It was after school . Hirata was on the podium, using the blackboard to prepare for the discussion .

Due to Hirata’s charisma, it seems like everyone showed up except for Horikita and Sudou . Those two already left the room . Before the discussion starts, I should leave the room too .

“Ayanokouji~”

From under the desk, Yamauchi stuck out his face, still looking dead .

“The hell!? W-what’s wrong?”

“Buy this for 20,000 points~ . I can’t buy anything because I have no points~”

Yamauchi put down the game console he was playing with the other day . Don’t push your troubles onto me…

“If you sell that thing to me, who would I play it with?”

“How should I know . It’s fine though, right? It’s a good deal . ”

“I’ll buy it if you lower the price to 1000 points . ”

“Ayanoukouji~! I don’t have anyone else to rely on~”

“Why only me… I can’t give what I don’t have . ”

Yamauchi looked up at me with watery eyes, but I averted my eyes because I felt bad .

He realized that asking me for points wasn’t going to work, so he switched to another target .

“Hasebe! I have a favor for my best friend! Buy this game console for 22,000 points!”

Looks like he’s trying to get Hasebe to buy it now . Furthermore, he shamelessly increased the price .

“Must be hard for everyone who’s used up their points…”

Kushida said while watching the exchange between Yamauchi and Hasebe .

“Kushida, are you ok on points? Girls have a lot of various necessities, after all . ”

“Hmm, well, for now . I’ve used up about half my points . I used too many points this first month, so it’ll be hard to control myself . Ayanokouji-kun, how about you?”

“It’s certainly difficult for someone who’s popular to live a school life without spending money . …I’ve practically used up none of points . I don’t have anything that I particularly need, either . ”

“Is that because you don’t have friends?”

“Hey…”

“Ahaha, sorry, sorry . I didn’t mean any offense . ”

Kushida apologized to me while giggling . She’s so cute when she laughs like that .

“Um, Kushida-san?”

“Karuizawa-san, what is it?”

“To be honest, I used up all my points . I’ve already gotten some help from the other girls in the class, but I also thought to ask Kushida-san . We’re friends, right? I only need about 2000 points . ”

Karuizawa asked for points from Kushida with a fake laugh . This should be an instant rejection .

“Un, ok . ”

I shouted “Ok!?” in my mind, but I guess it’s up to the person as to how they decide their friends .

Without wavering at all, Kushida decided to help Karuizawa .

“Thanks~ . Friends are really useful . This is my number . Well then, see you later~ . Ah, Inogashira-san, to be honest, I used up all my points~”

Moving onto her next target, Karuizawa walked away from us .

“Was that ok? Your points probably won’t come back . ”

“I can’t send a friend away when they come asking for help . Karuizawa-san also has a lot of friends, so it’s probably hard for her without too many points . ”

“However, I think that having used up all 100,000 points should be your own problem . ”

“Ah, but how do I even transfer my points?”

“You received a slip of paper from Karuizawa with a number, right? You can transfer points using your cell phone . ”

“Wow, the school really thought of everything for the students . They even created a system like this to help people like Karuizawa-san . ”

Certainly, it is a help to Karuizawa . However, was it really necessary to send her money? Looks like a bunch of trouble instead .

“Ayanokouji-kun from class D . Chiyabashira-sensei is calling for you . Please come to the staff room . ”

After a jingle, a voice came over the loudspeaker .

“Looks like you were called by the teacher . ”

“Yea… Sorry, Kushida . I’ll be going . ”

Since the first day of school, I don’t remember doing anything that would get me called . Feeling the heavy gazes of the other students, I exited the room .

I reached the staff room and timidly opened the door . Looking around the room, I didn’t see Chiyabashira-sensei anywhere . I called out to the teacher that was checking their own face in the mirror .

“Um, is Chiyabashira-sensei here?”

“What? Sae-chan? She was here until a few moments ago…”

The teacher who looked back had wavy, shoulder-length hair that gave off an adult-like impression . She said Chiyabashira-sensei’s name as if they were close . They also look close in age .

“Looks like she had something to do . Do you want to wait inside?”

“No, I’ll wait in the hallway . ”

I don’t feel comfortable in areas like the staff room . Because I didn’t want to attract any attention, I decided to stay in the hallway . As soon as I thought that, the teacher walked out into the hallway .

“I’m Hoshinomiya Chie, responsible for class B . I’ve been best friends with Sae since high school . We’re close enough to call each other Sae-chan and Chie-chan~ . ”

I’ve never heard of her before, but it seems like some useless information .

“Ne, why did Sae-chan call you here? Ne ne, why?”

“Who knows . I don’t know the reason either…”

“I don’t understand . You were called out without being given the reason? Fuun? What’s your name?

A barrage of questions . She examined me up and down .

“My name’s Ayanokouji . ”

“Ayanokouji-kun? Isn’t that a cool name~ . You’re popular, right~?”

What is this overly casual teacher . She’s closer to a student than she is to a teacher like Chiyabashira-sensei . If this were an all-boys school, she’d probably capture the hearts of every student .

“Ne ne, do you already have a girlfriend?”

“No… um, I’m not really popular . ”

I tried to make myself look offended and hurt, but Hoshinomiya-sensei still assertively approached me . With smooth motions, she grabbed my shoulders with her slender, beautiful hands .

“Fuun? That’s weird, I would’ve totally gone for you if we were in the same class~ . Is it because you’re too innocent? Or are you tsuntsun?”

She poked my cheeks with her fingers . I wasn’t sure what to say . If I suddenly licked her fingers, she’d probably stop, but if it’s brought up at a staff meeting, I’d probably be expelled immediately .

“What are you doing, Hoshinomiya?”

Suddenly, Chiyabashira-sensei hit Hoshinomiya-sensei’s head with a clipboard . Hoshinomiya-sensei squatted down, holding her head in pain .

“Oww . What’d you do that for!”

“That’s because you were doing weird things with students in here . ”

“I was only talking to him while he was waiting for you to come back!”

“Just leave it at that . Sorry for making you wait, Ayanokouji . Well then, let’s move to the guidance room . ”

“No, I didn’t wait long . Also, the guidance room… did I do something? I thought I was living a non-conspicuous school life . ”

“A good response . Come with me . ”

I followed Chiyabashira-sensei while thinking “What’s this about…” .

Suddenly, Hoshinomiya-sensei walked up next to me with a smile . When she noticed, Chiyabashira-sensei turned around and looked at her with a look of a demon .

“Not you, you stay back . ”

“Don’t say it so coldly~ . It’s no big deal if I listen too, right? Besides, Sae-chan isn’t the type to give one-on-one lessons, right? Also, to take Ayanokouji-kun to the guidance room out of the blue… do you have some kind of goal?”

Replying to Chiyabashira-sensei’s question with a grin, she got behind me and put her hands on my shoulders .

I couldn’t see Hoshinomiya-sensei’s face, but I understood that there was electricity in the air .

“By any chance, Sae-chan, are you looking for a younger man?”[1]

A younger man? What do you mean by that?

“Don’t say stupid things . That’s impossible . ”

“Fufu, certainly . It’s impossible for Sae-chan~”

Hoshinomiya-sensei kept following us .

“How long are you going to follow us? This is a problem concerning class D . ”

“Eh? Can’t I go with you? Is that no good? Look, I can give advice too~”

As Hoshinomiya-sensei followed us against our will, a student suddenly walked up in front of us and blocked our way .

It was a beautiful girl with light pink hair that I’ve never seen before .

“Hoshinomiya-sensei . Do you have time right now? The student council has matters to discuss . ”

She looked at us for a moment, but went back to facing Hoshinomiya-sensei .

“Look, she’s looking for you . Hurry up and go . ”

Chiyabashira-sensei hit Hoshinomiya-sensei’s butt with her clipboard .

“Mou~ . I think she’ll get mad if I stay any longer, so see you later, Ayanokouji-kun . Well, let’s go to the staff room, Ichinose-san . ”

With that, she turned on her heel and went back to the staff room with Ichinose .

After seeing off Hoshinomiya-sensei, Chiyabashira-sensei lightly scratched her head and continued walking towards the guidance room . Soon after, we arrived at the guidance room, which was right next to the staff room .

“Then… what was the reason you called me?”

“Umu, about that… before I talk about that, come over here . ”

While glancing at the clock on the wall, she opened a door that was in the room . She put a kettle on top of the stove in the office kitchen .

“I’ll be making some green tea . Are you ok with roasted green tea?”

I picked up the container with roasted green tea powder .

“Don’t do anything extra . Enter quietly . Until I say it’s ok to come back out, stand here quietly . If you don’t, you’ll be expelled . ”

“Ha? What do you mean—”

Without giving me an explanation, she closed the office kitchen door . What the hell is she trying to do? I stayed quiet as she told me to, and before long, I heard the sound of the guidance room door opening .

“Here, come in . Well then, what do you have to say to me? Horikita . ”

It looks like Horikita was the one who was called into the guidance room .

“I will ask you frankly . Why was I put into class D?”

“Are you really asking frankly?”

“Today, sensei said that the classes were divided by superiority . And that class D was the lowest collection of leftovers . ”

“I did indeed say that . It looks like you consider yourself as a ‘superior’ person . ”

I wonder how Horikita will reply to that . I’m betting that she’ll confidently object to her words .

“I believe that I solved nearly all the problems on the entrance exam, and had no big mistakes during the interview . At the very least, I don’t think I should be in class D . ”

Look, I got it dead-on . Horikita’s the type to think of herself as the best . She isn’t self-conscious either, and really thinks that she’s superior to everyone else . On the results of the test, Horikita was also tied for first place .

“Solved nearly all the problems on the entrance exam, is it . Usually, we can’t show the results of the entrance exam, but I’ll give you a special exception . I have your answer sheet here by chance . ”

“You are thoroughly prepared, I see . …Looks like you also knew I would come here to protest my placement . ”

“I’m a teacher . I understand the students to some degree at the very least . Horikita Suzune . As you thought, on the entrance examination, you were 3rd place among the incoming first-years . Your scores were behind first and second by only a small margin . You did very well . There were no particular problems that we observed during the interview either . Rather, you were highly rated . ”

“Thank you very much . Then—why?”

“Before that, why are you dissatisfied with class D?”

“There is no one that would be happy when they are not correctly evaluated . Also, the differences between classes also greatly affect future prospects . It’s only natural that I’m unhappy . ”

“Correctly evaluated? Hey hey, your evaluation of yourself is too high . ’

Chiyabashira-sensei snickered, or rather, openly laughed, at Horikita .

“I recognize that your academic ability is high . You are definitely smart . However, who decided that smart people were the ones who got into the superior classes? We never said that . ”

“That’s—that’s just common sense . ”

“Common sense? Didn’t that ‘common sense’ create the broken Japan we live in now? Indeed, we used to separate the inferior from the superior using the test scores . As a result, incompetent people tried to make up the difference in desperation to defeat the truly superior people . In the end, it led to a heredity system . ”

The heredity system means that social status, honor, and job are all passed on and inherited .

Hearing those words, I unintentionally let out a low groan . My chest hurts .

“Certainly, you have the ability to study . I won’t deny that . However, this school’s goal is to produce excellent people . It is a big mistake to think that you can be assigned to a superior class by only studying . That was the very first thing we explained, at the entrance ceremony . Besides, think about it calmly . Do you think someone like Sudou would make it if we determined acceptance only by intelligence?

“Tsu…”

Even though this is one of the best schools in Japan, they accept students that are interested in areas other than studying .

“Also, it’s rash to say that there is no one that would be happy when they are incorrectly evaluated . Class A, for example, receives a lot of pressure from the school and a lot of envy from the lower classes . Competing under heavy pressure is harder than you think . There are students that are fine with being evaluated lower than they actually are . ”

“That’s a joke, right? I can’t understand those kind of people . ”

“Really? I think there are a few in class D . Oddball students that would stay in a low-level class with pleasure .

It seemed as though she was talking to me through the wall .

“You still haven’t explained clearly . Is my placement in class D the truth, and was there no mistake in my evaluation? Please double check . ”

“It’s too bad, but your placement in class D was not a mistake . You’re definitely in class D . You are a student only at that level .

“… Is that so . I will hear from the school at another time . ”

It looks like she decided that her homeroom teacher was not the right person to ask, and didn’t give up .

“You’ll get the same result if you try to talk to anyone in a higher position . There’s no need to be that disappointed . As I said this morning, classes can overtake and surpass one another . Remember that there is the possibility of rising up to class A before graduation . ”

“It does not seem like a very easy path . How will the immature class D ever get more points than class A? No matter how I look at it, it is impossible . ”

That was Horikita’s honest opinion . There is an enormous point difference this time .

“I wouldn’t know . It’s your own choice whether or not to head down that reckless path . By any chance, do you have a special reason as to why you need to be in class A?”

“That is… I will excuse myself for today . However, please remember that I still do not understand . ”

“All right, I’ll remember that . ”

I heard the sound of a chair being pulled . Looks like the discussion ended .

“Oh, right . I called another person to the guidance room . It’s a person that’s also relevant to you . ”

“Relevant to me…? No way… Niisa—”

“Come out, Ayanokouji . ”

Don’t call me with such bad timing . All right, I won’t come out .

“If you don’t come out, you’ll be expelled . ”

C-cruel . You shouldn’t unfairly use expulsion as a weapon .

“How long will you make me wait?”

While letting out a sigh, I exited the office kitchen and into the guidance room . Naturally, Horikita was surprised .

“Were you… listening to us?”

“Listening? I know you guys were talking about something, but I didn’t hear anything . The walls are pretty thick . ”

“That’s not true . You can hear everything clearly from that kitchen . ”

For some reason, it looks like Chiyabashira-sensei wanted to drag me out into the room .

“… Sensei, why would you do that?”

Horikita immediately noticed that this was a setup . The anger was clear on her face .

“Because I decided it was necessary . Well then Ayanokouji, I’ll tell you the reason I called you . ”

Chiyabashira-sensei shot down Horikita’s question and turned her attention to me .

“Excuse me then…”

“Wait Horikita . It is better for you to listen to the end . This’ll be a hint for how you can get up to class A . ”

Horikita stopped in her tracks and sat back down in her chair .

“Please keep it short . ”

Looking down at her clipboard, Chiyabashira-sensei laughed .

“You’re an interesting student, Ayanokouji . ”

“I’m not interesting at all, not as interesting as someone like Chiyabashira who has a strange surname . ”

“Do you want to prostrate yourself in front of all the Chiyabashira-san’s in the country? Hmm?”

No, even if you looked all of the country for other Chiyabashira’s, there would probably be no one else other than you…

“After your entrance examination results, I was thinking about potential individual teaching methods, but after seeing your test results, my interest was piqued . I was surprised at first . ”

A familiar answer sheet from the entrance exam was on the clipboard .

“50 points in Japanese, 50 points in math, 50 points in english, 50 points in history, 50 points in science… and the result of the most recent test was also 50 points . Do you know what this means?”

In surprise, Horikita looked over my test form then shifted her gaze to me .

“What a frightening coincidence . ”

“Hou? You’re going to claim that your results are a coincidence to the very end? It’s clearly intentional . ”

“It’s a coincidence . You have no proof . Anyway, what benefit would I get from manipulating my own results? If I had a brain that could get high marks, I would aim for perfect scores in al all subjects . ”

Watching me feign innocence, she let out a sigh with a look of amazement .

“Honestly, you’re a really weird student . Are you sure? Math problem #5 was only solved by 3% of all students this year . Additionally, you included a complex formula and used it flawlessly . On the other hand, the correct answer rate of #10 was 76% . Did you make a mistake? Or is that ‘normal’?”

“I don’t know what’s normal in this world . It’s a coincidence, a coincidence . ”

“Good grief . I admire your attitude, but it’ll cause problems for you in the future . ”

“I’ll think about that when I have to . ”

Chiyabashira-sensei sent Horikita a look that said, “How was that?”

“Why do you… pretend that you don’t understand?”

“No, like I said, it’s a coincidence . It’s not like I’m hiding that I’m a genius or something .

“What do you think? He might be more intelligent than you are, Horikita . ”

Horikita visibly flinched . Sensei, please don’t say anything unnecessary .

“I don’t like studying, nor do I want to try my best . That’s why I get those kind of scores . ”

“It’s not about the students who choose this school . Like you and Koenji, there are others who are fine with either class A or class D . ”

It’s not just this school, but even the teachers aren’t normal . During their conversation earlier, Chiyabashira-sensei was able to upset Horikita with her words . It’s as if they hold the “secrets” of all the students .

“What is it? What other reasons are there?”

“Do you want to hear about it in detail?”

I noticed that Chiyabashira-sensei had a sharp glint in her eye . Somehow, it seems like she’s trying to provoke her .

“No, I’ll stop here . If I kept listening, I think I would go crazy and destroy all the furniture in here . ”

“If you do that, Ayanokouji will be demoted to class E . ”

“There’s such a class?”

“Certainly . Class E means expelled . In other words, dropping out of school . Well, the conversation ends here . Enjoy your student life from now on . ”

What a sarcastic remark .

“I will also leave . It’s time for the staff meeting to start . I’m going to close this room, so let’s leave the room . ”

She pushed the two of us out of the room . Why did Chiyabashira-sensei make the two of us meet? She doesn’t look like the type to do meaningless actions .

“Anyway… shall we go back?”

I started walking away without waiting for her to confirm . It’s probably better for us to walk back separately .

“Wait . ”

Horikita called out to me to stop, but I kept walking . If I get away from her until we’ve reached the dorms, my goal would be successful .

“Is your score… really a coincidence?”

“I already said it was . Or do you have any evidence that I’m doing it on purpose?”

“I don’t have any evidence, but… Ayanokouji-kun, I don’t understand . You avoid troublesome things, and you don’t have any interest in class A . ”

“You also have some unusual thoughts about class A . ”

“… Should I not? I’m working to make my future prospects more advantageous . ”

“No, it’s perfectly natural . ”

“That has been my goal ever since I entered this school . In truth, it’s a bit different . I’m not even at the start line yet . ”

I noticed that Horikita sped up her pace and was walking beside me .

“Then, are you aiming for class A?”

“First, I want to find the real intention of the school . Why I was put into class D . Chiyabashira-sensei said that I was only judged as someone fitting for class D, so… When I figure it out, I’ll aim for class A No, I’m always aiming for class A . ”

“That’s going to be really hard . You’ll have to fix those problem children . Sudou’s perpetual lateness, the talking during class, and the test scores . Even if you achieve that, it’s still ±0 . ”

“… I already know that . I’m still hoping that my placement was a mistake by the school . ”

Horikita’s previously overflowing confidence had turned into anxiety . Do you really “already know”?

The only conclusion I got from today’s information is the word “despair” . If you follow the basic rules of school life, minuses can be avoided to a certain extent . However, the crucial thing is that we don’t know how to turn minuses into pluses . The most superior class, class A, still had a small detraction of points .

Even if we do find a way to increase our points efficiently, the other classes would also find a way to do the same .

Also, once there is a huge point difference, it is very difficult to stay competitive among the classes in limited time .

“I can understand your thoughts to some extent . However, I don’t think that the school will continue to carefully watch the students . Then there would be no meaning in competing . ”

“I see, you can also think of it that way . ”

I read that the school does not allow class A to escape in the first month of admission . In other words, Horikita believed that this was our chance to make a big increase in points .

“Are you thinking of taking care of this situation with your own hands?”

“Yes . ”

“What a quick answer . ”

A hand stabbed my sides . Horikita ignored me when I made a painful expression .

“Ouch… I understand your feelings, but it’s not a problem you can solve on your own . I’m talking about Sudou . Even if you improve yourself, there’s nothing you can do if the rest of a class is a minus . ”

“No, it’s slightly different . Certainly, a person can’t achieve anything by themselves, but if everyone doesn’t put in their own effort, it’ll be an extraordinarily difficult problem . Unless everyone does it, we can’t even begin to compete against the other classes . ”

“So what are you going to do? All you’ve done is admit that it’s a huge problem . ”

“There are 3 key points we need to fix in order to improve . Tardies and talking during class . And then making sure that everyone passes the midterm . ”

“The first two will probably be done to some extent . However, the midterms are…”

The small test from the few days ago did have some hard problem, but overall it was easy . There’s a lot of students who still fail at that level, so the midterms look bleak, to be honest .

“Also—I want to ask for Ayanokouji-kun’s cooperation . ”

“Cooperation?”

Horikita looked at me with a blatantly unpleasant expression .

“You refused Hirata earlier this morning, so I can refuse for the same reason, right?”

“Do you want to refuse?”

“If I said I would gladly help?”

“I never thought you would go as far as to say you would gladly help, but I don’t think you would refuse either . If you really didn’t want to help, then… I wouldn’t ask further . It can’t be helped if you refused the same way I did . Well then, can I expect your help or not?”

If possible, I want to remember the words she used to refuse Hirata before… However, I don’t want to bluntly refuse someone who’s asking . No, no, stay calm . If I say that I will help, I’ll probably be worked to death until graduation . I need to have a heart like a demon here .

“I refuse .

“I believed that Ayanokouji-kun would agree to cooperate from the start . I give you my gratitude . ”

“I didn’t say that! I completely refused!”

“No, I heard the voice in your mind . You said that you would help . ”

Scary, she read my mind .

“I don’t think there’s anything I can particularly help you with . ”

Horikita’s definitely a smart person . I don’t think there’s any need for my skills .

“It’s nothing to worry about . I don’t need your brainpower . Leave the plans to me, and you can be the muscle . ”

“Ha? Why should I be the muscle?”

“Aren’t you worried about our class’ points? If you follow my instructions, I promise to make our points positive . I can guarantee that . ”

“I’m sure you have some kind of plan, but you can rely on people other than me . If you make friends, you can ask them to help . ”

“It’s too bad, but there is no one else in class D other than you that is remotely competent . ”

“No no, there are a lot of people . For example, Hirata . A classmate like him has a lot of influence in the class and is smart—he’s perfect . Moreover, he is worried that you don’t have any friends . ”

If you reach out to him, you’ll probably become good friends soon .

“He’s no good . Even if he has talent and ability, I can’t accept him . If I make a comparison, I need a chess piece . What I want now is not gold nor silver, but rather a pawn . ”

Are you calling me a pawn then? Is that what you’re calling me?

“A pawn can also be used to make money . ”

“An interesting reply, but you’re a person that wouldn’t make much of an effort . Haven’t you been thinking, ‘I’m ok with being a pawn, but I don’t want to admit it’?”

She shot back a tsukkomi on the spot . If I were a normal person, my feelings would be hurt .

“Sorry, but I can’t help you . I’m not suited for this . ”

“Well, you can contact me once you collect your thoughts . I will look forward to then . ”

My words didn’t reach Horikita .