The Footsteps of Turmoil

The summer vacation is now over and the second semester of the second year starts today, which means that we will soon be turning the corner in our three-year school life. I tied my tie and slid my arms through my sleeves. Looking in the mirror, I do my hair, making sure my appearance is in order, and headed for the door. On the way, I was joined by Sudou, who was yawning loudly. We exchanged greetings, kept in step with each other, and headed out of the dormitory.

“Suzune warned me about the possibility of the second semester exams coming in earlier, so I stayed up all night.”

“You were studying on the very last day of summer vacation?”

“Thankfully, I’ve got a full curriculum for my needs that she’s helped me out on. Well, even for me, I should be able to obtain high scores on exams and get my Academic Ability in the OAA to a B or higher.”

A ‘B’ or higher may be a bit of a stretch. But even so, perhaps it wasn’t truly that far from reality.

If he had been studying hard during the summer vacation, it would not be surprising if his academic performance had improved further. He has indeed become a man for whom the phrase “brains and brawns” fits quite well.

His minor behavioural problems like tardiness, absenteeism, and falling asleep in class had been drastically reduced.

There are still times when he would get heated depending on the situation, but that is also a characteristic of Sudo.

“I know this is a weird question, but do you think Kanji and Shinohara have kissed or done something like that yet?”

“Eh?”

“I’m happy for him for getting a girlfriend, but it’s kinda annoying that he got one before me I guess. Recently I’ve been feeling kinda weird about it.”

“Why don’t you ask him directly? If it’s Ike, I don’t think he’ll mind telling you.”

“….As if I could ask him something like that. I mean, it’s fine if they haven’t held hands yet, but if I hear from him that they’ve gone further than that……. Let’s just say that my right arm may roar for the first time in a long time.”

I see, so that was the situation. That roar is going to get him in a lot of trouble.

“With Ike’s personality if he’s happy then I also feel like he might talk about it regardless of the place. And nothing will really happen if you don’t ask, right?”

“That’s true. But maybe things are different when it comes to love. I don’t know myself, since I haven’t experienced it. By the way, have you had a girlfriend before, Ayanokouji?…….. I wonder how it would feel like being on the other side.”

The subject of the conversation which was about Ike unexpectedly shifted to me.

I involuntarily felt Sudou’s passionate gaze on me, as if asking “what would it feel it like.”

“There would be no point in lying, so I’ll be honest, I got my first girlfriend the other day.”

“……Really? Are you for real?”

Even if I avoided his question here, it would still be soon spread by Kei either way.

While I answered honestly, Sudou held his head and sighed in response.

After that, suddenly, he grabs my shoulders urgently.

“D-d-d-d-d-don’t tell me!?”

“Relax. It’s not the person you think it is”

“Y-you sure!? I can trust you that it’s not Suzune, right?”

“Yeah. Not her.”

“I-I see. Well, that’s okay then……I thought my heart was going to stop for a second there……”

He places his left palm on his forehead and wipe it messily, as if sweat was breaking out.

Then as if to show his anxiety, he showed me the sweat on his palms.

“Then, who is it?\*

“That’s——”

“Ah! Found you!”

Just as Sudo regained his composure, the sound of footsteps came running from behind. The footsteps caught up with our walking speed and the person behind it looked up at me with an angry face.

“I was thinking of asking you to walk with me to class today, but you weren’t in your room!”

Kei puffed out her cheeks a little and complained.

“But you didn’t tell me we were going together.”

“That’s……Well, it’s because I was nervous and decided to do so last minute……”

Sudo looked at us suspiciously as we suddenly began a mysterious exchange.

“We’re having an important conversation between us men, so don’t interrupt us Karuizawa.”

Apparently, he hadn’t noticed anything off about the nature of our conversation.

It seemed that he simply wasn’t satisfied with the fact that she had shown up here.

Now that I think about it, the two of them rarely interacted much in the past.

The relationship between them was neither good nor bad……..No, if I had to say, it would be on the bad side.

“Are you planning on revealing our relationship today, Kei?”

“Eh? Y-yeah. I’m just thinking of the timing……It doesn’t feel right announcing it as soon as the semester starts…… It’s surprisingly difficult to do it. Announcing it like ‘Guys, listen up~’ doesn’t feel quite right either.”

“You did it quickly when you were with Yousuke, though.”

“Well, t-that’s one thing, but this is a totally different situation.”

“Oi, oi, what the hell are you guys…..on…..about….eh?”

Sudou, who had been showing signs of dullness, stopped and looked dumbfounded, as if he had caught on to the fact that I had called her by her first name and the contents of our conversation.

“Wha……eh, O-oi, what’s going on here, Ayanokouji?”

Still, as if our pairing couldn’t possibly have a connection, he still didn’t seem to fully understand. In a way, it might be a good thing for Sudou to be the first person to know about our relationship.

“The both of us are going out.”

Kei grinned and elbowed me with her arm three times.

Perhaps she was happy that I had told him.

“Wha…..aaaaaaaaat!? Y-you’re kidding right!?”

He was taken aback, and shouted out loud, more exaggeratedly than I had imagined.

There happened to be no classmates of ours around, but the other students turned their heads to see what was going on.

“Too noisy.”

“M-my bad. But, eh!? Why Karuizawa?”

“What do you mean by that, is there something wrong with me?”

“That’s not what I mea-…..I didn’t say that, but……eeh….?”

As if to show his bewilderedness, he pulled back a little, and shook his head in an unconvincing manner.

“What? Would you rather had me go out with Horikita?”

“I would never accept that!……No, that wasn’t what I meant….. wait a second.”

He suddenly grabbed me by the shoulders and put his lips close to my ear and whispered.

“I know this isn’t a nice thing to say but…..Karuizawa dated Hirata before, and even before that, you wouldn’t know if she’s fooled around during her middle school years either, right? Are you not dissatisfied or disgusted by that? Having your first girlfriend be someone like that, isn’t that too much of a hurdle?”

Perhaps that was the image my classmates had of Kei Karuizawa.

In fact, until I learned about her past, I had always thought of her as that kind of girl.

“What are you guys whispering about?”

“I-its nothing.”

Sudou slunk away under her intense glare. Perhaps he felt bad for bad-mouthing her.

“Ayanokouji and Karuizawa dating…? No no no, no matter how many times I think about it, my understanding cannot catch up. I was drowsy up until a moment ago but now, it’s all cleared up. What a way to start the second semester…”