Leaving the library, I chased after Kushida . I wanted to thank her and apologize to her about the study group . Besides, I want to get along with cute girls, you know?

Taking out my phone enthusiastically, I looked through my address book for Kushida’s name . It’s only my second time, so I’m nervous to contact her . I heard the phone ring two, three times .

However, there’s no sign that she’s picking up . Did she not notice? Or is she ignoring me?

She wasn’t in sight, so I ran around, looking for her . Inside the school building, I saw someone that looked like Kushida from the back . It was around 6 o’clock, so there was no one other than club members . Well, there’s also the possibility that Kushida is meeting one of her friends that’s in a club .

I’ll chase after her; if she’s meeting up with someone, I can talk to her at a later date . Time to go inside .

Getting my indoor shoes from the rack, I headed for the hallway, but didn’t see Kushida . Did I lose sight of her? I thought that, but I heard the faint sounds of someone’s shoes .

I arrived at the stairs leading to the second floor . Still following her . I heard the footsteps above me, going to the third floor . The next floor is the rooftop, no? It’s open during lunchtime, but I believe that it’s locked after school . Feeling curious, I went up the stairs . I hid my presence in case she was meeting with someone . And then I stopped in the middle of the stairs .

I could see the outline of someone up there .

Leaning against the handrail, I peeked through the crack in the door . As I looked through the opening, I saw Kushida’s figure . There was no one else . Is she waiting for someone here?

If she’s waiting for someone in the deserted place… perhaps, is Kushida meeting up a boyfriend? In that case, there’s a possibility that I would be cornered from both sides . As I was wondering whether or not I should leave, Kushida put down her bag on the floor .

And then—

“Ah— so annoying . ”

Her voice was so low that I didn’t think that it was Kushida .

“It’s really annoying, irritating . It’d be fine if she just died…”

She was grumbling to herself as if she was saying some kind of spell or curse .

“I hate those kind of stuck-up girls that think they’re cute . Why is she such a bitch? A girl like her can’t possibly teach me how to study . ”

Is Kushida annoyed with… Horikita?

“Ah— the worst . She’s really the worst, the worst, the worst . Horikita’s annoying, annoying, so annoying!”

I feel like the image of the class’ most popular girl has been burned down . It was a figure that she didn’t want seen by anyone else . My brain told me that it was dangerous to stay here .

However, a question arose . Regardless of the fact that she was hiding her true feelings, why did she agree to help me if she hates Horikita? I thought that she would know enough about Horikita’s personality and character . She could’ve refused to help, leave the study group to Horikita, or have done countless other actions to take her hands off the issue .

Why would she force herself to participate in the study group? Did she want to get along with Horikita? Or did she want to get closer to someone participating?

None of those make sense . With that much stress, if there isn’t a different reason as to why she participated, I can’t explain it .

No… She might’ve showed signs of this from the very beginning .

I never thought much about it, but looking at the state she’s in right now, I had a thought . By any chance, are Kushida and Horikita—

Anyway, I should get away from here . Kushida probably wouldn’t want anyone else to see her like this . Hiding my presence, I tried to quickly leave .

Thump!

In the school at dusk, the sound of kicking the door was louder than I thought . Unexpectedly loud . Kushida, also hearing the sound, immediately tensed up and stopped breathing . As if someone called out to her, Kushida turned around and spotted me .

“… What are you… doing here?”

After a brief silence, Kushida asked in a cold voice .

“I lost my way, My bad, my bad . I’ll leave now . ”

Kushida kept looking at me, seeing through my obvious lie . She had an intense gaze I’d never seen before .

“Did you hear…?”

“Will you believe me if I said I didn’t?”

“I see…”

Kushida briskly walked down the stairs . She put her left forearm against my neck and pushed me against the wall .

Her tone of voice and behavior wasn’t the Kushida I knew .

The Kushida now had a scary look that I couldn’t help but compare to Horikita’s .

“What you heard just now… if you speak a word of it to anyone, I won’t forgive you . ”

That sounded like a threat .

“And if I did?’

“Then I’ll spread a rumor that you raped me up here . ”

“That’s a false charge, you know . ”

“That’s ok, since it’s not a false charge . ”

There was a strong impact to her words .

Kushida then grabbed my left wrist and slowly opened the palm of my hand . She held the back of my hand and put my palm on her breast .

The feeling of her soft breasts was transmitted throughout my whole palm .

“… What are you doing?”

At her unexpected behavior, I tried to pull away, but she pushed back on my hand .

“Your fingerprints are on my clothes . There’s evidence . I’m being serious . Get it?”

“… I understand . I got it, so let go of my hand . ”

“I’m going to leave this uniform in my room without washing it . If you tell anyone, I’m going to give this to the police . ”

For a while, I glared at Kushida as she kept my hand on her breasts .

“Don’t forget . ”

Making sure that I understood, Kushida stepped away from me .

I somehow couldn’t remember the feeling even though it was my first time touching a girl’s breasts .

“Hey, Kushida . Which one is the ‘real’ you?”

“… That has nothing to do with you . ”

“Is that so… However, watching you made me realize something . If you hate Horikita, then there’s no need to involve yourself with her, right?”

I didn’t mean to ask that . I knew that she probably wouldn’t answer . But I was curious as to why she went so far to befriend her .

“Is it bad to try to be liked by everyone? Do you understand how hard that is? You don’t, right?”

“I don’t have too many friends, so no, I can’t say I do . ”

Ever since the first day, Kushida certainly made an effort to talk to, exchange contact addresses with, and invite a pessimistic and negative girl . Anyone can imagine how time-consuming and hard that would be .

“Like Horikita… I wanted to at least look like I got along with Horikita-san . ”

“But you were stressed, huh . ”

“Yea . That’s my way of life . That way, I can feel my own real significance . ”

She answered without hesitation . Kushida has feelings and rules that only she herself knows . That’s what she was saying . Following her own rules, she frantically tried over and over to get along with Horikita .

“I’m telling you this because of the circumstances, but I really hate gloomy and plain boys like you . ”

My image of the cute Kushida has been shattered, but I’m not really shocked . People tend to have both public and private images, after all .

However, Kushida’s answer felt like it had both truths and lies .

“This is just my intuition, but were you and Horikita acquaintances? Before coming to this school . ”

When I said that, Kushida’s shoulder flinched for a split second .

“What the… I don’t know what you mean . Did Horikita-san say something about me?”

“No, I thought that it was your first time meeting her . It’s funny, though . ”

“… Funny?”

I remembered the first time Kushida talked to me .

“When I was introducing myself, you instantly remembered my name, no?”

Kushida asked in reply, “So what?”

“Where did you hear Horikita’s name from? At that time, she hadn’t told her name to anybody . The only one who knew was Sudou, but I doubt you met Sudou then . ”

In other words, she shouldn’t have had the chance to learn her name .

“Also, you probably got close to me so you could keep tabs on her, right?”

“Just shut up . I’m getting irritated from listening to you talk . I only want to say one thing . Do you swear that you won’t say a word of what you learned here?”

“I promise . Even if I told anyone, no one would believe me, right?”

Kushida is really trusted by the class . A difference of heaven and earth between us .

“… Ok . I believe you . ”

Although she didn’t change her expression, Kushida closed her eyes and exhaled deeply .

“Is there anyone that would even believe me?”

I accidently blurted out those words .

“Horikita-san’s kind of unusual, right?”

“Well, I’d say she’s really unusual . ”

“She’s not affected by anyone, nor does she involve herself with other people . The exact opposite of me . ”

Kushida and Horikita are really two opposite poles .

“You know, she only opens herself up to you . ”

“Wait . Let me make a quick revision . She doesn’t open herself up . Absolutely not . ”

“… Probably . Even so, she trusts you the most . Out of everyone I know, she has the most confidence in herself and the most wariness towards others . She wouldn’t trust anyone who’s worthless and stupid . ”

“You’re saying she has a good eye for people, right?”

“That’s the reason I said I believed you . After all, you’re pretty apathetic towards others, right?”

I don’t remember showing Kushida that kind of behavior, but she seemed to have confidence in her words .

“It’s not like it’s that strange to say . You showed absolutely no signs of giving your seat up to the old woman, right?”

I see, that’s what she’s talking about . She noticed us on the bus . And then she realized that we weren’t even thinking of giving up our seats .

“If you believed me, then don’t spread pointless rumors like that . ”

“If you had that much confidence before, you wouldn’t have had the chance to feel my breasts . ”

“Thats—I was really confused there . I panicked…”

Her facial expression softened, and changed to one of impatience .

“So, can I think of you as a bitch that would let boys touch your breasts without any hesitation?”

She kicked my thigh with all her strength . In a panic, I took hold of the railing .

“Dangerous! I could’ve gotten injured!”

“That’s because you said something stupid!”

With a flushed face (from anger, not bashfulness), Kushida snapped at me .

“Hey, wait for a bit . ”

I gave her a small nod .

Going back up the stairs, Kushida quickly got her bag and came back . She had a wide grin on her face .

“Shall we go back together?”

“S-sure . ”

I wondered whether this was a bad dream as her attitude did a complete 180 . It was the usual Kushida . In the end, I couldn’t tell which one was the real her .