Ch6 Intro

An Inevitable Past

It was evening, and my roommates were having a great time chatting about trivial things.

I was worried about Akito’s health, but his fever had gone down within a day and he was on the mend, so he had no issues lying down and talking for the time being. I was basically just spending my evening watching from the side-lines whilst operating my phone, occasionally interjecting with some small talk.

I was surfing the internet, waiting for drowsiness to hit me, when I received a message.

I want to talk to you on the phone for a bit right now, is that okay?

It was a message from Kei.

It had been a while since the ban on messaging was lifted, but we’d exchanged messages roughly once per day. No emoticons or stamps were used today, which suggested that it was a serious matter.

I’m in my room right now, so wait three minutes.

It wasn’t curfew yet, so it wasn’t difficult to get out of the cabin. After sending my reply, I decided to make a quick exit from the bed.

“I’m going to go buy a drink.”

Using those convenient words that could be used at any time, I left the cabin and went out to the hallway.

Since it was around 9pm, I didn’t see any students passing by. I then went out onto the deck and checked my surroundings. After making sure that no one was around, I called Kei.

“Hello?”

“Sorry for bothering you all of a sudden, but I just really wanted to talk today.”

She said cute things just like a girlfriend would. I wondered if this was one of those ‘I just wanted to hear your voice for some reason’ type requests from a lover.

“So you know───”

After a slight pause, Kei spoke up.

“I heard some bad rumours about you, you know? You’ll give me a detailed explanation, right?”

“Bad rumours?”

Huh? The words I was expecting didn’t jump out; rather, Kei seemed to be in a bad mood.

There was a long silence and I didn’t get a response right away.

“Bad rumours?”

I couldn’t take it anymore so I asked her for a second time, but she didn’t answer, just giving off a hint of frustration. Rather, after I repeated the question word for word, she instead became suspicious.

“Does nothing come to mind?”

“I can’t think of anything.”

I answered without hesitation, but there were a number of things that came to mind.

The first thing would have to be the Ichinose situation. When Nagumo saw the exchange between me and Ichinose, he would’ve figured out that we were in a serious situation. And now that he knew that Kei and I were in a relationship, it wouldn’t be strange if he went around spreading what he’d seen.

In addition to that, the fact that I paired up with Satou, who’d once confessed to me, and had a chat with Matsushita also crossed my mind.

“There’s really nothing that comes to mind?”

There was a long pause, as if she were making a final check before passing judgement.

“Nope, nothing.”

Despite that, I persisted and pretended not to know. If I knew what Kei’s ‘something that comes to mind’ was about, I would’ve readily confessed, whether it was the thing with Ichinose or the thing with Satou. However, since I haven’t identified which it was yet, if I were to say something inappropriate, the problem may worsen. It was a case of letting my own flesh be cut in order to sever the other’s bone, I guess.

…Anyway, why was something like this happening instead of it just being a sweet phone call?

“Kei?”

When I prompted her by calling her name, she spoke up, her lips seemingly trembling.

“You’ve been, like, messing around with an underclassman! That rumour!”

“…Huh?”

She told me what the rumours were saying, but I titled my head, unable to comprehend it. Were all the thoughts that came to mind off the mark? As I thought, it was a good thing that I didn’t say anything carelessly.

“Where and how did you even hear a rumour like that?”

“I don’t know! But I heard that you were seen repeatedly meeting with some first-year girl.”

A first-year girl. The person that immediately came to mind was Nanase…

It was true that I had talked to Nanase many times over this vacation. It wasn’t like we were meeting in secret, so there must’ve been witnesses everywhere. Now that I understood the situation, I could end this quickly.

“She’s just an underclassman, nothing more.”

“I know that! I mean if she wasn’t just an underclassman you’d be out!”

That’s for sure.

“And also! You didn’t tell me anything about pairing up with Satou-san for the treasure hunt.”

So it appeared that Kei was aware of one of the things that came to mind.

“Sure, I didn’t report it, but because it was you, Kei, you’d find out straight away, right?”

Since Satou and I had been walking around together on a treasure hunt, numerous people would’ve seen us. Even Matsushita knew about it.

“Y-yeah well I did find out straight away…I knew about it, but…”

She seemed to have a lot of complaints and was mumbling something inaudibly.

“Even though I actually wanted to pair up with you, Kiyotaka.”

“I understand how you feel, but the order would be reversed then wouldn’t it?”

“Buu”

“By the way, how were the results after working with Mori?”

“…You’re asking that?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

The mood was plummeting, so I shouldn’t get too involved. I didn’t mind continuing to listen to her complain, but since the topic of Satou had come up, I decided to ask her about it.

“You told Satou already about what we’re planning to do, right?”

“Eh? A-ahh yeah. I wanted to tell just Satou-san first.”

“Well, that’s probably a all right. By the way, did you talk about it over a phone call or through messages?”

“No way. You have to talk about these things face to face. It was at the café.”

“The café, huh. Do you remember if anyone might’ve overheard you?”

“I can be careful about stuff like that too you know? At the very least, there weren’t any second-years who could’ve overheard us, so don’t worry.”

Certainly, Kei would be most worried about the second-years. Normally, neither first nor third-years would have any strong interest in the love stories of other year groups. Especially if the person in question was me.

However, it was the quite the opposite for the current third-year students, who seemed to only bite on topics related to me.

“Ah ~ but there were some third-year girls sat nearby, so it was a little difficult to talk.”

As if she were checking her answers to an exam question, Kei thought back on the meeting she had with Satou. For Kei, who didn’t know the circumstances, she would’ve had no reason to assume she should be wary of third-year students.

“If she understood, then it’s good.”

“Yeah. But is it really okay? To be open about the fact that we’re dating?”

“Of course, it’s no problem.”

Rather, it was obvious that it would become a necessary action sooner or later. The more we pushed it back, the more troublesome it might become.

“Well, I say we’re going to be open about it, but it’s not like we’re going to go announce it in front of all our classmates. It’ll spread naturally from your friends, and after enough time passes it’ll become common knowledge.”

I’m sure everyone will be reacting to their heart’s content for a few days, but it wouldn’t be a big problem.

“But you know…you’re very popular, Kiyotaka.”

“Is that so?”

“Aargh, that whole not knowing anything part of you is super irritating you know.”

“In that case, we can just not talk about it.”

“Yeah that’s true, but even though I know that, I’m worried, so I end up asking!”

It wasn’t like I didn’t know what she was trying to say, but there were some contradictions.

“Isn’t the purpose of the declaration to keep the unnecessary bugs away?”

As long as they thought the person they liked didn’t have a boyfriend or girlfriend, they might try and go on an all-out offensive. To avoid this, you had to make a big deal of the fact that you were dating someone. If you did that, most people would give up and stop trying to attack.

Of course, I was aware that there were a few exceptions, but…

“I’m still gonna be worried…”

Those few exceptions, the enemies yet to be revealed, were what Kei was frightened of.

“You might not know this yet, but there are girls who fall for guys who already have a girlfriend, and there are girls who’ll enthusiastically try and steal them.”

“I see.”

“Get it? I’ll never forgive you if you cheat on me.”

As a dependant type, Kei would never forgive her boyfriend if he were to cheat on her. I knew that even before we started dating.

“Don’t worry; I wouldn’t do something like that.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really.”

“Really really?”

“Yes, really.”

We repeatedly went back and forth in what seemed like a waste of time.

However, this seemingly pointless back and forth was just one of the ways of expressing your affection in the process of falling in love.

“Do you…love me?”

I checked my surroundings once more to make sure I hadn’t missed anything. Of course, I didn’t think any students would show their face on this dark deck of their own free will at this hour.

“Yeah, I love you.”

After confirming that nobody was around, I could answer without hesitation.

“…Fufufu.”

“What’s with the creepy laugh?”

I thought she would definitely be happy or respond in the same way, but I didn’t expect to be laughed at.

“It’s kinda funny to think of you saying that while being careful of your surroundings, Kiyotaka.”

Apparently, Kei had seen through my actions.

“I’m hanging up.”

“Ahh wait, wait! Say it again.”

“Mmm.”

My words got caught in my throat after she asked for me to say it again.

“I said I was getting a drink when I left, so it’s about time I head back.”

“Wait! Tell me you love me!”

“I said it earlier, didn’t I?”

“I want to hear it again!”

How selfish. No, even though they were the same words, the weight of them seemed to have changed.

“…I love you.”

“…Pfft.”

“Hey.”

Kei tried to hold back her laughter, but eventually she couldn’t endure it any longer and let her voice slip out.

“Yep, I knew it, you’re the best… I’m absolutely never giving you to anyone else.”

I just said that she didn’t have to worry about that, but her anxiety only seemed to be growing.

“Are you okay not asking me too?”

“If I asked you, would you even say it?”

“Hmm, I wonder?”

“Then, we’ll talk again tomorrow.”

“Wait! That’s obviously the part where you ask me!”

How to put it? It seemed like I was given a choice, but I actually wasn’t.

“Then say it.”

“You just threw it out there! Like you don’t care either way! I can’t stomach it~!”

“…Please say it.”

“Eh~? I wonder what I should do~?”

I held back what I wanted to say and waited for Kei’s response.

“…I love you.”

Kei gave a short reply while laughing a little, no, while feeling awkward.

“Good night, Kiyotaka.”

“Yeah, good night.”

As I hung up the phone, the sound of Kei saying ‘I love you’ reverberated in my ears.

“This isn’t bad, huh?”

The thing known as love really was interesting. That was what I thought at that moment of the night.