When it was lunchtime, I got out of my seat with a goal in mind . Then I headed to the cafeteria .

“Where are you going?”

After having noticed me rush out of the classroom, Kushida followed . Stopping in front of me, she leaned over and looked up to me .

“Because it’s lunch, I thought I would go to the cafeteria . ”

“Fuun . Is it fine if I go with you?”

“It’s fine, but you have a lot of other people you can ask too, you know . ”

“Even though I have a lot of friends I can eat with, you have no one . Also, although you would usually talk to Horikita-san first, you didn’t say anything today . Didn’t you say yesterday that you were worried about something in the staff room? What was that?”

As usual, Kushida was listening to the surroundings; or rather, observing her surroundings . Honestly, I thought it would be annoying if someone was always, but I think it’s fine if it’s Kushida . I only got to know her secret by chance . I won’t do anything bad .

“I can tell you, but will you promise not to tell anyone else?”

“Keeping secrets is my strong point!”

We made our way to the cafeteria . Before long, we entered the confusion of the cafeteria and got to the meal ticket machine . After buying a ticket for two portions, I moved away from the ticket vending machine and didn’t line up at the counter . From there, I looked at the fingertips of the students who were buying their food .

“What is it?”

Kushida looked at me in curiosity .

“There is a possibility that this will lead to an answer to what I was concerned about . ”

I looked at all the students who were buying lunch . After about 20 students, I found my target student . The student bought the meal and walked over to the counter with heavy steps .

“Alright, let’s go . ”

“What? Ok . ”

Quickly exchanging our tickets for meals, I walked over to the student and sat down .

“Um, excuse me . You’re… a senpai, right?”

“…Huh? Who are you?”

Quietly looking up, he looked at me, uninterested .

“Are you a second-year? Third-year?”

“Third year . You’re a first-year, huh . ”

“I am Ayanakouji-kun of class D . Senpai, you’re also in class D, right?”

“…What does that have to do with you?”

Kushida looked at me in surprise, asking “How did you know?”

“Because he was restricted to the free meal . It’s not very tasty, is it?”

Senpai was eating the free vegetable meal .

“What the hell, making me feel annoyed . ”

He tried to get up with his try, but I stopped him .

“I have something to ask you . If you listened to me, I would show my gratitude . ”

“…Gratitude?”

My small voice was lost in the confusion of the cafeteria .

The nearby students were also engrossed in their conversations with friends .

“Do you still have the problems on the midterm from your first semester? Or if you know someone that has all the previous test problems, can you let us know who he is?”

“Hey, do you even understand what you’re saying?”

“It’s not anything surprising . I don’t think it’s against school policy to use old test problems to study . ”

“Why are you asking me?”

“That’s easy . I thought it would be easier to cut a deal with someone without points . Honestly, the free vegetable meal isn’t that tasty . Of course, things are different if you actually like eating that meal . What do you say?”

“…How much?”

“10,000 points . That’s as far as I can go . ”

“I don’t have any of the problems, but… I know someone who does . If you want to ask him to help, you need at least 30,000 points . ”

“30,000 is way too much . I don’t have that kind of money . ”

“How much do you have, then?”

“…20,000 points . ”

“Then 20,000 points… No, 15,000 points will do . Nothing less . ”

“15,000 points, huh…”

“If you would go as far as to ask a complete stranger about past problems, you must be really desperate . After all, the school expels everyone who fails . I’ve already lost a lot of my friends . ”

“I see . …Ok . I will pay 15,000 points . ”

“Then the deal is good . Of course, you’ll have to pay in advance . ”

“I don’t mind, but if you go back on your word, I won’t forgive you . I’ll make sure you get expelled . ”

“…Fine . I don’t want any bad records . If rumors pop up that I ripped off a kouhai, I probably won’t be forgiven . ”

“Now then, senpai, since I will pay you 15,000 points, can you give me a freebie? I want to see the answers to the mock test . ”

“Alright, I’ll include that . Well, I think that whatever you’re trying to do is useless, but sure . ”

It looks like senpai understood what I was thinking .

“Thank you . ”

The senpai quickly left his seat . I guess he didn’t want to be noticed .

“H-hey, Ayanokouji-kun… Was that… was that really ok?”

“There’s no problem at all . The transfer of points is allowed by school rules, so there aren’t any violations . ”

“That’s fine, but isn’t it dishonest to get past year’s questions?”

“Dishonest? I don’t think so . If the school didn’t allow it, there would’ve been something in the rules . Also, I confirmed another thing when I was just talking to the third-year senpai . It looks like these kind of transactions aren’t that strange . ”

“Huh…?”

“He wasn’t particularly surprised, and he quickly agreed to listen to my proposal . It probably isn’t his first time negotiating . He has not only the answers to the midterms, but even the mock test . There’s no mistake . ”

Her eyes were spinning in astonishment .

“Ayanokouji-kun, you were really different . I was surprised . ”

“It’s just insurance to make sure that Sudou and the others don’t get expelled . ”

“But this might turn out to be useless . Past questions are past questions, right? This year’s test may be completely unrelated . ”

“The problems may not be exactly the same, but there will definitely be some similarities . The last mock exam gave me that hint . ”

“Hint?”

“You noticed that there were really hard problems along with easy ones, right?”

“Well, yea . Those were the last problems of each section . I didn’t understand those questions at all . ”

“When I looked into it after, those were problems that second-years and third-years were learning . In other words, they don’t expect first-years to be able to solve those problems . Isn’t it useless to throw in those kind of unsolvable problems? They’re probably there for a reason other than to actually test us . If the problems on the mock exam were the exact same as previous mock exams, what would happen?”

“…If I saw those problems, I would be able to ace the test . ”

The same thing is applicable to the midterm .

Soon after, I got a message from the third-year senpai with an attachment . It was the old tests .

First, I checked the mock test . The key question is, are the last three problems the same?

Kushida also tried to look at my phone .

“Are they? Are they the same?”

“It’s completely identical . The problems, sentences, and all the words are the same . ”

“That’s amazing! If we showed this to everyone, it would be an easy success! Don’t show it to only Sudou-kun, but everyone else too!”

“No, we won’t show it to Sudou, Ike, and Yamauchi yet . ”

“W-why? You went as far as to use so many points . ”

“If they hear that these are the test questions, they’ll lose all motivation and focus . Above all, overconfidence is the biggest problem . The midterm may not be the same as the mock test; there’s a possibility the problems are different on the midterm . ”

It’s essential to keep in mind that these old tests are insurance .

“Then what are you going to use them for?”

“Release these problems the day before the test . Then we tell everyone that these problems are roughly the same as this year’s test . What would everyone do then?”

“That night, everyone would try to memorize the problems!”

“That’s how it is . ”

The students who are don’t understand the basics probably can’t memorize all the problems in a single day . But, it’s not difficult to understand the problems beforehand . We’re not trying to get the highest score possible on this next test . We’re trying to avoid failing . If we ask for too much, the plan might fail .

But with this, we can probably get everyone to pass in class D .

“Hey… When did you think to get these old tests?”

“Since we learned that the test was different . However, I had an inkling that the old tests might be similar ever since the midterm was mentioned . ”

“Eh!? T-that early!?”

“When Chiyabashira-sensei first mentioned the midterm, she was speaking in an unusual manner . Even though she knew Sudou and the other’s grades and attitudes, she spoke with absolute confidence . In other words, she confirmed that there was a surefire way to save them . ”

“Is that… the old tests?”

The reason why Sudou, Ike, and Yamauchi were all admitted to this school, despite their academic ability, must be connected to this somehow . If they can’t get good grades by studying hard, this is a sort of escape route for them . In other words, it’s possible for everyone get near perfect scores by getting the old tests . That’s how I understood it, at least .

“…Ayanokouji-kun, you’re really observant, aren’t you?”

“I’m just being cunning . I didn’t think that I could pass the midterm without any help anyway . I was looking for a way to reliably pass . ”

“Fuun . ”

As if she had something on her mind, Kushida had a mischievous smile .

“I have a favor to ask . Could you say that you got the old questions? Say that you got the old tests from a third-year senpai that you get along with . ”

“I’m fine with it, but… are you really ok with that?”

“I like to avoid trouble, after all . I don’t want to stand out . Also, our classmates trust you . It’d be a lot better for you to tell everyone else . ”

“…Ok . If you say so . ”

“Thanks . I don’t to stand out unnecessarily . ”

“Well then, let’s keep this a secret between us . ”

“Yea, that sounds good . ”

“Don’t you feel like there’s some kind of trust between us when we share this kind of secret?”

“Well, dunno . I hope so . ”

“Thanks . ”

Kushida curtly replied . I don’t know what her thanks was exactly for, though .