asleep and won't notice, but it's just to be considerate.

I slowly opened the door, intending to rely on the light from my phone to retrieve the charger in the darkness, but...

"Oh, Mom... Please don't go. Please..."

I heard Kirishima's voice, as if she was sobbing. I briefly directed the light from my phone towards the bed and saw Kirishima sleeping, wrapped in the blanket and hugging the pillow.

Why is she crying? Is she having a sad dream? Or has she always been like this? I won't know the exact reason unless I ask, but even when I saw her at the park, I caught a glimpse of the darkness in her family situation.

Why is she crying? Is she having a sad dream? Or has she always been like this?

I won't know the exact reason unless I ask, but even when I saw her at the park, I caught a glimpse of the darkness in her family situation.

However, Kirishima acts cheerful in public. Isn't she forcing herself? I worry that one day her mental state might collapse. I'm really concerned.

While thinking that I should continue to pay attention to Kirishima, I left the room.

"Good morning!"

"Morning!"

The next morning, the alarm on my phone went off as planned, and I woke up at 9 o'clock.

"Oh, I should go grocery shopping soon."

As I peeked into the refrigerator to prepare breakfast, I noticed that the ingredients were running low. It's not like we're financially struggling, but providing meals for Kirishima as well would double the consumption, which means I have to go shopping more often.

"Hey, can I come with you for grocery shopping? Or rather, let me come with you."

"Why? Do you want something to eat?"

"No, it's just that you've been letting me stay here and even cooking for me. I should do something in return, including covering the food expenses."

Ah, I guess she does feel indebted. Maybe I would do the same. But after seeing her last night (technically, earlier today), it doesn't really matter anymore.

"It's fine. Kirishima, you have been helping me with studying, so it's not financially burdensome."

"Do you receive an allowance that can cover double the food expenses...? That's nice."

"Well, I do earn my own money. I can't have a part-time job, so I have to find other ways."

Oh, was it okay to say that? Well, it should be fine. I don't think Kirishima has the personality to spread that around.

"It's impressive that you're earning money at your age. Well, it might be presumptuous for me to say that as someone who's being allowed to stay here."

"Well, don't worry about it. So, shall we go grocery shopping before noon?"

"Yeah, sounds good."

With the grocery shopping plan settled, I immediately started studying. Kirishima has been helping me with studying throughout Golden Week. I'm really grateful. Her way of teaching is easy to understand, and I think she would be suited for a career in education.

"So, what do you want to eat today?"

Kirishima and I were at the shopping mall near the station. I don't know why, but she had changed into a more elegant and refined outfit rather than her usual style. When did she bring that outfit? Her whole aura has changed, and she looks really cute.

As for me, I'm wearing my usual tracksuit. I don't have any clothes for going out. Hey, don't call me an introvert.

"Hey, hey. Can I cook dinner tonight?"

“Huh? Oh well, if you’re willing to cook...”

Kirishima’s homemade meal... I hope no one in class finds out. Ah, but from an outsider’s perspective, it’s probably too late to hide the fact that we’re living together. It’s not like Kirishima has fallen for me or anything, and I’m the only one agonizing over it every day.

It’s just that I couldn’t bear to see Kirishima in that state. That’s really all there is to it.

“If I remember correctly, you’re making fried rice for lunch. So maybe I’ll make hamburg steak for dinner.”

As she said that, Kirishima added ground meat and onions to the basket. To be honest, I don’t make hamburg steak or similar dishes very often. They’re just too much of a hassle. With fried rice, which I often eat, you just throw the ingredients into the frying pan and cook them. But when it comes to hamburg steak, you have to sauté the onions, let them cool, mix them with the ground meat, shape them into patties... It involves several steps.

“Do we have nutmeg?”

“Ah, yeah, I think we do.”

In the end, I ended up buying a considerable amount of groceries, enough to last for about half the week. Under the warm sunshine, the two of us were heading back home.

“Hmm?”

Suddenly, Kirishima hugged me from behind. Caught off guard by her sudden action, I turned around briefly and saw a look of fear on Kirishima’s face.

“What’s wrong?”

“S-Sorry, Kurata-kun. Just let me hide for a moment...”

“Huh? Um...”

I wondered what was going on as I looked around. This place is near the station, and there are quite a few people around. I don’t think there’s anything to be scared of.

“Are you okay?”

“Y-Yeah, I’m fine now.”

With doubts about Kirishima’s behavior, we decided to head back home.

Little did I know that someone was following closely behind me.

"I'm going to make dinner now."

"Okay, I'll work on my Japanese homework and let me know if you need any help."

As planned in the morning, Kirishima was going to cook dinner tonight. So I decided to focus on my assignments.

By the way, for the lunch I made, it seems like Kirishima enjoyed it. Of course, I didn't go all out with excessive seasonings and excessive oil in the fried rice. She's a girl, after all.

As I'm working on my homework now, I can't help but keep glancing towards the kitchen. A beautiful girl wearing an apron is incredibly enchanting. Especially when it's my apron she's wearing.

I never really had a fetish for aprons, but I can understand why it's depicted as moe.

"Hey~ Why are you staring at me like that? Finished your homework?"

"Oh, no. It's nothing."

Phew. If I were to say something like "I was captivated by your adorable appearance, Kirishima." I'd be dead on the spot. I must keep that to myself.

"Well, never mind. By the way, do you know where the frying pan is?"

"The frying pan is in the bottom drawer under the stove."

"Oh, you're right. I'll borrow it then."

Hmm... What a sight to behold. Just thinking these thoughts makes me realize how much of a guy I am. Anyway, I'll continue with my assignments.

While working on an essay question and contemplating the structure of my written response, a pleasant aroma wafted from the kitchen. Thinking it's about time for dinner, I quickly assembled a 100-character essay response. The essay question is the kind of problem that becomes troublesome if interrupted midway. It messes with your thought process.

"Kurata-kun, dinner is ready~"

"Alright. I'll be right there."

Just as I finished my essay response, there are still multiple-choice questions remaining, but I want to eat Kirishima's dinner while it's still hot, so I head towards the table.

"Looks delicious..."

Seeing the dishes on the table, the words escaped my mouth unintentionally. However, they truly look appetizing and have a wonderful aroma.

"Come on, let's eat!"

"Bon appétit."

First, I'll start with the main dish, the hamburger steak.

"Is it delicious?"

"...This is really good. It's probably much tastier than when I make it."

"That's great to hear."

I'm not just flattering her; it genuinely is delicious. Compared to the hamburger steak I made before, it doesn't have excess juices running out, and the shape is much neater.

"Well, I should start eating too."

"The soup is delicious too."

"Hey, hey, Kurata-kun, are you the type who usually pairs soup with meals?"

"Well... It depends on my mood, but most days I find it too bothersome and skip it."

During the meal, we got carried away discussing cooking. There were actually some helpful tips, so I want to make use of them in the future.

"Speaking of which, school starts tomorrow."

"Golden Week is already over. In the end, I relied on you a lot, Kurata-kun."

"Well, it's no problem. Hey, how about we change the time we leave the house?"

"Why? We can just go together, right?"

Listen, if we do that, rumors will start spreading. Do you know your position in the class?

"Um, if it were to be revealed that you and I are living in the same house, Kirishima, it would cause

various issues, you know?”

“Oh, right, that’s true. Got it. So, should I go to school first?”

“No, girls have their own concerns, so I’ll go first.”

After several rounds of compromising, it was decided that Kirishima would leave first. She kept apologizing, saying, “I’m sorry for being a freeloader,” and I eventually gave in. Kirishima can be stubborn in strange ways.

“Oh, by the way, when we were coming back from shopping, you seemed frightened. Are you okay?”

“Huh? Oh, no, I’m fine.”

“No, you’re clearly shaken up. If you’re struggling with something, I can listen and try to help. I can’t guarantee that I’ll be able to assist, though.”

“I really am okay. Yeah.”

Kirishima stubbornly refused to speak up. There must be a reason she doesn’t want to say. If she doesn’t want to talk about it, I won’t pry into that reason. It concerns her privacy as well.

“Well, if anything troubles you, just let me know. Don’t try to handle everything on your own. Got it?”

“Yeah, I got it.”

...Just how kind does Kurata-kun think he’s being to me?

Kirishima murmured such thoughts in her heart.

“I’m going to make dinner now.”

“Okay, I’ll work on my Japanese homework and let me know if you need any help.”

As planned in the morning, Kirishima was going to cook dinner tonight. So I decided to focus on my assignments.

By the way, for the lunch I made, it seems like Kirishima enjoyed it. Of course, I didn’t go all out with excessive seasonings and excessive oil in the fried rice. She’s a girl, after all.

As I’m working on my homework now, I can’t help but keep glancing towards the kitchen. A beautiful girl wearing an apron is incredibly enchanting. Especially when it’s my apron she’s wearing.

I never really had a fetish for aprons, but I can understand why it’s depicted as moe.

“Hey~ Why are you staring at me like that? Finished your homework?”

“Oh, no. It’s nothing.”

Phew. If I were to say something like “I was captivated by your adorable appearance, Kirishima.” I’d be dead on the spot. I must keep that to myself.

“Well, never mind. By the way, do you know where the frying pan is?”

“The frying pan is in the bottom drawer under the stove.”

“Oh, you’re right. I’ll borrow it then.”

Hmm... What a sight to behold. Just thinking these thoughts makes me realize how much of a guy I am. Anyway, I’ll continue with my assignments.

While working on an essay question and contemplating the structure of my written response, a pleasant aroma wafted from the kitchen. Thinking it’s about time for dinner, I quickly assembled a 100-character essay response. The essay question is the kind of problem that becomes troublesome if interrupted midway. It messes with your thought process.

“Kurata-kun, dinner is ready~”

“Alright. I’ll be right there.”

Just as I finished my essay response, there are still multiple-choice questions remaining, but I want to eat Kirishima’s dinner while it’s still hot, so I head towards the table.

“Looks delicious...”

Seeing the dishes on the table, the words escaped my mouth unintentionally. However, they truly look appetizing and have a wonderful aroma.

“Come on, let’s eat!”

“Bon appétit.”

First, I’ll start with the main dish, the hamburger steak.

“Is it delicious?”

“...This is really good. It’s probably much tastier than when I make it.”

“That’s great to hear.”

I’m not just flattering her; it genuinely is delicious. Compared to the hamburger steak I made before, it doesn’t have excess juices running out, and the shape is much neater.

“Well, I should start eating too.”

“The soup is delicious too.”

“Hey, hey, Kurata-kun, are you the type who usually pairs soup with meals?”

“Well... It depends on my mood, but most days I find it too bothersome and skip it.”

During the meal, we got carried away discussing cooking. There were actually some helpful tips, so I want to make use of them in the future.

“Speaking of which, school starts tomorrow.”

“Golden Week is already over. In the end, I relied on you a lot, Kurata-kun.”

“Well, it’s no problem. Hey, how about we change the time we leave the house?”

“Why? We can just go together, right?”

Listen, if we do that, rumors will start spreading. Do you know your position in the class?

“Um, if it were to be revealed that you and I are living in the same house, Kirishima, it would cause various issues, you know?”

“Oh, right, that’s true. Got it. So, should I go to school first?”

“No, girls have their own concerns, so I’ll go first.”

After several rounds of compromising, it was decided that Kirishima would leave first. She kept apologizing, saying, “I’m sorry for being a freeloader,” and I eventually gave in. Kirishima can be stubborn in strange ways.

“Oh, by the way, when we were coming back from shopping, you seemed frightened. Are you okay?”

“Huh? Oh, no, I’m fine.”

“No, you’re clearly shaken up. If you’re struggling with something, I can listen and try to help. I can’t guarantee that I’ll be able to assist, though.”

“I really am okay. Yeah.”

Kirishima stubbornly refused to speak up. There must be a reason she doesn’t want to say. If she doesn’t want to talk about it, I won’t pry into that reason. It concerns her privacy as well.

“Well, if anything troubles you, just let me know. Don’t try to handle everything on your own. Got it?”

“Yeah, I got it.”

...Just how kind does Kurata-kun think he’s being to me?

Kirishima murmured such thoughts in her heart.

“I’m going to make dinner now.”

“Okay, I’ll work on my Japanese homework and let me know if you need any help.”

As planned in the morning, Kirishima was going to cook dinner tonight. So I decided to focus on my assignments.

By the way, for the lunch I made, it seems like Kirishima enjoyed it. Of course, I didn’t go all out with excessive seasonings and excessive oil in the fried rice. She’s a girl, after all.

As I’m working on my homework now, I can’t help but keep glancing towards the kitchen. A beautiful girl wearing an apron is incredibly enchanting. Especially when it’s my apron she’s wearing.

I never really had a fetish for aprons, but I can understand why it’s depicted as moe.

“Hey~ Why are you staring at me like that? Finished your homework?”

“Oh, no. It’s nothing.”

Phew. If I were to say something like “I was captivated by your adorable appearance, Kirishima.” I’d be dead on the spot. I must keep that to myself.

“Well, never mind. By the way, do you know where the frying pan is?”

“The frying pan is in the bottom drawer under the stove.”

“Oh, you’re right. I’ll borrow it then.”

Hmm... What a sight to behold. Just thinking these thoughts makes me realize how much of a guy I am. Anyway, I’ll continue with my assignments.

While working on an essay question and contemplating the structure of my written response, a pleasant

aroma wafted from the kitchen. Thinking it's about time for dinner, I quickly assembled a 100-character essay response. The essay question is the kind of problem that becomes troublesome if interrupted midway. It messes with your thought process.

"Kurata-kun, dinner is ready~"

"Alright. I'll be right there."

Just as I finished my essay response, there are still multiple-choice questions remaining, but I want to eat Kirishima's dinner while it's still hot, so I head towards the table.

"Looks delicious..."

Seeing the dishes on the table, the words escaped my mouth unintentionally. However, they truly look appetizing and have a wonderful aroma.

"Come on, let's eat!"

"Bon appétit."

First, I'll start with the main dish, the hamburger steak.

"Is it delicious?"

"...This is really good. It's probably much tastier than when I make it."

"That's great to hear."

I'm not just flattering her; it genuinely is delicious. Compared to the hamburger steak I made before, it doesn't have excess juices running out, and the shape is much neater.

"Well, I should start eating too."

"The soup is delicious too."

"Hey, hey, Kurata-kun, are you the type who usually pairs soup with meals?"

"Well... It depends on my mood, but most days I find it too bothersome and skip it."

During the meal, we got carried away discussing cooking. There were actually some helpful tips, so I want to make use of them in the future.

"Speaking of which, school starts tomorrow."

"Golden Week is already over. In the end, I relied on you a lot, Kurata-kun."

"Well, it's no problem. Hey, how about we change the time we leave the house?"

"Why? We can just go together, right?"

Listen, if we do that, rumors will start spreading. Do you know your position in the class?

"Um, if it were to be revealed that you and I are living in the same house, Kirishima, it would cause various issues, you know?"

"Oh, right, that's true. Got it. So, should I go to school first?"

"No, girls have their own concerns, so I'll go first."

After several rounds of compromising, it was decided that Kirishima would leave first. She kept apologizing, saying, "I'm sorry for being a freeloader," and I eventually gave in. Kirishima can be stubborn in strange ways.

"Oh, by the way, when we were coming back from shopping, you seemed frightened. Are you okay?"

"Huh? Oh, no, I'm fine."

"No, you're clearly shaken up. If you're struggling with something, I can listen and try to help. I can't guarantee that I'll be able to assist, though."

"I really am okay. Yeah."

Kirishima stubbornly refused to speak up. There must be a reason she doesn't want to say. If she doesn't want to talk about it, I won't pry into that reason. It concerns her privacy as well.

"Well, if anything troubles you, just let me know. Don't try to handle everything on your own. Got it?"

"Yeah, I got it."

...Just how kind does Kurata-kun think he's being to me?

Kirishima murmured such thoughts in her heart.

After Golden Week, I quietly took my seat in order to avoid the bustling atmosphere of the class.

“Good morning~”

“Ah, good morning.”

The only difference today was that the beautiful girl next to me greeted me. She was usually seen chatting and laughing with the other girls, but today she sat quietly at her desk, studying.

“Hey~”

As I was preparing for class at my desk, Hoshino approached me.

“Good morning. Sorry for canceling the programme.”

“No problem. You had something urgent, right? Well, in return, treat me to something someday.”

“I’ll consider it. By the way, there was so much homework.”

Upon hearing that, Hoshino’s face turned pale. Ah, this guy. He hasn’t finished his homework.

“Oh, right. So, did you finish yours?”

“Yeah, of course.”

“What?! Out of everyone you!?”

“Hey.”

Truth be told, it was thanks to Kirishima, but I decided not to reveal that. It would be troublesome if everything came to light.

“Um, could you show me your homework?”

“Huh? ‘Out of everyone you?!’”

“I’m sorry!”

“I guess I have no choice. Be grateful for my kindness.”

“Thanks!”

I took some notes out of my bag and handed them to Hoshino. He hurriedly ran back to his seat.

Afterwards, I glanced at Kirishima, who was smiling happily. Well, thanks to her. To express my gratitude, I clasped my hands together, and she responded with an OK sign. Oh well, I’m grateful.

After school.

As usual, I stayed behind to ask questions about things I didn’t understand in class. Thanks to Kirishima, the number of questions had decreased significantly, but I still couldn’t solve every problem.

“Thank you very much.”

“Yeah, functions are often asked in exams. Make sure to master them.”

After a proper farewell, I left the faculty room. I checked my watch and it was already 4:30. I decided to call it a day around this time.

Returning to the sparsely populated classroom, I packed up my materials and quickly left.

“Hmm?”

I changed into my leather shoes and as I was about to leave through the entrance, I noticed a familiar figure standing next to the school gate.

“Ah!”

For some reason, she was waving her hand. Since there were hardly any people around, she was probably waving at me.

“Kurata-kun, you’re late~”

“Oh, I thought you might have left already.”

“Oh, that’s right, you know. I don’t have the key...”

Ah, I completely forgot. Without giving her a spare key, she wouldn’t be able to enter the house. Since Kirishima’s home is now my house, I should have considered this as well.

“I’m sorry for making you wait.”

“It’s okay. Shall we go home together?”

I walked with Kirishima along the commuting route. Then, out of nowhere, Kirishima made a bombshell statement.

“Us walking home like this, it feels like we’re a couple, doesn’t it?”

“Huh? That’s... um...”

“...Ah.”

Kirishima’s face turned red and she looked just like a ripe apple. I wonder if she has a playful side to her, considering she’s about to self-destruct like this.

“...But, I do like you, Kurata-kun.”

She muttered something under her breath, but her voice was too quiet for me to catch what she said.

“Hmm? Did you say something?”

“No, nothing. Forget what I said earlier!”

She emphasized it while still blushing. Well, it’s not like I think of us as a couple or anything. Don’t worry.

“So, about what happened on the way home from school.”

After finishing dinner, I brought up this topic while idly scrolling through my phone on the sofa.

“Oh, sorry for saying ‘couple’ earlier.”

“No, it’s not about that.”

For some reason, Kirishima’s face slightly puffed up. Did I say something wrong?

“Anyway, I’ll give you a spare key. I don’t think you would do anything sketchy, Kirishima.”

“No, it’s not right. I’ll be fine. I stay late at school too.”

“It’s okay. I trust Kirishima.”

I stood up from the sofa, retrieved the spare key from the shelf where I keep valuables, and returned to the sofa to hand it to Kirishima.

“No, I’ll be fine, really. I can’t take responsibility for it.”

Since Kirishima kept refusing, I realized that persuasion was futile and held her hand.

“Huh? Wh-what?”

“Just take it. Trust me.”

I forcefully placed the spare key in Kirishima’s hand. Once again, her face turned red.

In the end, albeit reluctantly, she agreed to take the spare key. It would be embarrassing as a man to leave a girl waiting outside, after all.

“If you’re that persistent, I can’t refuse...”

Kirishima’s murmuring didn’t reach Kurata.

After Golden Week, I quietly took my seat in order to avoid the bustling atmosphere of the class.

“Good morning~”

“Ah, good morning.”

The only difference today was that the beautiful girl next to me greeted me. She was usually seen chatting and laughing with the other girls, but today she sat quietly at her desk, studying.

“Hey~”

As I was preparing for class at my desk, Hoshino approached me.

“Good morning. Sorry for canceling the programme.”

“No problem. You had something urgent, right? Well, in return, treat me to something someday.”

“I’ll consider it. By the way, there was so much homework.”

Upon hearing that, Hoshino’s face turned pale. Ah, this guy. He hasn’t finished his homework.

“Oh, right. So, did you finish yours?”

“Yeah, of course.”

“What?! Out of everyone you!?”

“Hey.”

Truth be told, it was thanks to Kirishima, but I decided not to reveal that. It would be troublesome if everything came to light.

“Um, could you show me your homework?”

“Huh? ‘Out of everyone you?!’”

“I’m sorry!”

"I guess I have no choice. Be grateful for my kindness."

"Thanks!"

I took some notes out of my bag and handed them to Hoshino. He hurriedly ran back to his seat. Afterwards, I glanced at Kirishima, who was smiling happily. Well, thanks to her. To express my gratitude, I clasped my hands together, and she responded with an OK sign. Oh well, I'm grateful. After school.

As usual, I stayed behind to ask questions about things I didn't understand in class. Thanks to Kirishima, the number of questions had decreased significantly, but I still couldn't solve every problem.

"Thank you very much."

"Yeah, functions are often asked in exams. Make sure to master them."

After a proper farewell, I left the faculty room. I checked my watch and it was already 4:30. I decided to call it a day around this time.

Returning to the sparsely populated classroom, I packed up my materials and quickly left.

"Hmm?"

I changed into my leather shoes and as I was about to leave through the entrance, I noticed a familiar figure standing next to the school gate.

"Ah!"

For some reason, she was waving her hand. Since there were hardly any people around, she was probably waving at me.

"Kurata-kun, you're late~"

"Oh, I thought you might have left already."

"Oh, that's right, you know. I don't have the key..."

Ah, I completely forgot. Without giving her a spare key, she wouldn't be able to enter the house. Since Kirishima's home is now my house, I should have considered this as well.

"I'm sorry for making you wait."

"It's okay. Shall we go home together?"

I walked with Kirishima along the commuting route. Then, out of nowhere, Kirishima made a bombshell statement.

"Us walking home like this, it feels like we're a couple, doesn't it?"

"Huh? That's... um..."

"...Ah."

Kirishima's face turned red and she looked just like a ripe apple. I wonder if she has a playful side to her, considering she's about to self-destruct like this.

"...But, I do like you, Kurata-kun."

She muttered something under her breath, but her voice was too quiet for me to catch what she said.

"Hmm? Did you say something?"

"No, nothing. Forget what I said earlier!"

She emphasized it while still blushing. Well, it's not like I think of us as a couple or anything. Don't worry.

"So, about what happened on the way home from school."

After finishing dinner, I brought up this topic while idly scrolling through my phone on the sofa.

"Oh, sorry for saying 'couple' earlier."

"No, it's not about that."

For some reason, Kirishima's face slightly puffed up. Did I say something wrong?

"Anyway, I'll give you a spare key. I don't think you would do anything sketchy, Kirishima."

"No, it's not right. I'll be fine. I stay late at school too."

"It's okay. I trust Kirishima."

I stood up from the sofa, retrieved the spare key from the shelf where I keep valuables, and returned to the sofa to hand it to Kirishima.

"No, I'll be fine, really. I can't take responsibility for it."

Since Kirishima kept refusing, I realized that persuasion was futile and held her hand.

“Huh? Wh-what?”

“Just take it. Trust me.”

I forcefully placed the spare key in Kirishima’s hand. Once again, her face turned red.

In the end, albeit reluctantly, she agreed to take the spare key. It would be embarrassing as a man to leave a girl waiting outside, after all.

“If you’re that persistent, I can’t refuse...”

Kirishima’s murmuring didn’t reach Kurata.

After Golden Week, I quietly took my seat in order to avoid the bustling atmosphere of the class.

“Good morning~”

“Ah, good morning.”

The only difference today was that the beautiful girl next to me greeted me. She was usually seen chatting and laughing with the other girls, but today she sat quietly at her desk, studying.

“Hey~”

As I was preparing for class at my desk, Hoshino approached me.

“Good morning. Sorry for canceling the programme.”

“No problem. You had something urgent, right? Well, in return, treat me to something someday.”

“I’ll consider it. By the way, there was so much homework.”

Upon hearing that, Hoshino’s face turned pale. Ah, this guy. He hasn’t finished his homework.

“Oh, right. So, did you finish yours?”

“Yeah, of course.”

“What?! Out of everyone you!?”

“Hey.”

Truth be told, it was thanks to Kirishima, but I decided not to reveal that. It would be troublesome if everything came to light.

“Um, could you show me your homework?”

“Huh? ‘Out of everyone you?!’”

“I’m sorry!”

“I guess I have no choice. Be grateful for my kindness.”

“Thanks!”

I took some notes out of my bag and handed them to Hoshino. He hurriedly ran back to his seat.

Afterwards, I glanced at Kirishima, who was smiling happily. Well, thanks to her. To express my gratitude, I clasped my hands together, and she responded with an OK sign. Oh well, I’m grateful.

Afterwards, I glanced at Kirishima, who was smiling happily.
Well, thanks to her.

To express my gratitude, I clasped my hands together, and she responded with an OK sign. Oh well, I’m grateful.

After school.

As usual, I stayed behind to ask questions about things I didn’t understand in class. Thanks to Kirishima, the number of questions had decreased significantly, but I still couldn’t solve every problem.

“Thank you very much.”

“Yeah, functions are often asked in exams. Make sure to master them.”

After a proper farewell, I left the faculty room. I checked my watch and it was already 4:30. I decided to call it a day around this time.

Returning to the sparsely populated classroom, I packed up my materials and quickly left.

“Hmm?”

I changed into my leather shoes and as I was about to leave through the entrance, I noticed a familiar figure standing next to the school gate.

“Ah!”

For some reason, she was waving her hand. Since there were hardly any people around, she was probably waving at me.

“Kurata-kun, you’re late~”

“Oh, I thought you might have left already.”

“Oh, that’s right, you know. I don’t have the key...”

Ah, I completely forgot. Without giving her a spare key, she wouldn’t be able to enter the house. Since Kirishima’s home is now my house, I should have considered this as well.

“I’m sorry for making you wait.”

“It’s okay. Shall we go home together?”

I walked with Kirishima along the commuting route. Then, out of nowhere, Kirishima made a bombshell statement.

“Us walking home like this, it feels like we’re a couple, doesn’t it?”

“Huh? That’s... um...”

“...Ah.”

Kirishima’s face turned red and she looked just like a ripe apple. I wonder if she has a playful side to her, considering she’s about to self-destruct like this.

“...But, I do like you, Kurata-kun.”

She muttered something under her breath, but her voice was too quiet for me to catch what she said.

“Hmm? Did you say something?”

“No, nothing. Forget what I said earlier!”

She emphasized it while still blushing. Well, it’s not like I think of us as a couple or anything. Don’t worry.

“So, about what happened on the way home from school.”

After finishing dinner, I brought up this topic while idly scrolling through my phone on the sofa.

“Oh, sorry for saying ‘couple’ earlier.”

“No, it’s not about that.”

For some reason, Kirishima’s face slightly puffed up. Did I say something wrong?

“Anyway, I’ll give you a spare key. I don’t think you would do anything sketchy, Kirishima.”

“No, it’s not right. I’ll be fine. I stay late at school too.”

“It’s okay. I trust Kirishima.”

I stood up from the sofa, retrieved the spare key from the shelf where I keep valuables, and returned to the sofa to hand it to Kirishima.

“No, I’ll be fine, really. I can’t take responsibility for it.”

Since Kirishima kept refusing, I realized that persuasion was futile and held her hand.

“Huh? Wh-what?”

“Just take it. Trust me.”

I forcefully placed the spare key in Kirishima’s hand. Once again, her face turned red.

In the end, albeit reluctantly, she agreed to take the spare key. It would be embarrassing as a man to leave a girl waiting outside, after all.

“If you’re that persistent, I can’t refuse...”

Kirishima’s murmuring didn’t reach Kurata.

“Okay, see you~ Bye-bye~”

Kirishima from the neighboring seat stood up, waving her hand to the girls around her.

All the classes for today had ended, and the classroom was becoming empty.

“Hey, Kurata~ Can you teach me English homework?”

“No way, too much trouble.”

Hoshino came to my seat, fidgeting and rubbing his hands as if trying to butter me up. However, I wanted to go home quickly today. Why? Because I had to clean the house. If I didn’t clean it at least once every three days, it would psychologically bother me.

“Well, figure it out somehow. Please!”

“Sigh... Fine, where is it? Show me.”

Hoshino, who had a gloomy face, suddenly brightened up. This guy sure knows how to win people over.

“Oh, and why is this sentence...”

In the end, it was already 4:30 PM when we finished school. Since classes usually ended around 4 PM, it meant I had spent nearly 30 minutes answering Hoshino’s questions. Next time, I should make him treat me to something.

Eager to go home, as soon as I finished answering the English questions, I quickly parted ways with Hoshino and headed home. Although Hoshino had also asked me to help with math, unfortunately, I didn’t understand it either, so I had forcibly escaped.

While mentally venting my frustrations about Hoshino’s unreasonable requests, I headed home. However,

“What... Stop it!”

“What did you say?! You think you have any freedom?”

Near my house, a man who looked like a thug was intimidating someone. It wouldn’t be a big deal to ignore it, but the voice was familiar, catching my attention.

This... it was Kirishima’s voice. If I heard it every day, I would recognize it. If Kirishima was being attacked by someone, there was no way I could leave her without helping.

Quietly, so as not to be noticed by the other person, I headed towards the direction of the voice.

“What are you doing?”

“Huh?”

Oh, scary. I only called out to him, and yet... But I couldn’t back down here.

“Well, she seems reluctant. Besides, I can’t just ignore someone from the same school being harassed.”

“You little... You want me to teach you a lesson?!”

“What’s wrong? Should I call the police?”

When I said that exasperatedly, the man, who had his back turned to me, turned towards me.

“You...!”

Looking at the man’s face, it was the same man who had tried to stab me with a knife before. As soon as I saw his face, anger welled up inside me.

“Why are you here? Weren’t you supposed to be caught?”

Without answering my question, the man suddenly threw a right straight punch.

“Whoa!”

I evaded the man’s right straight punch and assumed a mid-level stance with the umbrella I was holding. I didn’t want to recall my past, but there was no choice.

“Oraa!”

“Hah!”

As the man tried to strike again, I thrust towards his throat. However, I hesitated, concerned that the thrust might kill him since he wasn’t wearing any protective gear.

“Gu!”

My thrust hit him in the chest area instead of the neck, but it still dealt significant damage to the man. It might have even been better that way. The man collapsed onto the road.

“Kirishima, go inside the house first!”

Shouting that, Kirishima hurriedly opened the front door and went inside. After confirming that, I approached the man and checked if I hadn't gone too far.

"Hey, what's your purpose?"

"...Shut up!"

"Don't ever come near us again. Next time, I'll strike for real."

Suppressing memories from the past that I didn't want to recall, I made sure that the man was conscious and then entered the house.

"Kirishima, are you alright?"

As I entered the house, I immediately checked on Kirishima for any injuries or problems. She had been cornered by a tall, adult man who was 10 to 20 centimeters taller than her, so I was worried.

"Y-Yeah, I'm fine. Thank you for helping me."

"It's alright. I'm just glad you're safe."

Despite saying she was fine, Kirishima's shoulders were trembling. It must have been terrifying for her.

"So, what happened? If you can, please tell me."

In just a little over a month, she had been in danger twice. Moreover, it was the same perpetrator. It couldn't be taken lightly. And why was this person so persistent? Plus, I didn't understand the nature of Kirishima's relationship with him.

I decided to get my phone. I needed to consider reporting this to the police. Ideally, I should immediately call emergency services, but considering the situation we were in, I didn't want to easily make that call.

"I can't stay silent anymore, right? Okay. The truth is..."

As Kirishima revealed the shocking truth, I was left in astonishment.

"Okay, see you~ Bye-bye~"

Kirishima from the neighboring seat stood up, waving her hand to the girls around her.

All the classes for today had ended, and the classroom was becoming empty.

"Hey, Kurata~ Can you teach me English homework?"

"No way, too much trouble."

Hoshino came to my seat, fidgeting and rubbing his hands as if trying to butter me up. However, I wanted to go home quickly today. Why? Because I had to clean the house. If I didn't clean it at least once every three days, it would psychologically bother me.

"Well, figure it out somehow. Please!"

"Sigh... Fine, where is it? Show me."

Hoshino, who had a gloomy face, suddenly brightened up. This guy sure knows how to win people over.

"Oh, and why is this sentence..."

In the end, it was already 4:30 PM when we finished school. Since classes usually ended around 4 PM, it meant I had spent nearly 30 minutes answering Hoshino's questions. Next time, I should make him treat me to something.

Eager to go home, as soon as I finished answering the English questions, I quickly parted ways with Hoshino and headed home. Although Hoshino had also asked me to help with math, unfortunately, I didn't understand it either, so I had forcibly escaped.

While mentally venting my frustrations about Hoshino's unreasonable requests, I headed home. However,

"What... Stop it!"

"What did you say?! You think you have any freedom?"

Near my house, a man who looked like a thug was intimidating someone. It wouldn't be a big deal to ignore it, but the voice was familiar, catching my attention.

This... it was Kirishima's voice. If I heard it every day, I would recognize it. If Kirishima was being attacked by someone, there was no way I could leave her without helping.

Quietly, so as not to be noticed by the other person, I headed towards the direction of the voice.

"What are you doing?"

"Huh?"

Oh, scary. I only called out to him, and yet... But I couldn't back down here.

“Well, she seems reluctant. Besides, I can’t just ignore someone from the same school being harassed.”

“You little... You want me to teach you a lesson?!”

“What’s wrong? Should I call the police?”

When I said that exasperatedly, the man, who had his back turned to me, turned towards me.

“You...!”

Looking at the man’s face, it was the same man who had tried to stab me with a knife before. As soon as I saw his face, anger welled up inside me.

“Why are you here? Weren’t you supposed to be caught?”

Without answering my question, the man suddenly threw a right straight punch.

“Whoa!”

I evaded the man’s right straight punch and assumed a mid-level stance with the umbrella I was holding. I didn’t want to recall my past, but there was no choice.

“Oraa!”

“Hah!”

As the man tried to strike again, I thrust towards his throat. However, I hesitated, concerned that the thrust might kill him since he wasn’t wearing any protective gear.

“Gu!”

My thrust hit him in the chest area instead of the neck, but it still dealt significant damage to the man. It might have even been better that way. The man collapsed onto the road.

“Kirishima, go inside the house first!”

Shouting that, Kirishima hurriedly opened the front door and went inside. After confirming that, I approached the man and checked if I hadn’t gone too far.

“Hey, what’s your purpose?”

“...Shut up!”

“Don’t ever come near us again. Next time, I’ll strike for real.”

Suppressing memories from the past that I didn’t want to recall, I made sure that the man was conscious and then entered the house.

“Kirishima, are you alright?”

As I entered the house, I immediately checked on Kirishima for any injuries or problems. She had been cornered by a tall, adult man who was 10 to 20 centimeters taller than her, so I was worried.

“Y-Yeah, I’m fine. Thank you for helping me.”

“It’s alright. I’m just glad you’re safe.”

Despite saying she was fine, Kirishima’s shoulders were trembling. It must have been terrifying for her.

“So, what happened? If you can, please tell me.”

In just a little over a month, she had been in danger twice. Moreover, it was the same perpetrator. It couldn’t be taken lightly. And why was this person so persistent? Plus, I didn’t understand the nature of Kirishima’s relationship with him.

I decided to get my phone. I needed to consider reporting this to the police. Ideally, I should immediately call emergency services, but considering the situation we were in, I didn’t want to easily make that call.

“I can’t stay silent anymore, right? Okay. The truth is...”

As Kirishima revealed the shocking truth, I was left in astonishment.

“Okay, see you~ Bye-bye~”

Kirishima from the neighboring seat stood up, waving her hand to the girls around her.

All the classes for today had ended, and the classroom was becoming empty.

“Hey, Kurata~ Can you teach me English homework?”

“No way, too much trouble.”

Hoshino came to my seat, fidgeting and rubbing his hands as if trying to butter me up. However, I wanted to go home quickly today. Why? Because I had to clean the house. If I didn’t clean it at least once every three days, it would psychologically bother me.

“Well, figure it out somehow. Please!”

“Sigh... Fine, where is it? Show me.”

“

Sigh

... Fine, where is it? Show me.”

Hoshino, who had a gloomy face, suddenly brightened up. This guy sure knows how to win people over.

“Oh, and why is this sentence...”

In the end, it was already 4:30 PM when we finished school. Since classes usually ended around 4 PM, it meant I had spent nearly 30 minutes answering Hoshino’s questions. Next time, I should make him treat me to something.

Eager to go home, as soon as I finished answering the English questions, I quickly parted ways with Hoshino and headed home. Although Hoshino had also asked me to help with math, unfortunately, I didn’t understand it either, so I had forcibly escaped.

While mentally venting my frustrations about Hoshino’s unreasonable requests, I headed home. However, “What... Stop it!”

“What did you say?! You think you have any freedom?”

Near my house, a man who looked like a thug was intimidating someone. It wouldn’t be a big deal to ignore it, but the voice was familiar, catching my attention.

This... it was Kirishima’s voice. If I heard it every day, I would recognize it. If Kirishima was being attacked by someone, there was no way I could leave her without helping.

Quietly, so as not to be noticed by the other person, I headed towards the direction of the voice.

“What are you doing?”

“Huh?”

Oh, scary. I only called out to him, and yet... But I couldn’t back down here.

Oh, scary.

I only called out to him, and yet... But I couldn’t back down here.

“Well, she seems reluctant. Besides, I can’t just ignore someone from the same school being harassed.”

“You little... You want me to teach you a lesson?!”

“What’s wrong? Should I call the police?”

When I said that exasperatedly, the man, who had his back turned to me, turned towards me.

“You...!”

Looking at the man’s face, it was the same man who had tried to stab me with a knife before. As soon as I saw his face, anger welled up inside me.

“Why are you here? Weren’t you supposed to be caught?”

Without answering my question, the man suddenly threw a right straight punch.

“Whoa!”

I evaded the man’s right straight punch and assumed a mid-level stance with the umbrella I was holding. I didn’t want to recall my past, but there was no choice.

“Oraa!”

“Hah!”

As the man tried to strike again, I thrust towards his throat. However, I hesitated, concerned that the thrust might kill him since he wasn’t wearing any protective gear.

“Gu!”

My thrust hit him in the chest area instead of the neck, but it still dealt significant damage to the man. It might have even been better that way. The man collapsed onto the road.

“Kirishima, go inside the house first!”

Shouting that, Kirishima hurriedly opened the front door and went inside. After confirming that, I approached the man and checked if I hadn’t gone too far.

“Hey, what’s your purpose?”

“...Shut up!”

“Don’t ever come near us again. Next time, I’ll strike for real.”

Suppressing memories from the past that I didn’t want to recall, I made sure that the man was conscious and then entered the house.

“Kirishima, are you alright?”

As I entered the house, I immediately checked on Kirishima for any injuries or problems. She had been

cornered by a tall, adult man who was 10 to 20 centimeters taller than her, so I was worried.

“Y-Yeah, I’m fine. Thank you for helping me.”

“It’s alright. I’m just glad you’re safe.”

Despite saying she was fine, Kirishima’s shoulders were trembling. It must have been terrifying for her.

“So, what happened? If you can, please tell me.”

In just a little over a month, she had been in danger twice. Moreover, it was the same perpetrator. It couldn’t be taken lightly. And why was this person so persistent? Plus, I didn’t understand the nature of Kirishima’s relationship with him.

I decided to get my phone. I needed to consider reporting this to the police. Ideally, I should immediately call emergency services, but considering the situation we were in, I didn’t want to easily make that call.

“I can’t stay silent anymore, right? Okay. The truth is…”

As Kirishima revealed the shocking truth, I was left in astonishment.

Kirishima, who sat down on the sofa, was still trembling.

Having a conversation in such a situation must have been extremely difficult for her.

“Well, the thing is, that person is my step brother.”

Upon hearing this revelation from Kirishima, I couldn’t find the words to respond.

“My dad remarried around March this year. Did I mention it before? My dad used to love my mom, or so I thought.”

“Um, what happened to your mother, Kirishima?”

“She passed away about ten years ago. She was always frail. Around the time I was in elementary school, she had to be hospitalized for an extended period.”

So, this is about the pain of not having a mother... That expression on Kirishima’s face back then was filled with despair. It must have been the result of the overwhelming grief from losing her mother.

“And so, ever since my dad remarried, he stopped coming home, and my stepmother seems to despise me for some reason. ...Did I do something wrong?”

“But why did you end up being attacked? It’s not like you did anything wrong, right, Kirishima?”

Even if the stepmother didn’t like her stepdaughter, I couldn’t understand why she would go as far as to have Kirishima attacked, even involving her son. Alternatively, was the stepbrother acting alone?

“I don’t know either. We hardly ever spoke to each other. Well, to be honest, I was bullied in various ways.”

“That...sounds like abuse.”

“In the eyes of society, maybe.”

As Kirishima said that, she suddenly burst into tears.

“I couldn’t protect my mom or our home... I ran away from what was happening right in front of me.”

Listening to Kirishima’s harrowing past, I couldn’t help but feel sympathy. And so, the action I took was...

“Thank you... You’re really kind, Kurata-kun.”

Without interfering in what Kirishima said, I quietly embraced her. I wasn’t sure if this was the right thing to do for Kirishima, but it was something I had done for my younger sister in the past.

As Kirishima clung to my chest and cried, I reached for my cell phone.

The person I called was the detective I had interacted with last month. That man should have already left, and besides, he was a repeat offender. Even if he was from Kirishima’s family, I didn’t want any harm to come to me.

As a result of the call, the detective said he would come to my house for questioning. It was already around 5 p.m., and I should have been preparing dinner, but there was no other choice. For both my sake and Kirishima’s, we needed to prevent a recurrence.

“For now, I’ll prepare dinner. Please wait.”

The detective finished the questioning around 8 p.m. I hadn’t prepared dinner, so I checked the contents of the refrigerator for dishes that could be made quickly.

By the way, I couldn’t ask the detective why that man was able to walk around the town. No matter how many times I asked, his response was always the same.

“I can’t answer that due to confidentiality obligations.”

It was infuriating. Despite the fact that I had almost died from being stabbed with a knife, this was the response I received. I felt like my patience with the incompetence of the police was about to snap.

Moreover, I didn’t even know if the man had been apprehended again. If that were the case, I didn’t know when he might attack again. There was even a possibility that he would seek revenge.

I needed to come up with a plan. He might bring his accomplices next time or use even deadlier weapons. According to the detective, they would arrange for patrols around this area as a precaution. However, this was a small residential area, and it remained dangerous with few people passing by. Particularly for someone like Kirishima, being a girl made her even more vulnerable.

“Kirishima, it’s ready!”

My representative quick and easy dish was fried rice. This dish, which could be made in just 10 minutes, held a similar position in the Chinese cuisine world as the “delicious, cheap, and fast” gyudon. Or so I’ve heard.

However, Kirishima seemed quite down today. Well, it’s understandable.

“Let’s eat.”

There was no usual “It’s delicious!” and the living room fell silent. It was a somewhat poignant scene.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah... I’m fine.”

Kirishima gave a clearly not okay response. It’s normal to try to encourage her, but I couldn’t think of the right words to say. Her grades in social studies should be fine.

While feeling frustrated with my own lack of communication skills, I silently continued eating.

After completing various household chores, I diligently studied in the living room. I was currently memorizing geography. Social studies subjects were primarily based on memorization, so I made it a point to steadily work on them. I wanted to focus on studying subjects like math closer to the test, so I needed to study these memorization-based subjects regularly and only review them minimally before the test.

“Kurata-kun.”

“Hmm?”

Suddenly, Kirishima called out to me. When I turned around, she was already in her pajamas. Her long hair, straightened after a bath, appeared more radiant than usual.

“Um, would you sleep with me tonight?”

“It’s not a problem... Wait, what?!”

Kirishima’s invitation was too stimulating for a high school boy to handle.

Kirishima, who sat down on the sofa, was still trembling.

Having a conversation in such a situation must have been extremely difficult for her.

“Well, the thing is, that person is my step brother.”

Upon hearing this revelation from Kirishima, I couldn’t find the words to respond.

“My dad remarried around March this year. Did I mention it before? My dad used to love my mom, or so I thought.”

“Um, what happened to your mother, Kirishima?”

“She passed away about ten years ago. She was always frail. Around the time I was in elementary school, she had to be hospitalized for an extended period.”

So, this is about the pain of not having a mother... That expression on Kirishima’s face back then was filled with despair. It must have been the result of the overwhelming grief from losing her mother.

“And so, ever since my dad remarried, he stopped coming home, and my stepmother seems to despise me for some reason. ...Did I do something wrong?”

“But why did you end up being attacked? It’s not like you did anything wrong, right, Kirishima?”

Even if the stepmother didn’t like her stepdaughter, I couldn’t understand why she would go as far as to have Kirishima attacked, even involving her son. Alternatively, was the stepbrother acting alone?

“I don’t know either. We hardly ever spoke to each other. Well, to be honest, I was bullied in various ways.”

“That...sounds like abuse.”

“In the eyes of society, maybe.”

As Kirishima said that, she suddenly burst into tears.

“I couldn’t protect my mom or our home... I ran away from what was happening right in front of me.”

Listening to Kirishima’s harrowing past, I couldn’t help but feel sympathy. And so, the action I took was...

“Thank you... You’re really kind, Kurata-kun.”

Without interfering in what Kirishima said, I quietly embraced her. I wasn’t sure if this was the right thing to do for Kirishima, but it was something I had done for my younger sister in the past.

As Kirishima clung to my chest and cried, I reached for my cell phone.

The person I called was the detective I had interacted with last month. That man should have already left, and besides, he was a repeat offender. Even if he was from Kirishima's family, I didn't want any harm to come to me.

As a result of the call, the detective said he would come to my house for questioning. It was already around 5 p.m., and I should have been preparing dinner, but there was no other choice. For both my sake and Kirishima's, we needed to prevent a recurrence.

"For now, I'll prepare dinner. Please wait."

The detective finished the questioning around 8 p.m. I hadn't prepared dinner, so I checked the contents of the refrigerator for dishes that could be made quickly.

By the way, I couldn't ask the detective why that man was able to walk around the town. No matter how many times I asked, his response was always the same.

"I can't answer that due to confidentiality obligations."

It was infuriating. Despite the fact that I had almost died from being stabbed with a knife, this was the response I received. I felt like my patience with the incompetence of the police was about to snap.

Moreover, I didn't even know if the man had been apprehended again. If that were the case, I didn't know when he might attack again. There was even a possibility that he would seek revenge.

I needed to come up with a plan. He might bring his accomplices next time or use even deadlier weapons. According to the detective, they would arrange for patrols around this area as a precaution. However, this was a small residential area, and it remained dangerous with few people passing by. Particularly for someone like Kirishima, being a girl made her even more vulnerable.

"Kirishima, it's ready!"

My representative quick and easy dish was fried rice. This dish, which could be made in just 10 minutes, held a similar position in the Chinese cuisine world as the "delicious, cheap, and fast" gyudon. Or so I've heard.

However, Kirishima seemed quite down today. Well, it's understandable.

"Let's eat."

There was no usual "It's delicious!" and the living room fell silent. It was a somewhat poignant scene.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah... I'm fine."

Kirishima gave a clearly not okay response. It's normal to try to encourage her, but I couldn't think of the right words to say. Her grades in social studies should be fine.

While feeling frustrated with my own lack of communication skills, I silently continued eating.

After completing various household chores, I diligently studied in the living room. I was currently memorizing geography. Social studies subjects were primarily based on memorization, so I made it a point to steadily work on them. I wanted to focus on studying subjects like math closer to the test, so I needed to study these memorization-based subjects regularly and only review them minimally before the test.

"Kurata-kun."

"Hmm?"

Suddenly, Kirishima called out to me. When I turned around, she was already in her pajamas. Her long hair, straightened after a bath, appeared more radiant than usual.

"Um, would you sleep with me tonight?"

"It's not a problem... Wait, what?!"

Kirishima's invitation was too stimulating for a high school boy to handle.

Kirishima, who sat down on the sofa, was still trembling.

Having a conversation in such a situation must have been extremely difficult for her.

"Well, the thing is, that person is my step brother."

Upon hearing this revelation from Kirishima, I couldn't find the words to respond.

"My dad remarried around March this year. Did I mention it before? My dad used to love my mom, or so I thought."

"Um, what happened to your mother, Kirishima?"

“She passed away about ten years ago. She was always frail. Around the time I was in elementary school, she had to be hospitalized for an extended period.”

So, this is about the pain of not having a mother... That expression on Kirishima’s face back then was filled with despair. It must have been the result of the overwhelming grief from losing her mother.

“And so, ever since my dad remarried, he stopped coming home, and my stepmother seems to despise me for some reason. ...Did I do something wrong?”

“But why did you end up being attacked? It’s not like you did anything wrong, right, Kirishima?”

Even if the stepmother didn’t like her stepdaughter, I couldn’t understand why she would go as far as to have Kirishima attacked, even involving her son. Alternatively, was the stepbrother acting alone?

“I don’t know either. We hardly ever spoke to each other. Well, to be honest, I was bullied in various ways.”

“That...sounds like abuse.”

“In the eyes of society, maybe.”

As Kirishima said that, she suddenly burst into tears.

“I couldn’t protect my mom or our home... I ran away from what was happening right in front of me.”

Listening to Kirishima’s harrowing past, I couldn’t help but feel sympathy. And so, the action I took was...

“Thank you... You’re really kind, Kurata-kun.”

Without interfering in what Kirishima said, I quietly embraced her. I wasn’t sure if this was the right thing to do for Kirishima, but it was something I had done for my younger sister in the past.

As Kirishima clung to my chest and cried, I reached for my cell phone.

The person I called was the detective I had interacted with last month. That man should have already left, and besides, he was a repeat offender. Even if he was from Kirishima’s family, I didn’t want any harm to come to me.

As a result of the call, the detective said he would come to my house for questioning. It was already around 5 p.m., and I should have been preparing dinner, but there was no other choice. For both my sake and Kirishima’s, we needed to prevent a recurrence.

“For now, I’ll prepare dinner. Please wait.”

The detective finished the questioning around 8 p.m. I hadn’t prepared dinner, so I checked the contents of the refrigerator for dishes that could be made quickly.

By the way, I couldn’t ask the detective why that man was able to walk around the town. No matter how many times I asked, his response was always the same.

“I can’t answer that due to confidentiality obligations.”

It was infuriating. Despite the fact that I had almost died from being stabbed with a knife, this was the response I received. I felt like my patience with the incompetence of the police was about to snap.

Moreover, I didn’t even know if the man had been apprehended again. If that were the case, I didn’t know when he might attack again. There was even a possibility that he would seek revenge.

I needed to come up with a plan. He might bring his accomplices next time or use even deadlier weapons. According to the detective, they would arrange for patrols around this area as a precaution. However, this was a small residential area, and it remained dangerous with few people passing by. Particularly for someone like Kirishima, being a girl made her even more vulnerable.

“Kirishima, it’s ready!”

My representative quick and easy dish was fried rice. This dish, which could be made in just 10 minutes, held a similar position in the Chinese cuisine world as the “delicious, cheap, and fast” gyudon. Or so I’ve heard.

However, Kirishima seemed quite down today. Well, it’s understandable.

“Let’s eat.”

There was no usual “It’s delicious!” and the living room fell silent. It was a somewhat poignant scene.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah... I’m fine.”

Kirishima gave a clearly not okay response. It’s normal to try to encourage her, but I couldn’t think of the right words to say. Her grades in social studies should be fine.

While feeling frustrated with my own lack of communication skills, I silently continued eating. After completing various household chores, I diligently studied in the living room. I was currently memorizing geography. Social studies subjects were primarily based on memorization, so I made it a point to steadily work on them. I wanted to focus on studying subjects like math closer to the test, so I needed to study these memorization-based subjects regularly and only review them minimally before the test.

“Kurata-kun.”

“Hmm?”

Suddenly, Kirishima called out to me. When I turned around, she was already in her pajamas. Her long hair, straightened after a bath, appeared more radiant than usual.

“Um, would you sleep with me tonight?”

“It’s not a problem... Wait, what?!”

Kirishima’s invitation was too stimulating for a high school boy to handle.

"I'm scared, you know. I want you to stay with me today."

As I looked at Kirishima, who pleaded with me using upturned eyes, my mind was divided. There were two conflicting thoughts in my head: one was the idea of sleeping together to reassure Kirishima, who had been attacked, and the other was the ethical dilemma of whether it was appropriate for a boy and girl of our age to sleep together.

"Hey... Is it really not okay?"

"Umm... it's fine."

When she looked at me with those eyes, no guy could refuse. I almost reflexively agreed, but I wondered what would happen tonight.

With that in mind, I tried to study geography. Of course, I couldn't concentrate at all.

"...Shall we sleep?"

"Yeah."

We had been studying in the living room, but there was no reason to stay up late at night, so we decided to sleep earlier than usual.

Normally, Kirishima would have gone to sleep first, but today she stayed awake with me. The reason was because she said, "I'm scared of being alone... Can you stay with me?"

So, for Kirishima's sake, I made the decision to go to bed early. After all, we had school tomorrow.

"Okay, I'll go get the futon."

"Huh?"

I immediately tried to get the mattress and comforter to lay on the floor in my room, but Kirishima looked puzzled. Why?

"Um, what's wrong?"

"Well, I want to sleep in the same bed."

It seemed that Kirishima desired to sleep side by side. The moment I heard that, my mind was filled with question marks.

"Please. I'm scared when I'm alone."

"Fine. But please don't cling onto me since I agreed."

Kirishima wouldn't let me go and hugged my body. It would be great if various things weren't pressing against me.

"Well, I don't mind sleeping together, but what about you, Kirishima? Do you have any resistance?"

"No."

She answered immediately. I wonder if she's okay, given this lack of crisis awareness.

"Oh, alright. Shall we go to the room then?"

"Yeah!"

Kirishima answered with a beaming smile. Now I'm starting to worry if I'll be able to sleep peacefully tonight.

In the end, we ended up sleeping in the same bed. My bed was attached to the wall, but I slept on the side attached to the wall, while Kirishima took the side next to the door.

"I'll turn off the lights."

Lying down in the darkness, I operated the remote control placed by the pillow and turned off the lights.

By the way, there was a wonderful fragrance, which made me feel uneasy for some reason. But I couldn't let that bother me. Kirishima trusted me like this.

"Thank you for today, Kouji."

"Huh? W-what's wrong?"

Out of the blue, Kirishima hugged my back as I lay down. Not only that, she called me by my first name. My heart instantly started beating faster. Just having a beautiful girl hugging me is enough to make me quite nervous, but calling me by my name puts a strain on my heart. It's definitely a happy thing, but...

"At first, I intended to keep the situation at my house a secret deep in my heart. You know, I always acted cheerful in the classroom, right?"

“Yeah, you did...”

“That’s why I couldn’t tell everyone about this. But I never thought things would become so serious.”
Well... yeah. Nobody would expect to be stabbed from behind or suddenly attacked on the way home.

“That’s why I’m grateful to you, Kouji. You’re my hero, you know? You protect me, shelter me. You’re the only person who gives me a sense of belonging.”

Kirishima speaks intermittently.

“So please, don’t abandon me. Right now, you’re my only place to belong. I don’t know what would happen to me if you were to leave me.”

Saying that, Kirishima tightened her embrace even more. I suddenly felt an urge to stroke her head. Perhaps it was because Kirishima’s words slightly overlapped with the image of my younger sister from the past. My sister also went through a period of mental instability, and I remember comforting her by sleeping beside her during that time. However, sleeping with my sister and sleeping with Kirishima are psychologically quite different.

“Don’t worry. I won’t abandon you, Kirishima.”

While stroking Kirishima’s head, I answered with a half-asleep mind.

“Thank you, Kouji. I’ll definitely repay this debt.”

“Yeah, please do.”

My consciousness sank into deep darkness at that moment.

“I love you, Koji.”

Whispering those words, Kirishima also drifted into sleep. Of course, within his chest.

“I’m scared, you know. I want you to stay with me today.”

As I looked at Kirishima, who pleaded with me using upturned eyes, my mind was divided. There were two conflicting thoughts in my head: one was the idea of sleeping together to reassure Kirishima, who had been attacked, and the other was the ethical dilemma of whether it was appropriate for a boy and girl of our age to sleep together.

“Hey... Is it really not okay?”

“Umm... it’s fine.”

When she looked at me with those eyes, no guy could refuse. I almost reflexively agreed, but I wondered what would happen tonight.

With that in mind, I tried to study geography. Of course, I couldn’t concentrate at all.

“...Shall we sleep?”

“Yeah.”

We had been studying in the living room, but there was no reason to stay up late at night, so we decided to sleep earlier than usual.

Normally, Kirishima would have gone to sleep first, but today she stayed awake with me. The reason was because she said, “I’m scared of being alone... Can you stay with me?”

So, for Kirishima’s sake, I made the decision to go to bed early. After all, we had school tomorrow.

“Okay, I’ll go get the futon.”

“Huh?”

I immediately tried to get the mattress and comforter to lay on the floor in my room, but Kirishima looked puzzled. Why?

“Um, what’s wrong?”

“Well, I want to sleep in the same bed.”

It seemed that Kirishima desired to sleep side by side. The moment I heard that, my mind was filled with question marks.

“Please. I’m scared when I’m alone.”

“Fine. But please don’t cling onto me since I agreed.”

Kirishima wouldn’t let me go and hugged my body. It would be great if various things weren’t pressing against me.

“Well, I don’t mind sleeping together, but what about you, Kirishima? Do you have any resistance?”

“No.”

She answered immediately. I wonder if she’s okay, given this lack of crisis awareness.

“Oh, alright. Shall we go to the room then?”

“Yeah!”

Kirishima answered with a beaming smile. Now I’m starting to worry if I’ll be able to sleep peacefully tonight.

In the end, we ended up sleeping in the same bed. My bed was attached to the wall, but I slept on the side attached to the wall, while Kirishima took the side next to the door.

“I’ll turn off the lights.”

Lying down in the darkness, I operated the remote control placed by the pillow and turned off the lights. By the way, there was a wonderful fragrance, which made me feel uneasy for some reason. But I couldn’t let that bother me. Kirishima trusted me like this.

“Thank you for today, Kouji.”

“Huh? W-what’s wrong?”

Out of the blue, Kirishima hugged my back as I lay down. Not only that, she called me by my first name. My heart instantly started beating faster. Just having a beautiful girl hugging me is enough to make me quite nervous, but calling me by my name puts a strain on my heart. It’s definitely a happy thing, but...

“At first, I intended to keep the situation at my house a secret deep in my heart. You know, I always acted cheerful in the classroom, right?”

“Yeah, you did...”

“That’s why I couldn’t tell everyone about this. But I never thought things would become so serious.”

Well... yeah. Nobody would expect to be stabbed from behind or suddenly attacked on the way home.

“That’s why I’m grateful to you, Kouji. You’re my hero, you know? You protect me, shelter me. You’re the only person who gives me a sense of belonging.”

Kirishima speaks intermittently.

“So please, don’t abandon me. Right now, you’re my only place to belong. I don’t know what would happen to me if you were to leave me.”

Saying that, Kirishima tightened her embrace even more. I suddenly felt an urge to stroke her head.

Perhaps it was because Kirishima’s words slightly overlapped with the image of my younger sister from the past. My sister also went through a period of mental instability, and I remember comforting her by sleeping beside her during that time. However, sleeping with my sister and sleeping with Kirishima are psychologically quite different.

“Don’t worry. I won’t abandon you, Kirishima.”

While stroking Kirishima’s head, I answered with a half-asleep mind.

“Thank you, Kouji. I’ll definitely repay this debt.”

“Yeah, please do.”

My consciousness sank into deep darkness at that moment.

“I love you, Koji.”

Whispering those words, Kirishima also drifted into sleep. Of course, within his chest.

“I’m scared, you know. I want you to stay with me today.”

As I looked at Kirishima, who pleaded with me using upturned eyes, my mind was divided. There were two conflicting thoughts in my head: one was the idea of sleeping together to reassure Kirishima, who had been attacked, and the other was the ethical dilemma of whether it was appropriate for a boy and girl of our age to sleep together.

“Hey... Is it really not okay?”

“Umm... it’s fine.”

When she looked at me with those eyes, no guy could refuse. I almost reflexively agreed, but I wondered what would happen tonight.

With that in mind, I tried to study geography. Of course, I couldn’t concentrate at all.

“...Shall we sleep?”

“Yeah.”

We had been studying in the living room, but there was no reason to stay up late at night, so we decided

to sleep earlier than usual.

Normally, Kirishima would have gone to sleep first, but today she stayed awake with me. The reason was because she said, "I'm scared of being alone... Can you stay with me?"

So, for Kirishima's sake, I made the decision to go to bed early. After all, we had school tomorrow.

"Okay, I'll go get the futon."

"Huh?"

I immediately tried to get the mattress and comforter to lay on the floor in my room, but Kirishima looked puzzled. Why?

"Um, what's wrong?"

"Well, I want to sleep in the same bed."

It seemed that Kirishima desired to sleep side by side. The moment I heard that, my mind was filled with question marks.

"Please. I'm scared when I'm alone."

"Fine. But please don't cling onto me since I agreed."

Kirishima wouldn't let me go and hugged my body. It would be great if various things weren't pressing against me.

"Well, I don't mind sleeping together, but what about you, Kirishima? Do you have any resistance?"

"No."

She answered immediately. I wonder if she's okay, given this lack of crisis awareness.

"Oh, alright. Shall we go to the room then?"

"Yeah!"

Kirishima answered with a beaming smile. Now I'm starting to worry if I'll be able to sleep peacefully tonight.

In the end, we ended up sleeping in the same bed. My bed was attached to the wall, but I slept on the side attached to the wall, while Kirishima took the side next to the door.

"I'll turn off the lights."

Lying down in the darkness, I operated the remote control placed by the pillow and turned off the lights.

By the way, there was a wonderful fragrance, which made me feel uneasy for some reason. But I couldn't let that bother me. Kirishima trusted me like this.

"Thank you for today, Kouji."

"Huh? W-what's wrong?"

Out of the blue, Kirishima hugged my back as I lay down. Not only that, she called me by my first name. My heart instantly started beating faster. Just having a beautiful girl hugging me is enough to make me quite nervous, but calling me by my name puts a strain on my heart. It's definitely a happy thing, but...

"At first, I intended to keep the situation at my house a secret deep in my heart. You know, I always acted cheerful in the classroom, right?"

"Yeah, you did..."

"That's why I couldn't tell everyone about this. But I never thought things would become so serious."

Well... yeah. Nobody would expect to be stabbed from behind or suddenly attacked on the way home.

"That's why I'm grateful to you, Kouji. You're my hero, you know? You protect me, shelter me. You're the only person who gives me a sense of belonging."

Kirishima speaks intermittently.

"So please, don't abandon me. Right now, you're my only place to belong. I don't know what would happen to me if you were to leave me."

Saying that, Kirishima tightened her embrace even more. I suddenly felt an urge to stroke her head.

Perhaps it was because Kirishima's words slightly overlapped with the image of my younger sister from the past. My sister also went through a period of mental instability, and I remember comforting her by sleeping beside her during that time. However, sleeping with my sister and sleeping with Kirishima are psychologically quite different.

"Don't worry. I won't abandon you, Kirishima."

While stroking Kirishima's head, I answered with a half-asleep mind.

"Thank you, Kouji. I'll definitely repay this debt."

“Yeah, please do.”

My consciousness sank into deep darkness at that moment.

“I love you, Koji.”

Whispering those words, Kirishima also drifted into sleep. Of course, within his chest.

“Hmm...”

The next morning.

I woke up on my own with the sunlight coming through the gap in the curtains.

“...Heheh~~. Koji, don’t~~!”

“Um~, Kirishima-san~”

A beautiful girl was hugging me tightly and talking in her sleep. What is this situation?

Moreover, because of Kirishima’s close proximity, various parts of the girl’s body are hitting my whole body. To be honest, I want to get out of here as soon as possible. It is too much stimulation for a high school boy.

“Kirishima, wake up.”

“Mnnnnnnnnnnnn!”

I decided that Kirishima would not wake up even if I called out to her, so I pinched her cheeks to force her to wake up. I was somewhat reluctant to touch her cheeks, but I told myself that it was her fault for not waking up. I told myself that it was my fault that Kirishima did not wake up. It was not because I wanted to touch her.

“Good morning...”

Kirishima finally woke up. Apparently, Kirishima is not the type to wake up in the morning.

Rather than that, I’d like you to do something about the way you’re hugging my body. I am trying very hard to suppress the physiological phenomenon of men.

“Um, you’re touching me in various places.”

“Oh, sorry.”

Kirishima untangled her hand that was wrapped around my neck and sat up. She still looked sleepy, rubbing her eyes. At times like this, it’s good to have breakfast and freshen up.

“For now, let’s have breakfast downstairs. What do you want to eat?”

“Well... something light would be nice.”

When it comes to a light breakfast, a sandwich would be good. That’s the only thing that came to mind. Besides, I don’t have much time to make something elaborate.

“Then, how about a tuna sandwich? Anyway, I’ll go downstairs, so please get ready.”

Since there are various things a girl needs to do, I should take the initiative. With that in mind, I left the room.

Now, let’s make a tuna sandwich.

First, I’ll take an onion wrapped in plastic wrap from the refrigerator. It’s the leftover from when I made hamburgers, so it’s lucky that I can make use of it like this.

After finely chopping the onion, I’ll sprinkle some salt and massage it a bit, then soak it in water. The purpose is to remove the pungent compounds of the onion with water. Ideally, it should be soaked for about an hour, but since I don’t have time, it will be around 5 to 10 minutes. Can’t be helped.

In the meantime, I’ll make the tuna mayo. I’ll open the lid of the tuna can and drain as much oil as possible from the tuna, then mix it with mayonnaise. If I mix the oil from the tuna can, the oil will separate and become sticky.

Finally, I’ll toss the onion, which has been drained of moisture with kitchen paper, with the tuna mayo. That completes the filling.

All that’s left is to sandwich it between slices of bread, and it’s done.

“I’m done preparing.”

“Oh, the tuna sandwich is ready.”

“Bon appétit.”

Now, should I get ready too...

“Alright, let’s go.”

“Okay.”

After finishing breakfast, we got ready for school. Not that it was any different from our usual routine.

However, I put my smartphone in my bag, which I don't usually bring with me. After yesterday's attack, I decided it would be better to have a way to call the police anywhere, just in case I get attacked again without warning.

I won't let Kirishima be attacked anymore. That was the strong determination I had made.

As we walked along the school route, Kirishima suddenly started talking to me. She had been silent and walking beside me until just now, so I was surprised.

"By the way..."

"W-What?"

"Why are you getting all defensive? No, it's not a big deal or anything, but can I call you Kouji at school?"

"That's a bit..."

In my mind, I screamed, "It's a really big deal!!!" Well, well, if she calls me that, it will definitely lead to misunderstandings. And if people think that our relationship has deepened the moment we become seat neighbors, I'm sure I'll be subjected to negative looks. Please stop.

"Well, I guess so."

Kirishima's face looked a bit sad for some reason, but did I do something? Did I say something that hurt her feelings?

"Then, I'll call you Kurata-kun at school. But I'll call you Kouji at other times!"

"Well, it doesn't matter..."

Now Kirishima's face turned really red. She seems to be showing intense emotions, but I'll just ignore it. As Kirishima continued to talk to me, we arrived at school a little earlier than usual.

"Hmm..."

The next morning.

I woke up on my own with the sunlight coming through the gap in the curtains.

"...Heheh~~. Koji, don't~~!"

"Um~, Kirishima-san~"

A beautiful girl was hugging me tightly and talking in her sleep. What is this situation?

Moreover, because of Kirishima's close proximity, various parts of the girl's body are hitting my whole body. To be honest, I want to get out of here as soon as possible. It is too much stimulation for a high school boy.

"Kirishima, wake up."

"Mnnnnnnnnnnn!"

I decided that Kirishima would not wake up even if I called out to her, so I pinched her cheeks to force her to wake up. I was somewhat reluctant to touch her cheeks, but I told myself that it was her fault for not waking up. I told myself that it was my fault that Kirishima did not wake up. It was not because I wanted to touch her.

"Good morning..."

Kirishima finally woke up. Apparently, Kirishima is not the type to wake up in the morning.

Rather than that, I'd like you to do something about the way you're hugging my body. I am trying very hard to suppress the physiological phenomenon of men.

"Um, you're touching me in various places."

"Oh, sorry."

Kirishima untangled her hand that was wrapped around my neck and sat up. She still looked sleepy, rubbing her eyes. At times like this, it's good to have breakfast and freshen up.

"For now, let's have breakfast downstairs. What do you want to eat?"

"Well... something light would be nice."

When it comes to a light breakfast, a sandwich would be good. That's the only thing that came to mind. Besides, I don't have much time to make something elaborate.

"Then, how about a tuna sandwich? Anyway, I'll go downstairs, so please get ready."

Since there are various things a girl needs to do, I should take the initiative. With that in mind, I left the room.

Now, let's make a tuna sandwich.

First, I'll take an onion wrapped in plastic wrap from the refrigerator. It's the leftover from when I made hamburgers, so it's lucky that I can make use of it like this.

After finely chopping the onion, I'll sprinkle some salt and massage it a bit, then soak it in water. The purpose is to remove the pungent compounds of the onion with water. Ideally, it should be soaked for about an hour, but since I don't have time, it will be around 5 to 10 minutes. Can't be helped.

In the meantime, I'll make the tuna mayo. I'll open the lid of the tuna can and drain as much oil as possible from the tuna, then mix it with mayonnaise. If I mix the oil from the tuna can, the oil will separate and become sticky.

Finally, I'll toss the onion, which has been drained of moisture with kitchen paper, with the tuna mayo. That completes the filling.

All that's left is to sandwich it between slices of bread, and it's done.

"I'm done preparing."

"Oh, the tuna sandwich is ready."

"Bon appétit."

Now, should I get ready too...

"Alright, let's go."

"Okay."

After finishing breakfast, we got ready for school. Not that it was any different from our usual routine. However, I put my smartphone in my bag, which I don't usually bring with me. After yesterday's attack, I decided it would be better to have a way to call the police anywhere, just in case I get attacked again without warning.

I won't let Kirishima be attacked anymore. That was the strong determination I had made.

As we walked along the school route, Kirishima suddenly started talking to me. She had been silent and walking beside me until just now, so I was surprised.

"By the way..."

"W-What?"

"Why are you getting all defensive? No, it's not a big deal or anything, but can I call you Kouji at school?"

"That's a bit..."

In my mind, I screamed, "It's a really big deal!!!" Well, well, if she calls me that, it will definitely lead to misunderstandings. And if people think that our relationship has deepened the moment we become seat neighbors, I'm sure I'll be subjected to negative looks. Please stop.

"Well, I guess so."

Kirishima's face looked a bit sad for some reason, but did I do something? Did I say something that hurt her feelings?

"Then, I'll call you Kurata-kun at school. But I'll call you Kouji at other times!"

"Well, it doesn't matter..."

Now Kirishima's face turned really red. She seems to be showing intense emotions, but I'll just ignore it. As Kirishima continued to talk to me, we arrived at school a little earlier than usual.

"Hmm..."

The next morning.

I woke up on my own with the sunlight coming through the gap in the curtains.

"...Heheh~~. Koji, don't~~!"

"Um~, Kirishima-san~"

A beautiful girl was hugging me tightly and talking in her sleep. What is this situation?

A beautiful girl was hugging me tightly and talking in her sleep.

What is this situation?

Moreover, because of Kirishima's close proximity, various parts of the girl's body are hitting my whole body. To be honest, I want to get out of here as soon as possible. It is too much stimulation for a high school boy.

"Kirishima, wake up."

“Mnnnnnnnnnn!”

I decided that Kirishima would not wake up even if I called out to her, so I pinched her cheeks to force her to wake up. I was somewhat reluctant to touch her cheeks, but I told myself that it was her fault for not waking up. I told myself that it was my fault that Kirishima did not wake up. It was not because I wanted to touch her.

“Good morning...”

Kirishima finally woke up. Apparently, Kirishima is not the type to wake up in the morning.

Rather than that, I'd like you to do something about the way you're hugging my body. I am trying very hard to suppress the physiological phenomenon of men.

“Um, you're touching me in various places.”

“Oh, sorry.”

Kirishima untangled her hand that was wrapped around my neck and sat up. She still looked sleepy, rubbing her eyes. At times like this, it's good to have breakfast and freshen up.

“For now, let's have breakfast downstairs. What do you want to eat?”

“Well... something light would be nice.”

When it comes to a light breakfast, a sandwich would be good. That's the only thing that came to mind. Besides, I don't have much time to make something elaborate.

“Then, how about a tuna sandwich? Anyway, I'll go downstairs, so please get ready.”

Since there are various things a girl needs to do, I should take the initiative. With that in mind, I left the room.

Now, let's make a tuna sandwich.

First, I'll take an onion wrapped in plastic wrap from the refrigerator. It's the leftover from when I made hamburgers, so it's lucky that I can make use of it like this.

After finely chopping the onion, I'll sprinkle some salt and massage it a bit, then soak it in water. The purpose is to remove the pungent compounds of the onion with water. Ideally, it should be soaked for about an hour, but since I don't have time, it will be around 5 to 10 minutes. Can't be helped.

In the meantime, I'll make the tuna mayo. I'll open the lid of the tuna can and drain as much oil as possible from the tuna, then mix it with mayonnaise. If I mix the oil from the tuna can, the oil will separate and become sticky.

Finally, I'll toss the onion, which has been drained of moisture with kitchen paper, with the tuna mayo. That completes the filling.

All that's left is to sandwich it between slices of bread, and it's done.

“I'm done preparing.”

“Oh, the tuna sandwich is ready.”

“Bon appétit.”

Now, should I get ready too...

“Alright, let's go.”

“Okay.”

After finishing breakfast, we got ready for school. Not that it was any different from our usual routine. However, I put my smartphone in my bag, which I don't usually bring with me. After yesterday's attack, I decided it would be better to have a way to call the police anywhere, just in case I get attacked again without warning.

I won't let Kirishima be attacked anymore. That was the strong determination I had made.

I won't let Kirishima be attacked anymore.

That was the strong determination I had made.

As we walked along the school route, Kirishima suddenly started talking to me. She had been silent and walking beside me until just now, so I was surprised.

“By the way...”

“W-What?”

“Why are you getting all defensive? No, it's not a big deal or anything, but can I call you Kouji at school?”

“That's a bit...”

In my mind, I screamed, “It’s a really big deal!!!” Well, well, if she calls me that, it will definitely lead to misunderstandings. And if people think that our relationship has deepened the moment we become seat neighbors, I’m sure I’ll be subjected to negative looks. Please stop.

“Well, I guess so.”

Kirishima’s face looked a bit sad for some reason, but did I do something? Did I say something that hurt her feelings?

“Then, I’ll call you Kurata-kun at school. But I’ll call you Kouji at other times!”

“Well, it doesn’t matter...”

Now Kirishima’s face turned really red. She seems to be showing intense emotions, but I’ll just ignore it. As Kirishima continued to talk to me, we arrived at school a little earlier than usual.

“You guys, we have regular exams starting next week, so study hard during this holiday. Alright, let’s wrap up.”

The homeroom teacher conveyed the announcements at the end of the day with a sluggish tone. Most of the class was engaged in chatter with their neighbors, but without paying much attention to that, the teacher quickly ended the homeroom.

“Okay, bye-bye~”

“Bye-bye.”

Kirishima waved her hand as the girls bid farewell. If it were about a month ago, she would have left the classroom with them.

“... Well, I’ll wait for you ahead.”

“Got it.”

After whispering to Kirishima in a voice that wouldn’t be heard by others, I left the classroom and changed my shoes in the entranceway. Then, right after passing through the school gate, I stopped by a lamppost just around the corner.

I had twisted my head to find an answer that would reconcile protecting Kirishima’s safety and preventing misunderstandings from those around us. The solution I came up with was to meet up in a place where no one would notice.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

“It’s fine, let’s go.”

I walked alongside Kirishima on the way back home. As I glanced at her, I noticed that she was walking with her head slightly down. It seemed that Kirishima was still feeling down. Throughout the day at school, there were moments where she clearly had a strained expression.

At times like this, there wasn’t much I could do other than try to bring up a topic that would cheer her up.

“By the way, Kirishima, do you like anyone?”

“What?!”

Kirishima’s face instantly turned red. It might have been inappropriate to ask such a question to a girl, especially since we were not of the same gender, but it could help change her mood from being down.

“H-Hey, why are you suddenly asking that?”

“Well... If you were to say something like, ‘I have someone I like!’ or something, I might have to change how I act towards you.”

“What do you mean by ‘change’?”

“Well, it’s not really good for a guy and a girl to live in the same house, you know.”

By the way, I intentionally brought up this topic with a slightly mischievous intention. Since we slept together yesterday, Kirishima’s reactions felt a bit off. I couldn’t help but wonder if there was something going on.

After that, Kirishima started mumbling something quietly. However, her voice was too low, and I couldn’t understand what she was saying at all.

“Well, I don’t often see you interacting with the guys in our class, Kirishima.”

“Because if I were to actively interact with them, they might misunderstand. If that happens, the other girls wouldn’t think kindly of it, I suppose.”

“That’s true. Also, the girls in our class seem to look at guys like they’re scrutinizing them.”

Those girls’ gazes were truly unpleasant. Moreover, I happened to overhear later on, but I was labeled as a typical “unpopular” guy. It made me quite angry to know that they were criticizing me without knowing my circumstances.

“Well, it can’t be helped. It’s that age, after all. But, K-Kouji, I think you’re kind and cool.”

“If I can be thought of that way, even by you alone, I’m grateful.”

Although I don’t really mind it now, I was truly grateful for her support.

As for Kirishima’s state of mind, it became rather complicated.

“I wonder how I should have answered when someone I like asked me something like this...”

Unfortunately, Kirishima's thoughts didn't reach anyone.

Today was Saturday, so we arrived home at 3 o'clock.

There wasn't much to do, just killing time.

"...What are you doing?"

Instead of changing out of my uniform and lazing around on the sofa, Kirishima came downstairs in her casual clothes and entered the living room.

"Well, I was wondering why exams even exist."

As I said that, Kirishima's expression turned cold in an instant. Ah, I wonder if she's angry. It's been like this before, but it seems like Kirishima really wants to improve my academic performance.

"You said you were going to study at home. Are you going back on our promise to study together?"

"Huh? Did we promise to study together, Kirishima?"

"Don't play dumb. Hurry up and change and come here."

"Well... I don't mind if you focus on your own studies."

"..."

Kirishima pointed silently toward the door. Her expression was very stern, and it seemed like she wasn't receptive to jokes.

Without saying a word, she drove me off the sofa as if it went without saying. I couldn't help but feel like I was being pushed around, but maybe it's just my imagination.

With a slight sense of unease about my future, I began preparing to study.

"You guys, we have regular exams starting next week, so study hard during this holiday. Alright, let's wrap up."

The homeroom teacher conveyed the announcements at the end of the day with a sluggish tone. Most of the class was engaged in chatter with their neighbors, but without paying much attention to that, the teacher quickly ended the homeroom.

"Okay, bye-bye~"

"Bye-bye."

Kirishima waved her hand as the girls bid farewell. If it were about a month ago, she would have left the classroom with them.

"... Well, I'll wait for you ahead."

"Got it."

After whispering to Kirishima in a voice that wouldn't be heard by others, I left the classroom and changed my shoes in the entranceway. Then, right after passing through the school gate, I stopped by a lamppost just around the corner.

I had twisted my head to find an answer that would reconcile protecting Kirishima's safety and preventing misunderstandings from those around us. The solution I came up with was to meet up in a place where no one would notice.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

"It's fine, let's go."

I walked alongside Kirishima on the way back home. As I glanced at her, I noticed that she was walking with her head slightly down. It seemed that Kirishima was still feeling down. Throughout the day at school, there were moments where she clearly had a strained expression.

At times like this, there wasn't much I could do other than try to bring up a topic that would cheer her up.

"By the way, Kirishima, do you like anyone?"

"What?!"

Kirishima's face instantly turned red. It might have been inappropriate to ask such a question to a girl, especially since we were not of the same gender, but it could help change her mood from being down.

"H-Hey, why are you suddenly asking that?"

"Well... If you were to say something like, 'I have someone I like!' or something, I might have to change how I act towards you."

"What do you mean by 'change'?"

“Well, it’s not really good for a guy and a girl to live in the same house, you know.”

By the way, I intentionally brought up this topic with a slightly mischievous intention. Since we slept together yesterday, Kirishima’s reactions felt a bit off. I couldn’t help but wonder if there was something going on.

After that, Kirishima started mumbling something quietly. However, her voice was too low, and I couldn’t understand what she was saying at all.

“Well, I don’t often see you interacting with the guys in our class, Kirishima.”

“Because if I were to actively interact with them, they might misunderstand. If that happens, the other girls wouldn’t think kindly of it, I suppose.”

“That’s true. Also, the girls in our class seem to look at guys like they’re scrutinizing them.”

Those girls’ gazes were truly unpleasant. Moreover, I happened to overhear later on, but I was labeled as a typical “unpopular” guy. It made me quite angry to know that they were criticizing me without knowing my circumstances.

“Well, it can’t be helped. It’s that age, after all. But, K-Kouji, I think you’re kind and cool.”

“If I can be thought of that way, even by you alone, I’m grateful.”

Although I don’t really mind it now, I was truly grateful for her support.

As for Kirishima’s state of mind, it became rather complicated.

“I wonder how I should have answered when someone I like asked me something like this…”

Unfortunately, Kirishima’s thoughts didn’t reach anyone.

Today was Saturday, so we arrived home at 3 o’clock.

There wasn’t much to do, just killing time.

“...What are you doing?”

Instead of changing out of my uniform and lazing around on the sofa, Kirishima came downstairs in her casual clothes and entered the living room.

“Well, I was wondering why exams even exist.”

As I said that, Kirishima’s expression turned cold in an instant. Ah, I wonder if she’s angry. It’s been like this before, but it seems like Kirishima really wants to improve my academic performance.

“You said you were going to study at home. Are you going back on our promise to study together?”

“Huh? Did we promise to study together, Kirishima?”

“Don’t play dumb. Hurry up and change and come here.”

“Well... I don’t mind if you focus on your own studies.”

“...”

Kirishima pointed silently toward the door. Her expression was very stern, and it seemed like she wasn’t receptive to jokes.

Without saying a word, she drove me off the sofa as if it went without saying. I couldn’t help but feel like I was being pushed around, but maybe it’s just my imagination.

With a slight sense of unease about my future, I began preparing to study.

“You guys, we have regular exams starting next week, so study hard during this holiday. Alright, let’s wrap up.”

The homeroom teacher conveyed the announcements at the end of the day with a sluggish tone. Most of the class was engaged in chatter with their neighbors, but without paying much attention to that, the teacher quickly ended the homeroom.

“Okay, bye-bye~”

“Bye-bye.”

Kirishima waved her hand as the girls bid farewell. If it were about a month ago, she would have left the classroom with them.

“... Well, I’ll wait for you ahead.”

“Got it.”

After whispering to Kirishima in a voice that wouldn’t be heard by others, I left the classroom and changed my shoes in the entranceway. Then, right after passing through the school gate, I stopped by a lamppost just around the corner.

I had twisted my head to find an answer that would reconcile protecting Kirishima’s safety and

preventing misunderstandings from those around us. The solution I came up with was to meet up in a place where no one would notice.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

"It's fine, let's go."

I walked alongside Kirishima on the way back home. As I glanced at her, I noticed that she was walking with her head slightly down. It seemed that Kirishima was still feeling down. Throughout the day at school, there were moments where she clearly had a strained expression.

At times like this, there wasn't much I could do other than try to bring up a topic that would cheer her up.

"By the way, Kirishima, do you like anyone?"

"What?!"

Kirishima's face instantly turned red. It might have been inappropriate to ask such a question to a girl, especially since we were not of the same gender, but it could help change her mood from being down.

"H-Hey, why are you suddenly asking that?"

"Well... If you were to say something like, 'I have someone I like!' or something, I might have to change how I act towards you."

"What do you mean by 'change'?"

"Well, it's not really good for a guy and a girl to live in the same house, you know."

By the way, I intentionally brought up this topic with a slightly mischievous intention. Since we slept together yesterday, Kirishima's reactions felt a bit off. I couldn't help but wonder if there was something going on.

After that, Kirishima started mumbling something quietly. However, her voice was too low, and I couldn't understand what she was saying at all.

"Well, I don't often see you interacting with the guys in our class, Kirishima."

"Because if I were to actively interact with them, they might misunderstand. If that happens, the other girls wouldn't think kindly of it, I suppose."

"That's true. Also, the girls in our class seem to look at guys like they're scrutinizing them."

Those girls' gazes were truly unpleasant. Moreover, I happened to overhear later on, but I was labeled as a typical "unpopular" guy. It made me quite angry to know that they were criticizing me without knowing my circumstances.

"Well, it can't be helped. It's that age, after all. But, K-Kouji, I think you're kind and cool."

"If I can be thought of that way, even by you alone, I'm grateful."

Although I don't really mind it now, I was truly grateful for her support.

As for Kirishima's state of mind, it became rather complicated.

"I wonder how I should have answered when someone I like asked me something like this..."

Unfortunately, Kirishima's thoughts didn't reach anyone.

Today was Saturday, so we arrived home at 3 o'clock.

There wasn't much to do, just killing time.

"...What are you doing?"

Instead of changing out of my uniform and lazing around on the sofa, Kirishima came downstairs in her casual clothes and entered the living room.

"Well, I was wondering why exams even exist."

As I said that, Kirishima's expression turned cold in an instant. Ah, I wonder if she's angry. It's been like this before, but it seems like Kirishima really wants to improve my academic performance.

"You said you were going to study at home. Are you going back on our promise to study together?"

"Huh? Did we promise to study together, Kirishima?"

"Don't play dumb. Hurry up and change and come here."

"Well... I don't mind if you focus on your own studies."

"..."

Kirishima pointed silently toward the door. Her expression was very stern, and it seemed like she wasn't receptive to jokes.

Without saying a word, she drove me off the sofa as if it went without saying. I couldn't help but feel like I was being pushed around, but maybe it's just my imagination.

With a slight sense of unease about my future, I began preparing to study.

Sunday. It is commonly understood that it is a day off for most people.

However, my leisurely Sunday was about to be interrupted.

“Kouji~”

I could hear a voice calling me from the realm of drowsiness. But I wanted to stay wrapped up in the warm blanket. Since there’s no school today, I wanted to sleep in a little longer...

Snap

“How long are you going to sleep? It’s already morning.”

“...I’m sleepy.”

“Ugh. If you’re not going to wake up, I have other methods, you know?”

I heard a camera shutter sound, but I couldn’t care less. The warm blanket is the best. It’s a day off, so let me sleep a bit more...

“If you’re not planning to wake up...!”

Then, out of nowhere, Kirishima straddled my stomach while I was still asleep. I was startled by this and my brain suddenly woke up.

Still struggling to lift my heavy eyelids, I tried to assess the situation.

“W-What are you doing!?”

“I’m sorry, but you’re not waking up, right? Come on, wake up already!, Kouji~!”

Saying that, she started lightly patting my chest. It was kind of cute.

In a mischievous moment, I closed my eyes again. I wanted to see Kirishima’s reaction.

“Ah! You’re still sleeping? Ugh.”

Kirishima seemed quite angry that I wasn’t waking up.

“If that’s how it is... Hehehe.”

Then, Kirishima suddenly pulled off the blanket.

“Wake up, Kouji.”

“Huh!?”

Kirishima whispered in my ear, urging me to wake up. My body shivered at this unfamiliar sensation.

“If you don’t wake up, I’ll do something even more embarrassing.”

No, this is bad. This way of waking someone up is like poison to a guy. In fact, my little buddy has already started its engine.

“Um, I’ll wake up. Please spare me.”

“Oh, really?”

I actually felt a bit reluctant to wake up, but it’s a bigger problem to have that “thing” standing up in front of Kirishima. I don’t know to what extent she is knowledgeable about these things, but since we’re living together, I have to avoid making her uncomfortable.

“By the way, what time is it now?”

“Well... It’s around 8 o’clock, I think.”

8 o’clock. That used to be the time when I would definitely still be sleeping.

“You would’ve probably slept until noon if I hadn’t woken you up.”

“Ugh...”

She hit the nail on the head, and I couldn’t argue back. She probably woke me up with the intention of making me study since we have the regular exams starting tomorrow.

“Should I make breakfast?”

“Then I’ll prepare for studying during that time. I won’t let you get bad grades in the midterms, okay?”

I don’t know why she’s going to such lengths, but for me, whose grades in math and science are struggling, it’s a very appreciated gesture.

“Kouji, your sleeping face is so cute.”

“Huh?”

While grinning, Kirishima showed me the screen of her phone. It displayed a picture of me sleeping soundly, wrapped up in the blanket.

“When did...?”

“It was when I first entered the room. I thought you would wake up when I opened the door, but your sleep was quite impressive.”

Ah, how embarrassing.

“If you feel frustrated, then try waking up earlier than me.”

“I’ll definitely capture your sleeping face on camera... Kirishima...”

Kirishima seemed to be speaking the same thoughts as mine, as if she could read my mind. A mysterious sense of rivalry emerged within me, and my frustration grew.

“But I guess the only chance for that is when we sleep together. Kouji, you don’t seem like the type to enter a girl’s bedroom.”

“That’s more of a common sense or resistance.”

“Right?”

When I sleep with Kirishima, I get extremely nervous. And isn’t it strange that she falls asleep right away while I have trouble falling asleep? In the end, Kirishima is the one who ends up waking up early.

“Well, I’ll be preparing for studying, so change your clothes and come downstairs.”

Saying that, Kirishima left my room. However, due to certain circumstances, I was delayed in getting out of bed. This kind of excitement in the morning is not good for me.

“Ah, Kouji in his morning daze, it’s cool...”

After leaving the room, Kirishima was rolling around on the sofa in a blissful state.

“That cute sleeping face and that flustered expression, everything is perfect... Plus, Kouji is weak in the morning, so I can play pranks without him noticing.”

Kirishima’s heart was overflowing with love for Kouji.

“I guess I really do like Kouji. But it doesn’t seem like Kouji feels the same way.”

In a complete change of mood, Kirishima’s expression became slightly displeased. In reality, Kouji didn’t have any romantic feelings towards Kirishima yet.

“I need to think about how to win over Kouji from now on.”

As Kirishima continued to indulge in various fantasies in her mind, she proceeded to prepare for studying.

Sunday. It is commonly understood that it is a day off for most people.

However, my leisurely Sunday was about to be interrupted.

“Kouji~”

I could hear a voice calling me from the realm of drowsiness. But I wanted to stay wrapped up in the warm blanket. Since there’s no school today, I wanted to sleep in a little longer...

Snap

“How long are you going to sleep? It’s already morning.”

“...I’m sleepy.”

“Ugh. If you’re not going to wake up, I have other methods, you know?”

I heard a camera shutter sound, but I couldn’t care less. The warm blanket is the best. It’s a day off, so let me sleep a bit more...

“If you’re not planning to wake up...!”

Then, out of nowhere, Kirishima straddled my stomach while I was still asleep. I was startled by this and my brain suddenly woke up.

Still struggling to lift my heavy eyelids, I tried to assess the situation.

“W-What are you doing!?”

“I’m sorry, but you’re not waking up, right? Come on, wake up already!, Kouji~!”

Saying that, she started lightly patting my chest. It was kind of cute.

In a mischievous moment, I closed my eyes again. I wanted to see Kirishima’s reaction.

“Ah! You’re still sleeping? Ugh.”

Kirishima seemed quite angry that I wasn’t waking up.

“If that’s how it is... Hehehe.”

Then, Kirishima suddenly pulled off the blanket.

“Wake up, Kouji.”

“Huh!?”

Kirishima whispered in my ear, urging me to wake up. My body shivered at this unfamiliar sensation.

“If you don’t wake up, I’ll do something even more embarrassing.”

No, this is bad. This way of waking someone up is like poison to a guy. In fact, my little buddy has already started its engine.

“Um, I’ll wake up. Please spare me.”

“Oh, really?”

I actually felt a bit reluctant to wake up, but it’s a bigger problem to have that “thing” standing up in front of Kirishima. I don’t know to what extent she is knowledgeable about these things, but since we’re living together, I have to avoid making her uncomfortable.

“By the way, what time is it now?”

“Well... It’s around 8 o’clock, I think.”

8 o’clock. That used to be the time when I would definitely still be sleeping.

“You would’ve probably slept until noon if I hadn’t woken you up.”

“Ugh...”

She hit the nail on the head, and I couldn’t argue back. She probably woke me up with the intention of making me study since we have the regular exams starting tomorrow.

“Should I make breakfast?”

“Then I’ll prepare for studying during that time. I won’t let you get bad grades in the midterms, okay?”

I don’t know why she’s going to such lengths, but for me, whose grades in math and science are struggling, it’s a very appreciated gesture.

“Kouji, your sleeping face is so cute.”

“Huh?”

While grinning, Kirishima showed me the screen of her phone. It displayed a picture of me sleeping soundly, wrapped up in the blanket.

“When did...?”

“It was when I first entered the room. I thought you would wake up when I opened the door, but your sleep was quite impressive.”

Ah, how embarrassing.

“If you feel frustrated, then try waking up earlier than me.”

“I’ll definitely capture your sleeping face on camera... Kirishima...”

Kirishima seemed to be speaking the same thoughts as mine, as if she could read my mind. A mysterious sense of rivalry emerged within me, and my frustration grew.

“But I guess the only chance for that is when we sleep together. Kouji, you don’t seem like the type to enter a girl’s bedroom.”

“That’s more of a common sense or resistance.”

“Right?”

When I sleep with Kirishima, I get extremely nervous. And isn’t it strange that she falls asleep right away while I have trouble falling asleep? In the end, Kirishima is the one who ends up waking up early.

“Well, I’ll be preparing for studying, so change your clothes and come downstairs.”

Saying that, Kirishima left my room. However, due to certain circumstances, I was delayed in getting out of bed. This kind of excitement in the morning is not good for me.

“Ah, Kouji in his morning daze, it’s cool...”

After leaving the room, Kirishima was rolling around on the sofa in a blissful state.

“That cute sleeping face and that flustered expression, everything is perfect... Plus, Kouji is weak in the morning, so I can play pranks without him noticing.”

Kirishima’s heart was overflowing with love for Kouji.

“I guess I really do like Kouji. But it doesn’t seem like Kouji feels the same way.”

In a complete change of mood, Kirishima’s expression became slightly displeased. In reality, Kouji didn’t have any romantic feelings towards Kirishima yet.

“I need to think about how to win over Kouji from now on.”

As Kirishima continued to indulge in various fantasies in her mind, she proceeded to prepare for studying. Sunday. It is commonly understood that it is a day off for most people. However, my leisurely Sunday was about to be interrupted.

“Kouji~”

I could hear a voice calling me from the realm of drowsiness. But I wanted to stay wrapped up in the warm blanket. Since there’s no school today, I wanted to sleep in a little longer...

Snap

“How long are you going to sleep? It’s already morning.”

“...I’m sleepy.”

“Ugh. If you’re not going to wake up, I have other methods, you know?”

I heard a camera shutter sound, but I couldn’t care less. The warm blanket is the best. It’s a day off, so let me sleep a bit more...

“If you’re not planning to wake up...!”

Then, out of nowhere, Kirishima straddled my stomach while I was still asleep. I was startled by this and my brain suddenly woke up.

Still struggling to lift my heavy eyelids, I tried to assess the situation.

“W-What are you doing!?”

“I’m sorry, but you’re not waking up, right? Come on, wake up already!, Kouji~!”

Saying that, she started lightly patting my chest. It was kind of cute.

In a mischievous moment, I closed my eyes again. I wanted to see Kirishima’s reaction.

“Ah! You’re still sleeping? Ugh.”

Kirishima seemed quite angry that I wasn’t waking up.

“If that’s how it is... Hehehe.”

Then, Kirishima suddenly pulled off the blanket.

“Wake up, Kouji.”

“Huh!?”

Kirishima whispered in my ear, urging me to wake up. My body shivered at this unfamiliar sensation.

“If you don’t wake up, I’ll do something even more embarrassing.”

No, this is bad. This way of waking someone up is like poison to a guy. In fact, my little buddy has already started its engine.

No, this is bad. This way of waking someone up is like poison to a guy.

In fact, my little buddy has already started its engine.

“Um, I’ll wake up. Please spare me.”

“Oh, really?”

I actually felt a bit reluctant to wake up, but it’s a bigger problem to have that “thing” standing up in front of Kirishima. I don’t know to what extent she is knowledgeable about these things, but since we’re living together, I have to avoid making her uncomfortable.

“By the way, what time is it now?”

“Well... It’s around 8 o’clock, I think.”

8 o’clock. That used to be the time when I would definitely still be sleeping.

“You would’ve probably slept until noon if I hadn’t woken you up.”

“Ugh...”

She hit the nail on the head, and I couldn’t argue back. She probably woke me up with the intention of making me study since we have the regular exams starting tomorrow.

“Should I make breakfast?”

“Then I’ll prepare for studying during that time. I won’t let you get bad grades in the midterms, okay?”

I don’t know why she’s going to such lengths, but for me, whose grades in math and science are struggling, it’s a very appreciated gesture.

“Kouji, your sleeping face is so cute.”

“Huh?”

While grinning, Kirishima showed me the screen of her phone. It displayed a picture of me sleeping soundly, wrapped up in the blanket.

“When did...?”

“It was when I first entered the room. I thought you would wake up when I opened the door, but your sleep was quite impressive.”

Ah, how embarrassing.

“If you feel frustrated, then try waking up earlier than me.”

“I’ll definitely capture your sleeping face on camera... Kirishima...”

Kirishima seemed to be speaking the same thoughts as mine, as if she could read my mind. A mysterious sense of rivalry emerged within me, and my frustration grew.

“But I guess the only chance for that is when we sleep together. Kouji, you don’t seem like the type to enter a girl’s bedroom.”

“That’s more of a common sense or resistance.”

“Right?”

When I sleep with Kirishima, I get extremely nervous. And isn’t it strange that she falls asleep right away while I have trouble falling asleep? In the end, Kirishima is the one who ends up waking up early.

“Well, I’ll be preparing for studying, so change your clothes and come downstairs.”

Saying that, Kirishima left my room. However, due to certain circumstances, I was delayed in getting out of bed. This kind of excitement in the morning is not good for me.

“Ah, Kouji in his morning daze, it’s cool...”

After leaving the room, Kirishima was rolling around on the sofa in a blissful state.

“That cute sleeping face and that flustered expression, everything is perfect... Plus, Kouji is weak in the morning, so I can play pranks without him noticing.”

Kirishima’s heart was overflowing with love for Kouji.

“I guess I really do like Kouji. But it doesn’t seem like Kouji feels the same way.”

In a complete change of mood, Kirishima’s expression became slightly displeased. In reality, Kouji didn’t have any romantic feelings towards Kirishima yet.

“I need to think about how to win over Kouji from now on.”

As Kirishima continued to indulge in various fantasies in her mind, she proceeded to prepare for studying.

“I’m tired~”

In the end, I studied continuously from around 9 in the morning until lunchtime. Usually, I can’t sustain this level of concentration, but perhaps it’s because Kirishima’s way of teaching is effective, it wasn’t difficult.

“You did well. Should I make something for lunch?”

“Please...”

As soon as I was released from my desk, exhaustion washed over me. If I continue like this, I won’t be able to handle the stress of the third year of high school entrance exams. I need to gradually get used to it. I picked up my smartphone from the table and checked my notifications.

“Oh...”

Unconsciously, a voice escaped me as I received a Gmail notification.

I haven’t told Kirishima yet, but my current source of income comes from advertising revenue from an app. Back when I was in junior high school, I created an app just to try it out and released it on the store, and it was downloaded more than I expected. That became the catalyst, and I ended up creating a total of 10 apps. Of course, initially, I used existing APIs (template-like ones) and reused them, but recently, I’ve also created apps from scratch.

However, the difficulty of app development lies not in the creation but in fixing the issues reported by users. Currently, there are numerous types of smartphones on the market. There are also various versions, and it can be especially challenging when a new version is released.

Most of the emails I receive are bug reports. Dealing with emails is quite troublesome, but it’s better than being showered with abuse in the app’s review section and receiving lower ratings.

I fetched my laptop from upstairs and started tinkering with the code. I had released a new feature a week ago, and there were numerous bug reports related to it.

“Should I rewrite this part?”

I rewrote the code that seemed to be the cause of the bug. Then I proceeded to debug and check if it worked properly. It’s not funny when the fixed part causes another error.

“Food’s ready~”

I heard Kirishima’s voice. It seems like the food is ready. After finishing the debugging and confirming that there are no issues, I checked off the task on my to-do list and closed the laptop.

“Oh, today we’re having udon.”

“You must be hungry, right? That’s why I thought something quick to eat would be better.”

Kirishima smiled softly. She was so beautiful that I couldn’t help but be captivated. And her consideration was perfect as well.

“Yeah, that sounds good. Well then, let’s eat.”

“Enjoy your meal~”

“Thank you for the meal.”

“I’ll clean up.”

Taking advantage of Kirishima’s kindness, I laid down on the sofa. It’s often said that you’ll turn into a cow if you sleep right after eating, but right now, I’m just too sleepy to care about that.

As I spaced out, my eyelids grew heavier and heavier. Having woken up early in the morning, the drowsiness had reached its peak.

“It’s okay to sleep, Kouji.”

Somewhere along the line, Kirishima finished washing the dishes and sat down on the sofa. Without reproaching me for lying down on the sofa, Kirishima whispered.

“Well then, I’ll take you up on your offer...”

Then, my head was lifted, and I felt something soft against my head.

“Is this the legendary lap pillow?”

“This is my first time doing this, so it’s quite embarrassing.”

As she said that, Kirishima started patting my head. There was a pleasant scent coming from her. I

glanced up and saw her truly magnificent bosom.

“What are you staring at?”

“Huh, oh, nothing.”

Kirishima smirked mischievously. Somehow, I felt defeated again. I quickly turned my face away and pretended as if nothing had happened.

“Rest your head on the lap pillow and sleep peacefully. Good night.”

Feeling the soft sensation on my head, I closed my eyes. Later on, I found myself already asleep without realizing it.

“You are so adorable, Kouji.”

While providing a lap pillow to my beloved, my face relaxed. I can’t help but be amazed at my inability to control these feelings.

“But I wonder if this life can’t last much longer...”

Muttering to myself, I stared at my smartphone. The screen displayed an email.

If I were to tell Kouji, he would empathize with me. But I want to avoid involving Kouji any further in this problem.

Rather than doing something like that, it would be better for me to distance myself from Kouji. He would find a better partner than getting involved with a troublesome woman like me.

“Kouji...”

No matter what, my feelings for Kouji overflow. But if I truly wish for Kouji’s happiness, these feelings shouldn’t exist.

In the end, what should I do? Can someone tell me?

I guess I was tired as well. In the end, I fell asleep with Kouji on my lap.

“I’m tired~”

In the end, I studied continuously from around 9 in the morning until lunchtime. Usually, I can’t sustain this level of concentration, but perhaps it’s because Kirishima’s way of teaching is effective, it wasn’t difficult.

“You did well. Should I make something for lunch?”

“Please...”

As soon as I was released from my desk, exhaustion washed over me. If I continue like this, I won’t be able to handle the stress of the third year of high school entrance exams. I need to gradually get used to it. I picked up my smartphone from the table and checked my notifications.

“Oh...”

Unconsciously, a voice escaped me as I received a Gmail notification.

I haven’t told Kirishima yet, but my current source of income comes from advertising revenue from an app. Back when I was in junior high school, I created an app just to try it out and released it on the store, and it was downloaded more than I expected. That became the catalyst, and I ended up creating a total of 10 apps. Of course, initially, I used existing APIs (template-like ones) and reused them, but recently, I’ve also created apps from scratch.

However, the difficulty of app development lies not in the creation but in fixing the issues reported by users. Currently, there are numerous types of smartphones on the market. There are also various versions, and it can be especially challenging when a new version is released.

Most of the emails I receive are bug reports. Dealing with emails is quite troublesome, but it’s better than being showered with abuse in the app’s review section and receiving lower ratings.

I fetched my laptop from upstairs and started tinkering with the code. I had released a new feature a week ago, and there were numerous bug reports related to it.

“Should I rewrite this part?”

I rewrote the code that seemed to be the cause of the bug. Then I proceeded to debug and check if it worked properly. It’s not funny when the fixed part causes another error.

“Food’s ready~”

I heard Kirishima's voice. It seems like the food is ready. After finishing the debugging and confirming that there are no issues, I checked off the task on my to-do list and closed the laptop.

"Oh, today we're having udon."

"You must be hungry, right? That's why I thought something quick to eat would be better."

Kirishima smiled softly. She was so beautiful that I couldn't help but be captivated. And her consideration was perfect as well.

"Yeah, that sounds good. Well then, let's eat."

"Enjoy your meal~"

"Thank you for the meal."

"I'll clean up."

Taking advantage of Kirishima's kindness, I laid down on the sofa. It's often said that you'll turn into a cow if you sleep right after eating, but right now, I'm just too sleepy to care about that.

As I spaced out, my eyelids grew heavier and heavier. Having woken up early in the morning, the drowsiness had reached its peak.

"It's okay to sleep, Kouji."

Somewhere along the line, Kirishima finished washing the dishes and sat down on the sofa. Without reproaching me for lying down on the sofa, Kirishima whispered.

"Well then, I'll take you up on your offer..."

Then, my head was lifted, and I felt something soft against my head.

"Is this the legendary lap pillow?"

"This is my first time doing this, so it's quite embarrassing."

As she said that, Kirishima started patting my head. There was a pleasant scent coming from her. I glanced up and saw her truly magnificent bosom.

"What are you staring at?"

"Huh, oh, nothing."

Kirishima smirked mischievously. Somehow, I felt defeated again. I quickly turned my face away and pretended as if nothing had happened.

"Rest your head on the lap pillow and sleep peacefully. Good night."

Feeling the soft sensation on my head, I closed my eyes. Later on, I found myself already asleep without realizing it.

"You are so adorable, Kouji."

While providing a lap pillow to my beloved, my face relaxed. I can't help but be amazed at my inability to control these feelings.

"But I wonder if this life can't last much longer..."

Muttering to myself, I stared at my smartphone. The screen displayed an email.

If I were to tell Kouji, he would empathize with me. But I want to avoid involving Kouji any further in this problem.

Rather than doing something like that, it would be better for me to distance myself from Kouji. He would find a better partner than getting involved with a troublesome woman like me.

"Kouji..."

No matter what, my feelings for Kouji overflow. But if I truly wish for Kouji's happiness, these feelings shouldn't exist.

In the end, what should I do? Can someone tell me?

I guess I was tired as well. In the end, I fell asleep with Kouji on my lap.

"I'm tired~"

In the end, I studied continuously from around 9 in the morning until lunchtime. Usually, I can't sustain this level of concentration, but perhaps it's because Kirishima's way of teaching is effective, it wasn't difficult.

"You did well. Should I make something for lunch?"

"Please..."

As soon as I was released from my desk, exhaustion washed over me. If I continue like this, I won't be

able to handle the stress of the third year of high school entrance exams. I need to gradually get used to it. I picked up my smartphone from the table and checked my notifications.

“Oh...”

Unconsciously, a voice escaped me as I received a Gmail notification.

I haven't told Kirishima yet, but my current source of income comes from advertising revenue from an app. Back when I was in junior high school, I created an app just to try it out and released it on the store, and it was downloaded more than I expected. That became the catalyst, and I ended up creating a total of 10 apps. Of course, initially, I used existing APIs (template-like ones) and reused them, but recently, I've also created apps from scratch.

However, the difficulty of app development lies not in the creation but in fixing the issues reported by users. Currently, there are numerous types of smartphones on the market. There are also various versions, and it can be especially challenging when a new version is released.

Most of the emails I receive are bug reports. Dealing with emails is quite troublesome, but it's better than being showered with abuse in the app's review section and receiving lower ratings.

I fetched my laptop from upstairs and started tinkering with the code. I had released a new feature a week ago, and there were numerous bug reports related to it.

“Should I rewrite this part?”

I rewrote the code that seemed to be the cause of the bug. Then I proceeded to debug and check if it worked properly. It's not funny when the fixed part causes another error.

“Food's ready~”

I heard Kirishima's voice. It seems like the food is ready. After finishing the debugging and confirming that there are no issues, I checked off the task on my to-do list and closed the laptop.

“Oh, today we're having udon.”

“You must be hungry, right? That's why I thought something quick to eat would be better.”

Kirishima smiled softly. She was so beautiful that I couldn't help but be captivated. And her consideration was perfect as well.

“Yeah, that sounds good. Well then, let's eat.”

“Enjoy your meal~”

“Thank you for the meal.”

“I'll clean up.”

Taking advantage of Kirishima's kindness, I laid down on the sofa. It's often said that you'll turn into a cow if you sleep right after eating, but right now, I'm just too sleepy to care about that.

As I spaced out, my eyelids grew heavier and heavier. Having woken up early in the morning, the drowsiness had reached its peak.

“It's okay to sleep, Kouji.”

Somewhere along the line, Kirishima finished washing the dishes and sat down on the sofa. Without reproaching me for lying down on the sofa, Kirishima whispered.

“Well then, I'll take you up on your offer...”

Then, my head was lifted, and I felt something soft against my head.

“Is this the legendary lap pillow?”

“This is my first time doing this, so it's quite embarrassing.”

As she said that, Kirishima started patting my head. There was a pleasant scent coming from her. I glanced up and saw her truly magnificent bosom.

“What are you staring at?”

“Huh, oh, nothing.”

Kirishima smirked mischievously. Somehow, I felt defeated again. I quickly turned my face away and pretended as if nothing had happened.

“Rest your head on the lap pillow and sleep peacefully. Good night.”

Feeling the soft sensation on my head, I closed my eyes. Later on, I found myself already asleep without realizing it.

“You are so adorable, Kouji.”

While providing a lap pillow to my beloved, my face relaxed. I can't help but be amazed at my inability to control these feelings.

"But I wonder if this life can't last much longer..."

Muttering to myself, I stared at my smartphone. The screen displayed an email.

If I were to tell Kouji, he would empathize with me. But I want to avoid involving Kouji any further in this problem.

Rather than doing something like that, it would be better for me to distance myself from Kouji. He would find a better partner than getting involved with a troublesome woman like me.

"Kouji..."

No matter what, my feelings for Kouji overflow. But if I truly wish for Kouji's happiness, these feelings shouldn't exist.

In the end, what should I do? Can someone tell me?

I guess I was tired as well. In the end, I fell asleep with Kouji on my lap.

“Ahh~”

With Kirishima’s lap pillow, I ended up taking a nap. However, I always thought lap pillows would make me nervous, yet I fell into a deep sleep for some reason.

But I can’t indulge in a nap here since I need to prepare dinner. With that in mind, I tried to sit up.

“Hey, Kirishima.”

The very person providing the lap pillow was fast asleep. Or rather, she was skillfully sleeping with my head resting on her lap.

Well, there’s no reason to wake her up forcefully, so I lifted Kirishima’s body and gently laid her down sideways from the seated position. It’s not good to sleep while sitting; it often leads to neck pain (from personal experience).

“Oh... Aren’t you lighter than I imagined?”

Kirishima was much lighter than I had anticipated, and I was surprised. It’s often said in anime and such that “girls are light,” but it was true. Unfortunately, my younger sister didn’t allow any body contact like this. She’s going through puberty, and, well, certain incidents have occurred.

“Hmm...”

While glancing at Kirishima sleeping, I started preparing dinner. Today’s dinner is curry. I had the ingredients in the refrigerator, and I just felt like having curry.

I think everyone has their own way of making curry, but I don’t have any particular modifications. I’m just someone who follows the instructions on the back of the box.

“...Huh, did I fall asleep?”

“Well, yeah.”

It’s probably around 6 o’clock now. Kirishima, you must have been quite sleepy too.

“Well, is this curry?”

“Correct& ... It’s embarrassing, though.”

I tried practicing a joke I saw on the internet, but it had more psychological damage than I expected. Let’s just leave it at that.

“Well, Kouji, you aren’t that kind of character. The usual Kouji is the best.”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

Kirishima rubbed her sleepy eyes and walked over to the kitchen. Maybe because she just woke up, her hair was slightly messy.

“In about 30 minutes, I think the curry will be ready, so please wait a little longer.”

“Okay.”

After saying that, Kirishima went back to the sofa, but she immediately returned. Her face was terribly pale.

“Huh? What’s wrong?”

“This... I want you to see this.”

Perplexed, I looked at the smartphone screen that Kirishima handed to me.

“Well... Huh?”

It was an email displayed on the screen. After reading the email, I was dumbfounded.

“So, should we call?”

“...I understand. We need to have a conversation.”

The sender of the e-mail was Kirishima’s father. The content was that he wanted to see her for the first time in a while and to discuss the problems at her parents’ house.

By “problems at home,” Kirishima was undoubtedly referring to the problems that were currently surrounding her. Since it was her step brother who was attacking Kirishima, it was easy to imagine that someone related to Kirishima would be involved.

“I don’t mind if he comes anytime.”

“Okay... Then I’ll call him right away. Maybe the police will tell him where you lives.”

Kirishima began typing a reply to a text message on his phone. I looked at the pot in front of me and

wondered if I could keep the curry.

Ding-dong.

The doorbell at the entrance was pressed. It was finally time to meet Kirishima's biological father face to face. Just in case,

I peered through the door, checking if that man was there or not. I still couldn't fully trust Kirishima's father. If he were to resort to violence, it would be a big problem.

Outside the door stood a man in his forties, dressed in a suit. It was just him, a single man. Judging that there was no immediate danger, I opened the door.

"Hello."

"Nice to meet you. I am Kirishima Yukiyasu."

"For now, please come inside."

Based on his current demeanor, I thought he seemed like an ordinary person. For now, as a guest, I invited him into the house.

"Reina! How have you been?"

"Dad, it's been a while."

As soon as Kirishima's father saw his daughter, he was overjoyed. On the other hand, Kirishima showed no signs of rejection and seemed happy to have a long-awaited reunion with her family.

"Well, Kurata-kun. Thank you for helping my daughter. Here, this is my business card."

"Thank you. For now, please have a seat on the sofa."

"Excuse me."

He handed me his business card. It had the logo of a certain corporation and the title of "Representative Director." Unfortunately, I was not familiar with this company, but the fact that they had such a neatly designed business card made me think that it must be a fairly sizable organization.

"When you say 'Representative Director,' does that mean you're the president? And what is the relationship between this company and the incidents involving Kirishima?"

"I think I need to explain that from the beginning, including that. Let me explain everything."

"Ahh~"

With Kirishima's lap pillow, I ended up taking a nap. However, I always thought lap pillows would make me nervous, yet I fell into a deep sleep for some reason.

But I can't indulge in a nap here since I need to prepare dinner. With that in mind, I tried to sit up.

"Hey, Kirishima."

The very person providing the lap pillow was fast asleep. Or rather, she was skillfully sleeping with my head resting on her lap.

Well, there's no reason to wake her up forcefully, so I lifted Kirishima's body and gently laid her down sideways from the seated position. It's not good to sleep while sitting; it often leads to neck pain (from personal experience).

"Oh... Aren't you lighter than I imagined?"

Kirishima was much lighter than I had anticipated, and I was surprised. It's often said in anime and such that "girls are light," but it was true. Unfortunately, my younger sister didn't allow any body contact like this. She's going through puberty, and, well, certain incidents have occurred.

"Hmm..."

While glancing at Kirishima sleeping, I started preparing dinner. Today's dinner is curry. I had the ingredients in the refrigerator, and I just felt like having curry.

I think everyone has their own way of making curry, but I don't have any particular modifications. I'm just someone who follows the instructions on the back of the box.

"...Huh, did I fall asleep?"

"Well, yeah."

It's probably around 6 o'clock now. Kirishima, you must have been quite sleepy too.

"Well, is this curry?"

"Correct& ... It's embarrassing, though."

I tried practicing a joke I saw on the internet, but it had more psychological damage than I expected. Let's just leave it at that.

"Well, Kouji, you aren't that kind of character. The usual Kouji is the best."

"Yeah, you're right."

Kirishima rubbed her sleepy eyes and walked over to the kitchen. Maybe because she just woke up, her hair was slightly messy.

"In about 30 minutes, I think the curry will be ready, so please wait a little longer."

"Okay."

After saying that, Kirishima went back to the sofa, but she immediately returned. Her face was terribly pale.

"Huh? What's wrong?"

"This... I want you to see this."

Perplexed, I looked at the smartphone screen that Kirishima handed to me.

"Well... Huh?"

It was an email displayed on the screen. After reading the email, I was dumbfounded.

"So, should we call?"

"...I understand. We need to have a conversation."

The sender of the e-mail was Kirishima's father. The content was that he wanted to see her for the first time in a while and to discuss the problems at her parents' house.

By "problems at home," Kirishima was undoubtedly referring to the problems that were currently surrounding her. Since it was her step brother who was attacking Kirishima, it was easy to imagine that someone related to Kirishima would be involved.

"I don't mind if he comes anytime."

"Okay... Then I'll call him right away. Maybe the police will tell him where you live."

Kirishima began typing a reply to a text message on his phone. I looked at the pot in front of me and wondered if I could keep the curry.

Ding-dong.

The doorbell at the entrance was pressed. It was finally time to meet Kirishima's biological father face to face. Just in case,

I peered through the door, checking if that man was there or not. I still couldn't fully trust Kirishima's father. If he were to resort to violence, it would be a big problem.

Outside the door stood a man in his forties, dressed in a suit. It was just him, a single man. Judging that there was no immediate danger, I opened the door.

"Hello."

"Nice to meet you. I am Kirishima Yukiyasu."

"For now, please come inside."

Based on his current demeanor, I thought he seemed like an ordinary person. For now, as a guest, I invited him into the house.

"Reina! How have you been?"

"Dad, it's been a while."

As soon as Kirishima's father saw his daughter, he was overjoyed. On the other hand, Kirishima showed no signs of rejection and seemed happy to have a long-awaited reunion with her family.

"Well, Kurata-kun. Thank you for helping my daughter. Here, this is my business card."

"Thank you. For now, please have a seat on the sofa."

"Excuse me."

He handed me his business card. It had the logo of a certain corporation and the title of "Representative Director." Unfortunately, I was not familiar with this company, but the fact that they had such a neatly designed business card made me think that it must be a fairly sizable organization.

"When you say 'Representative Director,' does that mean you're the president? And what is the relationship between this company and the incidents involving Kirishima?"

"I think I need to explain that from the beginning, including that. Let me explain everything."

"Ahh~"

With Kirishima's lap pillow, I ended up taking a nap. However, I always thought lap pillows would make me nervous, yet I fell into a deep sleep for some reason.

But I can't indulge in a nap here since I need to prepare dinner. With that in mind, I tried to sit up.

"Hey, Kirishima."

The very person providing the lap pillow was fast asleep. Or rather, she was skillfully sleeping with my head resting on her lap.

Well, there's no reason to wake her up forcefully, so I lifted Kirishima's body and gently laid her down sideways from the seated position. It's not good to sleep while sitting; it often leads to neck pain (from personal experience).

"Oh... Aren't you lighter than I imagined?"

Kirishima was much lighter than I had anticipated, and I was surprised. It's often said in anime and such that "girls are light," but it was true. Unfortunately, my younger sister didn't allow any body contact like this. She's going through puberty, and, well, certain incidents have occurred.

"Hmm..."

While glancing at Kirishima sleeping, I started preparing dinner. Today's dinner is curry. I had the ingredients in the refrigerator, and I just felt like having curry.

I think everyone has their own way of making curry, but I don't have any particular modifications. I'm just someone who follows the instructions on the back of the box.

"...Huh, did I fall asleep?"

"Well, yeah."

It's probably around 6 o'clock now. Kirishima, you must have been quite sleepy too.

"Well, is this curry?"

"Correct& ... It's embarrassing, though."

I tried practicing a joke I saw on the internet, but it had more psychological damage than I expected. Let's just leave it at that.

"Well, Kouji, you aren't that kind of character. The usual Kouji is the best."

"Yeah, you're right."

Kirishima rubbed her sleepy eyes and walked over to the kitchen. Maybe because she just woke up, her hair was slightly messy.

"In about 30 minutes, I think the curry will be ready, so please wait a little longer."

"Okay."

After saying that, Kirishima went back to the sofa, but she immediately returned. Her face was terribly pale.

"Huh? What's wrong?"

"This... I want you to see this."

Perplexed, I looked at the smartphone screen that Kirishima handed to me.

"Well... Huh?"

It was an email displayed on the screen. After reading the email, I was dumbfounded.

"So, should we call?"

"...I understand. We need to have a conversation."

The sender of the e-mail was Kirishima's father. The content was that he wanted to see her for the first time in a while and to discuss the problems at her parents' house.

By "problems at home," Kirishima was undoubtedly referring to the problems that were currently surrounding her. Since it was her step brother who was attacking Kirishima, it was easy to imagine that someone related to Kirishima would be involved.

"I don't mind if he comes anytime."

"Okay... Then I'll call him right away. Maybe the police will tell him where you lives."

Kirishima began typing a reply to a text message on his phone. I looked at the pot in front of me and wondered if I could keep the curry.

Ding-dong.

The doorbell at the entrance was pressed. It was finally time to meet Kirishima's biological father face to face. Just in case,

I peered through the door, checking if that man was there or not. I still couldn't fully trust Kirishima's father. If he were to resort to violence, it would be a big problem.

Outside the door stood a man in his forties, dressed in a suit. It was just him, a single man. Judging that there was no immediate danger, I opened the door.

"Hello."

"Nice to meet you. I am Kirishima Yukiyasu."

"Nice to meet you. I am Kirishima
Yukiyasu

"

"For now, please come inside."

Based on his current demeanor, I thought he seemed like an ordinary person. For now, as a guest, I invited him into the house.

"Reina! How have you been?"

"Dad, it's been a while."

As soon as Kirishima's father saw his daughter, he was overjoyed. On the other hand, Kirishima showed no signs of rejection and seemed happy to have a long-awaited reunion with her family.

"Well, Kurata-kun. Thank you for helping my daughter. Here, this is my business card."

"Thank you. For now, please have a seat on the sofa."

"Excuse me."

He handed me his business card. It had the logo of a certain corporation and the title of "Representative Director." Unfortunately, I was not familiar with this company, but the fact that they had such a neatly designed business card made me think that it must be a fairly sizable organization.

"When you say 'Representative Director,' does that mean you're the president? And what is the relationship between this company and the incidents involving Kirishima?"

"I think I need to explain that from the beginning, including that. Let me explain everything."

“Do you know about the Minamii Group, Kurata-kun?”

When it comes to the Minamii Group, it's one of Japan's leading conglomerates. I know that they have a wide range of businesses, including the automobile industry and banking, and they are a former zaibatsu-affiliated group.

“Well, I do know the name, at least.”

“I see. This group used to be a zaibatsu. And, well, I am the successor of the founding family of that group.”

“What? I didn't know that.”

Upon hearing this shocking statement, Kirishima, who was sitting next to me, exclaimed in surprise. On the contrary, I thought it was natural for someone who was a president to come from such a family background.

“I'm sorry, Reina. I've been hiding it from you all this time. Our past, mine and Mirei's.”

“Why? I don't think there's any reason to hide it.”

Certainly, that's true. If anything, if he holds a high position, he should have given her an appropriate education.

“That's true. But I couldn't tell you. The truth is, your mother and I eloped.”

To the shocking revelation, both Kirishima and I were left speechless. He seemed like a serious person at first glance.

“I came from a wealthy family, so I was forced into many things by my parents. But I hated it. Even though my environment might seem enviable to ordinary people, I couldn't bear it.

By the way, I attended a local high school, and that's where I met Mirei. I actually insisted on going to a public high school, against my parents' wishes. Fortunately, the entrance exam scores were higher than the private schools they recommended, so it worked out.”

“Why did you elope, dad? You could have just gotten married normally, right?”

Based on the story so far, I couldn't understand the reason for eloping either. It's not like parents should have a say in who you marry; that's such an outdated notion.

“I would have preferred that too, ideally. Oh well, that's why Mirei and I, who entered the same university, started dating in our third year. We kept it a secret from our parents at that time.

Then, through family connections, I joined Minami Trading. This is exactly what they call ‘riding on the coattails of one's family.’ Just by being a member of the founding family, I was promoted easily. Looking back, it was easy.”

At this point, Kirishima got up from her seat.

“Would you like something to drink?”

“Oh, yes, please.”

Indeed, after talking for a while, I could feel my throat getting dry. Besides, it's proper etiquette to offer a beverage to guests when they arrive.

“I'm sorry for not offering you something earlier.”

“It's fine. In fact, it's a bit uncouth of me to contact you at the last minute like this.”

As we were discussing, Kirishima returned with a cup of tea on a tray.

“By the way, Reina, are you enjoying living here? Oh, I don't mean to speak ill of you, Kurata-kun.”

“I actually prefer it here. My previous home was lonely.”

“...I see. I understand your preference.”

Kirishima's father showed a somewhat troubled gesture. I wasn't sure what he was worried about.

“Let's get back to the topic at hand. I finally revealed my relationship with Mirei to my parents. I think it was when I was around 25 or 26. And, as you might expect, they strongly opposed it. It seems they intended for me to have a politically advantageous marriage.”

“Nowadays, individual autonomy is respected, right?”

We often hear the phrase ‘individual autonomy’ these days. It probably hasn't changed much even in the past 10 or 20 years. Kirishima's father continued speaking with a slightly exasperated expression.

“Well, our family background played a role too. And I was the second son, with my older brother being the heir apparent.

However, our father didn’t approve of that. In fact, he chose me as his successor. Well, I didn’t know this because my brother and I have a significant age difference, but it seems my brother’s behavior wasn’t very good.”

“What? Dad, you have a sibling? I didn’t know.”

Kirishima voiced her surprise once again. It only deepened the mystery as to why he hadn’t shared this story with his daughter all this time.

“The reason I didn’t tell you is that I didn’t want you to end up like me. After a big fight with my parents, I left home. Luckily, I had enough funds to support myself for a while, but I also ended up getting fired from my job. Well, that was to be expected.”

I suppose if you’re disinherited from the family, it’s natural to lose the company that has been in the family for generations. But even so, it gives a glimpse of the dark side of society that they can easily dismiss someone in an executive position.

“So, they easily cut ties with an executive-level employee. Impressive.”

“Well... My brother seemed to hate me, so he readily handed me a dismissal notice. I know it might not be appropriate to discuss this in front of my daughter, but my brother has had run-ins with the police multiple times. And each time, he managed to cover it up with his power, committing heinous acts.”

“Do you know about the Minamii Group, Kurata-kun?”

When it comes to the Minamii Group, it’s one of Japan’s leading conglomerates. I know that they have a wide range of businesses, including the automobile industry and banking, and they are a former zaibatsu-affiliated group.

“Well, I do know the name, at least.”

“I see. This group used to be a zaibatsu. And, well, I am the successor of the founding family of that group.”

“What? I didn’t know that.”

Upon hearing this shocking statement, Kirishima, who was sitting next to me, exclaimed in surprise. On the contrary, I thought it was natural for someone who was a president to come from such a family background.

“I’m sorry, Reina. I’ve been hiding it from you all this time. Our past, mine and Mirei’s.”

“Why? I don’t think there’s any reason to hide it.”

Certainly, that’s true. If anything, if he holds a high position, he should have given her an appropriate education.

“That’s true. But I couldn’t tell you. The truth is, your mother and I eloped.”

To the shocking revelation, both Kirishima and I were left speechless. He seemed like a serious person at first glance.

“I came from a wealthy family, so I was forced into many things by my parents. But I hated it. Even though my environment might seem enviable to ordinary people, I couldn’t bear it.

By the way, I attended a local high school, and that’s where I met Mirei. I actually insisted on going to a public high school, against my parents’ wishes. Fortunately, the entrance exam scores were higher than the private schools they recommended, so it worked out.”

“Why did you elope, dad? You could have just gotten married normally, right?”

Based on the story so far, I couldn’t understand the reason for eloping either. It’s not like parents should have a say in who you marry; that’s such an outdated notion.

“I would have preferred that too, ideally. Oh well, that’s why Mirei and I, who entered the same university, started dating in our third year. We kept it a secret from our parents at that time.

Then, through family connections, I joined Minami Trading. This is exactly what they call ‘riding on the coattails of one’s family.’ Just by being a member of the founding family, I was promoted easily. Looking back, it was easy.”

At this point, Kirishima got up from her seat.

“Would you like something to drink?”

“Oh, yes, please.”

Indeed, after talking for a while, I could feel my throat getting dry. Besides, it's proper etiquette to offer a beverage to guests when they arrive.

“I'm sorry for not offering you something earlier.”

“It's fine. In fact, it's a bit uncouth of me to contact you at the last minute like this.”

As we were discussing, Kirishima returned with a cup of tea on a tray.

“By the way, Reina, are you enjoying living here? Oh, I don't mean to speak ill of you, Kurata-kun.”

“I actually prefer it here. My previous home was lonely.”

“...I see. I understand your preference.”

Kirishima's father showed a somewhat troubled gesture. I wasn't sure what he was worried about.

“Let's get back to the topic at hand. I finally revealed my relationship with Mirei to my parents. I think it was when I was around 25 or 26. And, as you might expect, they strongly opposed it. It seems they intended for me to have a politically advantageous marriage.”

“Nowadays, individual autonomy is respected, right?”

We often hear the phrase ‘individual autonomy’ these days. It probably hasn't changed much even in the past 10 or 20 years. Kirishima's father continued speaking with a slightly exasperated expression.

“Well, our family background played a role too. And I was the second son, with my older brother being the heir apparent.

However, our father didn't approve of that. In fact, he chose me as his successor. Well, I didn't know this because my brother and I have a significant age difference, but it seems my brother's behavior wasn't very good.”

“What? Dad, you have a sibling? I didn't know.”

Kirishima voiced her surprise once again. It only deepened the mystery as to why he hadn't shared this story with his daughter all this time.

“The reason I didn't tell you is that I didn't want you to end up like me. After a big fight with my parents, I left home. Luckily, I had enough funds to support myself for a while, but I also ended up getting fired from my job. Well, that was to be expected.”

I suppose if you're disinherited from the family, it's natural to lose the company that has been in the family for generations. But even so, it gives a glimpse of the dark side of society that they can easily dismiss someone in an executive position.

“So, they easily cut ties with an executive-level employee. Impressive.”

“Well... My brother seemed to hate me, so he readily handed me a dismissal notice. I know it might not be appropriate to discuss this in front of my daughter, but my brother has had run-ins with the police multiple times. And each time, he managed to cover it up with his power, committing heinous acts.”

“Do you know about the Minamii Group, Kurata-kun?”

“Do you know about the

Minamii

Group, Kurata-kun?”

When it comes to the Minamii Group, it's one of Japan's leading conglomerates. I know that they have a wide range of businesses, including the automobile industry and banking, and they are a former zaibatsu-affiliated group.

“Well, I do know the name, at least.”

“I see. This group used to be a zaibatsu. And, well, I am the successor of the founding family of that group.”

“What? I didn't know that.”

Upon hearing this shocking statement, Kirishima, who was sitting next to me, exclaimed in surprise. On the contrary, I thought it was natural for someone who was a president to come from such a family background.

“I'm sorry, Reina. I've been hiding it from you all this time. Our past, mine and Mirei's.”

“Why? I don't think there's any reason to hide it.”

Certainly, that's true. If anything, if he holds a high position, he should have given her an appropriate

education.

“That’s true. But I couldn’t tell you. The truth is, your mother and I eloped.”

To the shocking revelation, both Kirishima and I were left speechless. He seemed like a serious person at first glance.

“I came from a wealthy family, so I was forced into many things by my parents. But I hated it. Even though my environment might seem enviable to ordinary people, I couldn’t bear it.

By the way, I attended a local high school, and that’s where I met Mirei. I actually insisted on going to a public high school, against my parents’ wishes. Fortunately, the entrance exam scores were higher than the private schools they recommended, so it worked out.”

“Why did you elope, dad? You could have just gotten married normally, right?”

Based on the story so far, I couldn’t understand the reason for eloping either. It’s not like parents should have a say in who you marry; that’s such an outdated notion.

“I would have preferred that too, ideally. Oh well, that’s why Mirei and I, who entered the same university, started dating in our third year. We kept it a secret from our parents at that time.

Then, through family connections, I joined Minami Trading. This is exactly what they call ‘riding on the coattails of one’s family.’ Just by being a member of the founding family, I was promoted easily. Looking back, it was easy.”

At this point, Kirishima got up from her seat.

“Would you like something to drink?”

“Oh, yes, please.”

Indeed, after talking for a while, I could feel my throat getting dry. Besides, it’s proper etiquette to offer a beverage to guests when they arrive.

“I’m sorry for not offering you something earlier.”

“It’s fine. In fact, it’s a bit uncouth of me to contact you at the last minute like this.”

As we were discussing, Kirishima returned with a cup of tea on a tray.

“By the way, Reina, are you enjoying living here? Oh, I don’t mean to speak ill of you, Kurata-kun.”

“I actually prefer it here. My previous home was lonely.”

“...I see. I understand your preference.”

Kirishima’s father showed a somewhat troubled gesture. I wasn’t sure what he was worried about.

“Let’s get back to the topic at hand. I finally revealed my relationship with Mirei to my parents. I think it was when I was around 25 or 26. And, as you might expect, they strongly opposed it. It seems they intended for me to have a politically advantageous marriage.”

“Nowadays, individual autonomy is respected, right?”

We often hear the phrase ‘individual autonomy’ these days. It probably hasn’t changed much even in the past 10 or 20 years. Kirishima’s father continued speaking with a slightly exasperated expression.

“Well, our family background played a role too. And I was the second son, with my older brother being the heir apparent.

However, our father didn’t approve of that. In fact, he chose me as his successor. Well, I didn’t know this because my brother and I have a significant age difference, but it seems my brother’s behavior wasn’t very good.”

“What? Dad, you have a sibling? I didn’t know.”

Kirishima voiced her surprise once again. It only deepened the mystery as to why he hadn’t shared this story with his daughter all this time.

“The reason I didn’t tell you is that I didn’t want you to end up like me. After a big fight with my parents, I left home. Luckily, I had enough funds to support myself for a while, but I also ended up getting fired from my job. Well, that was to be expected.”

I suppose if you’re disinherited from the family, it’s natural to lose the company that has been in the family for generations. But even so, it gives a glimpse of the dark side of society that they can easily dismiss someone in an executive position.

“So, they easily cut ties with an executive-level employee. Impressive.”

“Well... My brother seemed to hate me, so he readily handed me a dismissal notice. I know it might not be appropriate to discuss this in front of my daughter, but my brother has had run-ins with the police

multiple times. And each time, he managed to cover it up with his power, committing heinous acts.”

“Eh... That means that the person who attacked Kouji was also...”

“Most likely, it was him. I’m sure the prosecution released him due to insufficient evidence or something like that.”

“I can’t forgive that. Kouji risked himself to protect me.”

Kirishima’s anger was palpable. I appreciate that she’s so angry on my behalf, but she’s gripping my clothes so tightly that they might tear.

“Let’s get back to the topic at hand. After I got fired, I started my own company, the one I’m currently running.”

“Is it easy to start a company?”

I often hear that the barrier for starting a business in Japan is higher compared to other countries.

Moreover, starting a business after being fired would be financially unstable and risky.

“Well, I had quite a bit of savings. I didn’t squander them like my brother. However, I had to sell off some stocks.

It took quite some time for the business to stabilize after starting it.”

He appeared composed, but I’m sure he faced considerable hardships. However, if I were in his position, after getting fired from a company, I would explore job opportunities elsewhere, rather than starting my own business. So, it takes great entrepreneurial spirit to start a company in such a situation.

“Did her mother support you?”

“Oh, yes. In fact, if it weren’t for Mirei, I might have collapsed. Mirei supported me no matter what. But it was because of me that her health deteriorated. I’m sorry.”

“There’s no need for you to apologize, dad. I can live the way I do thanks to you.”

Looking at them, their faces don’t resemble each other much, but it’s clear that they’re parent and child.

“But I couldn’t recover after Mirei’s death. The business suffered a significant decline. Also, the industry I initially entered was what we call a ‘sunset industry.’”

“As I expected, I think this company is in the IT industry. Is IT really in decline?”

“That’s exactly right. My company is in the IT sector. Even within the IT industry, there are various fields, and it’s a rapidly changing industry.

While I was struggling with the deteriorating business, someone from my family came. They asked me to return home.”

“Huh? Weren’t you estranged from them?”

“That’s what I thought, but there was no such easy solution.”

Dad spoke with a disappointed expression.

“For the time being, Minamii became the majority shareholder of my company, and it became an affiliated company of the Minamii Group. Originally, I wanted to refuse. I kept questioning myself why I had to sell out to my detested family.

But I had something to protect. Certainly, I had to protect my family, but more than that, I couldn’t leave my employees, my subordinates, in a difficult situation.

As a compromise, some members from Minamii Trading, I think it was called, joined our management team. It made things quite difficult. Plus, part of our business was absorbed.”

“Did you unconditionally transfer the business?”

Under the circumstances of having debts to the family, such a situation is quite plausible. It might be a kind of coercion.

“No way. Originally, I owned two-thirds of the company’s shares, and I transferred them to Minamii. So, I received the equivalent in return for the transferred shares.”

“But in that case, wouldn’t Minamii have no benefits?”

“Exactly. And then they demanded that we incorporate the name ‘Minamii’ into the company’s name. In other words, they wanted us to become a company affiliated with the Minamii Group.”

Is it like an actual absorption...? Did they want the technology that badly?

“If we did something like that, it would be practically selling the company. Regarding this matter, I

strongly opposed it as well. I went to negotiate directly, asking the Minamii to reconsider multiple times. However, my brother forcefully pushed things forward.”

“Was your company really attractive to the Minamii?”

“No, I think it was probably more like harassment towards me. My brother and I have been compared all along. I know it’s not good to say this, but he must have built up a lot of frustration, and that might be why he kept getting involved in delinquency.”

As he spoke, he had a somewhat sad expression. Even though he was the one suffering the damage, perhaps being able to worry about the other party is because they’re connected by blood.

I also have a sister, and I’m well aware that not all siblings are good.

“So, because of that, I became physically and mentally exhausted and stopped going home. As a result, I left Reina alone all the time. And despite the existence of Mirei, I got involved with another woman. I’m sorry.”

“I can’t completely forgive you, but I’m glad you’re explaining your reasons properly like this. However, I’ll never forget that you remarried.”

For Kirishima, her mother is an irreplaceable presence. You can infer that from her behavior up until now. If that presence were destroyed, it would be unbearable.

“I’m truly sorry. Please forgive me.”

Dad continues to bow his head to Kirishima.

“Let’s continue with the conversation for now.”

“...Alright.

Well, there were difficulties, but I managed to avoid being fully absorbed until today. However, recently, Minami Trading’s performance has been deteriorating, and my brother, a senior executive, has become more ruthless. On the other hand, my company was thriving by launching new businesses. Our operating profit was around 1.5 billion Yen.

That’s when my brother started threatening me. Initially, he targeted my new wife, but our relationship was already falling apart and it became meaningless.

Then, as the next move, he targeted Reina. I truly don’t understand why, but the fact is he caused an incident because of that. So, Kurata-kun, who saved Reina, I’m really grateful to you. Thank you again.”

“Oh, well, it’s no big deal.”

As I say that, I feel an immense frustration towards “Dad’s brother.” How can he even think of harming his wife and child?

“Eh... That means that the person who attacked Kouji was also...”

“Most likely, it was him. I’m sure the prosecution released him due to insufficient evidence or something like that.”

“I can’t forgive that. Kouji risked himself to protect me.”

Kirishima’s anger was palpable. I appreciate that she’s so angry on my behalf, but she’s gripping my clothes so tightly that they might tear.

“Let’s get back to the topic at hand. After I got fired, I started my own company, the one I’m currently running.”

“Is it easy to start a company?”

I often hear that the barrier for starting a business in Japan is higher compared to other countries.

Moreover, starting a business after being fired would be financially unstable and risky.

“Well, I had quite a bit of savings. I didn’t squander them like my brother. However, I had to sell off some stocks.

It took quite some time for the business to stabilize after starting it.”

He appeared composed, but I’m sure he faced considerable hardships. However, if I were in his position, after getting fired from a company, I would explore job opportunities elsewhere, rather than starting my own business. So, it takes great entrepreneurial spirit to start a company in such a situation.

“Did her mother support you?”

“Oh, yes. In fact, if it weren’t for Mirei, I might have collapsed. Mirei supported me no matter what. But

it was because of me that her health deteriorated. I'm sorry."

"There's no need for you to apologize, dad. I can live the way I do thanks to you."

Looking at them, their faces don't resemble each other much, but it's clear that they're parent and child.

"But I couldn't recover after Mirei's death. The business suffered a significant decline. Also, the industry I initially entered was what we call a 'sunset industry.'"

"As I expected, I think this company is in the IT industry. Is IT really in decline?"

"That's exactly right. My company is in the IT sector. Even within the IT industry, there are various fields, and it's a rapidly changing industry.

While I was struggling with the deteriorating business, someone from my family came. They asked me to return home."

"Huh? Weren't you estranged from them?"

"That's what I thought, but there was no such easy solution."

Dad spoke with a disappointed expression.

"For the time being, Minamii became the majority shareholder of my company, and it became an affiliated company of the Minamii Group. Originally, I wanted to refuse. I kept questioning myself why I had to sell out to my detested family.

But I had something to protect. Certainly, I had to protect my family, but more than that, I couldn't leave my employees, my subordinates, in a difficult situation.

As a compromise, some members from Minamii Trading, I think it was called, joined our management team. It made things quite difficult. Plus, part of our business was absorbed."

"Did you unconditionally transfer the business?"

Under the circumstances of having debts to the family, such a situation is quite plausible. It might be a kind of coercion.

"No way. Originally, I owned two-thirds of the company's shares, and I transferred them to Minamii. So, I received the equivalent in return for the transferred shares."

"But in that case, wouldn't Minamii have no benefits?"

"Exactly. And then they demanded that we incorporate the name 'Minamii' into the company's name. In other words, they wanted us to become a company affiliated with the Minamii Group."

Is it like an actual absorption...? Did they want the technology that badly?

"If we did something like that, it would be practically selling the company. Regarding this matter, I strongly opposed it as well. I went to negotiate directly, asking the Minamii to reconsider multiple times. However, my brother forcefully pushed things forward."

"Was your company really attractive to the Minamii?"

"No, I think it was probably more like harassment towards me. My brother and I have been compared all along. I know it's not good to say this, but he must have built up a lot of frustration, and that might be why he kept getting involved in delinquency."

As he spoke, he had a somewhat sad expression. Even though he was the one suffering the damage, perhaps being able to worry about the other party is because they're connected by blood.

I also have a sister, and I'm well aware that not all siblings are good.

"So, because of that, I became physically and mentally exhausted and stopped going home. As a result, I left Reina alone all the time. And despite the existence of Mirei, I got involved with another woman. I'm sorry."

"I can't completely forgive you, but I'm glad you're explaining your reasons properly like this. However, I'll never forget that you remarried."

For Kirishima, her mother is an irreplaceable presence. You can infer that from her behavior up until now. If that presence were destroyed, it would be unbearable.

"I'm truly sorry. Please forgive me."

Dad continues to bow his head to Kirishima.

"Let's continue with the conversation for now."

"...Alright.

Well, there were difficulties, but I managed to avoid being fully absorbed until today. However, recently, Minami Trading's performance has been deteriorating, and my brother, a senior executive, has become

more ruthless. On the other hand, my company was thriving by launching new businesses. Our operating profit was around 1.5 billion Yen.

That's when my brother started threatening me. Initially, he targeted my new wife, but our relationship was already falling apart and it became meaningless.

Then, as the next move, he targeted Reina. I truly don't understand why, but the fact is he caused an incident because of that. So, Kurata-kun, who saved Reina, I'm really grateful to you. Thank you again."

"Oh, well, it's no big deal."

As I say that, I feel an immense frustration towards "Dad's brother." How can he even think of harming his wife and child?

"Eh... That means that the person who attacked Kouji was also..."

"Most likely, it was him. I'm sure the prosecution released him due to insufficient evidence or something like that."

"I can't forgive that. Kouji risked himself to protect me."

Kirishima's anger was palpable. I appreciate that she's so angry on my behalf, but she's gripping my clothes so tightly that they might tear.

"Let's get back to the topic at hand. After I got fired, I started my own company, the one I'm currently running."

"Is it easy to start a company?"

I often hear that the barrier for starting a business in Japan is higher compared to other countries.

Moreover, starting a business after being fired would be financially unstable and risky.

"Well, I had quite a bit of savings. I didn't squander them like my brother. However, I had to sell off some stocks.

It took quite some time for the business to stabilize after starting it."

He appeared composed, but I'm sure he faced considerable hardships. However, if I were in his position, after getting fired from a company, I would explore job opportunities elsewhere, rather than starting my own business. So, it takes great entrepreneurial spirit to start a company in such a situation.

"Did her mother support you?"

"Oh, yes. In fact, if it weren't for Mirei, I might have collapsed. Mirei supported me no matter what. But it was because of me that her health deteriorated. I'm sorry."

"There's no need for you to apologize, dad. I can live the way I do thanks to you."

Looking at them, their faces don't resemble each other much, but it's clear that they're parent and child.

"But I couldn't recover after Mirei's death. The business suffered a significant decline. Also, the industry I initially entered was what we call a 'sunset industry.'"

"As I expected, I think this company is in the IT industry. Is IT really in decline?"

"That's exactly right. My company is in the IT sector. Even within the IT industry, there are various fields, and it's a rapidly changing industry.

While I was struggling with the deteriorating business, someone from my family came. They asked me to return home."

"Huh? Weren't you estranged from them?"

"That's what I thought, but there was no such easy solution."

Dad spoke with a disappointed expression.

"For the time being, Minamii became the majority shareholder of my company, and it became an affiliated company of the Minamii Group. Originally, I wanted to refuse. I kept questioning myself why I had to sell out to my detested family.

But I had something to protect. Certainly, I had to protect my family, but more than that, I couldn't leave my employees, my subordinates, in a difficult situation.

As a compromise, some members from Minamii Trading, I think it was called, joined our management team. It made things quite difficult. Plus, part of our business was absorbed."

"Did you unconditionally transfer the business?"

Under the circumstances of having debts to the family, such a situation is quite plausible. It might be a kind of coercion.

"No way. Originally, I owned two-thirds of the company's shares, and I transferred them to Minamii. So,

I received the equivalent in return for the transferred shares.”

“But in that case, wouldn’t Minamii have no benefits?”

“Exactly. And then they demanded that we incorporate the name ‘Minamii’ into the company’s name. In other words, they wanted us to become a company affiliated with the Minamii Group.”

Is it like an actual absorption...? Did they want the technology that badly?

“If we did something like that, it would be practically selling the company. Regarding this matter, I strongly opposed it as well. I went to negotiate directly, asking the Minamii to reconsider multiple times. However, my brother forcefully pushed things forward.”

“Was your company really attractive to the Minamii?”

“No, I think it was probably more like harassment towards me. My brother and I have been compared all along. I know it’s not good to say this, but he must have built up a lot of frustration, and that might be why he kept getting involved in delinquency.”

As he spoke, he had a somewhat sad expression. Even though he was the one suffering the damage, perhaps being able to worry about the other party is because they’re connected by blood.

I also have a sister, and I’m well aware that not all siblings are good.

“So, because of that, I became physically and mentally exhausted and stopped going home. As a result, I left Reina alone all the time. And despite the existence of Mirei, I got involved with another woman. I’m sorry.”

“I can’t completely forgive you, but I’m glad you’re explaining your reasons properly like this. However, I’ll never forget that you remarried.”

For Kirishima, her mother is an irreplaceable presence. You can infer that from her behavior up until now. If that presence were destroyed, it would be unbearable.

“I’m truly sorry. Please forgive me.”

Dad continues to bow his head to Kirishima.

“Let’s continue with the conversation for now.”

“...Alright.

Well, there were difficulties, but I managed to avoid being fully absorbed until today. However, recently, Minami Trading’s performance has been deteriorating, and my brother, a senior executive, has become more ruthless. On the other hand, my company was thriving by launching new businesses. Our operating profit was around 1.5 billion Yen.

That’s when my brother started threatening me. Initially, he targeted my new wife, but our relationship was already falling apart and it became meaningless.

Then, as the next move, he targeted Reina. I truly don’t understand why, but the fact is he caused an incident because of that. So, Kurata-kun, who saved Reina, I’m really grateful to you. Thank you again.”

“Oh, well, it’s no big deal.”

As I say that, I feel an immense frustration towards “Dad’s brother.” How can he even think of harming his wife and child?

“For now, what are your plans for the future? I also don’t want to keep being targeted and endangering myself,” Kurata asks.

As much as it is for the sake of protecting Kirishima, he has already been attacked once. He has even been hospitalized in the past, and he doesn’t want to cause any more trouble for his family.

“Of course, I have no intention of causing any inconvenience to you, Kuroaa-kun. It pains me, but I’ve already decided to sell the company.”

“Huh? Why?”

Kirishima reacts to this. After all, it’s a company that he has worked hard to build. I was also surprised by the statement of easily letting it go.

“To be honest, it’s clear to us that continuing to run the company as it is would be a huge burden. And I don’t want to hand over the company to the Minamii Group either. Besides, the Minamii Group’s performance isn’t currently favorable. So there will definitely be a large number of departments and employees who will be laid off. But I want to protect the employees as much as possible.

That’s why I’ve decided to sell to another major company. Fortunately, I have a connection who can make that happen. They have also guaranteed the future treatment for everyone.

Moreover, the business conducted by that company aligns quite well with our own. I can’t go into details because they involve confidential matters, but it’s definitely better than selling to the Nanamii group.”

“But what about you, Dad? Are you planning to disappear again?”

Kirishima knows well how lonely it has been for him. While I can be there for Kirishima, I can’t act as a blood relative. Kirishima himself should be aware that his only parent at the moment is his father.

“...To be honest, I’m concerned if I can stay in Japan. Being targeted by major corporations would make it difficult for me to start a business domestically. For the time being, I plan to handle the transition of the business as an advisor to the buyer for about a year, but I haven’t decided what to do afterwards.

By the way, Reina, what do you want? I’ll do what I can to help.”

“I want to continue living as I have been, attend high school properly, and go to university.”

“...I understand. But considering the possibility of being attacked again, I think it would be better for you to transfer schools.”

“Huh... I don’t want to transfer schools. Besides, I haven’t repaid Kouji yet.”

Hmm. Why does she call him by his first name in certain situations? It’s clear from the change in his father’s expression.

“If that’s what you want, Reina, then I understand. In that case, we’ll look for a different house. I don’t want to inconvenience Kurata-kun either.”

“Y-Yeah, I understand. Please.”

“Kurata-kun, thank you for everything up until now. By the way, I should also thank your parents. By the way, where are they?”

Hmm. Should I explain this? It could become a delicate situation if I mention that his father is currently under suspicion and that I’ve been living without my parents.

“Um, my father is currently on a business trip. And my mother...”

“Ah, I’ve asked something troublesome. Sorry. In that case, can you connect me to your father?”

“Well, if that’s the case...”

Since he’s currently on an overseas business trip, it’s more cost-effective to make a call over the internet. With that in mind, I make a call using a certain social media app on my smartphone.

“Hello? There’s something I want to talk about,” I say.

I carefully explained the situation to my father. As he listens to my story, he becomes less talkative.

“I see. I understand the main points. If you were stabbed to protect Kirishima, then that’s perfectly fine. And if you’ve been using your own pocket money to pay for expenses, I have no objections either. It’s not like you’ve crossed any boundaries, right?”

“Of course not. Well, it’s because Kirishima’s father is currently at home and wants to talk.”

“I see. Then please let me talk to him.”

That's how it is, so I hand my smartphone to my father.

"Here, please take the phone. You'll be connected to my father."

"Thank you."

Perhaps because he's an adult, the conversation starts off with proper etiquette. Well, that's to be expected since they're meeting for the first time.

Then, Kirishima's stomach makes a cute growling sound.

"N-No, it's not what you think!"

"You must be hungry. Shall we eat?"

I intentionally don't mention the fact that her stomach growled. It would be lacking in tact to point it out, after all.

By the way, did her father already eat? It wouldn't be appropriate to eat in front of a guest.

"It's alright. My father said, 'I'll eat first and then come, so it might take a little time.'"

"I see. In that case, I'll have some."

I head towards the kitchen and reheat the pot of cold curry on the stove. At the same time, I scoop rice from the rice cooker into bowls. The rice is still warm thanks to the rice cooker's keep-warm function.

"Oh, I'll prepare a salad."

How would an outsider evaluate this synchronized movement? Well, it's self-evident.

"Well, let's eat."

"Yes, let's dig in."

Today, dinner has become quite late.

"For now, what are your plans for the future? I also don't want to keep being targeted and endangering myself," Kurata asks.

As much as it is for the sake of protecting Kirishima, he has already been attacked once. He has even been hospitalized in the past, and he doesn't want to cause any more trouble for his family.

"Of course, I have no intention of causing any inconvenience to you, Kuroaa-kun. It pains me, but I've already decided to sell the company."

"Huh? Why?"

Kirishima reacts to this. After all, it's a company that he has worked hard to build. I was also surprised by the statement of easily letting it go.

"To be honest, it's clear to us that continuing to run the company as it is would be a huge burden. And I don't want to hand over the company to the Minamii Group either. Besides, the Minamii Group's performance isn't currently favorable. So there will definitely be a large number of departments and employees who will be laid off. But I want to protect the employees as much as possible.

That's why I've decided to sell to another major company. Fortunately, I have a connection who can make that happen. They have also guaranteed the future treatment for everyone.

Moreover, the business conducted by that company aligns quite well with our own. I can't go into details because they involve confidential matters, but it's definitely better than selling to the Nanamii group."

"But what about you, Dad? Are you planning to disappear again?"

Kirishima knows well how lonely it has been for him. While I can be there for Kirishima, I can't act as a blood relative. Kirishima himself should be aware that his only parent at the moment is his father.

"...To be honest, I'm concerned if I can stay in Japan. Being targeted by major corporations would make it difficult for me to start a business domestically. For the time being, I plan to handle the transition of the business as an advisor to the buyer for about a year, but I haven't decided what to do afterwards.

By the way, Reina, what do you want? I'll do what I can to help."

"I want to continue living as I have been, attend high school properly, and go to university."

"...I understand. But considering the possibility of being attacked again, I think it would be better for you to transfer schools."

"Huh... I don't want to transfer schools. Besides, I haven't repaid Kouji yet."

Hmm. Why does she call him by his first name in certain situations? It's clear from the change in his father's expression.

"If that's what you want, Reina, then I understand. In that case, we'll look for a different house. I don't want to inconvenience Kurata-kun either."

"Y-Yeah, I understand. Please."

"Kurata-kun, thank you for everything up until now. By the way, I should also thank your parents. By the way, where are they?"

Hmm. Should I explain this? It could become a delicate situation if I mention that his father is currently under suspicion and that I've been living without my parents.

"Um, my father is currently on a business trip. And my mother..."

"Ah, I've asked something troublesome. Sorry. In that case, can you connect me to your father?"

"Well, if that's the case..."

Since he's currently on an overseas business trip, it's more cost-effective to make a call over the internet. With that in mind, I make a call using a certain social media app on my smartphone.

"Hello? There's something I want to talk about," I say.

I carefully explained the situation to my father. As he listens to my story, he becomes less talkative.

"I see. I understand the main points. If you were stabbed to protect Kirishima, then that's perfectly fine. And if you've been using your own pocket money to pay for expenses, I have no objections either. It's not like you've crossed any boundaries, right?"

"Of course not. Well, it's because Kirishima's father is currently at home and wants to talk."

"I see. Then please let me talk to him."

That's how it is, so I hand my smartphone to my father.

"Here, please take the phone. You'll be connected to my father."

"Thank you."

Perhaps because he's an adult, the conversation starts off with proper etiquette. Well, that's to be expected since they're meeting for the first time.

Then, Kirishima's stomach makes a cute growling sound.

"N-No, it's not what you think!"

"You must be hungry. Shall we eat?"

I intentionally don't mention the fact that her stomach growled. It would be lacking in tact to point it out, after all.

By the way, did her father already eat? It wouldn't be appropriate to eat in front of a guest.

"It's alright. My father said, 'I'll eat first and then come, so it might take a little time.'"

"I see. In that case, I'll have some."

I head towards the kitchen and reheat the pot of cold curry on the stove. At the same time, I scoop rice from the rice cooker into bowls. The rice is still warm thanks to the rice cooker's keep-warm function.

"Oh, I'll prepare a salad."

How would an outsider evaluate this synchronized movement? Well, it's self-evident.

"Well, let's eat."

"Yes, let's dig in."

Today, dinner has become quite late.

"For now, what are your plans for the future? I also don't want to keep being targeted and endangering myself," Kurata asks.

As much as it is for the sake of protecting Kirishima, he has already been attacked once. He has even been hospitalized in the past, and he doesn't want to cause any more trouble for his family.

"Of course, I have no intention of causing any inconvenience to you, Kuroaa-kun. It pains me, but I've already decided to sell the company."

"Huh? Why?"

Kirishima reacts to this. After all, it's a company that he has worked hard to build. I was also surprised by the statement of easily letting it go.

"To be honest, it's clear to us that continuing to run the company as it is would be a huge burden. And I don't want to hand over the company to the Minamii Group either. Besides, the Minamii Group's performance isn't currently favorable. So there will definitely be a large number of departments and employees who will be laid off. But I want to protect the employees as much as possible."

That's why I've decided to sell to another major company. Fortunately, I have a connection who can make that happen. They have also guaranteed the future treatment for everyone.

Moreover, the business conducted by that company aligns quite well with our own. I can't go into details because they involve confidential matters, but it's definitely better than selling to the Nanamii group."

"But what about you, Dad? Are you planning to disappear again?"

Kirishima knows well how lonely it has been for him. While I can be there for Kirishima, I can't act as a blood relative. Kirishima himself should be aware that his only parent at the moment is his father.

"...To be honest, I'm concerned if I can stay in Japan. Being targeted by major corporations would make it difficult for me to start a business domestically. For the time being, I plan to handle the transition of the business as an advisor to the buyer for about a year, but I haven't decided what to do afterwards.

By the way, Reina, what do you want? I'll do what I can to help."

"I want to continue living as I have been, attend high school properly, and go to university."

"...I understand. But considering the possibility of being attacked again, I think it would be better for you to transfer schools."

"Huh... I don't want to transfer schools. Besides, I haven't repaid Kouji yet."

Hmm. Why does she call him by his first name in certain situations? It's clear from the change in his father's expression.

Hmm. Why does she call him by his first name in certain situations?

It's clear from the change in his father's expression.

"If that's what you want, Reina, then I understand. In that case, we'll look for a different house. I don't want to inconvenience Kurata-kun either."

"Y-Yeah, I understand. Please."

"Kurata-kun, thank you for everything up until now. By the way, I should also thank your parents. By the way, where are they?"

Hmm. Should I explain this? It could become a delicate situation if I mention that his father is currently under suspicion and that I've been living without my parents.

"Um, my father is currently on a business trip. And my mother..."

"Ah, I've asked something troublesome. Sorry. In that case, can you connect me to your father?"

"Well, if that's the case..."

Since he's currently on an overseas business trip, it's more cost-effective to make a call over the internet. With that in mind, I make a call using a certain social media app on my smartphone.

"Hello? There's something I want to talk about," I say.

I carefully explained the situation to my father. As he listens to my story, he becomes less talkative.

"I see. I understand the main points. If you were stabbed to protect Kirishima, then that's perfectly fine. And if you've been using your own pocket money to pay for expenses, I have no objections either. It's not like you've crossed any boundaries, right?"

"Of course not. Well, it's because Kirishima's father is currently at home and wants to talk."

"I see. Then please let me talk to him."

That's how it is, so I hand my smartphone to my father.

"Here, please take the phone. You'll be connected to my father."

"Thank you."

Perhaps because he's an adult, the conversation starts off with proper etiquette. Well, that's to be expected since they're meeting for the first time.

Then, Kirishima's stomach makes a cute growling sound.

"N-No, it's not what you think!"

"You must be hungry. Shall we eat?"

I intentionally don't mention the fact that her stomach growled. It would be lacking in tact to point it out, after all.

By the way, did her father already eat? It wouldn't be appropriate to eat in front of a guest.

By the way, did her father already eat?

It wouldn't be appropriate to eat in front of a guest.

"It's alright. My father said, 'I'll eat first and then come, so it might take a little time.'"

“I see. In that case, I’ll have some.”

I head towards the kitchen and reheat the pot of cold curry on the stove. At the same time, I scoop rice from the rice cooker into bowls. The rice is still warm thanks to the rice cooker’s keep-warm function.

“Oh, I’ll prepare a salad.”

How would an outsider evaluate this synchronized movement? Well, it’s self-evident.

“Well, let’s eat.”

“Yes, let’s dig in.”

Today, dinner has become quite late.

Around the time dinner was finished, the phone call between our parents ended as well.

“Reina, there’s something I need to discuss with you.”

“What is it?”

As I’m washing the dishes in the kitchen, Kirishima is called by her father. She places the dishcloth she was using to wipe the table and heads towards the living room.

“Ah, I’m going to be busy from now on, so I probably won’t be able to see you for a while. I think I’ll still be able to respond to messages, though. Also, I’m currently looking for a place for you to live. I should be able to make arrangements within a week, so please pack your belongings just in case. And let’s go together to retrieve anything that’s still at the original house. Just in case anything happens.”

“Understood.”

“And there’s something I’d like to ask of Kurata-kun as well.”

Oh, it seems I’m being called too. I temporarily stop my work and also head to the living room.

“Thank you for taking care of Reina all this time. Well, it hasn’t been long, but…”

As you can see, the situation is what it is, so I want you to protect Reina as much as possible. It’s a selfish request, I know, but please, I’m begging you.”

“I don’t mind. However, I hope you can make sure that neither your older brother nor Kirishima’s step brother harm us. I can’t always be with Kirishima, and I don’t want to see an outcome where they take advantage of that.”

“I’m well aware of that. I intend to do what I can on my end.”

“You don’t have to push yourself too hard. This is our problem too, after all.”

Kirishima immediately chimes in with support. I’m grateful for her words, but for some reason, I feel a sense of exclusion.

I find it strange that I feel this way, but unfortunately, I couldn’t explain it.

“Well then, I’ll take my leave here. I’ll let Reina know as soon as the house is secured. Well then.”

Her father picks up the bag that was placed in the corner and stands up from the sofa.

In order to see him off properly, we also head towards the entrance.

“Well, take care.”

“Stay safe.”

“Keep in touch.”

After her father opens the door and goes outside, he waves his hand. It was an unexpected gesture, given his appearance.

After a while, I hear the sound of a powerful engine from outside. It seems he rode a large motorcycle. Somehow, that seems fitting for him.

After her father leaves, I resume the dishwashing that I had paused midway. There wasn’t much left, so I’ll be finished soon.

“Kouji.”

“Hm? What is it?”

Kirishima comes all the way to the kitchen. It seems she still has something to say.

“Although my father said that, I actually don’t want to live alone. It just makes me feel even more anxious about when I might be attacked again.”

It seems Kirishima wasn’t convinced after all.

“In that case, why didn’t you tell your father?”

“I can’t do that! If I did, I’d definitely have to transfer schools.”

Kirishima’s voice becomes agitated. It may be the first time since the incident at the park that she’s raised her voice like this.

“…I’m sorry. It’s sudden. But I think my father originally intended for me to transfer schools. Besides, it seems like he knew that I hadn’t made many friends.”

“Then why didn’t you go along with it?”

“…I don’t want to say.”

Huh? Does she have some guilty reason? But as I think that, Kirishima's face continues to redden.

"Well, if it's embarrassing, you don't have to say. But, man, this is tough. Once the discussion with your father is settled, it can't be reversed."

"You won't let me stay?"

Kirishima (the beautiful girl) looks at me with a sad expression. The destructive power of that expression is something I can't resist, no matter how hard I struggle. From my perspective, it's actually a relief to be able to spend time with Kirishima, but...

"Ah, alright, alright. Please feel free to stay as long as you want."

"No, if you're that against it, then it's fine."

"No, please stay. I'm begging you."

I, feeling somewhat provoked, responded defiantly. However, Kirishima's face turns even redder.

"Hey, something seems off with you today, Kirishima. If you're tired, you should go to bed early."

"Kouji, the clueless one, never changes. I'm going to take a bath."

With unhappy footsteps, Kirishima heads towards the bathroom. I didn't intend to anger her, but perhaps I did something that bothered her.

Setting that aside, it seems that the only way to alleviate Kirishima's anxiety is to live together. I wouldn't want to move and risk being attacked either.

"Sigh..."

The sound of dripping water echoes. When I looked at myself in the mirror earlier, my face reflected in it and seemed terribly exhausted.

Of course, I know the cause. It's because I made Kouji feel uncomfortable by being embarrassed.

Does Kouji not want me to live with me? From his words and actions earlier, that suspicion becomes stronger.

"Huh... I'm crying."

My vision becomes blurred with tears. And the tears that overflow from my eyes fall onto the surface of the water.

I realize once again that I truly have feelings for Kouji. Otherwise, I wouldn't be in a situation where I'm crying.

At the same time, I feel that I need to make more of an effort. Right now, I'm just someone who couldn't be abandoned, like a stray cat picked up on the side of the road.

That's why I want him to see me as a woman. Even if I look at my own body, I'm not inferior to those around me. In fact, I've been confessed to by boys in my class more than a few times.

"All right."

With that determination in my heart, I get out of the bathtub.

Around the time dinner was finished, the phone call between our parents ended as well.

"Reina, there's something I need to discuss with you."

"What is it?"

As I'm washing the dishes in the kitchen, Kirishima is called by her father. She places the dishcloth she was using to wipe the table and heads towards the living room.

"Ah, I'm going to be busy from now on, so I probably won't be able to see you for a while. I think I'll still be able to respond to messages, though. Also, I'm currently looking for a place for you to live. I should be able to make arrangements within a week, so please pack your belongings just in case. And let's go together to retrieve anything that's still at the original house. Just in case anything happens."

"Understood."

"And there's something I'd like to ask of Kurata-kun as well."

Oh, it seems I'm being called too. I temporarily stop my work and also head to the living room.

"Thank you for taking care of Reina all this time. Well, it hasn't been long, but..."

As you can see, the situation is what it is, so I want you to protect Reina as much as possible. It's a selfish request, I know, but please, I'm begging you."

"I don't mind. However, I hope you can make sure that neither your older brother nor Kirishima's step brother harm us. I can't always be with Kirishima, and I don't want to see an outcome where they take advantage of that."

"I'm well aware of that. I intend to do what I can on my end."

"You don't have to push yourself too hard. This is our problem too, after all."

Kirishima immediately chimes in with support. I'm grateful for her words, but for some reason, I feel a sense of exclusion.

I find it strange that I feel this way, but unfortunately, I couldn't explain it.

"Well then, I'll take my leave here. I'll let Reina know as soon as the house is secured. Well then."

Her father picks up the bag that was placed in the corner and stands up from the sofa.

In order to see him off properly, we also head towards the entrance.

"Well, take care."

"Stay safe."

"Keep in touch."

After her father opens the door and goes outside, he waves his hand. It was an unexpected gesture, given his appearance.

After a while, I hear the sound of a powerful engine from outside. It seems he rode a large motorcycle. Somehow, that seems fitting for him.

After her father leaves, I resume the dishwashing that I had paused midway. There wasn't much left, so I'll be finished soon.

"Kouji."

"Hm? What is it?"

Kirishima comes all the way to the kitchen. It seems she still has something to say.

"Although my father said that, I actually don't want to live alone. It just makes me feel even more anxious about when I might be attacked again."

It seems Kirishima wasn't convinced after all.

"In that case, why didn't you tell your father?"

"I can't do that! If I did, I'd definitely have to transfer schools."

Kirishima's voice becomes agitated. It may be the first time since the incident at the park that she's raised her voice like this.

"...I'm sorry. It's sudden. But I think my father originally intended for me to transfer schools. Besides, it seems like he knew that I hadn't made many friends."

"Then why didn't you go along with it?"

"...I don't want to say."

Huh? Does she have some guilty reason? But as I think that, Kirishima's face continues to redden.

"Well, if it's embarrassing, you don't have to say. But, man, this is tough. Once the discussion with your father is settled, it can't be reversed."

"You won't let me stay?"

Kirishima (the beautiful girl) looks at me with a sad expression. The destructive power of that expression is something I can't resist, no matter how hard I struggle. From my perspective, it's actually a relief to be able to spend time with Kirishima, but...

"Ah, alright, alright. Please feel free to stay as long as you want."

"No, if you're that against it, then it's fine."

"No, please stay. I'm begging you."

I, feeling somewhat provoked, responded defiantly. However, Kirishima's face turns even redder.

"Hey, something seems off with you today, Kirishima. If you're tired, you should go to bed early."

"Kouji, the clueless one, never changes. I'm going to take a bath."

With unhappy footsteps, Kirishima heads towards the bathroom. I didn't intend to anger her, but perhaps I did something that bothered her.

Setting that aside, it seems that the only way to alleviate Kirishima's anxiety is to live together. I wouldn't want to move and risk being attacked either.

“Sigh...”

The sound of dripping water echoes. When I looked at myself in the mirror earlier, my face reflected in it and seemed terribly exhausted.

Of course, I know the cause. It’s because I made Kouji feel uncomfortable by being embarrassed.

Does Kouji not want me to live with me? From his words and actions earlier, that suspicion becomes stronger.

“Huh... I’m crying.”

My vision becomes blurred with tears. And the tears that overflow from my eyes fall onto the surface of the water.

I realize once again that I truly have feelings for Kouji. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be in a situation where I’m crying.

At the same time, I feel that I need to make more of an effort. Right now, I’m just someone who couldn’t be abandoned, like a stray cat picked up on the side of the road.

That’s why I want him to see me as a woman. Even if I look at my own body, I’m not inferior to those around me. In fact, I’ve been confessed to by boys in my class more than a few times.

“All right.”

With that determination in my heart, I get out of the bathtub.

Around the time dinner was finished, the phone call between our parents ended as well.

“Reina, there’s something I need to discuss with you.”

“What is it?”

As I’m washing the dishes in the kitchen, Kirishima is called by her father. She places the dishcloth she was using to wipe the table and heads towards the living room.

“Ah, I’m going to be busy from now on, so I probably won’t be able to see you for a while. I think I’ll still be able to respond to messages, though. Also, I’m currently looking for a place for you to live. I should be able to make arrangements within a week, so please pack your belongings just in case. And let’s go together to retrieve anything that’s still at the original house. Just in case anything happens.”

“Understood.”

“And there’s something I’d like to ask of Kurata-kun as well.”

Oh, it seems I’m being called too. I temporarily stop my work and also head to the living room.

“Thank you for taking care of Reina all this time. Well, it hasn’t been long, but...”

As you can see, the situation is what it is, so I want you to protect Reina as much as possible. It’s a selfish request, I know, but please, I’m begging you.”

“I don’t mind. However, I hope you can make sure that neither your older brother nor Kirishima’s step brother harm us. I can’t always be with Kirishima, and I don’t want to see an outcome where they take advantage of that.”

“I’m well aware of that. I intend to do what I can on my end.”

“You don’t have to push yourself too hard. This is our problem too, after all.”

Kirishima immediately chimes in with support. I’m grateful for her words, but for some reason, I feel a sense of exclusion.

I find it strange that I feel this way, but unfortunately, I couldn’t explain it.

“Well then, I’ll take my leave here. I’ll let Reina know as soon as the house is secured. Well then.”

Her father picks up the bag that was placed in the corner and stands up from the sofa.

In order to see him off properly, we also head towards the entrance.

“Well, take care.”

“Stay safe.”

“Keep in touch.”

After her father opens the door and goes outside, he waves his hand. It was an unexpected gesture, given his appearance.

After a while, I hear the sound of a powerful engine from outside. It seems he rode a large motorcycle. Somehow, that seems fitting for him.

After her father leaves, I resume the dishwashing that I had paused midway. There wasn’t much left, so I’ll be finished soon.

“Kouji.”

“Hm? What is it?”

Kirishima comes all the way to the kitchen. It seems she still has something to say.

“Although my father said that, I actually don’t want to live alone. It just makes me feel even more anxious about when I might be attacked again.”

It seems Kirishima wasn’t convinced after all.

“In that case, why didn’t you tell your father?”

“I can’t do that! If I did, I’d definitely have to transfer schools.”

Kirishima’s voice becomes agitated. It may be the first time since the incident at the park that she’s raised her voice like this.

“...I’m sorry. It’s sudden. But I think my father originally intended for me to transfer schools. Besides, it seems like he knew that I hadn’t made many friends.”

“Then why didn’t you go along with it?”

“...I don’t want to say.”

Huh? Does she have some guilty reason? But as I think that, Kirishima’s face continues to redden.

Huh? Does she have some guilty reason?

But as I think that, Kirishima’s face continues to redden.

“Well, if it’s embarrassing, you don’t have to say. But, man, this is tough. Once the discussion with your father is settled, it can’t be reversed.”

“You won’t let me stay?”

Kirishima (the beautiful girl) looks at me with a sad expression. The destructive power of that expression is something I can’t resist, no matter how hard I struggle. From my perspective, it’s actually a relief to be able to spend time with Kirishima, but...

“Ah, alright, alright. Please feel free to stay as long as you want.”

“No, if you’re that against it, then it’s fine.”

“No, please stay. I’m begging you.”

I, feeling somewhat provoked, responded defiantly. However, Kirishima’s face turns even redder.

“Hey, something seems off with you today, Kirishima. If you’re tired, you should go to bed early.”

“Kouji, the clueless one, never changes. I’m going to take a bath.”

With unhappy footsteps, Kirishima heads towards the bathroom. I didn’t intend to anger her, but perhaps I did something that bothered her.

Setting that aside, it seems that the only way to alleviate Kirishima’s anxiety is to live together. I wouldn’t want to move and risk being attacked either.

“Sigh...”

The sound of dripping water echoes. When I looked at myself in the mirror earlier, my face reflected in it and seemed terribly exhausted.

Of course, I know the cause. It’s because I made Kouji feel uncomfortable by being embarrassed.

Does Kouji not want me to live with me? From his words and actions earlier, that suspicion becomes stronger.

“Huh... I’m crying.”

My vision becomes blurred with tears. And the tears that overflow from my eyes fall onto the surface of the water.

I realize once again that I truly have feelings for Kouji. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be in a situation where I’m crying.

At the same time, I feel that I need to make more of an effort. Right now, I’m just someone who couldn’t be abandoned, like a stray cat picked up on the side of the road.

That’s why I want him to see me as a woman. Even if I look at my own body, I’m not inferior to those around me. In fact, I’ve been confessed to by boys in my class more than a few times.

“All right.”

With that determination in my heart, I get out of the bathtub.

In the end, it seems that after Kirishima took a bath, she immediately returned to her room. Thinking that I had offended her, I decided to apologize and was studying in the living room. Starting from Monday, it's finally the final exams, so it's the last push.

But... Kirishima didn't come no matter how much time passed, so I assumed she went to sleep to prepare for tomorrow's exam, and I decided to go to sleep as well.

Looking back, too many things happened today. I should go to sleep quickly and prepare for tomorrow.
"...W-wake up."

I hear someone's voice. It feels like I've been in this situation before.

"Wake up~"

My body shakes vigorously. Is Kirishima waking me up? It would be amusing to continue sleeping like this, but she seems angry, so I decide to wake up.

"Good morning. What's up so early?"

"Well, I thought it was about time to wake up."

Having been told that, I turn on my smartphone next to the pillow. Indeed, it's the time I usually wake up.

"Also, about yesterday. I was being sulky towards you, Kouji. I'm really grateful enough that you let me stay as a lodger. So I wanted to apologize to you, Kouji. I'm sorry."

"That was my fault too. I got desperate and said thoughtless things without considering your feelings, Kirishima."

The atmosphere becomes awkward. I wish someone would teach me how to start a conversation when we're both apologizing to each other.

"Well, anyway, I'll get changed."

"Y-yeah. Then in the living room..."

Kirishima quickly leaves. Someone, please give me an air purifier for this awkward atmosphere.

"Oh no, I'm going to fail so many subjects."

"Well, even if I tell you, you were probably playing around yesterday anyway."

"That's exactly right. I might be in trouble soon."

Although I left home with Kirishima, we separated on the way, and I ended up arriving at school first.

From the place we separated, there are quite a few people passing by, so I should be fine.

Then, as I arrived first and someone called out to me, it was Hoshino as usual. In fact, besides Hoshino, I feel like I've never had a one-on-one conversation with any of the boys in this class.

"Well, at this point, it's already pretty bad. We're taking entrance exams next year, you know? We have to develop a habit of studying."

"That's right. Hey, weren't you that type of person?"

"I made up my mind too."

I say that while giving credit mostly to Kirishima. But we really have come to a critical time where we must focus on the entrance exams. That's why Kirishima's guidance is greatly appreciated.

"There's no helping it. I'll send you pictures of my English notes later. Be grateful, okay?"

"Of course. Thank you, Kurata-sama."

For some reason, I can't hate this guy. Well, maybe it's just that we get along well.

"Good morning."

It seems that Kirishima has arrived as well. As soon as Kirishima arrives, most of the class (mostly boys) look in her direction. Some of them even greet her.

Looking at it this way, I can truly appreciate Kirishima's popularity.

"...Good morning."

"A-ah, good morning."

Although the awkward atmosphere in our house was resolved to some extent when we came to school together, it still lingers a bit. This has manifested in Kirishima's behavior in the classroom. Normally, she would be friendly, but now she seems somewhat suspicious.

"What? Is something wrong with you?"

Hoshino asks me that as he observes my unnatural behavior. It's quite different from my usual self, so it's understandable.

"No? I don't think there's anything."

I answer with a blatant lie and a straight face. But Hoshino, who is used to seeing the usual me, seems to sense that I'm lying. In fact, judging by his reaction, I could tell he was becoming suspicious.

"Well, whatever. Let's just focus on studying for now. We're in trouble if we don't study."

"Yeah, you're right."

I feel like I managed to deceive him somehow. I can only pray that I won't be further questioned later.

Then, our homeroom teacher came in. He probably has an envelope with today's exam papers in it.

"You all should already know this, but today marks the beginning of the final exams. Well, I hope you won't engage in any cheating or misconduct as usual. Now, do your best. Um, was there any other announcement?"

The teacher proceeds through the homeroom sluggishly. Since I became a second-year student, I don't recall ever seeing him full of energy. Perhaps because of that, some students around me are quietly studying in their notebooks, while others are exchanging quizzes for memorization-based subjects. Actually, I do wonder why the teacher doesn't reprimand them. Maybe he just finds it troublesome to do so.

"Kouji, I'll remind you, but make sure you remember what you studied, okay? And don't panic."

Kirishima, sitting next to me, casually speaks to me. Just being seen like this could cause trouble, but fortunately, we're speaking in low voices, and with everyone around us frantically looking at their notes and reference books, and considering we're seated in the back row, it doesn't seem like we've been caught.

"Well, I'll do my best."

I reply like that and lower my gaze to the notebook on my desk.

In the end, it seems that after Kirishima took a bath, she immediately returned to her room. Thinking that I had offended her, I decided to apologize and was studying in the living room. Starting from Monday, it's finally the final exams, so it's the last push.

But... Kirishima didn't come no matter how much time passed, so I assumed she went to sleep to prepare for tomorrow's exam, and I decided to go to sleep as well.

Looking back, too many things happened today. I should go to sleep quickly and prepare for tomorrow.

"...W-wake up."

I hear someone's voice. It feels like I've been in this situation before.

"Wake up~"

My body shakes vigorously. Is Kirishima waking me up? It would be amusing to continue sleeping like this, but she seems angry, so I decide to wake up.

"Good morning. What's up so early?"

"Well, I thought it was about time to wake up."

Having been told that, I turn on my smartphone next to the pillow. Indeed, it's the time I usually wake up.

"Also, about yesterday. I was being sulky towards you, Kouji. I'm really grateful enough that you let me stay as a lodger. So I wanted to apologize to you, Kouji. I'm sorry."

"That was my fault too. I got desperate and said thoughtless things without considering your feelings, Kirishima."

The atmosphere becomes awkward. I wish someone would teach me how to start a conversation when we're both apologizing to each other.

"Well, anyway, I'll get changed."

"Y-yeah. Then in the living room..."

Kirishima quickly leaves. Someone, please give me an air purifier for this awkward atmosphere.

"Oh no, I'm going to fail so many subjects."

"Well, even if I tell you, you were probably playing around yesterday anyway."

"That's exactly right. I might be in trouble soon."

Although I left home with Kirishima, we separated on the way, and I ended up arriving at school first. From the place we separated, there are quite a few people passing by, so I should be fine.

Then, as I arrived first and someone called out to me, it was Hoshino as usual. In fact, besides Hoshino, I feel like I've never had a one-on-one conversation with any of the boys in this class.

"Well, at this point, it's already pretty bad. We're taking entrance exams next year, you know? We have to develop a habit of studying."

"That's right. Hey, weren't you that type of person?"

"I made up my mind too."

I say that while giving credit mostly to Kirishima. But we really have come to a critical time where we must focus on the entrance exams. That's why Kirishima's guidance is greatly appreciated.

"There's no helping it. I'll send you pictures of my English notes later. Be grateful, okay?"

"Of course. Thank you, Kurata-sama."

For some reason, I can't hate this guy. Well, maybe it's just that we get along well.

"Good morning."

It seems that Kirishima has arrived as well. As soon as Kirishima arrives, most of the class (mostly boys) look in her direction. Some of them even greet her.

Looking at it this way, I can truly appreciate Kirishima's popularity.

"...Good morning."

"A-ah, good morning."

Although the awkward atmosphere in our house was resolved to some extent when we came to school together, it still lingers a bit. This has manifested in Kirishima's behavior in the classroom. Normally, she would be friendly, but now she seems somewhat suspicious.

"What? Is something wrong with you?"

Hoshino asks me that as he observes my unnatural behavior. It's quite different from my usual self, so it's understandable.

"No? I don't think there's anything."

I answer with a blatant lie and a straight face. But Hoshino, who is used to seeing the usual me, seems to sense that I'm lying. In fact, judging by his reaction, I could tell he was becoming suspicious.

"Well, whatever. Let's just focus on studying for now. We're in trouble if we don't study."

"Yeah, you're right."

I feel like I managed to deceive him somehow. I can only pray that I won't be further questioned later. Then, our homeroom teacher came in. He probably has an envelope with today's exam papers in it.

"You all should already know this, but today marks the beginning of the final exams. Well, I hope you won't engage in any cheating or misconduct as usual. Now, do your best. Um, was there any other announcement?"

The teacher proceeds through the homeroom sluggishly. Since I became a second-year student, I don't recall ever seeing him full of energy. Perhaps because of that, some students around me are quietly studying in their notebooks, while others are exchanging quizzes for memorization-based subjects. Actually, I do wonder why the teacher doesn't reprimand them. Maybe he just finds it troublesome to do so.

"Kouji, I'll remind you, but make sure you remember what you studied, okay? And don't panic."

Kirishima, sitting next to me, casually speaks to me. Just being seen like this could cause trouble, but fortunately, we're speaking in low voices, and with everyone around us frantically looking at their notes and reference books, and considering we're seated in the back row, it doesn't seem like we've been caught.

"Well, I'll do my best."

I reply like that and lower my gaze to the notebook on my desk.

In the end, it seems that after Kirishima took a bath, she immediately returned to her room. Thinking that I had offended her, I decided to apologize and was studying in the living room. Starting from Monday, it's finally the final exams, so it's the last push.

But... Kirishima didn't come no matter how much time passed, so I assumed she went to sleep to prepare for tomorrow's exam, and I decided to go to sleep as well.

Looking back, too many things happened today. I should go to sleep quickly and prepare for tomorrow.

“...W-wake up.”

I hear someone's voice. It feels like I've been in this situation before.

“Wake up~”

My body shakes vigorously. Is Kirishima waking me up? It would be amusing to continue sleeping like this, but she seems angry, so I decide to wake up.

My body shakes vigorously.

Is Kirishima waking me up?

It would be amusing to continue sleeping like this, but she seems angry, so I decide to wake up.

“Good morning. What's up so early?”

“Well, I thought it was about time to wake up.”

Having been told that, I turn on my smartphone next to the pillow. Indeed, it's the time I usually wake up.

“Also, about yesterday. I was being sulky towards you, Kouji. I'm really grateful enough that you let me stay as a lodger. So I wanted to apologize to you, Kouji. I'm sorry.”

“That was my fault too. I got desperate and said thoughtless things without considering your feelings, Kirishima.”

The atmosphere becomes awkward. I wish someone would teach me how to start a conversation when we're both apologizing to each other.

“Well, anyway, I'll get changed.”

“Y-yeah. Then in the living room...”

Kirishima quickly leaves. Someone, please give me an air purifier for this awkward atmosphere.

“Oh no, I'm going to fail so many subjects.”

“Well, even if I tell you, you were probably playing around yesterday anyway.”

“That's exactly right. I might be in trouble soon.”

Although I left home with Kirishima, we separated on the way, and I ended up arriving at school first.

From the place we separated, there are quite a few people passing by, so I should be fine.

Then, as I arrived first and someone called out to me, it was Hoshino as usual. In fact, besides Hoshino, I feel like I've never had a one-on-one conversation with any of the boys in this class.

“Well, at this point, it's already pretty bad. We're taking entrance exams next year, you know? We have to develop a habit of studying.”

“That's right. Hey, weren't you that type of person?”

“I made up my mind too.”

I say that while giving credit mostly to Kirishima. But we really have come to a critical time where we must focus on the entrance exams. That's why Kirishima's guidance is greatly appreciated.

“There's no helping it. I'll send you pictures of my English notes later. Be grateful, okay?”

“Of course. Thank you, Kurata-sama.”

For some reason, I can't hate this guy. Well, maybe it's just that we get along well.

“Good morning.”

It seems that Kirishima has arrived as well. As soon as Kirishima arrives, most of the class (mostly boys) look in her direction. Some of them even greet her.

Looking at it this way, I can truly appreciate Kirishima's popularity.

“...Good morning.”

“A-ah, good morning.”

Although the awkward atmosphere in our house was resolved to some extent when we came to school together, it still lingers a bit. This has manifested in Kirishima's behavior in the classroom. Normally, she would be friendly, but now she seems somewhat suspicious.

“What? Is something wrong with you?”

Hoshino asks me that as he observes my unnatural behavior. It's quite different from my usual self, so it's understandable.

“No? I don't think there's anything.”

I answer with a blatant lie and a straight face. But Hoshino, who is used to seeing the usual me, seems to sense that I'm lying. In fact, judging by his reaction, I could tell he was becoming suspicious.

“Well, whatever. Let’s just focus on studying for now. We’re in trouble if we don’t study.”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

I feel like I managed to deceive him somehow. I can only pray that I won’t be further questioned later. Then, our homeroom teacher came in. He probably has an envelope with today’s exam papers in it.

“You all should already know this, but today marks the beginning of the final exams. Well, I hope you won’t engage in any cheating or misconduct as usual. Now, do your best. Um, was there any other announcement?”

The teacher proceeds through the homeroom sluggishly. Since I became a second-year student, I don’t recall ever seeing him full of energy. Perhaps because of that, some students around me are quietly studying in their notebooks, while others are exchanging quizzes for memorization-based subjects. Actually, I do wonder why the teacher doesn’t reprimand them. Maybe he just finds it troublesome to do so.

“Kouji, I’ll remind you, but make sure you remember what you studied, okay? And don’t panic.”

Kirishima, sitting next to me, casually speaks to me. Just being seen like this could cause trouble, but fortunately, we’re speaking in low voices, and with everyone around us frantically looking at their notes and reference books, and considering we’re seated in the back row, it doesn’t seem like we’ve been caught.

“Well, I’ll do my best.”

I reply like that and lower my gaze to the notebook on my desk.

“Ugh, I’m so exhausted.”

“You managed to avoid failing English, right?”

“I don’t know...”

The four-day regular exams are finally over today. Phew, I’m tired.

The tense atmosphere in the class has dissipated, and some students are already making plans for after school.

“Kirishima-san! Wanna go somewhere?”

“How about karaoke?”

In fact, even next to me, Kirishima is being invited by the guys. But I feel like they’re a bit too enthusiastic. Witnessing that enthusiasm, I sense that Kirishima is also taken aback.

“Are you going to join them too?”

Come to think of it, Hoshino has hung out with them before. He gets along well with me for some reason, but he also has an overwhelming “sunny” personality.

“Nah, I need to level up in the game.”

“You’re still playing games at a time like this? Well, whatever.”

As expected, Hoshino remains unchanged. He’s quite a consistent guy. Although, truth be told, he’s ranked around 500th in the national rankings of that game.

“Well, I’m heading home.”

“Me too.”

In the end, we decided to go straight home. That’s probably the best choice for someone like me, who is more on the introverted side.

“Sorry, I have something to take care of today.”

“What? What’s the matter?”

“It’s something at home.”

“Can’t you do it tomorrow? Let’s hang out today.”

But listening to the conversations around me, I can’t help but think they’re being too desperate.

Moreover, the ones inviting Kirishima are all handsome guys, like the captain of the basketball club. It’s understandable that Kirishima would face backlash from the girls.

But even though Kirishima hasn’t done anything wrong, doesn’t she find it unfair?

“Let’s go home...”

“Yeah.”

Hoshino must have started feeling uncomfortable too, as he urges us to leave. For some reason, I answered in Kansai dialect.

While heading home from school, I sent a message to Kirishima on a certain messaging app. I expressed my concern for her and assured her that I’m worried about her well-being.

A few minutes later, I received a response. She specified a meeting place near the station and sent me the meeting time. That means she wants me to pick her up.

Since there’s still plenty of time until the pick-up time, I decided to take care of various tasks.

Specifically, general housework, bug fixing for my selfmade app, self-scoring the regular exams, and so on. There are countless things to do.

“Um, I guess this place will do.”

I arrived at the meeting place 10 minutes before the scheduled time. Acting ahead of time is common sense for working adults. Well, I’m still a high school student, though.

The meeting place is a plaza near the station. It’s currently the rush hour for people returning home, so there’s a lot of foot traffic. I can’t help but wonder if Kirishima will be able to spot me in this crowd as I observe my surroundings.

However, since I don’t have much else to do, I decide to sit around the fountain in the center of the plaza and pass the time with my smartphone.

“Ah!”

“Whoa! Ah, that startled me.”

I was almost in a zombie-like state, staring at my smartphone when suddenly I was hit with a loud voice from behind. The one who called out to me was Kirishima, but it was so sudden that I ended up shouting in public, which was completely out of character for me.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Did you wait long?”

“No, well...”

Kirishima looks at me with a teasing expression. However, I couldn’t help but show my anger at myself for shouting so loudly in the middle of the street.

Kirishima must have noticed that I was angry because she apologized with a remorseful expression.

“Sorry, I didn’t expect you to get so angry.”

“Just leave it at that. It’s really bad for my heart.”

“I didn’t expect you to get that angry.”

Kirishima looks quite dejected. Seeing her like that, I start to feel guilty too.

“Well, let’s just go home. What do you want for dinner? If we don’t have the ingredients, we can stop by the supermarket.”

“Then let’s have a salted pork rice bowl.”

“Ah, did we have pork?”

It seems Kirishima has also fallen in love with the charm of salted pork rice bowl. When your own preferences align with someone else’s, it feels somewhat satisfying or even fulfilling.

By the way, Kirishima is still in her school uniform. Technically, according to the school rules, detours are not allowed. But it seems like that rule has become somewhat superficial. However, since I’ve never had any reason to take a detour before, I can be seen as an exemplary student who strictly adheres to the rules.

“Hey, hey.”

While I’m lost in pointless thoughts, Kirishima, who is walking beside me, calls out to me.

“How did you do on the exams?”

“Well, it was... decent, I guess.”

“Hey, if ‘decent’ means you got a failing grade, I won’t forgive you, you know?”

Huh? What will you do to me if you don’t forgive me? It’s actually quite scary.

“Well, just kidding. We can go over the test questions later. I’ll help you.”

“I’m glad to have your help.”

“I owe you so much, Kouji. But why are you using honorifics?”

“Well, it’s just...”

Kirishima looks at me with a puzzled expression. Well, I’m really sorry. I still think Kirishima is an angel, but somehow I feel like there’s a demon lurking behind her... or something like that.

“Ugh, I’m so exhausted.”

“You managed to avoid failing English, right?”

“I don’t know...”

The four-day regular exams are finally over today. Phew, I’m tired.

The tense atmosphere in the class has dissipated, and some students are already making plans for after school.

“Kirishima-san! Wanna go somewhere?”

“How about karaoke?”

In fact, even next to me, Kirishima is being invited by the guys. But I feel like they’re a bit too enthusiastic. Witnessing that enthusiasm, I sense that Kirishima is also taken aback.

“Are you going to join them too?”

Come to think of it, Hoshino has hung out with them before. He gets along well with me for some reason, but he also has an overwhelming “sunny” personality.

“Nah, I need to level up in the game.”

“You’re still playing games at a time like this? Well, whatever.”

As expected, Hoshino remains unchanged. He's quite a consistent guy. Although, truth be told, he's ranked around 500th in the national rankings of that game.

"Well, I'm heading home."

"Me too."

In the end, we decided to go straight home. That's probably the best choice for someone like me, who is more on the introverted side.

"Sorry, I have something to take care of today."

"What? What's the matter?"

"It's something at home."

"Can't you do it tomorrow? Let's hang out today."

But listening to the conversations around me, I can't help but think they're being too desperate.

Moreover, the ones inviting Kirishima are all handsome guys, like the captain of the basketball club. It's understandable that Kirishima would face backlash from the girls.

But even though Kirishima hasn't done anything wrong, doesn't she find it unfair?

"Let's go home..."

"Yeah."

Hoshino must have started feeling uncomfortable too, as he urges us to leave. For some reason, I answered in Kansai dialect.

While heading home from school, I sent a message to Kirishima on a certain messaging app. I expressed my concern for her and assured her that I'm worried about her well-being.

A few minutes later, I received a response. She specified a meeting place near the station and sent me the meeting time. That means she wants me to pick her up.

Since there's still plenty of time until the pick-up time, I decided to take care of various tasks.

Specifically, general housework, bug fixing for my selfmade app, self-scoring the regular exams, and so on. There are countless things to do.

"Um, I guess this place will do."

I arrived at the meeting place 10 minutes before the scheduled time. Acting ahead of time is common sense for working adults. Well, I'm still a high school student, though.

The meeting place is a plaza near the station. It's currently the rush hour for people returning home, so there's a lot of foot traffic. I can't help but wonder if Kirishima will be able to spot me in this crowd as I observe my surroundings.

However, since I don't have much else to do, I decide to sit around the fountain in the center of the plaza and pass the time with my smartphone.

"Ah!"

"Whoa! Ah, that startled me."

I was almost in a zombie-like state, staring at my smartphone when suddenly I was hit with a loud voice from behind. The one who called out to me was Kirishima, but it was so sudden that I ended up shouting in public, which was completely out of character for me.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Did you wait long?"

"No, well..."

Kirishima looks at me with a teasing expression. However, I couldn't help but show my anger at myself for shouting so loudly in the middle of the street.

Kirishima must have noticed that I was angry because she apologized with a remorseful expression.

"Sorry, I didn't expect you to get so angry."

"Just leave it at that. It's really bad for my heart."

"I didn't expect you to get that angry."

Kirishima looks quite dejected. Seeing her like that, I start to feel guilty too.

"Well, let's just go home. What do you want for dinner? If we don't have the ingredients, we can stop by the supermarket."

"Then let's have a salted pork rice bowl."

"Ah, did we have pork?"

It seems Kirishima has also fallen in love with the charm of salted pork rice bowl. When your own

preferences align with someone else's, it feels somewhat satisfying or even fulfilling.

By the way, Kirishima is still in her school uniform. Technically, according to the school rules, detours are not allowed. But it seems like that rule has become somewhat superficial. However, since I've never had any reason to take a detour before, I can be seen as an exemplary student who strictly adheres to the rules.

"Hey, hey."

While I'm lost in pointless thoughts, Kirishima, who is walking beside me, calls out to me.

"How did you do on the exams?"

"Well, it was... decent, I guess."

"Hey, if 'decent' means you got a failing grade, I won't forgive you, you know?"

Huh? What will you do to me if you don't forgive me? It's actually quite scary.

"Well, just kidding. We can go over the test questions later. I'll help you."

"I'm glad to have your help."

"I owe you so much, Kouji. But why are you using honorifics?"

"Well, it's just..."

Kirishima looks at me with a puzzled expression. Well, I'm really sorry. I still think Kirishima is an angel, but somehow I feel like there's a demon lurking behind her... or something like that.

"Ugh, I'm so exhausted."

"You managed to avoid failing English, right?"

"I don't know..."

The four-day regular exams are finally over today. Phew, I'm tired.

The four-day regular exams are finally over today.

Phew, I'm tired.

The tense atmosphere in the class has dissipated, and some students are already making plans for after school.

"Kirishima-san! Wanna go somewhere?"

"How about karaoke?"

In fact, even next to me, Kirishima is being invited by the guys. But I feel like they're a bit too enthusiastic. Witnessing that enthusiasm, I sense that Kirishima is also taken aback.

"Are you going to join them too?"

Come to think of it, Hoshino has hung out with them before. He gets along well with me for some reason, but he also has an overwhelming "sunny" personality.

"Nah, I need to level up in the game."

"You're still playing games at a time like this? Well, whatever."

As expected, Hoshino remains unchanged. He's quite a consistent guy. Although, truth be told, he's ranked around 500th in the national rankings of that game.

"Well, I'm heading home."

"Me too."

In the end, we decided to go straight home. That's probably the best choice for someone like me, who is more on the introverted side.

"Sorry, I have something to take care of today."

"What? What's the matter?"

"It's something at home."

"Can't you do it tomorrow? Let's hang out today."

But listening to the conversations around me, I can't help but think they're being too desperate.

Moreover, the ones inviting Kirishima are all handsome guys, like the captain of the basketball club. It's understandable that Kirishima would face backlash from the girls.

But even though Kirishima hasn't done anything wrong, doesn't she find it unfair?

"Let's go home..."

"Yeah."

Hoshino must have started feeling uncomfortable too, as he urges us to leave. For some reason, I answered in Kansai dialect.

While heading home from school, I sent a message to Kirishima on a certain messaging app. I expressed my concern for her and assured her that I'm worried about her well-being.

A few minutes later, I received a response. She specified a meeting place near the station and sent me the meeting time. That means she wants me to pick her up.

Since there's still plenty of time until the pick-up time, I decided to take care of various tasks.

Specifically, general housework, bug fixing for my selfmade app, self-scoring the regular exams, and so on. There are countless things to do.

"Um, I guess this place will do."

I arrived at the meeting place 10 minutes before the scheduled time. Acting ahead of time is common sense for working adults. Well, I'm still a high school student, though.

The meeting place is a plaza near the station. It's currently the rush hour for people returning home, so there's a lot of foot traffic. I can't help but wonder if Kirishima will be able to spot me in this crowd as I observe my surroundings.

However, since I don't have much else to do, I decide to sit around the fountain in the center of the plaza and pass the time with my smartphone.

"Ah!"

"Whoa! Ah, that startled me."

I was almost in a zombie-like state, staring at my smartphone when suddenly I was hit with a loud voice from behind. The one who called out to me was Kirishima, but it was so sudden that I ended up shouting in public, which was completely out of character for me.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Did you wait long?"

"No, well..."

Kirishima looks at me with a teasing expression. However, I couldn't help but show my anger at myself for shouting so loudly in the middle of the street.

Kirishima must have noticed that I was angry because she apologized with a remorseful expression.

"Sorry, I didn't expect you to get so angry."

"Just leave it at that. It's really bad for my heart."

"I didn't expect you to get that angry."

Kirishima looks quite dejected. Seeing her like that, I start to feel guilty too.

"Well, let's just go home. What do you want for dinner? If we don't have the ingredients, we can stop by the supermarket."

"Then let's have a salted pork rice bowl."

"Ah, did we have pork?"

It seems Kirishima has also fallen in love with the charm of salted pork rice bowl. When your own preferences align with someone else's, it feels somewhat satisfying or even fulfilling.

By the way, Kirishima is still in her school uniform. Technically, according to the school rules, detours are not allowed. But it seems like that rule has become somewhat superficial. However, since I've never had any reason to take a detour before, I can be seen as an exemplary student who strictly adheres to the rules.

"Hey, hey."

While I'm lost in pointless thoughts, Kirishima, who is walking beside me, calls out to me.

"How did you do on the exams?"

"Well, it was... decent, I guess."

"Hey, if 'decent' means you got a failing grade, I won't forgive you, you know?"

Huh? What will you do to me if you don't forgive me? It's actually quite scary.

"Well, just kidding. We can go over the test questions later. I'll help you."

"I'm glad to have your help."

"I owe you so much, Kouji. But why are you using honorifics?"

"Well, it's just..."

Kirishima looks at me with a puzzled expression. Well, I'm really sorry. I still think Kirishima is an angel, but somehow I feel like there's a demon lurking behind her... or something like that.

As you know, with the end of the regular exams, the atmosphere in the class has become light-hearted. Until the summer of our second year in high school, we have the period where we can enjoy ourselves, but after that, we'll start intense exam preparation, making it physically impossible to do such things. Perhaps because of that, this summer feels like the last summer of our youth, and some people are determined to make the most of it.

Amidst all that, I feel like I'm missing out on the "life" of youth. Well, I think indulging in games with a few friends can also be considered a part of youth, so it doesn't bother me much.

But still, even though we're supposed to be attending a school known for its academic focus, I can't help but wonder if it's okay to be so carefree. Despite having assignments and tasks, very few students actually submit them properly.

"So, what's up?"

"Well~, I just didn't have enough time."

Hoshino avoids my gaze awkwardly. Sweat drips down his forehead.

"You keep pestering me to show you my notes, yet you don't even do your assignments properly. And you barely passed the test. It's not a laughing matter, you know?"

"I have no words to say in my defense."

During the morning class, our English tests were returned, and during the break, seeing Hoshino's obvious strange behavior, I decided to question him a bit. To my surprise, Hoshino's disastrous test was revealed. He had managed to grasp the key points I had summarized in my notes and earned some points, but he just barely avoided failing.

"I can't lend you a hand anymore, you know? To someone who can't make a sincere effort."

"I'm sorry. I'll change my ways and ask for your help."

I let out a deep sigh. I could only feel disappointment for my supposed friend's unfortunate situation.

"Sure, your gaming skills are impressive, but since you're here at this school, let's try a bit harder. I can help you with the parts you don't understand."

"Yes..."

If you wanted to improve your gaming skills, there might have been different paths to take. Even if you didn't go to high school, you could still obtain a high school equivalency certificate.

As I continue talking to Hoshino, his gloomy tone gradually returns to his usual one. I've known for a while that he has a quick change of mood.

"By the way, I heard that Kirishima, who sits next to you, was seen walking with a guy in town."

Saying that, Hoshino shows me his smartphone screen. The screen displayed an image of someone who appeared to be Kirishima in her school uniform and a guy wearing clothes that I distinctly recognized.

"But until now, I've never heard anything about her being involved with someone romantically. It's surprising, isn't it?"

"Hmm, I see."

The person shown in this image is almost certainly me. Fortunately, since the photo was taken from behind, it's unclear who the guy is, so the excitement doesn't go any further.

"But seriously, I never thought Kirishima had a boyfriend."

"Isn't it her brother? I mean, it's unlikely she would meet a boyfriend in her school uniform."

Actually, Kirishima does have a brother. They have a strained relationship, but I'm not lying.

"Well, I've never heard anything about Kirishima having a brother. Well, it could totally be true, though."

"But where did this image come from?"

"I think it was circulated within our class group. The source was... um, Taniguchi, I think."

Who's that? I don't even know if they're in the same class since they rarely interact with others.

"Well, you probably don't know Taniguchi. In a nutshell, they're a rich, flashy kid."

"Yeah, seems like the type who will definitely mess up in the future."

They probably spend their student days being carefree, and their future is guaranteed through their family's influence. Ah, it's a sad story. This is the privilege of hereditary succession.

"I can't deny that. After all, there are rumors going around that aren't exactly favorable."

"Like what?"

"For example, rumors that they go through women like changing clothes, and every time they commit wrongdoing, they use their money and their parents' power to cover it up."

It's a phrase I've heard somewhere before. It just reaffirms that there are people who have lost their humanity no matter where you go.

"Sigh. Must be nice to have such a privileged background."

"Indeed. And to top it off, this guy's father is a politician. I believe he was a member of the House of Representatives. They'll probably end up with a cushy job with their parents' support."

"Or they might use their parents' connections to become a politician. Either way, it's a rotten world."

If you have the power of your parents, you can even enter through the back door. Things like recommendation slots at private universities are often decided subjectively by the university itself. It would be easy to admit the son of a wealthy family.

"Damn, this world really sucks."

I mutter quietly and start preparing for the next class.

As you know, with the end of the regular exams, the atmosphere in the class has become light-hearted. Until the summer of our second year in high school, we have the period where we can enjoy ourselves, but after that, we'll start intense exam preparation, making it physically impossible to do such things. Perhaps because of that, this summer feels like the last summer of our youth, and some people are determined to make the most of it.

Amidst all that, I feel like I'm missing out on the "life" of youth. Well, I think indulging in games with a few friends can also be considered a part of youth, so it doesn't bother me much.

But still, even though we're supposed to be attending a school known for its academic focus, I can't help but wonder if it's okay to be so carefree. Despite having assignments and tasks, very few students actually submit them properly.

"So, what's up?"

"Well~, I just didn't have enough time."

Hoshino avoids my gaze awkwardly. Sweat drips down his forehead.

"You keep pestering me to show you my notes, yet you don't even do your assignments properly. And you barely passed the test. It's not a laughing matter, you know?"

"I have no words to say in my defense."

During the morning class, our English tests were returned, and during the break, seeing Hoshino's obvious strange behavior, I decided to question him a bit. To my surprise, Hoshino's disastrous test was revealed. He had managed to grasp the key points I had summarized in my notes and earned some points, but he just barely avoided failing.

"I can't lend you a hand anymore, you know? To someone who can't make a sincere effort."

"I'm sorry. I'll change my ways and ask for your help."

I let out a deep sigh. I could only feel disappointment for my supposed friend's unfortunate situation.

"Sure, your gaming skills are impressive, but since you're here at this school, let's try a bit harder. I can help you with the parts you don't understand."

"Yes..."

If you wanted to improve your gaming skills, there might have been different paths to take. Even if you didn't go to high school, you could still obtain a high school equivalency certificate.

As I continue talking to Hoshino, his gloomy tone gradually returns to his usual one. I've known for a while that he has a quick change of mood.

"By the way, I heard that Kirishima, who sits next to you, was seen walking with a guy in town."

Saying that, Hoshino shows me his smartphone screen. The screen displayed an image of someone who appeared to be Kirishima in her school uniform and a guy wearing clothes that I distinctly recognized.

"But until now, I've never heard anything about her being involved with someone romantically. It's surprising, isn't it?"

“Hmm, I see.”

The person shown in this image is almost certainly me. Fortunately, since the photo was taken from behind, it's unclear who the guy is, so the excitement doesn't go any further.

“But seriously, I never thought Kirishima had a boyfriend.”

“Isn't it her brother? I mean, it's unlikely she would meet a boyfriend in her school uniform.”

Actually, Kirishima does have a brother. They have a strained relationship, but I'm not lying.

“Well, I've never heard anything about Kirishima having a brother. Well, it could totally be true, though.”

“But where did this image come from?”

“I think it was circulated within our class group. The source was... um, Taniguchi, I think.”

Who's that? I don't even know if they're in the same class since they rarely interact with others.

“Well, you probably don't know Taniguchi. In a nutshell, they're a rich, flashy kid.”

“Yeah, seems like the type who will definitely mess up in the future.”

They probably spend their student days being carefree, and their future is guaranteed through their family's influence. Ah, it's a sad story. This is the privilege of hereditary succession.

“I can't deny that. After all, there are rumors going around that aren't exactly favorable.”

“Like what?”

“For example, rumors that they go through women like changing clothes, and every time they commit wrongdoing, they use their money and their parents' power to cover it up.”

It's a phrase I've heard somewhere before. It just reaffirms that there are people who have lost their humanity no matter where you go.

“Sigh. Must be nice to have such a privileged background.”

“Indeed. And to top it off, this guy's father is a politician. I believe he was a member of the House of Representatives. They'll probably end up with a cushy job with their parents' support.”

“Or they might use their parents' connections to become a politician. Either way, it's a rotten world.”

If you have the power of your parents, you can even enter through the back door. Things like recommendation slots at private universities are often decided subjectively by the university itself. It would be easy to admit the son of a wealthy family.

“Damn, this world really sucks.”

I mutter quietly and start preparing for the next class.

As you know, with the end of the regular exams, the atmosphere in the class has become light-hearted.

Until the summer of our second year in high school, we have the period where we can enjoy ourselves, but after that, we'll start intense exam preparation, making it physically impossible to do such things.

Perhaps because of that, this summer feels like the last summer of our youth, and some people are determined to make the most of it.

Amidst all that, I feel like I'm missing out on the “life” of youth. Well, I think indulging in games with a few friends can also be considered a part of youth, so it doesn't bother me much.

But still, even though we're supposed to be attending a school known for its academic focus, I can't help but wonder if it's okay to be so carefree. Despite having assignments and tasks, very few students actually submit them properly.

“So, what's up?”

“Well~, I just didn't have enough time.”

Hoshino avoids my gaze awkwardly. Sweat drips down his forehead.

“You keep pestering me to show you my notes, yet you don't even do your assignments properly. And you barely passed the test. It's not a laughing matter, you know?”

“I have no words to say in my defense.”

During the morning class, our English tests were returned, and during the break, seeing Hoshino's obvious strange behavior, I decided to question him a bit. To my surprise, Hoshino's disastrous test was revealed. He had managed to grasp the key points I had summarized in my notes and earned some points, but he just barely avoided failing.

“I can't lend you a hand anymore, you know? To someone who can't make a sincere effort.”

“I'm sorry. I'll change my ways and ask for your help.”

I let out a deep sigh. I could only feel disappointment for my supposed friend's unfortunate situation.

“Sure, your gaming skills are impressive, but since you’re here at this school, let’s try a bit harder. I can help you with the parts you don’t understand.”

“Yes...”

If you wanted to improve your gaming skills, there might have been different paths to take. Even if you didn’t go to high school, you could still obtain a high school equivalency certificate.

As I continue talking to Hoshino, his gloomy tone gradually returns to his usual one. I’ve known for a while that he has a quick change of mood.

“By the way, I heard that Kirishima, who sits next to you, was seen walking with a guy in town.”

Saying that, Hoshino shows me his smartphone screen. The screen displayed an image of someone who appeared to be Kirishima in her school uniform and a guy wearing clothes that I distinctly recognized.

“But until now, I’ve never heard anything about her being involved with someone romantically. It’s surprising, isn’t it?”

“Hmm, I see.”

The person shown in this image is almost certainly me. Fortunately, since the photo was taken from behind, it’s unclear who the guy is, so the excitement doesn’t go any further.

“But seriously, I never thought Kirishima had a boyfriend.”

“Isn’t it her brother? I mean, it’s unlikely she would meet a boyfriend in her school uniform.”

Actually, Kirishima does have a brother. They have a strained relationship, but I’m not lying.

“Well, I’ve never heard anything about Kirishima having a brother. Well, it could totally be true, though.”

“But where did this image come from?”

“I think it was circulated within our class group. The source was... um, Taniguchi, I think.”

Who’s that? I don’t even know if they’re in the same class since they rarely interact with others.

“Well, you probably don’t know Taniguchi. In a nutshell, they’re a rich, flashy kid.”

“Yeah, seems like the type who will definitely mess up in the future.”

They probably spend their student days being carefree, and their future is guaranteed through their family’s influence. Ah, it’s a sad story. This is the privilege of hereditary succession.

“I can’t deny that. After all, there are rumors going around that aren’t exactly favorable.”

“Like what?”

“For example, rumors that they go through women like changing clothes, and every time they commit wrongdoing, they use their money and their parents’ power to cover it up.”

It’s a phrase I’ve heard somewhere before. It just reaffirms that there are people who have lost their humanity no matter where you go.

“Sigh. Must be nice to have such a privileged background.”

“Indeed. And to top it off, this guy’s father is a politician. I believe he was a member of the House of Representatives. They’ll probably end up with a cushy job with their parents’ support.”

“Or they might use their parents’ connections to become a politician. Either way, it’s a rotten world.”

If you have the power of your parents, you can even enter through the back door. Things like recommendation slots at private universities are often decided subjectively by the university itself. It would be easy to admit the son of a wealthy family.

“Damn, this world really sucks.”

I mutter quietly and start preparing for the next class.

"It's raining."

The rain is falling lightly. It's the kind of weather that feels like the start of the rainy season. I'm about to go home, but rain is always such a hassle. Even if I use an umbrella, my leather shoes still get slightly wet, and my bag gets damp too. I often hear people say they like rain, but I can't quite understand that feeling.

"Well, see ya."

"Yeah."

Hoshino seems to be leaving too. It appears that Hoshino is also fed up with the rainy season, as they leave the classroom with a grim expression.

Now, instead of lingering here, I should hurry up and go home. Since Kirishima doesn't seem to be in the classroom anymore, she's probably waiting near the school gate.

"Alright."

Today, we had physical education, so I have to take my gym clothes home. Also, carrying all the textbooks and materials is quite heavy, especially with the school-issued bag weighing me down. It's quite a burden to walk home with all of that.

"Hey there."

As I trudge along, burdened by an incredibly heavy bag, someone calls out to me. I'm taken aback by the sudden interruption.

When I turn around, I see a guy who appears to be in the same grade as me, smiling cheerfully behind me.

"Um, what is it?"

"This is you, right?"

He holds up his smartphone. The screen displays a photo that I saw Hoshino show me the other day. But how did he recognize that the person in the photo is me? For now, I'll try to evade the question casually.

"I have something to do, so I can't stay."

"Hey!"

I try to leave the situation nonchalantly, but my attempt fails. This guy seems to have some ulterior motive, and my intuition is sounding the alarm bells.

"Oh, you're still trying to play dumb?"

"What are you really after?"

With an eerie smile, the guy scans my entire body intently. Then, with an air of confidence, he starts operating his smartphone.

"So, what's this?"

He shows me the screen of his smartphone, which displays a snapshot of me and Kirishima side by side, holding shopping bags.

"Why do you have a photo like this? Isn't it secretly taken?"

"Secretly taken? Who knows? But more importantly, what's the relationship between you and Kirishima?"

As I show signs of panic upon seeing the candid photo, the guy suddenly changes his tone and interrogates me. I can't help but feel a slight sense of danger from his sudden change.

I'm currently in a less crowded area of the hallway. Moreover, I've been stopped just as I was about to descend the stairs, meaning we're in a secluded spot with almost no foot traffic.

"Why do I need to tell you about my relationship with Kirishima? We're free to do whatever we want."

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"No offense, but I don't understand what you're getting at. Do you have some kind of relationship with Kirishima?"

It might be better not to provoke this guy, but his selfish attitude has irritated me a bit.

"You're seriously annoying. What's your deal?"

"Well, even if you get defensive. If you have nothing else to say, I'm leaving here."

I forcefully cut off the conversation and left the scene. In the end, I still didn't know who this guy was or anything about his background, but I at least understood that he was fixated on Kirishima. And I realized that he harbored clear animosity towards me. It was evident from his gaze and expression. After I left, I didn't miss the fact that the guy made a loud sigh. But for now, I decided to go home. It was clear that getting involved with this guy would lead to nothing good.

I hurriedly descended the stairs, carrying my heavy bag, as if trying to escape the situation.

"Tch. Who does he think he is?"

The guy who had been talking to Kurata had a face flushed with hatred in the dimly lit corner of the staircase. Moreover, he gripped his pants as if about to tear them apart.

"Reina is mine. Why is she hanging around with him? He's just an introverted guy with no redeeming qualities."

Muttering such things, the guy operated his smartphone and made a call to a certain person.

"Hello? Take action quickly. You already have his address, right?"

"But, there's pressure from the police and the parent company..."

The person on the other end of the call responded with a frightened voice. However, the guy didn't pay any attention to it and continued to vent his frustration.

"Just get it done quickly. By any means necessary. Got it!"

The guy threatened the person on the other end of the call with an angry tone and hung up. His voice echoed throughout the corridor, but unfortunately, it was after school, and no one else heard it.

"It's raining."

The rain is falling lightly. It's the kind of weather that feels like the start of the rainy season.

I'm about to go home, but rain is always such a hassle. Even if I use an umbrella, my leather shoes still get slightly wet, and my bag gets damp too. I often hear people say they like rain, but I can't quite understand that feeling.

"Well, see ya."

"Yeah."

Hoshino seems to be leaving too. It appears that Hoshino is also fed up with the rainy season, as they leave the classroom with a grim expression.

Now, instead of lingering here, I should hurry up and go home. Since Kirishima doesn't seem to be in the classroom anymore, she's probably waiting near the school gate.

"Alright."

Today, we had physical education, so I have to take my gym clothes home. Also, carrying all the textbooks and materials is quite heavy, especially with the school-issued bag weighing me down. It's quite a burden to walk home with all of that.

"Hey there."

As I trudge along, burdened by an incredibly heavy bag, someone calls out to me. I'm taken aback by the sudden interruption.

When I turn around, I see a guy who appears to be in the same grade as me, smiling cheerfully behind me.

"Um, what is it?"

"This is you, right?"

He holds up his smartphone. The screen displays a photo that I saw Hoshino show me the other day. But how did he recognize that the person in the photo is me? For now, I'll try to evade the question casually.

"I have something to do, so I can't stay."

"Hey!"

I try to leave the situation nonchalantly, but my attempt fails. This guy seems to have some ulterior motive, and my intuition is sounding the alarm bells.

"Oh, you're still trying to play dumb?"

"What are you really after?"

With an eerie smile, the guy scans my entire body intently. Then, with an air of confidence, he starts

operating his smartphone.

“So, what’s this?”

He shows me the screen of his smartphone, which displays a snapshot of me and Kirishima side by side, holding shopping bags.

“Why do you have a photo like this? Isn’t it secretly taken?”

“Secretly taken? Who knows? But more importantly, what’s the relationship between you and Kirishima?”

As I show signs of panic upon seeing the candid photo, the guy suddenly changes his tone and interrogates me. I can’t help but feel a slight sense of danger from his sudden change.

I’m currently in a less crowded area of the hallway. Moreover, I’ve been stopped just as I was about to descend the stairs, meaning we’re in a secluded spot with almost no foot traffic.

“Why do I need to tell you about my relationship with Kirishima? We’re free to do whatever we want.”

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

“No offense, but I don’t understand what you’re getting at. Do you have some kind of relationship with Kirishima?”

It might be better not to provoke this guy, but his selfish attitude has irritated me a bit.

“You’re seriously annoying. What’s your deal?”

“Well, even if you get defensive. If you have nothing else to say, I’m leaving here.”

I forcefully cut off the conversation and left the scene. In the end, I still didn’t know who this guy was or anything about his background, but I at least understood that he was fixated on Kirishima.

And I realized that he harbored clear animosity towards me. It was evident from his gaze and expression.

After I left, I didn’t miss the fact that the guy made a loud sigh. But for now, I decided to go home. It was clear that getting involved with this guy would lead to nothing good.

I hurriedly descended the stairs, carrying my heavy bag, as if trying to escape the situation.

“Tch. Who does he think he is?”

The guy who had been talking to Kurata had a face flushed with hatred in the dimly lit corner of the staircase. Moreover, he gripped his pants as if about to tear them apart.

“Reina is mine. Why is she hanging around with him? He’s just an introverted guy with no redeeming qualities.”

Muttering such things, the guy operated his smartphone and made a call to a certain person.

“Hello? Take action quickly. You already have his address, right?”

“But, there’s pressure from the police and the parent company…”

The person on the other end of the call responded with a frightened voice. However, the guy didn’t pay any attention to it and continued to vent his frustration.

“Just get it done quickly. By any means necessary. Got it!”

The guy threatened the person on the other end of the call with an angry tone and hung up. His voice echoed throughout the corridor, but unfortunately, it was after school, and no one else heard it.

“It’s raining.”

The rain is falling lightly. It’s the kind of weather that feels like the start of the rainy season.

I’m about to go home, but rain is always such a hassle. Even if I use an umbrella, my leather shoes still get slightly wet, and my bag gets damp too. I often hear people say they like rain, but I can’t quite understand that feeling.

“Well, see ya.”

“Yeah.”

Hoshino seems to be leaving too. It appears that Hoshino is also fed up with the rainy season, as they leave the classroom with a grim expression.

Now, instead of lingering here, I should hurry up and go home. Since Kirishima doesn’t seem to be in the classroom anymore, she’s probably waiting near the school gate.

“Alright.”

Today, we had physical education, so I have to take my gym clothes home. Also, carrying all the textbooks and materials is quite heavy, especially with the school-issued bag weighing me down. It’s quite a burden to walk home with all of that.

“Hey there.”

As I trudge along, burdened by an incredibly heavy bag, someone calls out to me. I’m taken aback by the sudden interruption.

When I turn around, I see a guy who appears to be in the same grade as me, smiling cheerfully behind me.

“Um, what is it?”

“This is you, right?”

He holds up his smartphone. The screen displays a photo that I saw Hoshino show me the other day. But how did he recognize that the person in the photo is me? For now, I’ll try to evade the question casually.

“I have something to do, so I can’t stay.”

“Hey!”

I try to leave the situation nonchalantly, but my attempt fails. This guy seems to have some ulterior motive, and my intuition is sounding the alarm bells.

“Oh, you’re still trying to play dumb?”

“What are you really after?”

With an eerie smile, the guy scans my entire body intently. Then, with an air of confidence, he starts operating his smartphone.

“So, what’s this?”

He shows me the screen of his smartphone, which displays a snapshot of me and Kirishima side by side, holding shopping bags.

“Why do you have a photo like this? Isn’t it secretly taken?”

“Secretly taken? Who knows? But more importantly, what’s the relationship between you and Kirishima?”

As I show signs of panic upon seeing the candid photo, the guy suddenly changes his tone and interrogates me. I can’t help but feel a slight sense of danger from his sudden change.

I’m currently in a less crowded area of the hallway. Moreover, I’ve been stopped just as I was about to descend the stairs, meaning we’re in a secluded spot with almost no foot traffic.

“Why do I need to tell you about my relationship with Kirishima? We’re free to do whatever we want.”

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

“No offense, but I don’t understand what you’re getting at. Do you have some kind of relationship with Kirishima?”

It might be better not to provoke this guy, but his selfish attitude has irritated me a bit.

“You’re seriously annoying. What’s your deal?”

“Well, even if you get defensive. If you have nothing else to say, I’m leaving here.”

I forcefully cut off the conversation and left the scene. In the end, I still didn’t know who this guy was or anything about his background, but I at least understood that he was fixated on Kirishima.

And I realized that he harbored clear animosity towards me. It was evident from his gaze and expression.

After I left, I didn’t miss the fact that the guy made a loud sigh. But for now, I decided to go home. It was clear that getting involved with this guy would lead to nothing good.

I hurriedly descended the stairs, carrying my heavy bag, as if trying to escape the situation.

“Tch. Who does he think he is?”

The guy who had been talking to Kurata had a face flushed with hatred in the dimly lit corner of the staircase. Moreover, he gripped his pants as if about to tear them apart.

“Reina is mine. Why is she hanging around with him? He’s just an introverted guy with no redeeming qualities.”

Muttering such things, the guy operated his smartphone and made a call to a certain person.

“Hello? Take action quickly. You already have his address, right?”

“But, there’s pressure from the police and the parent company...”

The person on the other end of the call responded with a frightened voice. However, the guy didn’t pay any attention to it and continued to vent his frustration.

“Just get it done quickly. By any means necessary. Got it!”

The guy threatened the person on the other end of the call with an angry tone and hung up. His voice

echoed throughout the corridor, but unfortunately, it was after school, and no one else heard it.

“So, what about Kirishima?”

I hurriedly ran through the rain and, as soon as I arrived home, I promptly informed Kirishima about the earlier incident.

“What should we do? I don’t know anything about that person.”

“Huh? You don’t know him?”

“Yeah. Maybe we’ve talked in the past, but I don’t remember.”

In that case, the person from earlier must be some crazy guy fixating on someone he hasn’t even talked to properly. Seeing his insane behavior, my suspicions deepen even more.

“For now, Kirishima, be careful. There may be times when I can’t be by your side.”

“I can take care of myself, you know? I don’t want to trouble you like that, Kouji.”

“Well, even so...”

Lately, our surroundings have been getting suspicious. Come to think of it, since meeting Kirishima, both my surroundings and I have been changing rapidly.

It’s not like I want to speak ill of Kirishima, but there are way too many people targeting her. Sure, she’s cute and has a good personality, I know that well enough, but I can’t help but wonder why he wants Kirishima so badly.

“Why did he approach you in the first place, Kouji?”

This time, Kirishima asked me a question.

“That’s true. And also, should we report the fact that he was taking photos of you to the police?”

“Should we consider that? Hey, if those photos were to be spread around, wouldn’t it be bad?”

“Oh...”

I completely forgot about that. If those photos were to be spread now, things would truly get out of control. Moreover, it’s not good for me to attract too much attention mentally.

“For now, I’ll make dinner.”

Saying that, Kirishima went to the kitchen. Come to think of it, lately Kirishima has been the one cooking most of the time. Even if I try to do it, she would say, “It’s fine, I’ll do it,” and I’ve ended up spending less and less time in the kitchen.

That being said, things have really become troublesome. That man could do anything, and I don’t have many close friends I can consult in this situation. The only person I can consider confiding in (Hoshino) is someone I’m not sure if I should consult given the current circumstances.

The next day.

For the time being, I asked Hoshino for information to find out who the guy from yesterday was. I kept the details vague, feeling a little guilty about it.

“Oh, that guy was the one I mentioned yesterday, Taniguchi. Wait, did he bother you?”

“Well, he seemed to have some issue with me or something.”

More than just having an issue, he was openly hostile towards me. It felt like he saw me as some sort of enemy, like avenging his parents or something.

“You should be careful from now on. Taniguchi has a terrible reputation. It’s said that anyone who opposes him disappears from this school. I want to believe it’s just a lie, but I can’t deny that it might be true.”

“Thanks. So, Taniguchi really is a dangerous guy.”

“He’s making full use of his family’s connections. And it seems he’s received considerable financial contributions to the school, so they can’t just intervene recklessly.”

“Money and power, huh?”

“You seriously need to watch out.”

Why do I have to get involved with someone like him? Did I do something? I wonder. Even if my past life was that of a heinous criminal, it wouldn’t make sense for me to bear the consequences like this.

“Huh? What’s wrong? Your face turned pale.”

Kirishima, who had appeared next to me without my noticing, looked at my face and immediately

expressed concern. Well, it's understandable. The impact of our previous conversation was significant.

"It's nothing. I'm just feeling a little unwell."

I should probably consult with her. But I evaded the question, whether out of an attempt to not worry Kirishima or out of a desire to save face, I couldn't tell which was the driving force behind my actions now.

Throughout the morning, I thought about how to handle the situation. Fortunately, the morning classes consisted of electives and English, so I didn't face much difficulty even if my brain wasn't fully engaged.

"Hey."

After school, just as I was about to leave, the nightmare approached me again.

"What do you want?"

"I want to talk to you for a bit."

Taniguchi made contact in almost the same spot as yesterday. He still wore clothes that hinted at his rebellious nature. It was hard to believe that we were wearing the same school uniform.

"We can't talk here?"

"It's something I don't want others to hear. Of course, we can talk here, but it might inconvenience you or the people around you."

Taniguchi smirked. However, not knowing what Taniguchi was going to say, I had no choice but to comply with his words.

"So, what about Kirishima?"

I hurriedly ran through the rain and, as soon as I arrived home, I promptly informed Kirishima about the earlier incident.

"What should we do? I don't know anything about that person."

"Huh? You don't know him?"

"Yeah. Maybe we've talked in the past, but I don't remember."

In that case, the person from earlier must be some crazy guy fixating on someone he hasn't even talked to properly. Seeing his insane behavior, my suspicions deepen even more.

"For now, Kirishima, be careful. There may be times when I can't be by your side."

"I can take care of myself, you know? I don't want to trouble you like that, Kouji."

"Well, even so..."

Lately, our surroundings have been getting suspicious. Come to think of it, since meeting Kirishima, both my surroundings and I have been changing rapidly.

It's not like I want to speak ill of Kirishima, but there are way too many people targeting her. Sure, she's cute and has a good personality, I know that well enough, but I can't help but wonder why he wants Kirishima so badly.

"Why did he approach you in the first place, Kouji?"

This time, Kirishima asked me a question.

"That's true. And also, should we report the fact that he was taking photos of you to the police?"

"Should we consider that? Hey, if those photos were to be spread around, wouldn't it be bad?"

"Oh..."

I completely forgot about that. If those photos were to be spread now, things would truly get out of control. Moreover, it's not good for me to attract too much attention mentally.

"For now, I'll make dinner."

Saying that, Kirishima went to the kitchen. Come to think of it, lately Kirishima has been the one cooking most of the time. Even if I try to do it, she would say, "It's fine, I'll do it," and I've ended up spending less and less time in the kitchen.

That being said, things have really become troublesome. That man could do anything, and I don't have many close friends I can consult in this situation. The only person I can consider confiding in (Hoshino) is someone I'm not sure if I should consult given the current circumstances.

The next day.

For the time being, I asked Hoshino for information to find out who the guy from yesterday was. I kept

the details vague, feeling a little guilty about it.

“Oh, that guy was the one I mentioned yesterday, Taniguchi. Wait, did he bother you?”

“Well, he seemed to have some issue with me or something.”

More than just having an issue, he was openly hostile towards me. It felt like he saw me as some sort of enemy, like avenging his parents or something.

“You should be careful from now on. Taniguchi has a terrible reputation. It’s said that anyone who opposes him disappears from this school. I want to believe it’s just a lie, but I can’t deny that it might be true.”

“Thanks. So, Taniguchi really is a dangerous guy.”

“He’s making full use of his family’s connections. And it seems he’s received considerable financial contributions to the school, so they can’t just intervene recklessly.”

“Money and power, huh?”

“You seriously need to watch out.”

Why do I have to get involved with someone like him? Did I do something? I wonder. Even if my past life was that of a heinous criminal, it wouldn’t make sense for me to bear the consequences like this.

“Huh? What’s wrong? Your face turned pale.”

Kirishima, who had appeared next to me without my noticing, looked at my face and immediately expressed concern. Well, it’s understandable. The impact of our previous conversation was significant.

“It’s nothing. I’m just feeling a little unwell.”

I should probably consult with her. But I evaded the question, whether out of an attempt to not worry Kirishima or out of a desire to save face, I couldn’t tell which was the driving force behind my actions now.

Throughout the morning, I thought about how to handle the situation. Fortunately, the morning classes consisted of electives and English, so I didn’t face much difficulty even if my brain wasn’t fully engaged.

“Hey.”

After school, just as I was about to leave, the nightmare approached me again.

“What do you want?”

“I want to talk to you for a bit.”

Taniguchi made contact in almost the same spot as yesterday. He still wore clothes that hinted at his rebellious nature. It was hard to believe that we were wearing the same school uniform.

“We can’t talk here?”

“It’s something I don’t want others to hear. Of course, we can talk here, but it might inconvenience you or the people around you.”

Taniguchi smirked. However, not knowing what Taniguchi was going to say, I had no choice but to comply with his words.

“So, what about Kirishima?”

I hurriedly ran through the rain and, as soon as I arrived home, I promptly informed Kirishima about the earlier incident.

“What should we do? I don’t know anything about that person.”

“Huh? You don’t know him?”

“Yeah. Maybe we’ve talked in the past, but I don’t remember.”

In that case, the person from earlier must be some crazy guy fixating on someone he hasn’t even talked to properly. Seeing his insane behavior, my suspicions deepen even more.

“For now, Kirishima, be careful. There may be times when I can’t be by your side.”

“I can take care of myself, you know? I don’t want to trouble you like that, Kouji.”

“Well, even so...”

Lately, our surroundings have been getting suspicious. Come to think of it, since meeting Kirishima, both my surroundings and I have been changing rapidly.

It’s not like I want to speak ill of Kirishima, but there are way too many people targeting her. Sure, she’s cute and has a good personality, I know that well enough, but I can’t help but wonder why he wants Kirishima so badly.

“Why did he approach you in the first place, Kouji?”

This time, Kirishima asked me a question.

“That’s true. And also, should we report the fact that he was taking photos of you to the police?”

“Should we consider that? Hey, if those photos were to be spread around, wouldn’t it be bad?”

“Oh…”

I completely forgot about that. If those photos were to be spread now, things would truly get out of control. Moreover, it’s not good for me to attract too much attention mentally.

“For now, I’ll make dinner.”

Saying that, Kirishima went to the kitchen. Come to think of it, lately Kirishima has been the one cooking most of the time. Even if I try to do it, she would say, “It’s fine, I’ll do it,” and I’ve ended up spending less and less time in the kitchen.

That being said, things have really become troublesome. That man could do anything, and I don’t have many close friends I can consult in this situation. The only person I can consider confiding in (Hoshino) is someone I’m not sure if I should consult given the current circumstances.

The next day.

For the time being, I asked Hoshino for information to find out who the guy from yesterday was. I kept the details vague, feeling a little guilty about it.

“Oh, that guy was the one I mentioned yesterday, Taniguchi. Wait, did he bother you?”

“Well, he seemed to have some issue with me or something.”

More than just having an issue, he was openly hostile towards me. It felt like he saw me as some sort of enemy, like avenging his parents or something.

“You should be careful from now on. Taniguchi has a terrible reputation. It’s said that anyone who opposes him disappears from this school. I want to believe it’s just a lie, but I can’t deny that it might be true.”

“Thanks. So, Taniguchi really is a dangerous guy.”

“He’s making full use of his family’s connections. And it seems he’s received considerable financial contributions to the school, so they can’t just intervene recklessly.”

“Money and power, huh?”

“You seriously need to watch out.”

Why do I have to get involved with someone like him? Did I do something? I wonder. Even if my past life was that of a heinous criminal, it wouldn’t make sense for me to bear the consequences like this.

Why do I have to get involved with someone like him? Did I do something?

I wonder. Even if my past life was that of a heinous criminal, it wouldn’t make sense for me to bear the consequences like this.

“Huh? What’s wrong? Your face turned pale.”

Kirishima, who had appeared next to me without my noticing, looked at my face and immediately expressed concern. Well, it’s understandable. The impact of our previous conversation was significant.

“It’s nothing. I’m just feeling a little unwell.”

I should probably consult with her. But I evaded the question, whether out of an attempt to not worry Kirishima or out of a desire to save face, I couldn’t tell which was the driving force behind my actions now.

Throughout the morning, I thought about how to handle the situation. Fortunately, the morning classes consisted of electives and English, so I didn’t face much difficulty even if my brain wasn’t fully engaged.

“Hey.”

After school, just as I was about to leave, the nightmare approached me again.

“What do you want?”

“I want to talk to you for a bit.”

Taniguchi made contact in almost the same spot as yesterday. He still wore clothes that hinted at his rebellious nature. It was hard to believe that we were wearing the same school uniform.

“We can’t talk here?”

“It’s something I don’t want others to hear. Of course, we can talk here, but it might inconvenience you or the people around you.”

Taniguchi smirked. However, not knowing what Taniguchi was going to say, I had no choice but to

comply with his words.

“So, what’s this about?”

This time, I was brought to an empty classroom in the special building. The special building housed rooms such as the art room and computer room. They were occasionally used for elective classes but remained unused by most clubs after school.

Because of that, it was unpopular, and as I was being led there, a sense of fear started to creep up within me.

“I looked into you and just wanted to confirm some facts.”

Taniguchi said as he operated his smartphone. Surely, my information was stored in that device.

“It seems that Kirishima-san is being pursued by her relatives. That’s why she’s staying at your house.”

“Well, that’s true. But what does it have to do with you?”

“Well, I thought I could ease your burden. You probably know this, but my father is a politician. I think if I ‘request’ it from Kirishima-san’s company, everything will be resolved.”

Taniguchi presented his suggestion to me with an excited air. However, why was he reporting this to me?

“If that’s the case, then you can handle it on your own. Why are you telling me?”

“Well, you were getting along so well, going shopping and all. I thought I should let you know.”

“I see. I don’t know what Kirishima will say about it, but even if you use your power, won’t the underlying issue remain unresolved?”

The reason he’s currently chasing after Kirishima is that he wants to absorb her father’s company in response to the decline of the Minai Group’s performance.

However, it feels like that’s not the only reason. In fact, I had suspected it for a while. Because if they simply wanted to absorb it, there would be no need to chase after Kirishima. They could easily accomplish it by using the power of the parent company.

So, I decided to bring up something.

“But isn’t Kirishima someone that someone else desires?”

“What?”

Taniguchi’s face twisted slightly. My intuition told me that there was something behind this.

“For example, is there someone who has been involved with Kirishima and wants to claim her as their own, scheming behind the scenes?”

I just voiced something that came to mind, but for some reason, this guy’s expression grew stern.

“...How do you know about that?”

“Huh? I merely presented a possibility. Could it be that it’s actually true?”

I was genuinely surprised. I never expected him to be the mastermind behind all this.

“Tch. You’re really annoying, aren’t you? Do you want to disappear?”

“Disappear? Are you trying to kill me? But if you make me disappear, what will Kirishima and my friends think? Maybe my friends could get fooled with a sudden transfer, but Kirishima is living at my house, you know?”

I got a bit heated and some intimidating words slipped out. Then, Taniguchi suddenly lunged at me, attempting to punch me.

“Kuh...”

I narrowly dodged Taniguchi’s right straight. However, Taniguchi was ready for a fight. He would surely come at me again right away.

But why do I have to keep getting punched like this? I feel like I’m definitely being possessed by something evil.

“You really are pathetic, resorting to violence. Isn’t your parents’ way of raising you completely wrong?”

As I said that, I tried to take something out of my bag. But before I could, Taniguchi unexpectedly attacked me with a survival knife in his hand. I was trying to buy some time, but it seemed like I only provoked him more.

“Dieeee!”

“Seriously?!”

I held the baton in my left hand and successfully diverted Taniguchi's knife. However, I couldn't completely change its direction, and the knife grazed my left arm slightly. Taniguchi looked frustrated and turned towards me. In his hand, he still held a shiny silver survival knife. Seizing a momentary opportunity, I grabbed the tip of the expandable baton and extended it to a length of about 50cm. The heavy sound of the lock clicking echoed in the classroom. Taniguchi and I faced each other, silently observing each other's moves. However, unlike in a kendo match, my opponent had a blade. Moreover, dealing with a partially excited person is risky. He can unleash unimaginable strength, and the fact that he has the intention to "kill" is the real problem. On the other hand, I wasn't prepared for such a situation. Even if I tried to escape, the classroom door was on the opponent's side, and it was closed. If I tried to run, I would likely be stabbed in that moment of vulnerability. Moreover, even if I called for help, this school building was deserted. It would probably only provoke Taniguchi further.

"So, what's this about?"

This time, I was brought to an empty classroom in the special building. The special building housed rooms such as the art room and computer room. They were occasionally used for elective classes but remained unused by most clubs after school.

Because of that, it was unpopular, and as I was being led there, a sense of fear started to creep up within me.

"I looked into you and just wanted to confirm some facts."

Taniguchi said as he operated his smartphone. Surely, my information was stored in that device.

"It seems that Kirishima-san is being pursued by her relatives. That's why she's staying at your house."

"Well, that's true. But what does it have to do with you?"

"Well, I thought I could ease your burden. You probably know this, but my father is a politician. I think if I 'request' it from Kirishima-san's company, everything will be resolved."

Taniguchi presented his suggestion to me with an excited air. However, why was he reporting this to me?

"If that's the case, then you can handle it on your own. Why are you telling me?"

"Well, you were getting along so well, going shopping and all. I thought I should let you know."

"I see. I don't know what Kirishima will say about it, but even if you use your power, won't the underlying issue remain unresolved?"

The reason he's currently chasing after Kirishima is that he wants to absorb her father's company in response to the decline of the Minai Group's performance.

However, it feels like that's not the only reason. In fact, I had suspected it for a while. Because if they simply wanted to absorb it, there would be no need to chase after Kirishima. They could easily accomplish it by using the power of the parent company.

So, I decided to bring up something.

"But isn't Kirishima someone that someone else desires?"

"What?"

Taniguchi's face twisted slightly. My intuition told me that there was something behind this.

"For example, is there someone who has been involved with Kirishima and wants to claim her as their own, scheming behind the scenes?"

I just voiced something that came to mind, but for some reason, this guy's expression grew stern.

"...How do you know about that?"

"Huh? I merely presented a possibility. Could it be that it's actually true?"

I was genuinely surprised. I never expected him to be the mastermind behind all this.

"Tch. You're really annoying, aren't you? Do you want to disappear?"

"Disappear? Are you trying to kill me? But if you make me disappear, what will Kirishima and my friends think? Maybe my friends could get fooled with a sudden transfer, but Kirishima is living at my house, you know?"

I got a bit heated and some intimidating words slipped out. Then, Taniguchi suddenly lunged at me,

attempting to punch me.

“Kuh...”

I narrowly dodged Taniguchi’s right straight. However, Taniguchi was ready for a fight. He would surely come at me again right away.

But why do I have to keep getting punched like this? I feel like I’m definitely being possessed by something evil.

“You really are pathetic, resorting to violence. Isn’t your parents’ way of raising you completely wrong?”

As I said that, I tried to take something out of my bag. But before I could, Taniguchi unexpectedly attacked me with a survival knife in his hand. I was trying to buy some time, but it seemed like I only provoked him more.

“Dieeee!”

“Seriously?!”

I held the baton in my left hand and successfully diverted Taniguchi’s knife. However, I couldn’t completely change its direction, and the knife grazed my left arm slightly.

Taniguchi looked frustrated and turned towards me. In his hand, he still held a shiny silver survival knife. Seizing a momentary opportunity, I grabbed the tip of the expandable baton and extended it to a length of about 50cm. The heavy sound of the lock clicking echoed in the classroom.

Taniguchi and I faced each other, silently observing each other’s moves. However, unlike in a kendo match, my opponent had a blade. Moreover, dealing with a partially excited person is risky. He can unleash unimaginable strength, and the fact that he has the intention to “kill” is the real problem.

On the other hand, I wasn’t prepared for such a situation. Even if I tried to escape, the classroom door was on the opponent’s side, and it was closed. If I tried to run, I would likely be stabbed in that moment of vulnerability.

Moreover, even if I called for help, this school building was deserted. It would probably only provoke Taniguchi further.

“So, what’s this about?”

This time, I was brought to an empty classroom in the special building. The special building housed rooms such as the art room and computer room. They were occasionally used for elective classes but remained unused by most clubs after school.

Because of that, it was unpopular, and as I was being led there, a sense of fear started to creep up within me.

“I looked into you and just wanted to confirm some facts.”

Taniguchi said as he operated his smartphone. Surely, my information was stored in that device.

“It seems that Kirishima-san is being pursued by her relatives. That’s why she’s staying at your house.”

“Well, that’s true. But what does it have to do with you?”

“Well, I thought I could ease your burden. You probably know this, but my father is a politician. I think if I ‘request’ it from Kirishima-san’s company, everything will be resolved.”

Taniguchi presented his suggestion to me with an excited air. However, why was he reporting this to me?

“If that’s the case, then you can handle it on your own. Why are you telling me?”

“Well, you were getting along so well, going shopping and all. I thought I should let you know.”

“I see. I don’t know what Kirishima will say about it, but even if you use your power, won’t the underlying issue remain unresolved?”

The reason he’s currently chasing after Kirishima is that he wants to absorb her father’s company in response to the decline of the Minai Group’s performance.

However, it feels like that’s not the only reason. In fact, I had suspected it for a while. Because if they simply wanted to absorb it, there would be no need to chase after Kirishima. They could easily accomplish it by using the power of the parent company.

So, I decided to bring up something.

“But isn’t Kirishima someone that someone else desires?”

“What?”

Taniguchi’s face twisted slightly. My intuition told me that there was something behind this.

“For example, is there someone who has been involved with Kirishima and wants to claim her as their

own, scheming behind the scenes?”

I just voiced something that came to mind, but for some reason, this guy’s expression grew stern.

“...How do you know about that?”

“Huh? I merely presented a possibility. Could it be that it’s actually true?”

I was genuinely surprised. I never expected him to be the mastermind behind all this.

“Tch. You’re really annoying, aren’t you? Do you want to disappear?”

“Disappear? Are you trying to kill me? But if you make me disappear, what will Kirishima and my friends think? Maybe my friends could get fooled with a sudden transfer, but Kirishima is living at my house, you know?”

I got a bit heated and some intimidating words slipped out. Then, Taniguchi suddenly lunged at me, attempting to punch me.

“Kuh...”

I narrowly dodged Taniguchi’s right straight. However, Taniguchi was ready for a fight. He would surely come at me again right away.

But why do I have to keep getting punched like this? I feel like I’m definitely being possessed by something evil.

“You really are pathetic, resorting to violence. Isn’t your parents’ way of raising you completely wrong?”

As I said that, I tried to take something out of my bag. But before I could, Taniguchi unexpectedly attacked me with a survival knife in his hand. I was trying to buy some time, but it seemed like I only provoked him more.

“Dieeee!”

“Seriously?!”

I held the baton in my left hand and successfully diverted Taniguchi’s knife. However, I couldn’t completely change its direction, and the knife grazed my left arm slightly.

Taniguchi looked frustrated and turned towards me. In his hand, he still held a shiny silver survival knife. Seizing a momentary opportunity, I grabbed the tip of the expandable baton and extended it to a length of about 50cm. The heavy sound of the lock clicking echoed in the classroom.

Taniguchi and I faced each other, silently observing each other’s moves. However, unlike in a kendo match, my opponent had a blade. Moreover, dealing with a partially excited person is risky. He can unleash unimaginable strength, and the fact that he have the intention to “kill” is the real problem. On the other hand, I wasn’t prepared for such a situation. Even if I tried to escape, the classroom door was on the opponent’s side, and it was closed. If I tried to run, I would likely be stabbed in that moment of vulnerability.

Moreover, even if I called for help, this school building was deserted. It would probably only provoke Taniguchi further.

“Cheh. Didn’t you quit kendo?”

Taniguchi faced me, holding the knife. His eyes clearly conveyed the intent to kill me. If I had nothing in my hands, he would attack me immediately. Meanwhile, I noticed that my left arm was bleeding visibly. The pain from the cut and the fact that my uniform was soaked in blood were evident.

“Why would you know that?”

“You thought I hadn’t investigated your background? Nevertheless, it was miscalculated that your kendo skills haven’t dulled. And me, I practice karate. If you dare to make a move, I won’t hold back.”

This man has thoroughly researched my background. I don’t know what means he used, but if he knows that I used to do kendo, he must also know my trauma. The incident where I cut off ties with a large group of adults.

“You quit kendo for the sake of your sister, right?”

“...Stop it.”

I don’t want to hear this story. In fact, even remembering it makes me feel sick. However, Taniguchi, paying no attention to my discomfort, continued speaking with a pleased expression.

“Well, well, I respect your actions to save your sister. Although it seems it didn’t have much meaning.”

“You...!”

Unable to suppress the emotions welling up inside me as I watched Taniguchi eagerly talking, I finally took action. I swung the baton I had in my right hand toward Taniguchi’s right hand.

“Ugh!”

My swing struck Taniguchi’s right wrist perfectly. Of course, Taniguchi resisted, but I managed to incapacitate him before that. Unlike a wooden sword, the baton is significantly lighter but has sufficient lethality due to being made of metal.

Taniguchi let out a groan and dropped the knife he was holding.

“Just so you know, even if you report this to the police, I will resist. You were the one who attacked with a knife. I wonder what will happen when it comes to trial.”

“Eek!”

Taniguchi, clutching his right wrist, looked at me with a fearful gaze. He probably didn’t expect to experience such pain. This is just my speculation, but people like him target only the weak and squeeze them relentlessly.

If his parents’ influence were to be used, I would probably have no chance, but I have prepared countermeasures for that as well.

“By the way, it seems that Kirishima doesn’t even recognize you. Yet, you’ve been chasing after Kirishima all this time. And I heard that you’ve left several women scarred in the past.”

“W-Where’s the evidence for that?”

“Some of the individuals involved have said so. Oh well, if something like this were to circulate on the internet, it might affect your father’s political activities, don’t you think?”

Upon hearing that, Taniguchi’s face turned pale, and he averted his gaze. I knew that Taniguchi’s father was a member of the House of Representatives, but in recent years, he had made various gaffes and scandals, which had led to scrutiny even from the opposition party. If it were to be revealed that his own son had committed a crime, his influence would undoubtedly diminish further.

“...I understand. I have no intention of reporting this to the police. So, don’t cause any trouble for my father.”

“Oh? Quite audacious of you to say that so brazenly. You scoundrel.”

“...”

“Well, I don’t want to escalate the situation either. So, you’ll stop interfering with Kirishima from now on, right?”

“...Yes.”

Taniguchi, biting his lips in frustration, accepted my demand. Or rather, it was a mystery why he thought he could challenge kendo, which has a large attack range, with his close combat karate.

“Hey, by any chance, were you also interfering with the Minami Group?”

Observing the recent chain of events, I began to suspect that this guy might be the mastermind behind it all. Considering his father’s position as a member of the parliament, pressuring the Minami side would be an easy task.

“Who knows?”

While saying so, Taniguchi lifted himself up using only his left arm.

“You’re definitely involved based on that reaction. Stop it right now.”

In response to my warning, Taniguchi didn’t utter a word. He had his back turned, and I couldn’t discern his expression.

Finally, without turning his face towards me, he opened the classroom door.

“Kurata. You’re too slow. You’re too late.”

Uttering those enigmatic words, Taniguchi slowly left the classroom.

Left behind in the classroom, with the evening sun casting its glow, I couldn’t grasp the meaning behind the words Taniguchi had thrown at me.

“Cheh. Didn’t you quit kendo?”

Taniguchi faced me, holding the knife. His eyes clearly conveyed the intent to kill me. If I had nothing in my hands, he would attack me immediately. Meanwhile, I noticed that my left arm was bleeding visibly. The pain from the cut and the fact that my uniform was soaked in blood were evident.

“Why would you know that?”

“You thought I hadn’t investigated your background? Nevertheless, it was miscalculated that your kendo skills haven’t dulled. And me, I practice karate. If you dare to make a move, I won’t hold back.”

This man has thoroughly researched my background. I don’t know what means he used, but if he knows that I used to do kendo, he must also know my trauma. The incident where I cut off ties with a large group of adults.

“You quit kendo for the sake of your sister, right?”

“...Stop it.”

I don’t want to hear this story. In fact, even remembering it makes me feel sick. However, Taniguchi, paying no attention to my discomfort, continued speaking with a pleased expression.

“Well, well, I respect your actions to save your sister. Although it seems it didn’t have much meaning.”

“You...!”

Unable to suppress the emotions welling up inside me as I watched Taniguchi eagerly talking, I finally took action. I swung the baton I had in my right hand toward Taniguchi’s right hand.

“Ugh!”

My swing struck Taniguchi’s right wrist perfectly. Of course, Taniguchi resisted, but I managed to incapacitate him before that. Unlike a wooden sword, the baton is significantly lighter but has sufficient lethality due to being made of metal.

Taniguchi let out a groan and dropped the knife he was holding.

“Just so you know, even if you report this to the police, I will resist. You were the one who attacked with a knife. I wonder what will happen when it comes to trial.”

“Eek!”

Taniguchi, clutching his right wrist, looked at me with a fearful gaze. He probably didn’t expect to experience such pain. This is just my speculation, but people like him target only the weak and squeeze them relentlessly.

If his parents’ influence were to be used, I would probably have no chance, but I have prepared countermeasures for that as well.

“By the way, it seems that Kirishima doesn’t even recognize you. Yet, you’ve been chasing after Kirishima all this time. And I heard that you’ve left several women scarred in the past.”

“W-Where’s the evidence for that?”

“Some of the individuals involved have said so. Oh well, if something like this were to circulate on the internet, it might affect your father’s political activities, don’t you think?”

Upon hearing that, Taniguchi's face turned pale, and he averted his gaze. I knew that Taniguchi's father was a member of the House of Representatives, but in recent years, he had made various gaffes and scandals, which had led to scrutiny even from the opposition party. If it were to be revealed that his own son had committed a crime, his influence would undoubtedly diminish further.

"...I understand. I have no intention of reporting this to the police. So, don't cause any trouble for my father."

"Oh? Quite audacious of you to say that so brazenly. You scoundrel."

"..."

"Well, I don't want to escalate the situation either. So, you'll stop interfering with Kirishima from now on, right?"

"... Yes."

Taniguchi, biting his lips in frustration, accepted my demand. Or rather, it was a mystery why he thought he could challenge kendo, which has a large attack range, with his close combat karate.

"Hey, by any chance, were you also interfering with the Minami Group?"

Observing the recent chain of events, I began to suspect that this guy might be the mastermind behind it all. Considering his father's position as a member of the parliament, pressuring the Minami side would be an easy task.

"Who knows?"

While saying so, Taniguchi lifted himself up using only his left arm.

"You're definitely involved based on that reaction. Stop it right now."

In response to my warning, Taniguchi didn't utter a word. He had his back turned, and I couldn't discern his expression.

Finally, without turning his face towards me, he opened the classroom door.

"Kurata. You're too slow. You're too late."

Uttering those enigmatic words, Taniguchi slowly left the classroom.

Left behind in the classroom, with the evening sun casting its glow, I couldn't grasp the meaning behind the words Taniguchi had thrown at me.

"Cheh. Didn't you quit kendo?"

Taniguchi faced me, holding the knife. His eyes clearly conveyed the intent to kill me. If I had nothing in my hands, he would attack me immediately. Meanwhile, I noticed that my left arm was bleeding visibly. The pain from the cut and the fact that my uniform was soaked in blood were evident.

"Why would you know that?"

"You thought I hadn't investigated your background? Nevertheless, it was miscalculated that your kendo skills haven't dulled. And me, I practice karate. If you dare to make a move, I won't hold back."

This man has thoroughly researched my background. I don't know what means he used, but if he knows that I used to do kendo, he must also know my trauma. The incident where I cut off ties with a large group of adults.

"You quit kendo for the sake of your sister, right?"

"...Stop it."

I don't want to hear this story. In fact, even remembering it makes me feel sick. However, Taniguchi, paying no attention to my discomfort, continued speaking with a pleased expression.

"Well, well, I respect your actions to save your sister. Although it seems it didn't have much meaning."

"You...!"

Unable to suppress the emotions welling up inside me as I watched Taniguchi eagerly talking, I finally took action. I swung the baton I had in my right hand toward Taniguchi's right hand.

"Ugh!"

My swing struck Taniguchi's right wrist perfectly. Of course, Taniguchi resisted, but I managed to incapacitate him before that. Unlike a wooden sword, the baton is significantly lighter but has sufficient lethality due to being made of metal.

Taniguchi let out a groan and dropped the knife he was holding.

"Just so you know, even if you report this to the police, I will resist. You were the one who attacked with a knife. I wonder what will happen when it comes to trial."

“Eek!”

Taniguchi, clutching his right wrist, looked at me with a fearful gaze. He probably didn’t expect to experience such pain. This is just my speculation, but people like him target only the weak and squeeze them relentlessly.

If his parents’ influence were to be used, I would probably have no chance, but I have prepared countermeasures for that as well.

“By the way, it seems that Kirishima doesn’t even recognize you. Yet, you’ve been chasing after Kirishima all this time. And I heard that you’ve left several women scarred in the past.”

“W-Where’s the evidence for that?”

“Some of the individuals involved have said so. Oh well, if something like this were to circulate on the internet, it might affect your father’s political activities, don’t you think?”

Upon hearing that, Taniguchi’s face turned pale, and he averted his gaze. I knew that Taniguchi’s father was a member of the House of Representatives, but in recent years, he had made various gaffes and scandals, which had led to scrutiny even from the opposition party. If it were to be revealed that his own son had committed a crime, his influence would undoubtedly diminish further.

“...I understand. I have no intention of reporting this to the police. So, don’t cause any trouble for my father.”

“Oh? Quite audacious of you to say that so brazenly. You scoundrel.”

“...”

“Well, I don’t want to escalate the situation either. So, you’ll stop interfering with Kirishima from now on, right?”

“...Yes.”

Taniguchi, biting his lips in frustration, accepted my demand. Or rather, it was a mystery why he thought he could challenge kendo, which has a large attack range, with his close combat karate.

“Hey, by any chance, were you also interfering with the Minami Group?”

Observing the recent chain of events, I began to suspect that this guy might be the mastermind behind it all. Considering his father’s position as a member of the parliament, pressuring the Minami side would be an easy task.

“Who knows?”

While saying so, Taniguchi lifted himself up using only his left arm.

“You’re definitely involved based on that reaction. Stop it right now.”

In response to my warning, Taniguchi didn’t utter a word. He had his back turned, and I couldn’t discern his expression.

Finally, without turning his face towards me, he opened the classroom door.

“Kurata. You’re too slow. You’re too late.”

Uttering those enigmatic words, Taniguchi slowly left the classroom.

Left behind in the classroom, with the evening sun casting its glow, I couldn’t grasp the meaning behind the words Taniguchi had thrown at me.

As I opened the classroom door, I felt like there was a heightened level of attention directed towards me, more so than usual.

In fact, most of the male students in the classroom were looking at me with questioning eyes. Being the center of attention from numerous people due to a past incident is not good for one's mental well-being. I hurriedly made my way to my seat as if trying to escape the situation.

"Hey, Kurata."

As soon as I sat down, Hoshino immediately approached me. Hoshino also had a stern expression on his face as he came towards me.

"Um, what's with this atmosphere? It feels extremely uncomfortable."

"What's this?"

Hoshino placed his smartphone on my desk. On the screen, there was a photo displayed.

"What... is this?"

"Well, if you look at it, you'll understand. Hey, is this true?"

The photo depicted me and Kirishima walking side by side. It was the same photo that Taniguchi had shown me yesterday.

Apparently, this had been posted on a social media group. The chat sent right after the photo read,

"Kurata and Kirishima from Class 1 are on their way to a love hotel."

"I have no recollection of this!"

"Then why does such a photo exist?"

I instinctively tried to deny the contents, but then another male student interrupted. I didn't know his name, but he seemed quite furious.

"Show it to me again."

I borrowed Hoshino's smartphone once again. Opening the chat in the group, the sender of the photo and chat was listed as 'Unknown.' This meant that the account had been deleted after sending these messages. Furthermore, the timestamp indicated it was sent around 4 p.m. This was when I was still in the classroom.

"Damn it."

The remark Taniguchi made yesterday, "You're too late," was referring to this.

"Hey, explain everything from the beginning!"

One of the male students in the class grabbed me by the collar. However, I had nothing to say. Because in reality, I hadn't done anything.

But I couldn't speak out loud about that fact. Because it would bring back the trauma from my past.

"Hey, you have nothing to say? Huh?"

I was being choked, unable to breathe properly, and all I could do was tremble. Honestly, I wanted to leave this place right away, but that was also impossible.

"Hey."

"...No."

"What did you say? Speak louder!"

"I didn't do it!"

Finally, my emotions exceeded their limits. In despair, I shook off the hand that was grabbing my collar and ended up throwing punches at the surrounding boys.

"Get out of my way!"

"You bastard!"

The boys started attacking one after another, but fortunately, I couldn't afford to lose either. Perhaps due to it being a prestigious school, there weren't many physically strong guys attacking me.

Within less than a minute, the situation around me was under control. There were still a few guys left, but they seemed to be observing quietly and didn't show any signs of attacking.

"...Is this the end?"

Seizing the opportunity, I quickly grabbed my bag from the side of my desk. My bag contained valuable

items and combat equipment. Of course, there was a reason why I took my bag. Well, simply put, I didn't want to stay in this situation any longer. Soon, the homeroom teacher would arrive, and there's no way I could attend classes with these people.

"Hey, where are you going, Kurata?"

Hoshino called out to me. While Hoshino didn't participate in the violent acts, it was clear that I didn't want to engage in conversation with him either. Even now, my innermost thoughts were tainted with fear.

"I'm going home. See you."

I quickly replied and left the classroom.

"Why? Why me and Kurata-kun?"

When I arrived at the classroom, it was in turmoil. And I was approached by a student who I usually didn't interact with.

Then, to my surprise, I was asked straightforwardly, "Did you sleep with Kurata?" I had no idea what they were talking about. Kurata-kun had actually helped me.

"Haven't you seen the group? Look, this photo."

A classmate showed me their smartphone. It displayed a photo of Kurata-kun and me walking side by side.

"It's true that it's Kurata-kun and me in the photo, but how does that connect to us sleeping together?"

As I said that, the other students fell silent. I wondered why they believed it based solely on this.

"Well, what about Kurata-kun?"

"Well..."

The other students averted their gazes, looking at each other. That meant something must have happened.

"The truth is, the boys grabbed Kurata-kun by the collar, and it turned into a brawl."

"A brawl? In the classroom?"

So, that's why the usually noisy boys were quiet. But I couldn't see Kurata-kun anywhere.

"Yes. And then Kurata-kun took his belongings and left."

"But we have classes now. What's going on?"

I asked the people around me, but everyone just looked confused. What happened, Kouji?

As I opened the classroom door, I felt like there was a heightened level of attention directed towards me, more so than usual.

In fact, most of the male students in the classroom were looking at me with questioning eyes. Being the center of attention from numerous people due to a past incident is not good for one's mental well-being. I hurriedly made my way to my seat as if trying to escape the situation.

"Hey, Kurata."

As soon as I sat down, Hoshino immediately approached me. Hoshino also had a stern expression on his face as he came towards me.

"Um, what's with this atmosphere? It feels extremely uncomfortable."

"What's this?"

Hoshino placed his smartphone on my desk. On the screen, there was a photo displayed.

"What... is this?"

"Well, if you look at it, you'll understand. Hey, is this true?"

The photo depicted me and Kirishima walking side by side. It was the same photo that Taniguchi had shown me yesterday.

Apparently, this had been posted on a social media group. The chat sent right after the photo read,

"Kurata and Kirishima from Class 1 are on their way to a love hotel."

"I have no recollection of this!"

"Then why does such a photo exist?"

I instinctively tried to deny the contents, but then another male student interrupted. I didn't know his name, but he seemed quite furious.

"Show it to me again."

I borrowed Hoshino's smartphone once again. Opening the chat in the group, the sender of the photo and chat was listed as 'Unknown.' This meant that the account had been deleted after sending these messages. Furthermore, the timestamp indicated it was sent around 4 p.m. This was when I was still in the classroom.

"Damn it."

The remark Taniguchi made yesterday, "You're too late," was referring to this.

"Hey, explain everything from the beginning!"

One of the male students in the class grabbed me by the collar. However, I had nothing to say. Because in reality, I hadn't done anything.

But I couldn't speak out loud about that fact. Because it would bring back the trauma from my past.

"Hey, you have nothing to say? Huh?"

I was being choked, unable to breathe properly, and all I could do was tremble. Honestly, I wanted to leave this place right away, but that was also impossible.

"Hey."

"...No."

"What did you say? Speak louder!"

"I didn't do it!"

Finally, my emotions exceeded their limits. In despair, I shook off the hand that was grabbing my collar and ended up throwing punches at the surrounding boys.

"Get out of my way!"

"You bastard!"

The boys started attacking one after another, but fortunately, I couldn't afford to lose either. Perhaps due to it being a prestigious school, there weren't many physically strong guys attacking me.

Within less than a minute, the situation around me was under control. There were still a few guys left, but they seemed to be observing quietly and didn't show any signs of attacking.

"...Is this the end?"

Seizing the opportunity, I quickly grabbed my bag from the side of my desk. My bag contained valuable items and combat equipment. Of course, there was a reason why I took my bag. Well, simply put, I didn't want to stay in this situation any longer. Soon, the homeroom teacher would arrive, and there's no way I could attend classes with these people.

"Hey, where are you going, Kurata?"

Hoshino called out to me. While Hoshino didn't participate in the violent acts, it was clear that I didn't want to engage in conversation with him either. Even now, my innermost thoughts were tainted with fear.

"I'm going home. See you."

I quickly replied and left the classroom.

"Why? Why me and Kurata-kun?"

When I arrived at the classroom, it was in turmoil. And I was approached by a student who I usually didn't interact with.

Then, to my surprise, I was asked straightforwardly, "Did you sleep with Kurata?" I had no idea what they were talking about. Kurata-kun had actually helped me.

"Haven't you seen the group? Look, this photo."

A classmate showed me their smartphone. It displayed a photo of Kurata-kun and me walking side by side.

"It's true that it's Kurata-kun and me in the photo, but how does that connect to us sleeping together?"

As I said that, the other students fell silent. I wondered why they believed it based solely on this.

"Well, what about Kurata-kun?"

"Well..."

The other students averted their gazes, looking at each other. That meant something must have happened.

"The truth is, the boys grabbed Kurata-kun by the collar, and it turned into a brawl."

"A brawl? In the classroom?"

So, that's why the usually noisy boys were quiet. But I couldn't see Kurata-kun anywhere.

“Yes. And then Kurata-kun took his belongings and left.”

“But we have classes now. What’s going on?”

I asked the people around me, but everyone just looked confused. What happened, Kouji?

As I opened the classroom door, I felt like there was a heightened level of attention directed towards me, more so than usual.

In fact, most of the male students in the classroom were looking at me with questioning eyes. Being the center of attention from numerous people due to a past incident is not good for one’s mental well-being. I hurriedly made my way to my seat as if trying to escape the situation.

“Hey, Kurata.”

As soon as I sat down, Hoshino immediately approached me. Hoshino also had a stern expression on his face as he came towards me.

“Um, what’s with this atmosphere? It feels extremely uncomfortable.”

“What’s this?”

Hoshino placed his smartphone on my desk. On the screen, there was a photo displayed.

“What... is this?”

“Well, if you look at it, you’ll understand. Hey, is this true?”

The photo depicted me and Kirishima walking side by side. It was the same photo that Taniguchi had shown me yesterday.

Apparently, this had been posted on a social media group. The chat sent right after the photo read,

“Kurata and Kirishima from Class 1 are on their way to a love hotel.”

Apparently, this had been posted on a social media group. The chat sent right after the photo read

, “Kurata and Kirishima from Class 1 are on their way to a love hotel.”

“I have no recollection of this!”

“Then why does such a photo exist?”

I instinctively tried to deny the contents, but then another male student interrupted. I didn’t know his name, but he seemed quite furious.

“Show it to me again.”

I borrowed Hoshino’s smartphone once again. Opening the chat in the group, the sender of the photo and chat was listed as ‘Unknown.’ This meant that the account had been deleted after sending these messages. Furthermore, the timestamp indicated it was sent around 4 p.m. This was when I was still in the classroom.

“Damn it.”

The remark Taniguchi made yesterday, “You’re too late,” was referring to this.

“Hey, explain everything from the beginning!”

One of the male students in the class grabbed me by the collar. However, I had nothing to say. Because in reality, I hadn’t done anything.

But I couldn’t speak out loud about that fact. Because it would bring back the trauma from my past.

“Hey, you have nothing to say? Huh?”

I was being choked, unable to breathe properly, and all I could do was tremble. Honestly, I wanted to leave this place right away, but that was also impossible.

“Hey.”

“...No.”

“What did you say? Speak louder!”

“I didn’t do it!”

Finally, my emotions exceeded their limits. In despair, I shook off the hand that was grabbing my collar and ended up throwing punches at the surrounding boys.

“Get out of my way!”

“You bastard!”

The boys started attacking one after another, but fortunately, I couldn’t afford to lose either. Perhaps due to it being a prestigious school, there weren’t many physically strong guys attacking me.

Within less than a minute, the situation around me was under control. There were still a few guys left, but they seemed to be observing quietly and didn’t show any signs of attacking.

“...Is this the end?”

Seizing the opportunity, I quickly grabbed my bag from the side of my desk. My bag contained valuable items and combat equipment. Of course, there was a reason why I took my bag. Well, simply put, I didn't want to stay in this situation any longer. Soon, the homeroom teacher would arrive, and there's no way I could attend classes with these people.

“Hey, where are you going, Kurata?”

Hoshino called out to me. While Hoshino didn't participate in the violent acts, it was clear that I didn't want to engage in conversation with him either. Even now, my innermost thoughts were tainted with fear.

“I'm going home. See you.”

I quickly replied and left the classroom.

“Why? Why me and Kurata-kun?”

When I arrived at the classroom, it was in turmoil. And I was approached by a student who I usually didn't interact with.

Then, to my surprise, I was asked straightforwardly, “Did you sleep with Kurata?” I had no idea what they were talking about. Kurata-kun had actually helped me.

“Haven't you seen the group? Look, this photo.”

A classmate showed me their smartphone. It displayed a photo of Kurata-kun and me walking side by side.

“It's true that it's Kurata-kun and me in the photo, but how does that connect to us sleeping together?”

As I said that, the other students fell silent. I wondered why they believed it based solely on this.

“Well, what about Kurata-kun?”

“Well...”

The other students averted their gazes, looking at each other. That meant something must have happened.

“The truth is, the boys grabbed Kurata-kun by the collar, and it turned into a brawl.”

“A brawl? In the classroom?”

So, that's why the usually noisy boys were quiet. But I couldn't see Kurata-kun anywhere.

“Yes. And then Kurata-kun took his belongings and left.”

“But we have classes now. What's going on?”

I asked the people around me, but everyone just looked confused. What happened, Kouji?

I asked the people around me, but everyone just looked confused.

What happened, Kouji?

This is a story from when I was in the third year of middle school.

At that time, I didn't have the same gloomy feeling as I do now, and I had friends, and we often went out to play together.

I was also a member of the kendo club. By the way, I had been practicing kendo since elementary school. I think the reason I started was because I saw a superhero anime and thought, "That's cool!" It's just a childhood memory, so I don't remember it vividly.

And then, during the summer of my third year, when I was preparing for entrance exams, an incident occurred.

The catalyst for it was when I noticed that something was off with my younger sister, Kaede, who was a first-year student at the same middle school. Even when she came home, I couldn't see the cheerful appearance she had when she was in elementary school. On top of that, she started locking herself in her room more often. At first, I casually thought it was just adolescence, but gradually, I couldn't believe that was the only reason.

As an older brother, I had a sense of responsibility, so I decided to go all the way to the first-year student floor to see Kaede's condition and find out what was happening to her.

At the same time, I tried to talk to Kaede at home. However, Kaede just kept spewing words of rejection like "I don't know" or "It's none of your business, brother."

Then, one day, as a member of the middle school kendo club, I was about to participate in the final tournament. We had about eight members in our kendo club, but only six of us could participate in the team and individual matches combined.

I'm not bragging, but my kendo skills were reasonably advanced, so I hoped to participate in the individual matches, and I was able to secure my spot.

Since this summer kendo tournament would mark the end of kendo in middle school, I devoted myself to intense training in preparation for the tournament.

And then, after school, just before the tournament, I realized I had forgotten something in the classroom. I went to the staff room to pick up the key to the classroom and made my way up the deserted school building.

On my way back, as I was descending the stairs in the hallway, I heard someone's "voice." It was already past the time for students to go home, so there shouldn't be anyone in this building.

In order to investigate the source of the "voice," I headed towards where I heard it. It could have been just my imagination, or perhaps it was something fateful.

As I approached the direction of the "voice," I heard a familiar "voice." The "voice" filled me with anxiety and curiosity.

Since the hallway happened to turn a corner, I hid myself and listened attentively.

"What do you think you're doing this time?"

A trembling girl retorted, surrounded by five other girls.

"Huh? What do you think I'm doing? It should be obvious without even asking us, right?"

One of the girls among the five replied mockingly, as if ridiculing the frightened girl, and the other four had similar expressions on their faces.

"That's why I've been saying it over and over again. I'm not trying to please the boys, and I have no reason to do so."

"Oh really? Can you speak that way?"

The girls placed their bags by the side of the corridor.

"Just disappear already, will you? Frankly speaking, you're just a nuisance."

"..."

"Say something, come on."

Saying that, one of the girls kicked the girl. Without offering any resistance to the kick, the girl was sent flying into the wall.

Witnessing that moment, my anger finally reached its peak. Taking out a shinai from its bag, I let my

anger take over and headed towards the girl.

Looking back, if my thinking had been a little calmer at that time, the outcome might have been different. However, I wasn't yet mature enough to control my emotions effectively back then.

This is a story from when I was in the third year of middle school.

At that time, I didn't have the same gloomy feeling as I do now, and I had friends, and we often went out to play together.

I was also a member of the kendo club. By the way, I had been practicing kendo since elementary school. I think the reason I started was because I saw a superhero anime and thought, "That's cool!" It's just a childhood memory, so I don't remember it vividly.

And then, during the summer of my third year, when I was preparing for entrance exams, an incident occurred.

The catalyst for it was when I noticed that something was off with my younger sister, Kaede, who was a first-year student at the same middle school. Even when she came home, I couldn't see the cheerful appearance she had when she was in elementary school. On top of that, she started locking herself in her room more often. At first, I casually thought it was just adolescence, but gradually, I couldn't believe that was the only reason.

As an older brother, I had a sense of responsibility, so I decided to go all the way to the first-year student floor to see Kaede's condition and find out what was happening to her.

At the same time, I tried to talk to Kaede at home. However, Kaede just kept spewing words of rejection like "I don't know" or "It's none of your business, brother."

Then, one day, as a member of the middle school kendo club, I was about to participate in the final tournament. We had about eight members in our kendo club, but only six of us could participate in the team and individual matches combined.

I'm not bragging, but my kendo skills were reasonably advanced, so I hoped to participate in the individual matches, and I was able to secure my spot.

Since this summer kendo tournament would mark the end of kendo in middle school, I devoted myself to intense training in preparation for the tournament.

And then, after school, just before the tournament, I realized I had forgotten something in the classroom. I went to the staff room to pick up the key to the classroom and made my way up the deserted school building.

On my way back, as I was descending the stairs in the hallway, I heard someone's "voice." It was already past the time for students to go home, so there shouldn't be anyone in this building.

In order to investigate the source of the "voice," I headed towards where I heard it. It could have been just my imagination, or perhaps it was something fateful.

As I approached the direction of the "voice," I heard a familiar "voice." The "voice" filled me with anxiety and curiosity.

Since the hallway happened to turn a corner, I hid myself and listened attentively.

"What do you think you're doing this time?"

A trembling girl retorted, surrounded by five other girls.

"Huh? What do you think I'm doing? It should be obvious without even asking us, right?"

One of the girls among the five replied mockingly, as if ridiculing the frightened girl, and the other four had similar expressions on their faces.

"That's why I've been saying it over and over again. I'm not trying to please the boys, and I have no reason to do so."

"Oh really? Can you speak that way?"

The girls placed their bags by the side of the corridor.

"Just disappear already, will you? Frankly speaking, you're just a nuisance."

"..."

"Say something, come on."

Saying that, one of the girls kicked the girl. Without offering any resistance to the kick, the girl was sent

flying into the wall.

Witnessing that moment, my anger finally reached its peak. Taking out a shinai from its bag, I let my anger take over and headed towards the girl.

Looking back, if my thinking had been a little calmer at that time, the outcome might have been different. However, I wasn't yet mature enough to control my emotions effectively back then.

This is a story from when I was in the third year of middle school.

At that time, I didn't have the same gloomy feeling as I do now, and I had friends, and we often went out to play together.

I was also a member of the kendo club. By the way, I had been practicing kendo since elementary school. I think the reason I started was because I saw a superhero anime and thought, "That's cool!" It's just a childhood memory, so I don't remember it vividly.

And then, during the summer of my third year, when I was preparing for entrance exams, an incident occurred.

The catalyst for it was when I noticed that something was off with my younger sister, Kaede, who was a first-year student at the same middle school. Even when she came home, I couldn't see the cheerful appearance she had when she was in elementary school. On top of that, she started locking herself in her room more often. At first, I casually thought it was just adolescence, but gradually, I couldn't believe that was the only reason.

As an older brother, I had a sense of responsibility, so I decided to go all the way to the first-year student floor to see Kaede's condition and find out what was happening to her.

At the same time, I tried to talk to Kaede at home. However, Kaede just kept spewing words of rejection like "I don't know" or "It's none of your business, brother."

Then, one day, as a member of the middle school kendo club, I was about to participate in the final tournament. We had about eight members in our kendo club, but only six of us could participate in the team and individual matches combined.

I'm not bragging, but my kendo skills were reasonably advanced, so I hoped to participate in the individual matches, and I was able to secure my spot.

Since this summer kendo tournament would mark the end of kendo in middle school, I devoted myself to intense training in preparation for the tournament.

And then, after school, just before the tournament, I realized I had forgotten something in the classroom. I went to the staff room to pick up the key to the classroom and made my way up the deserted school building.

On my way back, as I was descending the stairs in the hallway, I heard someone's "voice." It was already past the time for students to go home, so there shouldn't be anyone in this building.

In order to investigate the source of the "voice," I headed towards where I heard it. It could have been just my imagination, or perhaps it was something fateful.

As I approached the direction of the "voice," I heard a familiar "voice." The "voice" filled me with anxiety and curiosity.

Since the hallway happened to turn a corner, I hid myself and listened attentively.

"What do you think you're doing this time?"

A trembling girl retorted, surrounded by five other girls.

"Huh? What do you think I'm doing? It should be obvious without even asking us, right?"

One of the girls among the five replied mockingly, as if ridiculing the frightened girl, and the other four had similar expressions on their faces.

"That's why I've been saying it over and over again. I'm not trying to please the boys, and I have no reason to do so."

"Oh really? Can you speak that way?"

The girls placed their bags by the side of the corridor.

"Just disappear already, will you? Frankly speaking, you're just a nuisance."

"..."

"Say something, come on."

Saying that, one of the girls kicked the girl. Without offering any resistance to the kick, the girl was sent

flying into the wall.

Witnessing that moment, my anger finally reached its peak. Taking out a shinai from its bag, I let my anger take over and headed towards the girl.

Looking back, if my thinking had been a little calmer at that time, the outcome might have been different. However, I wasn't yet mature enough to control my emotions effectively back then.

This is a story from when I was in the third year of middle school.

At that time, I didn't have the same gloomy feeling as I do now, and I had friends, and we often went out to play together.

I was also a member of the kendo club. By the way, I had been practicing kendo since elementary school. I think the reason I started was because I saw a superhero anime and thought, "That's cool!" It's just a childhood memory, so I don't remember it vividly.

And then, during the summer of my third year, when I was preparing for entrance exams, an incident occurred.

The catalyst for it was when I noticed that something was off with my younger sister, Kaede, who was a first-year student at the same middle school. Even when she came home, I couldn't see the cheerful appearance she had when she was in elementary school. On top of that, she started locking herself in her room more often. At first, I casually thought it was just adolescence, but gradually, I couldn't believe that was the only reason.

As an older brother, I had a sense of responsibility, so I decided to go all the way to the first-year student floor to see Kaede's condition and find out what was happening to her.

At the same time, I tried to talk to Kaede at home. However, Kaede just kept spewing words of rejection like "I don't know" or "It's none of your business, brother."

Then, one day, as a member of the middle school kendo club, I was about to participate in the final tournament. We had about eight members in our kendo club, but only six of us could participate in the team and individual matches combined.

I'm not bragging, but my kendo skills were reasonably advanced, so I hoped to participate in the individual matches, and I was able to secure my spot.

Since this summer kendo tournament would mark the end of kendo in middle school, I devoted myself to intense training in preparation for the tournament.

And then, after school, just before the tournament, I realized I had forgotten something in the classroom. I went to the staff room to pick up the key to the classroom and made my way up the deserted school building.

On my way back, as I was descending the stairs in the hallway, I heard someone's "voice." It was already past the time for students to go home, so there shouldn't be anyone in this building.

In order to investigate the source of the "voice," I headed towards where I heard it. It could have been just my imagination, or perhaps it was something fateful.

As I approached the direction of the "voice," I heard a familiar "voice." The "voice" filled me with anxiety and curiosity.

Since the hallway happened to turn a corner, I hid myself and listened attentively.

"What do you think you're doing this time?"

A trembling girl retorted, surrounded by five other girls.

"Huh? What do you think I'm doing? It should be obvious without even asking us, right?"

One of the girls among the five replied mockingly, as if ridiculing the frightened girl, and the other four had similar expressions on their faces.

"That's why I've been saying it over and over again. I'm not trying to please the boys, and I have no reason to do so."

"Oh really? Can you speak that way?"

The girls placed their bags by the side of the corridor.

"Just disappear already, will you? Frankly speaking, you're just a nuisance."

"..."

"Say something, come on."

Saying that, one of the girls kicked the girl. Without offering any resistance to the kick, the girl was sent flying into the wall.

Witnessing that moment, my anger finally reached its peak. Taking out a shinai from its bag, I let my

anger take over and headed towards the girl.

Looking back, if my thinking had been a little calmer at that time, the outcome might have been different. However, I wasn't yet mature enough to control my emotions effectively back then.

This is a story from when I was in the third year of middle school.

At that time, I didn't have the same gloomy feeling as I do now, and I had friends, and we often went out to play together.

I was also a member of the kendo club. By the way, I had been practicing kendo since elementary school. I think the reason I started was because I saw a superhero anime and thought, "That's cool!" It's just a childhood memory, so I don't remember it vividly.

And then, during the summer of my third year, when I was preparing for entrance exams, an incident occurred.

The catalyst for it was when I noticed that something was off with my younger sister, Kaede, who was a first-year student at the same middle school. Even when she came home, I couldn't see the cheerful appearance she had when she was in elementary school. On top of that, she started locking herself in her room more often. At first, I casually thought it was just adolescence, but gradually, I couldn't believe that was the only reason.

As an older brother, I had a sense of responsibility, so I decided to go all the way to the first-year student floor to see Kaede's condition and find out what was happening to her.

At the same time, I tried to talk to Kaede at home. However, Kaede just kept spewing words of rejection like "I don't know" or "It's none of your business, brother."

Then, one day, as a member of the middle school kendo club, I was about to participate in the final tournament. We had about eight members in our kendo club, but only six of us could participate in the team and individual matches combined.

I'm not bragging, but my kendo skills were reasonably advanced, so I hoped to participate in the individual matches, and I was able to secure my spot.

Since this summer kendo tournament would mark the end of kendo in middle school, I devoted myself to intense training in preparation for the tournament.

And then, after school, just before the tournament, I realized I had forgotten something in the classroom. I went to the staff room to pick up the key to the classroom and made my way up the deserted school building.

On my way back, as I was descending the stairs in the hallway, I heard someone's "voice." It was already past the time for students to go home, so there shouldn't be anyone in this building.

In order to investigate the source of the "voice," I headed towards where I heard it. It could have been just my imagination, or perhaps it was something fateful.

As I approached the direction of the "voice," I heard a familiar "voice." The "voice" filled me with anxiety and curiosity.

Since the hallway happened to turn a corner, I hid myself and listened attentively.

"What do you think you're doing this time?"

A trembling girl retorted, surrounded by five other girls.

"Huh? What do you think I'm doing? It should be obvious without even asking us, right?"

One of the girls among the five replied mockingly, as if ridiculing the frightened girl, and the other four had similar expressions on their faces.

"That's why I've been saying it over and over again. I'm not trying to please the boys, and I have no reason to do so."

"Oh really? Can you speak that way?"

The girls placed their bags by the side of the corridor.

"Just disappear already, will you? Frankly speaking, you're just a nuisance."

"..."

"Say something, come on."

Saying that, one of the girls kicked the girl. Without offering any resistance to the kick, the girl was sent

flying into the wall.

Witnessing that moment, my anger finally reached its peak. Taking out a shinai from its bag, I let my anger take over and headed towards the girl.

Looking back, if my thinking had been a little calmer at that time, the outcome might have been different. However, I wasn't yet mature enough to control my emotions effectively back then.

This is a story from when I was in the third year of middle school.

At that time, I didn't have the same gloomy feeling as I do now, and I had friends, and we often went out to play together.

I was also a member of the kendo club. By the way, I had been practicing kendo since elementary school. I think the reason I started was because I saw a superhero anime and thought, "That's cool!" It's just a childhood memory, so I don't remember it vividly.

And then, during the summer of my third year, when I was preparing for entrance exams, an incident occurred.

The catalyst for it was when I noticed that something was off with my younger sister, Kaede, who was a first-year student at the same middle school. Even when she came home, I couldn't see the cheerful appearance she had when she was in elementary school. On top of that, she started locking herself in her room more often. At first, I casually thought it was just adolescence, but gradually, I couldn't believe that was the only reason.

As an older brother, I had a sense of responsibility, so I decided to go all the way to the first-year student floor to see Kaede's condition and find out what was happening to her.

At the same time, I tried to talk to Kaede at home. However, Kaede just kept spewing words of rejection like "I don't know" or "It's none of your business, brother."

Then, one day, as a member of the middle school kendo club, I was about to participate in the final tournament. We had about eight members in our kendo club, but only six of us could participate in the team and individual matches combined.

I'm not bragging, but my kendo skills were reasonably advanced, so I hoped to participate in the individual matches, and I was able to secure my spot.

Since this summer kendo tournament would mark the end of kendo in middle school, I devoted myself to intense training in preparation for the tournament.

And then, after school, just before the tournament, I realized I had forgotten something in the classroom. I went to the staff room to pick up the key to the classroom and made my way up the deserted school building.

On my way back, as I was descending the stairs in the hallway, I heard someone's "voice." It was already past the time for students to go home, so there shouldn't be anyone in this building.

In order to investigate the source of the "voice," I headed towards where I heard it. It could have been just my imagination, or perhaps it was something fateful.

As I approached the direction of the "voice," I heard a familiar "voice." The "voice" filled me with anxiety and curiosity.

Since the hallway happened to turn a corner, I hid myself and listened attentively.

"What do you think you're doing this time?"

A trembling girl retorted, surrounded by five other girls.

"Huh? What do you think I'm doing? It should be obvious without even asking us, right?"

One of the girls among the five replied mockingly, as if ridiculing the frightened girl, and the other four had similar expressions on their faces.

"That's why I've been saying it over and over again. I'm not trying to please the boys, and I have no reason to do so."

"Oh really? Can you speak that way?"

The girls placed their bags by the side of the corridor.

"Just disappear already, will you? Frankly speaking, you're just a nuisance."

"..."

"Say something, come on."

Saying that, one of the girls kicked the girl. Without offering any resistance to the kick, the girl was sent

flying into the wall.

Witnessing that moment, my anger finally reached its peak. Taking out a shinai from its bag, I let my anger take over and headed towards the girl.

Looking back, if my thinking had been a little calmer at that time, the outcome might have been different. However, I wasn't yet mature enough to control my emotions effectively back then.

“Hey.”

I couldn’t bear the sight of my sister being bullied any longer, and finally raised my voice against the perpetrators of the bullying.

“Oh, brother?”

“Huh? You gotta be kidding me.”

“You guys. Shut up.”

As I looked at the ones who were bullying my sister, my frustration kept growing.

“Hey, what do you think you’re doing to someone’s sister?”

“...”

The girls remained silent, not giving any response. Meanwhile, Kaede leaned against the wall, appearing to be in pain.

Seeing her like that, I could no longer tolerate the current situation.

“Come on, say something.”

I swung the shinai and struck the ground. The sound echoed loudly in the hallway, and the girls were frightened. With the corridor forming a “C” shape and me standing by the passage, they couldn’t escape.

“What’s the matter? You bullied someone’s sister all this time, but now that you’re at a disadvantage, you’re keeping quiet? Huh?”

I usually didn’t use such language, but my words and actions were altered by overwhelming anger.

At that moment, Kaede, who had been leaning in the back, came towards me despite the pain she should have been feeling.

“Brother, violence is not the answer...”

“Kaede, why didn’t you say anything? It must have been tough for you. Just go home quickly for now.”

As I said that, I urged Kaede to go to the health office. There was no point in staying with these people, and she must have been physically and mentally exhausted.

“So, do you know what kind of response we should take? Even with your airheaded minds.”

With my sister gone, my words and actions kept heating up. However, I was completely blind to the situation around me due to my anger.

“What are you doing?”

If a man with a shinai raised his voice inside the school, there was no way he wouldn’t be noticed. When I turned to my left, a young male teacher had a frozen expression on his face. Unfortunately, I didn’t know him.

“Please don’t come any closer. I have to give these idiots a good talking-to.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, but why are you carrying a shinai inside the school?”

The teacher kept getting closer to me. Seeing this as a perfect opportunity, the girls stood up and tried to escape.

“Hey, what are you trying to run away for?”

In order to prevent these wretched girls from escaping, I instinctively swung the shinai to the side.

Looking back, I may not have needed to swing the shinai, but it seemed that these girls had ignited an unexpectedly boiling rage within me.

The impact traveled through my hand holding the shinai. The swing of my shinai had hit one of the girls in the abdomen.

“Hey, wait!”

The male teacher, witnessing the scene, was left speechless. Likewise, the girls remained silent. The teacher couldn’t hide his shock at the fact that the shinai had actually been swung, while the girls were terrified by the sight of one of their comrades falling.

“Which one hurts more, the pain you caused Kaede or this?”

“Hey, stop! Lower your shinai!”

The male teacher shouted loudly, trying to stop me. However, as I glanced briefly at the teacher, he quickly moved away, as if fleeing from the scene.

“I-I’m sorry.”

Finally, one of the girls voiced an apology. It had already been thirty minutes since I witnessed the situation.

“You’re late. Well, it’s just like you. Trembling in fear after seeing your comrade hurt, with the thought of not wanting to become a target yourself, right?”

But even if Kaede might accept it, I won’t. It’s absurd that you think you can be absolved just by apologizing, considering how you’ve mercilessly hurt others. Kaede has repeatedly said, ‘Stop,’ hasn’t she?”

The girls continued to gaze downwards, their faces on the verge of tears. They behaved like timid people who pretend to be strong on the inside, but when attacked from the outside, it all crumbles. A typical example.

“Say something, please.”

“Hey, Kurata! Lower your shinai now!”

When I turned around, I saw the physical education teacher and our homeroom teacher gathered behind me.

“Kurata! Can you hear us?”

“You guys are so annoying! Besides, you teachers are incompetent, so I have to step in and do something!”

However, as if ignoring my words, the teachers approached.

“Kurata, this is your final warning. Lower what you’re holding. Otherwise, we’ll have to take serious measures to restrain you.”

My homeroom teacher spoke in an admonishing tone. But the eyes of the teachers indicated that they were serious.

“Hey.”

I couldn’t bear the sight of my sister being bullied any longer, and finally raised my voice against the perpetrators of the bullying.

“Oh, brother?”

“Huh? You gotta be kidding me.”

“You guys. Shut up.”

As I looked at the ones who were bullying my sister, my frustration kept growing.

“Hey, what do you think you’re doing to someone’s sister?”

“...”

The girls remained silent, not giving any response. Meanwhile, Kaede leaned against the wall, appearing to be in pain.

Seeing her like that, I could no longer tolerate the current situation.

“Come on, say something.”

I swung the shinai and struck the ground. The sound echoed loudly in the hallway, and the girls were frightened. With the corridor forming a “C” shape and me standing by the passage, they couldn’t escape.

“What’s the matter? You bullied someone’s sister all this time, but now that you’re at a disadvantage, you’re keeping quiet? Huh?”

I usually didn’t use such language, but my words and actions were altered by overwhelming anger.

At that moment, Kaede, who had been leaning in the back, came towards me despite the pain she should have been feeling.

“Brother, violence is not the answer...”

“Kaede, why didn’t you say anything? It must have been tough for you. Just go home quickly for now.”

As I said that, I urged Kaede to go to the health office. There was no point in staying with these people, and she must have been physically and mentally exhausted.

“So, do you know what kind of response we should take? Even with your airheaded minds.”

With my sister gone, my words and actions kept heating up. However, I was completely blind to the situation around me due to my anger.

“What are you doing?”

If a man with a shinai raised his voice inside the school, there was no way he wouldn't be noticed. When I turned to my left, a young male teacher had a frozen expression on his face. Unfortunately, I didn't know him.

“Please don't come any closer. I have to give these idiots a good talking-to.”

“I don't know what you're talking about, but why are you carrying a shinai inside the school?”

The teacher kept getting closer to me. Seeing this as a perfect opportunity, the girls stood up and tried to escape.

“Hey, what are you trying to run away for?”

In order to prevent these wretched girls from escaping, I instinctively swung the shinai to the side.

Looking back, I may not have needed to swing the shinai, but it seemed that these girls had ignited an unexpectedly boiling rage within me.

The impact traveled through my hand holding the shinai. The swing of my shinai had hit one of the girls in the abdomen.

“Hey, wait!”

The male teacher, witnessing the scene, was left speechless. Likewise, the girls remained silent. The teacher couldn't hide his shock at the fact that the shinai had actually been swung, while the girls were terrified by the sight of one of their comrades falling.

“Which one hurts more, the pain you caused Kaede or this?”

“Hey, stop! Lower your shinai!”

The male teacher shouted loudly, trying to stop me. However, as I glanced briefly at the teacher, he quickly moved away, as if fleeing from the scene.

“I-I'm sorry.”

Finally, one of the girls voiced an apology. It had already been thirty minutes since I witnessed the situation.

“You're late. Well, it's just like you. Trembling in fear after seeing your comrade hurt, with the thought of not wanting to become a target yourself, right?”

But even if Kaede might accept it, I won't. It's absurd that you think you can be absolved just by apologizing, considering how you've mercilessly hurt others. Kaede has repeatedly said, ‘Stop,’ hasn't she?”

The girls continued to gaze downwards, their faces on the verge of tears. They behaved like timid people who pretend to be strong on the inside, but when attacked from the outside, it all crumbles. A typical example.

“Say something, please.”

“Hey, Kurata! Lower your shinai now!”

When I turned around, I saw the physical education teacher and our homeroom teacher gathered behind me.

“Kurata! Can you hear us?”

“You guys are so annoying! Besides, you teachers are incompetent, so I have to step in and do something!”

However, as if ignoring my words, the teachers approached.

“Kurata, this is your final warning. Lower what you're holding. Otherwise, we'll have to take serious measures to restrain you.”

My homeroom teacher spoke in an admonishing tone. But the eyes of the teachers indicated that they were serious.

“Hey.”

I couldn't bear the sight of my sister being bullied any longer, and finally raised my voice against the perpetrators of the bullying.

“Oh, brother?”

“Huh? You gotta be kidding me.”

“You guys. Shut up.”

As I looked at the ones who were bullying my sister, my frustration kept growing.

“Hey, what do you think you’re doing to someone’s sister?”

“…”

The girls remained silent, not giving any response. Meanwhile, Kaede leaned against the wall, appearing to be in pain.

Seeing her like that, I could no longer tolerate the current situation.

“Come on, say something.”

I swung the shinai and struck the ground. The sound echoed loudly in the hallway, and the girls were frightened. With the corridor forming a “C” shape and me standing by the passage, they couldn’t escape.

“What’s the matter? You bullied someone’s sister all this time, but now that you’re at a disadvantage, you’re keeping quiet? Huh?”

I usually didn’t use such language, but my words and actions were altered by overwhelming anger.

At that moment, Kaede, who had been leaning in the back, came towards me despite the pain she should have been feeling.

“Brother, violence is not the answer…”

“Kaede, why didn’t you say anything? It must have been tough for you. Just go home quickly for now.”

As I said that, I urged Kaede to go to the health office. There was no point in staying with these people, and she must have been physically and mentally exhausted.

“So, do you know what kind of response we should take? Even with your airheaded minds.”

With my sister gone, my words and actions kept heating up. However, I was completely blind to the situation around me due to my anger.

“What are you doing?”

If a man with a shinai raised his voice inside the school, there was no way he wouldn’t be noticed. When I turned to my left, a young male teacher had a frozen expression on his face. Unfortunately, I didn’t know him.

“Please don’t come any closer. I have to give these idiots a good talking-to.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, but why are you carrying a shinai inside the school?”

The teacher kept getting closer to me. Seeing this as a perfect opportunity, the girls stood up and tried to escape.

“Hey, what are you trying to run away for?”

In order to prevent these wretched girls from escaping, I instinctively swung the shinai to the side.

Looking back, I may not have needed to swing the shinai, but it seemed that these girls had ignited an unexpectedly boiling rage within me.

The impact traveled through my hand holding the shinai. The swing of my shinai had hit one of the girls in the abdomen.

“Hey, wait!”

The male teacher, witnessing the scene, was left speechless. Likewise, the girls remained silent. The teacher couldn’t hide his shock at the fact that the shinai had actually been swung, while the girls were terrified by the sight of one of their comrades falling.

“Which one hurts more, the pain you caused Kaede or this?”

“Hey, stop! Lower your shinai!”

The male teacher shouted loudly, trying to stop me. However, as I glanced briefly at the teacher, he quickly moved away, as if fleeing from the scene.

“I-I’m sorry.”

Finally, one of the girls voiced an apology. It had already been thirty minutes since I witnessed the situation.

“You’re late. Well, it’s just like you. Trembling in fear after seeing your comrade hurt, with the thought of not wanting to become a target yourself, right?”

But even if Kaede might accept it, I won’t. It’s absurd that you think you can be absolved just by apologizing, considering how you’ve mercilessly hurt others. Kaede has repeatedly said, ‘Stop,’ hasn’t she?”

The girls continued to gaze downwards, their faces on the verge of tears. They behaved like timid people who pretend to be strong on the inside, but when attacked from the outside, it all crumbles. A typical

example.

“Say something, please.”

“Hey, Kurata! Lower your shinai now!”

When I turned around, I saw the physical education teacher and our homeroom teacher gathered behind me.

“Kurata! Can you hear us?”

“You guys are so annoying! Besides, you teachers are incompetent, so I have to step in and do something!”

However, as if ignoring my words, the teachers approached.

“Kurata, this is your final warning. Lower what you’re holding. Otherwise, we’ll have to take serious measures to restrain you.”

My homeroom teacher spoke in an admonishing tone. But the eyes of the teachers indicated that they were serious.

I obediently followed the final warning from the teachers and was escorted to the staff room. Naturally, my parents were summoned, and we were interrogated late into the night.

During this interrogation, I desperately asserted the situation with my sister. However, the fact that I had assaulted the girls was the main concern, and they didn't take my defense seriously. As a result, I had to go home without any proper resolution.

However, when I returned home, my parents didn't blame me particularly. Rather, they said they were glad that we took action to protect my sister, as we hadn't noticed what she was going through. Of course, they also said that resorting to violence was wrong.

"I'm sorry, bwrother."

Before going to bed, when I opened the door to check on Kaede, she was crying alone on her bed.

Witnessing her like that, I immediately rushed to her side.

"Kaede, I don't mind at all."

"No, it's my fault. I just let them do whatever they wanted to me."

While saying that, Kaede hugged me and sobbed. It could be frustration or sadness. All I could do now was to comfort Kaede.

"Kaede, if there's anything you want me to do, just tell me. So, please don't bear it all by yourself."

"...Okay, I understand. Thank you, brother."

That night, I felt like I finally heard my sister's true feelings. However, my personal hell was far from over.

The next day, as soon as I entered the classroom, the gazes directed at me were significantly different from before.

Confused by the unexpected reaction from the class, I tried to ask my friends about it...

"What are you doing during the exam period?"

"I have no obligation to associate with someone like you."

The class's response was completely different from the day before, and I was bewildered. Even friends who weren't particularly close suddenly looked at me with suspicion.

Despite enduring this psychological torment, I managed to extract some information.

When I put everything together, it turned out that the siblings of the girls who had bullied Kaede were in the same class as me. Although they should have been questioned by the teachers and received warnings, it seemed that they still held a grudge.

However, the fact that they had exerted their power against the brother of their bullying target weighed heavily on them. Perhaps because I had threatened them with "there won't be a next time," they found it difficult to harm Kaede directly.

In that case, my existence was incredibly annoying to them. Even if they changed their target of bullying, their fear of me remained, and their anger towards Kaede remained the same.

Therefore, they set out to crush me.

I had never experienced such treatment in elementary school or middle school, and my mental state was severely affected. On top of that, I became a target of bullying by my classmates.

Their bullying was blatant, and as I had already quit the club activities, I eventually stopped going to school. I was betrayed by all the friends I was close to, and I developed a distrust of people. There was no reason for me to go to school.

In my state of distrust, I became a shut-in. Fortunately, thanks to my sister and family supporting me when my mental state was shattered, I could trust only my family.

By the way, Kaede completely distanced herself from the bullying group and quietly enjoyed her school life.

"I didn't know that happened, Kouji"

Kirishima's hand was on the back of my head without me realizing, and I was being embraced. Perhaps I also felt a sense of maternal instinct from Kirishima because my heart felt calmer than before.

However, I couldn't indulge in this sensation forever. After all, I didn't want to cause trouble for

Kirishima because of me.

“Hey, Kirishima. I have something to discuss with you.”

“Hmm? What is it?”

I placed a bankbook on Kirishima’s hand. It was originally entrusted to me by Kirishima’s father.

“What’s this?”

“It’s the living expenses arranged by your father. We’re making arrangements to find a new home for you soon.”

“Why...?”

Kirishima’s expression suddenly changed, and she looked at me as if she was about to cry.

“Why? It’s because I don’t want to inconvenience you anymore. Being with me may also result in rumors and reputation damage.”

“I don’t mind at all! Besides, why do we need to live in separate homes?”

Kirishima questioned me with her teary face and voice. However, if I were to show weakness here, it would only lead to a situation where I would end up being trapped.

“First of all, it was wrong for a man and a woman to live together in the same house. Besides, I decided to try a slightly different lifestyle to forget about my trauma.”

“A different lifestyle?”

“Maybe I’ll go on a little journey.”

I obediently followed the final warning from the teachers and was escorted to the staff room. Naturally, my parents were summoned, and we were interrogated late into the night.

During this interrogation, I desperately asserted the situation with my sister. However, the fact that I had assaulted the girls was the main concern, and they didn’t take my defense seriously. As a result, I had to go home without any proper resolution.

However, when I returned home, my parents didn’t blame me particularly. Rather, they said they were glad that we took action to protect my sister, as we hadn’t noticed what she was going through. Of course, they also said that resorting to violence was wrong.

“I’m sorry, brother.”

Before going to bed, when I opened the door to check on Kaede, she was crying alone on her bed.

Witnessing her like that, I immediately rushed to her side.

“Kaede, I don’t mind at all.”

“No, it’s my fault. I just let them do whatever they wanted to me.”

While saying that, Kaede hugged me and sobbed. It could be frustration or sadness. All I could do now was to comfort Kaede.

“Kaede, if there’s anything you want me to do, just tell me. So, please don’t bear it all by yourself.”

“...Okay, I understand. Thank you, brother.”

That night, I felt like I finally heard my sister’s true feelings. However, my personal hell was far from over.

The next day, as soon as I entered the classroom, the gazes directed at me were significantly different from before.

Confused by the unexpected reaction from the class, I tried to ask my friends about it...

“What are you doing during the exam period?”

“I have no obligation to associate with someone like you.”

The class’s response was completely different from the day before, and I was bewildered. Even friends who weren’t particularly close suddenly looked at me with suspicion.

Despite enduring this psychological torment, I managed to extract some information.

When I put everything together, it turned out that the siblings of the girls who had bullied Kaede were in the same class as me. Although they should have been questioned by the teachers and received warnings, it seemed that they still held a grudge.

However, the fact that they had exerted their power against the brother of their bullying target weighed heavily on them. Perhaps because I had threatened them with “there won’t be a next time,” they found it

difficult to harm Kaede directly.

In that case, my existence was incredibly annoying to them. Even if they changed their target of bullying, their fear of me remained, and their anger towards Kaede remained the same.

Therefore, they set out to crush me.

I had never experienced such treatment in elementary school or middle school, and my mental state was severely affected. On top of that, I became a target of bullying by my classmates.

Their bullying was blatant, and as I had already quit the club activities, I eventually stopped going to school. I was betrayed by all the friends I was close to, and I developed a distrust of people. There was no reason for me to go to school.

In my state of distrust, I became a shut-in. Fortunately, thanks to my sister and family supporting me when my mental state was shattered, I could trust only my family.

By the way, Kaede completely distanced herself from the bullying group and quietly enjoyed her school life.

“I didn’t know that happened, Kouji”

Kirishima’s hand was on the back of my head without me realizing, and I was being embraced. Perhaps I also felt a sense of maternal instinct from Kirishima because my heart felt calmer than before.

However, I couldn’t indulge in this sensation forever. After all, I didn’t want to cause trouble for Kirishima because of me.

“Hey, Kirishima. I have something to discuss with you.”

“Hmm? What is it?”

I placed a bankbook on Kirishima’s hand. It was originally entrusted to me by Kirishima’s father.

“What’s this?”

“It’s the living expenses arranged by your father. We’re making arrangements to find a new home for you soon.”

“Why...?”

Kirishima’s expression suddenly changed, and she looked at me as if she was about to cry.

“Why? It’s because I don’t want to inconvenience you anymore. Being with me may also result in rumors and reputation damage.”

“I don’t mind at all! Besides, why do we need to live in separate homes?”

Kirishima questioned me with her teary face and voice. However, if I were to show weakness here, it would only lead to a situation where I would end up being trapped.

“First of all, it was wrong for a man and a woman to live together in the same house. Besides, I decided to try a slightly different lifestyle to forget about my trauma.”

“A different lifestyle?”

“Maybe I’ll go on a little journey.”

I obediently followed the final warning from the teachers and was escorted to the staff room. Naturally, my parents were summoned, and we were interrogated late into the night.

During this interrogation, I desperately asserted the situation with my sister. However, the fact that I had assaulted the girls was the main concern, and they didn’t take my defense seriously. As a result, I had to go home without any proper resolution.

However, when I returned home, my parents didn’t blame me particularly. Rather, they said they were glad that we took action to protect my sister, as we hadn’t noticed what she was going through. Of course, they also said that resorting to violence was wrong.

“I’m sorry, brother.”

Before going to bed, when I opened the door to check on Kaede, she was crying alone on her bed.

Witnessing her like that, I immediately rushed to her side.

“Kaede, I don’t mind at all.”

“No, it’s my fault. I just let them do whatever they wanted to me.”

While saying that, Kaede hugged me and sobbed. It could be frustration or sadness. All I could do now was to comfort Kaede.

“Kaede, if there’s anything you want me to do, just tell me. So, please don’t bear it all by yourself.”

“...Okay, I understand. Thank you, brother.”

That night, I felt like I finally heard my sister's true feelings. However, my personal hell was far from over.

The next day, as soon as I entered the classroom, the gazes directed at me were significantly different from before.

Confused by the unexpected reaction from the class, I tried to ask my friends about it...

"What are you doing during the exam period?"

"I have no obligation to associate with someone like you."

The class's response was completely different from the day before, and I was bewildered. Even friends who weren't particularly close suddenly looked at me with suspicion.

Despite enduring this psychological torment, I managed to extract some information.

When I put everything together, it turned out that the siblings of the girls who had bullied Kaede were in the same class as me. Although they should have been questioned by the teachers and received warnings, it seemed that they still held a grudge.

However, the fact that they had exerted their power against the brother of their bullying target weighed heavily on them. Perhaps because I had threatened them with "there won't be a next time," they found it difficult to harm Kaede directly.

In that case, my existence was incredibly annoying to them. Even if they changed their target of bullying, their fear of me remained, and their anger towards Kaede remained the same.

Therefore, they set out to crush me.

I had never experienced such treatment in elementary school or middle school, and my mental state was severely affected. On top of that, I became a target of bullying by my classmates.

Their bullying was blatant, and as I had already quit the club activities, I eventually stopped going to school. I was betrayed by all the friends I was close to, and I developed a distrust of people. There was no reason for me to go to school.

In my state of distrust, I became a shut-in. Fortunately, thanks to my sister and family supporting me when my mental state was shattered, I could trust only my family.

By the way, Kaede completely distanced herself from the bullying group and quietly enjoyed her school life.

"I didn't know that happened, Kouji"

Kirishima's hand was on the back of my head without me realizing, and I was being embraced. Perhaps I also felt a sense of maternal instinct from Kirishima because my heart felt calmer than before.

However, I couldn't indulge in this sensation forever. After all, I didn't want to cause trouble for Kirishima because of me.

"Hey, Kirishima. I have something to discuss with you."

"Hmm? What is it?"

I placed a bankbook on Kirishima's hand. It was originally entrusted to me by Kirishima's father.

"What's this?"

"It's the living expenses arranged by your father. We're making arrangements to find a new home for you soon."

"Why...?"

Kirishima's expression suddenly changed, and she looked at me as if she was about to cry.

"Why? It's because I don't want to inconvenience you anymore. Being with me may also result in rumors and reputation damage."

"I don't mind at all! Besides, why do we need to live in separate homes?"

Kirishima questioned me with her teary face and voice. However, if I were to show weakness here, it would only lead to a situation where I would end up being trapped.

"First of all, it was wrong for a man and a woman to live together in the same house. Besides, I decided to try a slightly different lifestyle to forget about my trauma."

"A different lifestyle?"

"Maybe I'll go on a little journey."