“Are you free during lunch? Do you want to eat together?”

During break-time, Horikita came up to me asked .

“An invitation from you is unusual . I feel scared for some reason . ”

“It’s nothing to be scared about . I can buy you the vegetable set, if you’re fine with it . ”

Isn’t that the free meal…?

“Just kidding . I’ll seriously buy you whatever you want to eat . ”

“Definitely scary . Is there some kind of catch?”

Seeing as how Horikita invited me to eat with her, I can’t help but feel suspicious .

I would be suspicious if I was invited out of the blue . I remember Horikita saying that before .

“If we always doubted everyone else’s true intentions, human society wouldn’t function, right?”

“Well, that’s true, but…”

I didn’t have anything planned, so I followed Horikita to the cafeteria .

I chose one of the more expensive meals, found a seat, and sat down with Horikita .

“Well then, itadakimasu?”

Horikita was staring at me as if she was waiting for me to eat .

“What’s wrong, Ayanokouji-kun? Why aren’t you eating?”

“O-oh . ”

Scary . There’s definitely a catch somewhere . There’s no way that this is for free . Nevertheless, I can’t stall forever . It’d be wasteful if I let it go cold . I hesitantly took one bite of my croquette .

“It’s sudden, but listen to me . ”

“I have a bad feeling about this…”

As I thought of getting up and running away, my hand was grabbed .

“Ayanokouji-kun, I’ll say it again . Won’t you listen to me?”

“Fua…”

“Ever since Chiyabashira-sensei’s advice, the number of infractions during class has certainly decreased . It wouldn’t be wrong to say that more than half the reason for our deducted points has been erased . ”

“Yea, that’s true . It wasn’t a really hard problem to solve, though . ”

It may not last very long, but at least the last few days are much better than before .

“Now, the next thing we have to do is to improve the test scores for the midterm in two weeks . Earlier, Hirata-kun also started to take some action . ”

“Study groups, huh . Well… I guess it would help . However—”

“However, what? Sounds like you’re implying something . Do you have any problems with study groups?”

“No, don’t worry about it . It’s strange to see you worried about other people, though . ”

“Originally, I couldn’t even imagine getting a failing score . However, it is true that there are students in the world that inevitably fail their tests . ”

“Are you talking about Sudou and his friends? Ruthless words as always, I see . ”

“I’m only saying the truth . ”

Since none of the students could leave school grounds, contact anyone on the outside, or attend cram school, there was no other option but to be taught by other students . ”

“I’m somewhat relieved because Hirata-kun proactively started up a study group . However, Sudou-kun, Ike-kun, and Yamauchi-kun didn’t join, right? I still feel uneasy . ”

“Oh, those guys . They’re not on very good terms with Hirata . They wouldn’t participate . ”

“In other words, those guys will probably fail . And in order to get up to class A, we have to avoid getting negative points and focus on staying positive, right? I also think there’s a high possibility that good test scores are related to getting positive points . ”

It’s natural to think that the students would get a reward proportional to the effort they put in .

“What if—you also hold a study group like Hirata? So that we can help out Sudou, Ike, and Yamauchi . ”

“Yea . I have no objections to that . You probably think that’s surprising, huh?”

“Your whole attitude is surprising for me . ”

I’m not really surprised, though . She’s still doing this for herself, and I never thought she was particularly cold either .

“Well, I got that you want to move up to class A . However, I honestly never thought that you would use such an ordinary method as teaching them . After all, those kind of people hate studying . You also stayed away from the other students on the first day, right? It’s commendable that someone like you who doesn’t want friends would offer to teach them . ”

“That’s why I’m talking to you, isn’t it? Fortunately, they’re people close to you, right?”

“Ha? … Hey, are you really—”

“It’ll be faster if you talk to them . There’s no problem since they’re your friends, right? Here, just bring them to the library . I can help them study . ”

“You say some unreasonable things . Do you even think that someone like me, who is leading a harmless and inoffensive life, could do that?”

“It’s not a matter of ‘can do’ or ‘can’t do’ . Just do it . ”

Am I your dog or something?

“It’s your freedom to aim for class A, but don’t involve me in your plans . ”

“You ate, right? My treat . Lunch . That wonderful, tasty special meal . ”

“All I got was the honest good will of another human . ”

“Too bad, but that wasn’t out of kindness . ”

“I can’t hear you… Here, I’ll give you some points . We’re even now . ”

“I won’t stoop as low as to receive gifts from other people . I will turn down your offer . ”

“I’m starting to feel angry at you for the first time…”

“How is it? Will you cooperate with me? Or are you going to make an enemy of me?”

“It’s like you’re pointing a gun at my head and threatening me…”

“It’s not ‘like’, I really am threatening you . ”

Is this the power of violence? It’s very effective .

Well… If it’s only gathering them, I guess there’s no problem cooperating, right?

Horikita’s weakest point is that she won’t make any friends .

Also, Sudou, Ike, and the other are all people that I became friends with after much trouble . I can’t have them drop out of school this quickly .

When I was hesitating, Horikita pressed me even further .

“You also don’t think that I would forgive you for colluding with Kushida-san to call me out, right?”

“You said you wouldn’t blame for that . Bringing that up now is unfair . ”

“I said that to Kushida-san, but I don’t remember saying that to you . ”

“Wow, you dirty…”

“If you want me to forgive you, work together with me . ”

Looks like there was no escape route for me since the very beginning .

I thought that she would just drop the subject, but I guess it’s only possible by listening to her request now .

“There’s no guarantee that they’ll come . Are you fine with that?”

“I believe that you can gather everyone . Here, this is my phone number . If something happens, contact me . ”

Although it was in a unusual way, for the first time in my high school life, I got the contact info of a girl .

It’s Horikita’s, though… Well, I’m not particularly happy about it .