

雨森たきび

ILLUST.

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Illustration by IMIGMURU

Too Many
LOSING
Heroines!

AMAMORI TAKIBI
presents

GAGACA

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AMAMORI TAKIBI presents

GAGACA



Make Heroine ga Oosugiru!

Volume 01



By Amamori Takibi (アマモリタキビ)

Illustrator : Imigimuru

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多すぎへん!

雨森たきび

ILLUST. いみぎむる









Losing Heroines on the Beach

Character
s

Kazuhiko
Nukumizu

ぬくみず・かずひこ
1st year in high school.
A sloppy teenager.

Anna
Yanami

やなみ・あんな
1st year in high school.
A bright girl with a
big appetite.

Chika
Komari

こまり・ちか
1st year in high school.
Literature Club.
Loves BL.

Remon
Yakishio

やきしお・れもん
1st year in high school.
Track and Field Club.
An energetic girl.

Kajyu
Nukumizu

ぬくみず・かじゅ
2nd year in middle school.
A perfect little sister who
can do anything.

Koto
Tsukinoki

つきのき・こと
3rd year in high school.
Literature Club's
vice president.

Yumeko
Shikiya

しきや・ゆめこ
2nd year in high school.
Student council member.
A zombie gal.

Shintaro
Tamaki

たまき・しんたろう
3rd year in high school.
Literature Club's
president.

Konami
Amanatsu

あまなつ・とまなみ
Teaching social studies.
Class teacher of 1C.

Sayo
Konuki

こぬき・さよ
School nurse.
Went to the same school
as Amanatsu.

Too Many
LOSING
Heroines!

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負けヒロイン多すぎる!
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Yanami: 'Nukumizu-kun, what does the 'losing heroine' in the title mean?"

Nukumizu: "Uh, it means...the main heroine lost, right?"

Yanami: "Lost? Where did the main heroine lose?"

Nukumizu: "Romance, right? ...Like she got rejected or something."

Yanami: "Eh, I feel bad for her."

Nukumizu: "Yeah, ...Yanami-san."

Yanami: "...Why are you looking away?"



Yanami: "Some bad guys are calling me the losing heroine."

Nukumizu: "Yes."

Yanami: "Right here."

Nukumizu: "Yanami-san, can you please don't stare at me so much?"

Yanami: "I'm not dumped as long as the book isn't released. You know, like that cat something."

Nukumizu: "That's too vague."

Yanami: "I just temporarily forgot. That one. The one where the cat dies when you open the box."

Nukumizu: "It's not dead."



Kajyu: "Nice to meet you. My name is Kajyu Nukumizu. Please come and buy <I have too many onii-samas!> releasing in July."

Nukumizu: "The title's wrong, okay?"

Kajyu: "It's indeed wrong. There can never be too many onii-samas."

Nukumizu: "A bunch of me, ...that sounds scary."

Kajyu: "Well, I can clone myself too, onii-sama."

Nukumizu: "Humans can't do that."



佳



温

Kajyu: "With this opportunity, I want to recruit friends for onii-sama."

Nukumizu: "I refuse."

Kajyu: "The requirement for guys is between 10-80 years old. As for girls, I'll interview them after a paper exam."

Nukumizu: "You're going really tough on girls."

Kajyu: "Of course, I want to eradicate all people that are trying to harm onii-sama."

Nukumizu: "Didn't you say you're just recruiting friends?"



Yanami: "I want someone to comfort me."

Nukumizu: "That's sudden."

Yanami: "People are calling me with mean names like losing heroine and loser dog, okay? Nukumizu-kun, please say something as sweet as sugar to me."

Nukumizu: "Well, ...Yanami-san, it's amazing that you can finish a whole bowl of rice."

Yanami: "My bad. I shouldn't expect anything from you."



Yanami: "Why did Nukumizu-kun fall in love with me?"

Nukumizu: "What are you talking about, Yanami-san?"

Yanami: "I'm the main heroine, okay?"

Nukumizu: "I guess."

Yanami: "I'm the classmate that you're yearning for in your eyes, right?"

Nukumizu: "Eh, ...you'll cause trouble for me if you say that."

Yanami: "Trouble!? Where!?"

Nukumizu: "That's why I said it's troubling."



Yanami: "Karen-chan is my best friend."

Nukumizu: "The girl that transferred here? But she's with your childhood friend..."

Yanami: "It's still not definite yet!"

Nukumizu: "Give up."

Yanami: "Indeed, she's cuter, has bigger boobs, and a better personality! However, there's one key element she's missing."

Nukumizu: "Key element!?"

Yanami: "She's not his childhood friend!"

Nukumizu: "...Right."

Yanami: "Please don't give me such a sympathetic look, alright?"



Yanami: "It's already decided that Nukumizu-kun will fall in love with me sooner or later."

Nukumizu: "What was that? It's scary. Be honest."

Yanami: "You forgot to bring your eraser during the entrance exam, right? Didn't I give you half of mine? Isn't this proof that you'll fall in love with me?"

Nukumizu: "...You're not talking about me, right?"

Yanami: "Eh, ...then who's that guy?"

Nukumizu: "Why would I know that?"



Kajyu: "Onii-sama, when can you let me meet that person?"

Nukumizu: "What?"

Kajyu: "Recently, I'm seeing a lot of girls with onii-sama. So, Kajyu wants to interview them, set up a schedule, and make progress management."

Nukumizu: "Progress management? What are you trying to manage?"

Kajyu: "Progress."

Nukumizu: "That's why I asked what is that!?"

Anna Yanami

やなみ・あんな

1st year in Tsuwabuki High School.
15 yrs old. 156 cm. E cup.

A cheerful and expressive girl who can get along
with everyone.

Her soft, feminine postures made her very
popular among guys.

Unexpectedly huge appetite.

Has a crush on her childhood friend
next door, Sosuke Hakama...?

CHARACTER



“Sosuke said

he'll marry me someday after we grow up.

Isn't he pretty mean?”

Remon Yakishio

やきしお・れもん

1st year in Tsuwabuki High School.
15 yrs old. 163 cm. B cup.

A short-haired girl with a tan.
The ace of Track and Field Club.
Bright and friendly with a brain made out of muscles.
Slim and beautiful.
Fell in love with Mitsuki Ayano, who went to the same elementary school. So...?

CHARACTER

"Girls just want to be spoiled once in a while, okay?"

“S-She’s not his girlfriend!
They are just childhood friends!”

Chika Komari

こまり・ちか

1st year in Tsuwabuki High School.
15 yrs old. 148 cm. A cup.

Bad at talking. Usually types on her phone.
Fujoshi. Likes real person fictions.
In the Literature Club. Has special feelings
for the president, Shintaro Tamaki.

CHARACTER

Kazuhiko Nukumizu

ぬくみず・かずひこ

1st year in Tsuwabuki High School.
15 yrs old. 170 cm.

Calls himself a background character.
Likes to read light novels.

Weak sense of crisis. Absentminded.
Philosophical in his own way.

Isn't a threat to other people, so he has a good
reputation in couples.

I think he joined the Literature Club recently.

CHARACTER

...No, I mean,
it's completely over at this point."

PROLOGUE

Today's the end of the first term final exam.

It's a Friday afternoon, less than 10 days until the summer holiday. I went out of my way to the family restaurant in the next town and ordered a drink and a large fries. It's really far away from school.

I wiped the sweat on my forehead with my handkerchief as I looked around leisurely

The key is to not get too hasty. I can casually grab the drink after the fries are here.

“Well, let's start...”

After checking that no students are in the same uniform, I took a novel out of my schoolbag.

It's the latest volume of <Is it okay to be spoiled by my little sister?>.

Coke, fries, light novel. Let the party time begins-

CHAPTER 1

PROFESSIONAL CHILDHOOD FRIEND - ANNA YANAMI'S DEFEAT

"You did well, onii-chan. It must've been rough. I really know that onii-chan tried your best. So, it's okay for you to be spoiled by Kurumi."

...I can't help but cry after seeing the little sister's lines, who's also the main heroine.

I'm shivering from the generosity of Kurumi-chan. She can always spoil the MC. I'm deeply satisfied with this 20-page long spoiling scene as I closed the book in silence.

I stared at the Kurumi-chan on the cover lovingly.

Ah, I want to be loved like this too. I want a lap pillow with these soft thighs-

"You can't do that, Sosuke! You shouldn't waste your time on this!"

The screams from the next table blew away my fantasy. I think a couple is arguing about something.

Sheesh, that's why I hate normies. ...They should learn from Kurumi Kashitani-chan, who's called the Sweet Angel.

Well, I should rewatch the illustrations as I enjoy my melon-flavored coke.

"Huh!?"

I quickly sat back down after trying to walk to the drink bar.

Shit, the couple from the other table is from my school. They're also my classmates.

The person screaming is Anna Yanami. She's a cute and soft girl who's popular in class.

The guy sitting opposite is Sosuke Hakamada. He's also an attractive and shining guy. The two of them have always stayed together. Hmm, they are indeed going out, right?

But why did they get into an argument here? I raised my ears as I looked down at my novel.

"Karen-chan will be going to England if you don't go. Is that alright?"

"But Karen-chan said goodbye to me~"

"Doesn't that mean she wants you to see her!?"

...What's wrong with that familiar conversation? Their story entered the climax after I finished reading.

The Karen that appeared throughout the conversation...is the girl who transferred here, right? I think her name is Karen Himemiya.

When she introduced herself on the first day of school, she got into an argument with Hakamada. Something about "Ah, you're the chikan from that time!"

By the way, she's transferring again? England? Isn't that too fast?

"Why do you know that?"

"I know it because I know it! It's because I've also always loved..."

Yanami lowered her head and bit her lips.

“Anna, I-“

“Yes, that’s okay.”

Yanami raised her head determinedly. Then, she stood up and put the key of her bicycle on the table.

“Go, Karen-chan is waiting for you!”

“...Are you sure?”

“Karen-chan is a nice girl. I won’t accept her not being happy.”

“Thanks, I’m going to tell her about my feelings.”

“Good luck. I can reluctantly hear you out if you’re rejected.”

“...I’m sorry, Anna.”

Hakamada dashed out after saying that. He didn’t even look at Yanami.

Yanami remained still for a while. After that, she sat down helplessly and mumbled.

“...Don’t apologize, idiot.”

Come to think of it, what a scene I’m in right now. Even though I have nothing to do with the normie world, this is certainly a samurai’s kindness. I should just pretend I didn’t see anything.

I can’t help but start suspecting when I’m hiding my face in the menu.

-Huh!? D-Don’t tell me she’s going to do stuff like that!?

The girl who just got rejected, Anna Yanami, slowly reached her hand out to the glass cup.

It’s the glass cup of the guy who just rejected her, Sosuke Hakama.

-Stop! Please don't do something so pathetic!

My desperate prayer isn't received. Yanami's holding the glass in her hands as she hesitantly put the straw in her mouth.

...Ahh, she ended up doing it.

Her eyes focused on somewhere as if she's attracted by something. As for what she's looking at- it's me.

Shit, our eyes met.

My last hope is that she didn't notice me-

Ah, Yanami's face turned red. Then, pfft! She spat all her coffee out and choked like crazy.

...That's why I hate 3D.

Well, I can only pretend that I haven't seen anything. I whistled despite not knowing how and looked at the menu.

Wasting my efforts, Yanami sat in front of me.

Seriously? Why can't you just let me chill alone?

"You're Nukumizu-kun from the same class, right?"

"Uh, yes, I didn't see you, Yanami-san. I didn't see anything at all."

Uwah, I said that in a completely emotionless tone.

Even Yanami's ears turned red too. Her eyes looked up at me.

"P-Please don't tell anyone about this!"

"Ah, I didn't see anything. It's okay."

"R-Right! Nukumizu-kun didn't see anything!"

Yanami looked away awkwardly as she stood up.

She's making it as if I peeked on them. You two were the ones going wild, though.

Sigh, whatever. I pretended that nothing happened as I walked to the drink bar. A cold drink should calm my brain down.

I went back to my seat with a glass of melon-flavored coke. Then, I realized that Yanami's still standing next to the table. It seems that she's counting the money inside her wallet. Don't tell me she's short on cash.

...It can't be helped. I have to protect my elegant after-school time. I counted to 10 in my heart before speaking up, just in case.

"Uh, are you short on money?"

"Eh?"

Yanami freaked out with tears as she nodded.

I took the receipt from Yanami. Sheesh, how much did you two eat?

Dude, that Hakamada guy ordered a steak set. Yanami's not better. She got a hamburger steak set, dessert, salad, and soup.

I'm stunned by this lack of planning.

"Fine, I'll cover it for you. You can pay me back on Monday."

Sigh, I was going to buy a bunch of light novels.

However, I'm not cold-hearted enough to leave my classmate alone after hearing her out.

"Eh, really? Even though I've just heard of your name."

It's okay. Please just go home.

...But why is she sitting down again?

“Uh, why are you sitting down?”

“Thank you. I’m sorry. I think I misunderstood Nukumizu-kun for a bit.”

I think she has said all kinds of impolite stuff to me since then. Also, I’m starting to regret helping this girl out, but that will remain a secret.

“So, why did you sit down again?”

I said it twice because it’s important.

Even so, Yanami clapped her hands together and looked into the distance.

“Hakamada is my childhood friend.”

Are you seriously giving me story time right now?

“When we were little, Hakamada put on a ring made with clovers on me. He said I’ll be his wife. ...His wife.”

Tears fell from Yanami’s eyes.

“Uwah! Are you okay, Yanami-san!?”

Hey, what’s wrong with this person? The others are staring daggers at us.

I ran away to the drink bar and randomly picked a teabag.

“A-Anyway, drink this and calm down first.”

“Thanks, this...tastes good.”

“Glad to hear that. This is rose tea.”

I think the label mentioned its effects. Hmm, if I remembered correctly-

“I think it improves your skin.”

“Improves my skin...”

Yanami laughed self-mockingly.

“Even though there’s no one to show mine to.”

Don’t say that. You’re too dramatic. Please just chug it and go home.

Just as I’m thinking what I should say to get her ass home-

“Sorry for the wait. Here are your large fries!”

“Eh?”

A plate of fries is put in front of me. Also, I think the girl just shoved it into my bill.

“Hey, what is this?”

“Karen-chan is an important friend of mine. However, however!? She only transferred here in May, okay? How about the 12 years I spent with Sosuke?”

Sniff, Yanami wiped her nose with the towel, and straight-up started eating the fries.

“Let me ask again. Did Yanami-san order the fries?”

“Even though Sosuke said I’ll be his wife. Isn’t this very mean? What a liar.”

Aren’t you being very mean to me too?

But I want this to end on a happy note. So, I suppressed my urge to sigh and started crossing my legs.

“When did this wife thing happen?”

“Before we went to elementary school. I think it’s when we were around 4 or 5 years old.”

That doesn’t count at all, right?

“Does this count as cheating? He changed his target after a cuter girl with a bigger chest showed up.”

Changed his target? Eh, Hakamada's going to cheat with that refreshing face of his?

Indeed, Karen Himemiya is a genuine beauty.

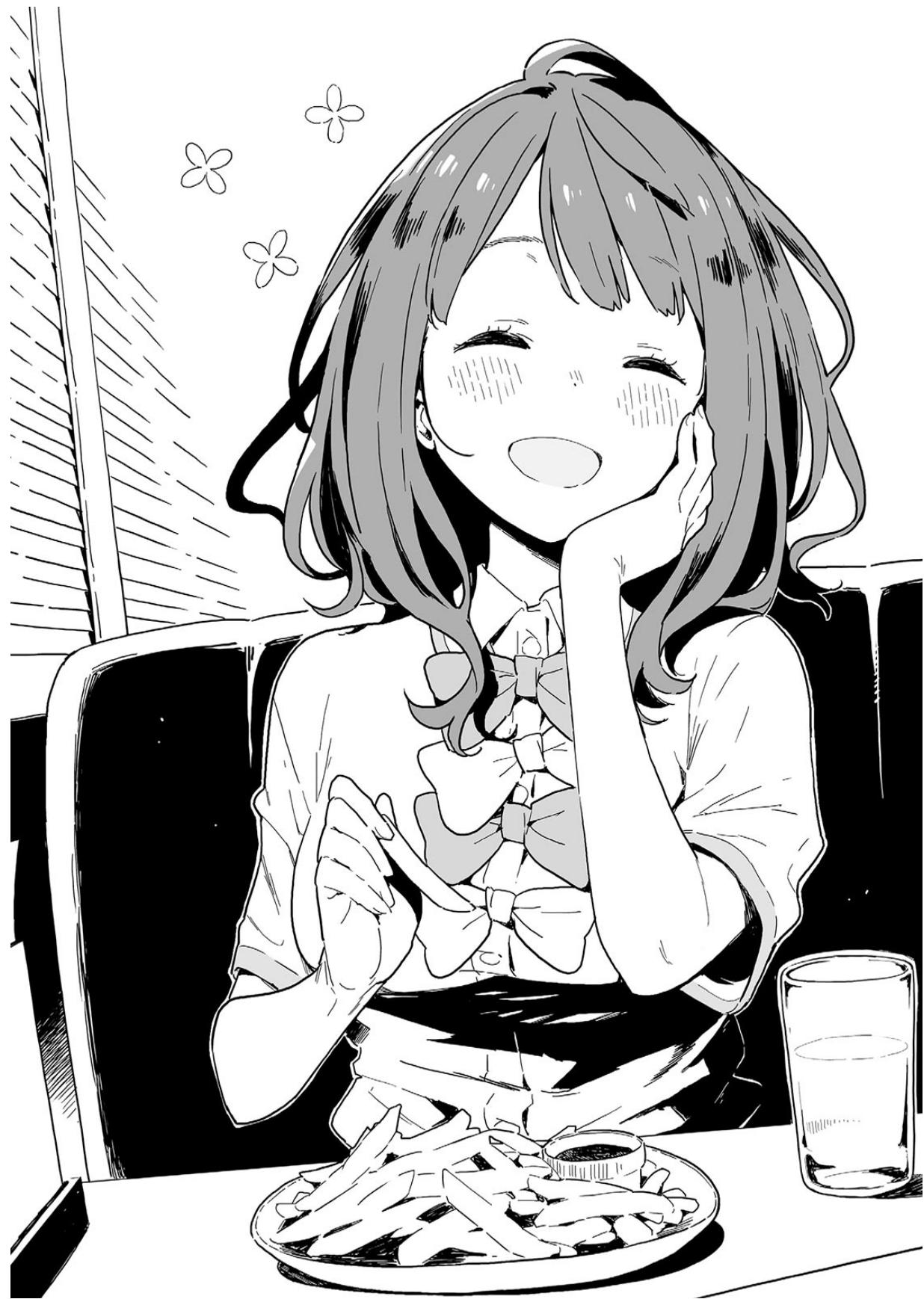
Perhaps Yanami is just as adorable as her. However, she still lacked the brilliance that signifies the main heroine in anime or games. After all, that's decided by genetics.

Just as I grew a little sense of fondness with Yanami, I asked her with a worried tone.

"Is Yanami-san indeed going out with Hakamada?"

"Eh? S-Sheesh, do we really look like that? People had always said we match each other since when we were little. Yeah, that's really how other people see us too. Ehehe."

Yanami covered her blushing face in embarrassment.



Hey, in other words...?

"You two aren't dating? Then it's not cheating, right?"

Yanami's face rapidly distorted after hearing what I said.

"Eh!? I-It means that we're about to go out. Things would've gone great if that boob woman didn't show up!"

Where did your dear friend go?

"Also, it's not completely over yet. Will Sosuke change his mind at this key moment?"

"...No, it's already completely over."

I didn't watch all these rom-coms for nothing, you know? This girl is fated to lose.

"Let me tell you something. It's a secret. I once took a bath with Sosuke."

"That happened when you two were 4 or 5 years old, right?"

I bet the two of them will take a bath together soon. You should just mentally prepare yourself, girl.

"Also, also! Both of our parents largely approved of our relationship. In the end, marriage is just two families hanging out- "

Yanami ignored everything and continued. Huge drops of tears came out of her eyes again.

"Uwah, what's wrong!?"

"...The wedding, ...his wife, ...the wedding dress that should've been worn by me, ...it's now being shown off to me by that boob woman."

I think she imagined her rival in love wearing a wedding dress. Ahh, sheesh, I didn't know rejected girls have such

unstable emotions.

“...I know. The result could’ve been different if I mustered my courage early on.”

“Y-You’re right. Do you want another cup? I recommend mint tea too.”

“No, that tastes like toothpaste...”

I guess she calmed down after crying for a while. She wiped her tears and smiled.

“Sorry for making such a mess.”

“No, it’s fine.”

That’s not why you should say sorry to me.

“I feel like this is enough. I’m happy as long as Sosuke can smile. It’s fine for me to stay next to him as his best friend.”

“I-I see...”

But, what’s with the refreshingly rejected look of Yanami?

Yanami’s still pressing on. I reached my hand to the fries as I gave her a sympathetic look.

Come to think of it, there’s this sentence used to describe girls like this.

...Anna Yanami. Yeah, this girl’s a losing heroine.



It’s been 3 days since that happened. It’s now Monday, and I’m in school.

I closed the tap as I wiped the water off my mouth.

Some people say that tap water tastes bad in big cities, while others think it tastes better nowadays. However, little did people know, tap water tastes different in every building.

As for me, Kazuhiko Nukumizu, a student in Class 1C of Tsuwabuki High School, I'm the person that knows this.

"Yeah, it just has to be this tap in the morning...."

I chose the tap in front of the library in the new school building during the 3rd lesson's break.

This is the furthest from the water tank on the roof, which means that it has less chlorine. This is the decision after considering the burden of my stomach before lunch.

Let's go back to the classroom.

I finished drinking and started making my way back as I calculated the remaining time and distance.

If I go back too early, I won't know how to deal with troublesome situations like other people hanging around at my seat.

I leisurely strolled in the corridor as I remembered what happened last week.

Anna Yanami. Since she's quite a cute girl in our grade, she caused some commotions among the boys during the entrance ceremony. I've acknowledged that I won't interact with her in any way, so I never paid attention to her.

On that day, I ended up staying with her until she diarrhea'd out all of her emotions. It's been a long time since I've talked this much to a girl.

Her expressions were interchanging between a smile and tearing down. I was attracted and worried at the same time.

Well, in the end, we're at different levels. This little story will be over after she returns the money. I guess this counts as a small memory.

I entered the classroom after checking my watch. 30 seconds until the bell rings, literal perfection.

...Tck, someone's sitting on my chair.

The person is Remon Yakishio. Track and Field Club. She's a sporty girl with a very healthy tan.

I've heard about her since middle school. She's bright, adorable, and popular. A group of people is always clustered to her. I guess she won't move until the bell rings if I don't do anything.

I went around and passed my seat. Then, I threw my receipt, specifically prepared for moments like this, into the trash bin. The bell rings at just the right time.

I think Yakishio will return to her seat, right? Well, I should go back too.

“...?”

A sense of weirdness made me stop. Why is no one going back to their own seat?

Don't tell me. I looked at the blackboard.

<4th lesson: World History. The teacher will be 10 minutes late. Please study by yourselves before the teacher arrives.>

-I miscalculated. I see now. Everyone just feels like they had another 10-minute break.

Well, what should I do? I wiped the sweat on my forehead and stood in front of the notice board.

...Eh, the national sports festival is this month. I think the Archery Club got into the festival for 3 years straight. They are amazing.

I emptied my mind and read the schedule of the festival.

<Opening Ceremony: July 22. Girls' Volleyball: July 22 - 25. Kayaking: July 28 - 31.>

"-Well, let's have lunch together with the three of us!"

A thorough and bright voice distracted my attention.

This is Karen Himemiya's voice.

I glimpsed them. She's chatting happily with Yanami and Hakamada. Such a brilliant appearance and cheerful personality. A genuine beauty on this scale shouldn't exist. Also, her assets are surely big...

Yanami also answered with a refreshing smile as well.

...I'm quite worried about Yanami because of what happened, but it looks like she's quite energetic. These dramas must be common among normies.

"I'm good. I don't want to interrupt you two."

Yanami said that jokingly.

"You don't need to mind that. We're friends, you know?"

"Yeah, it's not like you to sweat these small things."

"You too, Hakamada. Please be considerate to Karen-chan's feelings."

Yanami poked Hakamada politely.

"Hey, Anna."

"What's wrong, Karen-chan-"

Karen Himemiya suddenly hugged Yanami tightly.

“Hey, what’s wrong?”

“Thank you. Anna is really my best friend.”

That girl calls you “boob woman” from behind, you know?

“Sheesh, Karen-chan. We’re in class.”

Yanami said as she patted Karen Himemiya’s shoulder.

Well, it’s good that Yanami doesn’t care anymore.

...I realized something after getting relieved.

Yanami’s legs are shivering as Himemiya hugged her. Her fingers are getting pale from how much force she’s using.

Uwah, this girl isn’t letting go at all.

“Well, let’s have lunch in the courtyard-“

“Hey, uh.”

Himemiya is going in for the kill with a smile. Yanami’s face is getting paler and paler.

I can’t help but walk to those three and speak up after making up my mind.

“Hey, Yanami-san.”

“Eh?”

The three looked at me with shocked faces.

This is what I’m talking about. This is the face I’m talking about. I’m so sorry that a background character like me is talking to you all.

I was really upset, but I kept my outward calmness and said what I’ve prepared.

“Yanami-san is on duty, right? Amanatsu-sensei wants you to help out in the printing room.”

“Eh, ah, I see. Thanks, I’ll be going.”

Yanami escaped from Himemiya with a face full of relief. She is reminded of something and turned to me just as she’s about to leave the classroom.

“Well, can Nukumizu-kun help out too?”



I don’t even know why Yanami and I are walking in the corridor. What should I even say?

I observed Yanami secretly.

Anna Yanami. She’s a girl with slightly fluffy hair, all in all, a person filled with girls’ power.

Her eyes are slightly drooping. Her cheeks give off an innocent feeling. It’s a package of all elements popular with guys.

...This girl’s really cute. Why did that Sosuke Hakamada guy dump her? It’s another childhood friend. What’s bad about her?

Well, even though Karen Himemiya does look cuter and has bigger boobs-

“Hmm? Is there something on my face?”

Yanami tilted her head defenselessly and looked at my face.

“Eh? Oh, it’s nothing.”

...Shit, I was being impolite to her.

She noticed my tenseness. So, she naturally closed off our distance and whispered to me in a voice only I could hear.

“Did Nukumizu-kun help me because you know I’m in trouble?”

“Well, I guess I may have done something unnecessary. You looked really upset there back then.”

“It’s alright, thank you. I barely kept myself from pinching Karen-chan’s boobs.”

She’s saying total nonsense with a serious face.

“Well, where are we going now? The whole helping out the teacher thing is fake, right?”

“Amanatsu-sensei told us to self-study because she forgot to print the material, right? Well, might as well help her out after we come here.”

Konami Amanatsu, she’s teaching us social studies and our class teacher.

Even though she’s a professional latecomer, she’s definitely not lazing around. It’s just that she messes up her schedule, forgets her teaching material, and enters the wrong classroom from time to time.

I’m 100% sure that she told us to self-study because she forgot to print the material.

After opening the door to the printing room, the person in there is exactly who we expected.

“Uwah, what’s going on?”

The floor and the tables are filled with papers.

Just like what we expected, Amanatsu-sensei is duking it out with the printer pathetically. She’s a petite and adorable teacher who won’t look weird in a school uniform. But how should I describe her?

"Ara, Yanami. Why did you come here? Shouldn't you be in class- uwah!"

Amanatsu-sensei stepped onto the papers and slipped. Her notes are flying across the room.

You can say that she's clumsy. Actually, she really makes other people worry about her.

"I was thinking maybe I can help sensei out."

"Oh, thanks. Well, help me print the list of numbers of classmates, please."

The notes are scattered across the floor. ...So, which one are we printing again?

In the end, the 10-minute self-study session has already passed after the three of us found it.

"I've spent a lot of time preparing the material. Look forward to it."

Indeed, Amanatsu-sensei always makes detailed notes. I looked at the content unintentionally.

"Sensei, the curriculum's wrong, right? Aren't we starting Chinese history today?"

"Hey, hey, even though I don't know which class you're in, you should pay attention to your studies. The curriculum of year 2 students in July is about the Byzantine Empire. I'll teach you all about the cute parts in this history."

"Sensei, you're going to 1C's classroom now."

Also, I'm in your class.

"Ehhhh!?"

Sha. The notes that Amanatsu-sensei took forever to collect fell onto the floor again.

“It’s okay. There are still 40 minutes left. I can just prepare all the stuff before that! Please wait!”

The lesson will be over at that point.

Amanatsu-sensei dashed out of the printing room after tripping over.

...The storm has passed. We were shocked by sensei’s moment and didn’t snap out of it for a while.

“Anyway, let’s clean this printing room first.”

“You’re right. Amanatsu-sensei has always been like this.”

We started tidying up the room silently. It feels quite awkward. Being alone with a girl in the printing room, should I say something?

...Come to think of it, there is indeed something important to say. I cleared my throat and spoke to Yanami.

“Hey, about the money I paid for you on Friday.”

“Oh, right. I don’t have my wallet with me right now. Can you come to the emergency stairs in the old building during lunch break?”

“Eh? Oh, sure, I guess.”

Perhaps Yanami doesn’t want people to know that she has something to do with an insignificant guy like me, right? Not to mention in front of a guy that rejected her.

Feeling a bit slumped, I tidied up the notes and handed them to Yanami.

Yanami spoke up as she’s rearranging the notes.

“...Nukumizu-kun noticed it too, right? Those two have started dating.”

She said that calmly.

I can see Yanami's eyes are devoid of energy. She's packing up the notes robotically.

"Well, I can feel it. By the way, the notes are all tidied up, right?"

"You should've also heard that I'm invited to have lunch with them, right? Will someone really do that under normal circumstances?"

She's holding the notes tighter and tighter.

"...They are messing with me, right? Or are they just showing off?"

Yanami finally destroyed the papers.

"No, well, I was in the same group as Hakamada during a group project. I think he's a pretty good guy, okay? He won't do something like this."

"You're correct. Sosuke isn't a guy like that, right?"

"Yes."

"Sosuke's as perfect as an angel. I thought I got a photo of an angel when I looked at the pictures when we were little. He's so adorable that he can be on SNS's top. Ehehe."

Yanami closed her eyes intoxicatedly as she started a trip down the memory lane.

After a long while, I can see a spark of black flame in Yanami's open pupils.

"...I see. In other words, it's Karen-chan. Karen-chan is the demon."

"Eh?"

"She wants me to give up approaching her man."

"Hey, I think you're overthinking it too much."

"Even though I treat her as a dear friend, she's seducing Sosuke with her arrogantly developed body..."

I started thinking about this a couple days ago. Are you two really dear friends?

"Those huge meat sacks are filled with gooey and sticky malice. Nukumizu-kun, this is what you're thinking too, right?"

Don't seek acknowledgment from me. In my eyes, those are filled with hopes and dreams.

My god, can sensei please just come back already? The door was opened just as my eyes reached out for help.

"Thank god, sensei~"

"Glory to Byzantium!"

Amanatsu-sensei came back excitedly. I got a bad feeling from this.

"What's wrong, sensei?"

"Well, come to think of it, I didn't even prepare the content for year 1 students, so I was planning to just sit the whole lesson out in the office."

How can you say that with a smile? This person is a functioning member of our society, right?

"However, I realized that I can still talk about the cool points of Byzantium to those first-year brats. So, let's go back to the classroom."

"Sensei, please take your classes seriously."

Why did I wish for this person's return?

"Your sensei did a good job preparing year 2's curriculum, alright?"

“Just use the content in the book during lessons. I bet sensei can pull that off.”

“Uh, but is it okay if I’m totally not prepared?”

“It’s not about whether it’s okay or not. It’s that you have to.”

The half-baked encouragement seems to have impressed sensei’s heartstrings. Amanatsu-sensei clenched her tiny fists tightly.

“I got it. I’ll try, even though I forgot the textbook.”

“No, please bring the textbook.”

“You’re so nice, my student, but please go back to your classroom since the lesson has already started.”

“I’m in your class.”

...Sensei, can I please just go back? I’m tired of complaining.



On that day’s lunch break, I sat down on the emergency stairs as we’d promised.

I didn’t know such a place existed in school. I observed around a little bit surprisedly.

This is a place devoid of outsider detection. At the same time, no one really comes here. It’s been 4 months since I entered this school. Honestly, I’m done with drinking tap water. This is a great location for me to be in during breaks.

I don’t even know when Yanami will show up. Well, I’ll eat my bread first.

“Ah, there you are, Nukumizu-kun.”

Yanami descended from the stairs above. I looked up unintentionally, and a pair of soft and white thighs filled my sight. I quickly looked away.

“Uh, no, I wasn’t planning to do that!”

Yanami didn’t really mind my attitude. She sat down next to me.

“Help me out.”

That’s the first thing Yanami said after sitting down.

“Karen-chan said she wants the three of us to go sing karaoke after school.”

...Ah, karaoke, the singing game loved by normies, and you want my help? This is indeed a dangerous game.

“Huh, why don’t you just go?”

After Yanami heard my reasonable response, she wrapped her hands around her head with a hopeless face.

“You’re telling me to listen to those two’s duet!? Does Nukumizu-kun really want me to die this much!?”

Why would I know about things like that?

“I’m not sure since I’ve never gone to karaoke.”

“Ah.”

Clouds formed on Yanami’s expression.

“Hey, ...I’m sorry. I didn’t know that you’ve never visited a karaoke place. ...I’m really sorry. How should I repay my debt to you...?”

Wait, don’t just apologize so adamantly. Hey, please stop. I’ll really break down in tears.

“Please don’t mind it. Well, about the money I lent you earlier.”

“Even though those two tell me we can keep hanging out like we were in the past.”

What? Yanami opened the lid of her bento box. Is she preparing to have lunch here?

“Ha, anyway, don’t push yourself too hard. Well, about the money...”

“I got the message that they’ve started dating at midnight on the day you lent me money.”

She keeps stabbing the taro with her chopsticks.

“...What did those two even do before sending me the message?”

“Hey, don’t think about it too much. It’s just that you got the message late in the night.”

“On that night, I received a text from Sosuke’s onee-san. She said she couldn’t contact Sosuke and asked whether I’m with him?”

“Uh...”

Help me.

I can only pay attention to the curry bread in my hands.

“Weren’t they doing something that makes it hard for other people to contact them? Right?”

The taro suffered stab after stab and eventually shattered into pieces.

“I-I bet his phone ran out of battery. I’ve always encountered something like that too.”

“Hmm, maybe. I have to trust them, ...even though I don’t know what I should trust.”

I still don’t understand what’s happening.

Yanami finally raised her head at this point.

“Sorry, I’ve been talking non-stop.”

“Ah, well, it’s okay. I can still do it if you just want someone to listen to you.”

“Thank you, Nukumizu-kun. It’s because I can’t tell my friends and acquaintances about this, so I’m really happy.”

So I’m not even your acquaintance?

“The lunch break is ending soon. Let’s eat.”

Our common topics are just that loving couple and the lunch before us since we’re not even acquaintances. Yanami showed me an exhausted smile after hearing my suggestion.

“...You’re right. We should eat.”

We started dining silently.

I finished the curry bread early, so I glimpsed at Yanami in secret. Why am I having lunch next to a girl?

I bet rejecting and being rejected are really frequent in the upper class.

With how adorable Yanami is, I bet she has rejected a lot of people too. Then, this time, she’s the one being dumped.

This must be something she can’t avoid in her life. I think a lot of similar things will happen too, unlike me.

“Hey, Yanami-san.”

I couldn’t help but voice out, even I’m shocked by myself too. Also, I’m not even sure what I should say next.

“Well, you’re really popular among guys. I bet you have more followers than Himemiya-san.”

Yanami looked at me with unbelievable eyes. This is what I'm talking about. I bet that's how people on TV looked when somebody called their name.

"Hey, are you comforting me?"

"Ah, well, I'm sorry. I said something weird. Forget about it."

Uwah, what did I even do? I should've never left the background.

I can hear gentle peals of laughter just as I'm drowning in regret.

I can't help but look away embarrassedly after seeing Yanami's soft smile.

"Thank you, it looks like I still misunderstood Nukumizu-kun for a bit."

She put the taro in her mouth after saying that.

...Your misunderstandings are really deep. What's even your impression of mine?

"Well, it's almost time to give me back my money. Here's the receipt."

"Oh, thanks for helping me back then~"

Yanami's body suddenly stopped after taking the receipt.

"What?"

"Eh, how come the price got higher?"

"Yanami-san, you ordered melon pizza after that, right? The one with ice cream toppings."

"Yes."

"Also, there's this pork shabu salad udon at the bottom."

"It's because eating salad won't get you fat."

I don't dislike the utter trust you have for salad, you know?
It seems that she accepted reality. Finally, I can get my money back.

After Yanami looked between my hands and the receipt, she nodded her head as if she had decided something.

"...This is just an example. If Nukumizu-kun doesn't hate it, can I pay you back with something else?"

"Something else?"

What is it?

Yanami's face slowly turned red. The stew chicken on her chopsticks fell down too.

"I-I'm not really experienced with this, so I don't know whether I can satisfy you. Well, I can only do this since I don't have enough money. Sosuke got really happy when I did this too-"

"What?"

So, what is she saying? Yanami looks really embarrassed as she's staring at the slippery, sticky chicken on top of her chopsticks. Wait, Yanami's lowering her head from embarrassment, and the chicken's sticky, greasy, and moist-

Eh? Eh? Ehh? Don't tell me...she's going to do that!? Aren't we fast-forwarding too much here?

I shook my head violently.

"No, no, no! This isn't good, right!? We're at school."

"Even though I'm not good with cooking, a bento is still within my reach."

"...Eh? Bento?"

"Yes, that. What's wrong?"

Yanami's eyes are crystal-clear. She tilted her head in confusion.

"It's nothing! It's nothing! It's nothing! Ah, a bento."

...Shit, what was I even thinking? I snapped out of it and looked at the price tag on the receipt.

"However, I'm afraid a single bento can't..."

This is something precious I've saved up from reducing my lunch allowance, alright?

"Yes, so you can give my bento a price tag each time. I'll keep making them for you until I've paid back the money."

A girl is making a bento for me. I don't think I'll ever encounter something like this if I weren't involved with her. Also, I can save up my lunch money. I guess you can say I got my money back.

But, how should I put it? ...This is troublesome.

I have to avoid other people and give a price tag on the bento.

"Well, I still think-

"Well, I'll be waiting for you here starting tomorrow."

Yanami showed a relieved smile. Looking at her enjoying her chicken bento happily, I can't say anything else.

"...Yeah, I'm looking forward to it."



As the lunch break bell rang, I sat back on my seat exhaustedly.

I'm pooped. How come getting people to pay me back can be this tiring?

...Also, she didn't even give me my money back.

For some reason, I think Yanami said that she's paying me back with her handmade bento. In other words, I can enjoy her food for the following days, right?

The plot's going too fast. My brain can't handle it.

It's mid-July now. I should just empty my brain for the rest of the term. I imagined myself hiding my presence completely in my brain.

...Very well, I'll never be talked to again today. It's because this jujutsu is unbreakable-

"H-Hey, you're Nukumizu-kun, right?"

It was destroyed easily. A girl who looked really desperate came to me.

"I-I'm a first-year from the Literature Club."

She coughed twice after squeezing that sentence out.

What's with this weird girl? I would never do that if I were you.

"Huh? Who are you? Where did you come from?"

"U-Uh, I'm Komari! From the Literature Club! Chika Komari!"

This girl called herself Komari and pinched the skirt of her slightly oversized summer uniform. She stared at me with eyes full of tears.

"H-Hey, there's something I want to tell you about the club!"

"Me? Literature Club? Why?"

"I-It's because Nukumizu-kun is in the Literature Club, right!?"

“Eh?”

“Eh?”

Silence.

Wait, come to think of it, I visited the Literature Club once during the first week. The people in the Literature Club made me write down my name too. Don’t tell me that’s a registration form?

“Ah, I think that happened.”

Chika Komari started tapping her phone screen crazily after sighing in relief. After several clicks, she put her screen in front of me.

<We’re warned by the student council since there are inactive members. We have very few people, after all.>

That inactive member is referring to me. Komari’s fingers started sliding across the screen quickly again.

<Anyway, please pay us a visit today after school.>

“Oh, sure. I’ll be there.”

I remembered now. Aside from the president, everyone in the Literature Club is a girl. I didn’t go because I don’t think I can stay there for now.

I reaffirmed my decision to not go to the Literature Club at that time as I watched Komari leave.

...After all, this is the type of person that represented that club.



Please let me go home.

After school, I came to a desolate corner of the west building that no one visits.

“...This is where the clubroom is.”

I looked at the door to the clubroom with conflicted feelings. Honestly, I don't want to go in at all. However, I gave up after hearing that this club doesn't have enough members. After all, I know how difficult things are for the minority.

After a deep breath, I made up my mind and twisted the doorknob.

“What? It's locked?”

The door's locked when I'm called here. In other words, this means that I can go home, right?

Just as I sighed in relief and prepared to leave, a phone screen blocked my view.

<Move away. I'm opening the door.>

Chika Komari is standing there. She pushed me away and opened the door. No, I think you should tell me instead of typing it.

I followed her and entered the room. Komari just sat down on a chair and ignored me as she started reading her novel.

I sat on the foldable chair slightly away from Komari and looked at the Literature Club's room. There's a bookshelf reaching to the ceiling on this wall. It's full of books.

I didn't notice this at first since I was too nervous. Aside from all kinds of old hard-covered books, there are books with pale spines. This is a bit surprising. There are a lot of light novels too.

“Hey, Komari-san, the books here-“

“Uh, w-well.”

Komari quickly pulled out her phone.

...I'm starting to feel bad for her.

"No, it's fine. Please continue reading."

The atmosphere is really tense here. I was so bored that I randomly took an Osama Dazai novel from the bookshelf.

This one's so famous that even I've read it. Come to think of it, Dazai was pretty popular with girls, right? Tck, throw him into the river. *[Dazai committed suicide by drowning himself in a river.]*

I opened the book in boredom.

...Oh, there are these trendy illustrations. What is this scene?

Even though I'm not sure, I think it's "sweet punishment time". "Takuya's wild rod reached into Haruta's yet-to-blossom flower—"

What? Is this really what Dazai wrote?

The book was robbed away before I could remove the cover. Komari's holding the book in front of her chest with a pale face.

"N-N-No! Boys can't see this!"

"But isn't this Dazai's book?"

"Y-Yes! So, n-no!"

What? I don't understand at all.

"Oh, you two already got so close!"

A girl with glasses and her long hair tied into two bundles walked inside as she said that. She's a slightly mature beauty.

"Hiya, it looks like I was wrong."

Glasses-san patted Komari's head as she smiled at me.



“Nukumizu-kun, right? It’s been a long time.”

Her gentle expression made me smile too. Great, there’s finally a normal person.

“Oh, I’m sorry for being an inactive member.”

“It’s already a great help for you to come here. Do you still remember? I’m the third-year vice president, Koto Tsukinoki.”

“Oh, of course.”

That was a lie.

Tsukinoki-senpai watched the novel in Komari’s hand and nodded her head.

“Ah, I forgot to say this. Boys can’t watch the Dazai’s and Mishima’s books on the shelf.”

“Are those really written by Yukio Mishima and Dazai?”

After I said that, Tsukinoki-senpai’s glasses immediately flashed eerily.

She grabbed my shoulders with her hands as I tried to back up.

“...No, Dazai is in front. Osama Dazai and Yukio Mishima. Don’t switch them. This is important.”

Senpai’s eyes are scary. After I nodded while shivering, senpai returned to her usual smile.

“I’m glad that you understood. Well, sit down first. I’ll make us tea.”

Hey, what’s wrong with this Literature Club? No one’s normal here.

I fell into horror as I stared at the keychain on my schoolbag after taking a seat. Komari patted my shoulder. I saw her phone screen after raising my head.

<She's definitely wrong. Mishima is in front, and Dazai's at the back.>

Who cares? Don't drag me into this.

"Nukumizu-kun, what do you usually read?"

Tsukinoki-senpai gave me a cup of tea as she asked.

"Well, it's all light novels recently."

"Oh, I see. We have a lot of light novels here too. You can borrow them as you like."

That's great. I'm too lazy to point out whose fault it is. But, after all, my plan to buy a bunch of books has been thwarted.

"Ah, come to think of it, where are other club members?"

"First of all, there's the president. He's the third-year student that explained things to you in April."

I think I remember. He's a gentle, tall, and handsome guy.

...Wait, why is Tsukinoki-senpai drinking tea calmly?

"Yeah, a hot day calls for a hot cup of sencha!"

"Well, where are the others?"

"That's all."

She slammed the cup onto the table after saying that. For some reason, her face looks really smug.

"Our club got the student council's attention recently. So, you should chill in the Literature Club for a while. The tea's free."

I looked at the light novels on the bookshelf. Well, it's not a bad thing.

"Well, sure."

Tsukinoki-senpai smiled and stood up impatiently.

"Well, I'll be leaving. Komari-san, explain our club to him, please."

"Eh!?"

Komari suddenly gave a weird voice after re-surfacing from her book.

"That Shintaro forgot he's on duty today and got trapped in the classroom. I have to help him out."

Girl, you got a boyfriend? Everyone is surely sinking into romance in high schools.

"Romance is an elective in middle school, but it's core in high school." I think somebody said that before. Anyway, I've obviously failed.

"Ah, also, you should absolutely not touch Dazai's and Mishima's books on the shelf. This is important, so I'll say it twice."

Tsukinoki-senpai waved her hand and walked out.

After sighing in relief, Komari shoved her phone onto my face.

<Mishima's in front, and Dazai's at the back! Don't mess it up!>

I think we have a girl that failed the core subject here.

"I know, alright? So, can you please tell me more about this club?"

"E-Ehhh..."

Komari showed an explicitly annoyed look.

“It can’t be helped, right? The vice president went to meet her boyfriend.”

<H-H-He’s not her boyfriend! S-Shintaro is the president! Shintaro Tamaki! T-They are just childhood friends!>

What’s with the sudden aggressiveness?

Komari wanted to say something else, but she quietly moaned just as she clicked on the phone.

“T-The battery died!”

After that, she started searching the schoolbag frantically. Hey, that’s my schoolbag. Please calm down.

Knock knock. Someone knocked on the door. Who’s showing up at such a busy moment?

“I’m sorry. ...I’m Shikiya from the student council. Are you guys free right now?”

“Uh, it’s a bit-“

My eyes are glued to the person coming in.

Her white, silky hair is adorned with a beautiful flower decoration. A hairband is on her wrist. Her fingers are painted with brilliant colors. She’s wearing a slightly oversized uniform with a skirt that’s a little bit short.

Her makeup looks really natural at first sight, yet she has a lot of eyelashes. By the way, white pupils look scary.

This...is a gal, right? A human who has nothing to do with me appeared in front of us. This Shikiya gal looked around the clubroom before closing in on me.

I gulped.

Even though I don't know her business here, she's still a gal, after all. I bet she'll scold me. Honestly, I can hardly contain my emotions.

"You're...Nukumizu-kun from the Literature Club, right...?"

Wait, why is she so polite? Aren't you a gal?

"Ah, ...yes. I'm Nukumizu."

My emotions cooled off as well. This is definitely not because I'm disappointed, okay?

"I'm sorry. ...I have to investigate the Literature Club's activity. What does...the Literature Club usually do...?"

I don't know whether Shikiya-san's too tired. She leaned on the wall hopelessly. Is she okay?

"Well, I'm not really sure what we're usually doing."

"Eh? ...Are you...really a Literature Club member...?"

Her white pupils are observing me from top to bottom. Oh, shit, I think I'm the reason why this club is about to be disbanded.

I sought help from Komari. However, I'm not sure whether she's afraid of a gal's presence. She's holding her dead phone tightly as her body shivers in the corner of the room. Uwah, this girl's useless.

"Uh, it's because the Literature Club is all about reading books..."

"It's just...reading?"

Shikiya-san tilted her head. Eh, is that not enough?

"There's...no...club activities?"

Shikiya-san's body slowly wobbled as she approached me. This person is legit scaring the hell out of me. What kind of

zombie is this?

“Hey, uh, we sometimes write something too!”

“Writing, right...? Well, ...it’s not just...reading?”

Shikiya-san looked up to the ceiling for a while. She wrote something in her notebook without even looking at it.

“I got it. ...Thanks.”

She closed her notebook, turned around, and walked out of the room.

This is really creeping me out.

I turned around, and Komari is poking at her phone’s black screen as if she’s possessed. Hey, this side is pretty scary too.

I retrieved a charging cable from the ground full of things and handed it to Komari.

“Ah, please lend me that!”

Komari robbed the charging cable away from me. I noticed something as she’s plugging the cable into her phone with shivering hands.

I’m actually quite a normal person.



That night, I edited the list in my notebook on my room’s desk. The light novel purchasing plan has to change after knowing that there are more in the Literature Club. Oh, yeah, and also Yanami.

I leaned on the chair as I calculated the remaining cash in my wallet and the lunch allowance next week.

Right now, I can treat that my lunch allowance is saved. Let's put the money aside for the new series I haven't touched on yet.

"First of all, I need <Do you love an onee-chan who's pretty good at melee combat?> after falling in love with the anime."

Wait, it's almost time for me to buy <Flat-chested Senpai> too. I saved a place on my shelf just for the novel and the manga.

My hands are grabbed by a white and petite one as I'm editing the list.

"How can you forget <You're the innocent Queen of Darkness>? Kajyu's beloved character fell into darkness during Volume 5. You should just buy everything."

"Kajyu, why are you in my room?"

"It's just that onii-sama ignored me. Kajyu is here most of the time."

The person saying these dangerous things is my little sister, Kajyu. She's two years younger than me. Under the onii-chan's filter, I guess she belongs to the cute type. Also, I think she entered the student council recently too. Why are our differences so great despite sharing the same blood?

"But I want <Flat-chested Senpai> more."

"That one's a bit interesting, but it's too lewd, so no. It will cause harm to onii-sama."

"Why did you know that?"

"Kajyu got it from my friend. It's really lewd."

That's cunning. Borrow it to your onii-sama too.

Just as I'm about to complain, my mouth is blocked with a cookie. It tastes good.

After that, a glass of iced tea is delivered into my mouth too. Am I a patient?

"I can drink it myself."

"Did onii-sama make friends in school?"

Kajyu suddenly leaned forward.

"Uh, not yet."

"Kajyu's really worried about this. Onii-sama is already a high school student. Kajyu only acknowledges onii-sama's friendlessness until the end of your mandatory education."

I didn't know that I'm not even acknowledged by my little sister.

"How about today? How many people did you talk to aside from the teacher?"

Uh, how many people did I talk to again? Yanami, Komari, the vice president Tsukinoki-senpai, and Shikiya-san from the student council.

"4, I guess."

"...4?"

Kajyu's eyes bulged in surprise. Yes, when your onii-sama is using his true power, trivial things like this are-

"Onii-sama, it's not shameful to not have friends."

"But you won't acknowledge me then."

"However, I can't believe onii-sama will lie to his beloved little sister. This makes Kajyu really upset."

"Ha? I'm not lying."

Are my words so unconvincing?

“Also, Kajyu is also feeling really bad from forcing onii-sama to lie.”

Kajyu broke down in tears as she's feeding me cookies.

“No, I told you I can eat them myself.”

“Please relax, onii-sama. Kajyu will definitely get onii-sama a friend.”

Kajyu wiped her tears and hugged my head tightly. It's hot.



Kajyu Nukumizu, is she a brocon or a worrywart? Anyway, she really cares about me.

However, is it a really bad thing to not have friends? I don't feel inconvenient usually.

Well, small things like no one telling me about the schedule change or being accidentally ignored by people do happen.

I sighed at the troubles to come as I sipped the iced tea

<Today's remaining debt: 3617 yen>



During the next day's lunch break, I came to the emergency stairs to take my bento. This is what Yanami first said when she saw me.

"Don't you think you're pretty mean?"

Woah, back up there, pal. Are you dragging me in already?

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you. I begged you to help me out yesterday, right? I was treated brutally in the karaoke room, you know?"

Also, why is Yanami sitting next to me on the stairs? Honestly, I just want to chill alone.

"What did you want me to do?"

"Girls are creatures that demand resonance. You should consider my feelings when those two are singing Frozen together?"

Frozen, what's that?

"The 'no right, no wrong, no rules for me', right?"

I don't think that's right.

"No, it's the one where Anna and the prince are singing together. That last duet was like hell to my ears."

Ah, that one. If I remember correctly, the prince's line is-

"Something like 'Marry me!', right?"

"Meanwhile, Anna said yes! Ahhhhh!"

Yanami said that as she wrapped her hands around her head. You just had to open the lid to hell.

"Indeed, that woman is telling me to give up. That ice witch..."

"Well, that's how a date goes in the beginning. Anyway, where's my bento?"

I'm going straight to the point. Of course, I won't deny that I'm excited to get Yanami's bento. A bento made by my classmate, and she's a girl. It feels quite special-

"...Okay, help yourself."

She took a bento box wrapped with rainbow paper. From the "Chicken Thighs: 98 yen" text on it, I can tell that she just folded a leaflet into a box, right? I saw that once in my grandma's home.

"Can I ask what this is?"

"I made my own bento along with Nukumizu-kun's in the morning."

"I see, but why is this the end product?"

"When I took out two bento boxes, my mom told me, 'Sosuke-kun will definitely be very happy'..."

...Stop, you're going to make me cry. Don't throw out keywords like 'my mom'.

I quickly silenced myself and opened the box. It's a sandwich in a plastic bag.

"This is from the convenience store, right?"

"Did you even listen to me? I told you I can't prepare bento for two people."

Is this really a handmade bento? Well, the package is handmade, though.

"Nukumizu-kun, how much is this worth?"

"Let me think, 268 yen."

"That's cheap."

Yeah, the price tag is right on there, girl. After that, Yanami gave me a piece of egg roll from her bento.

"...Well, 300 yen."

After Yanami heard that, she tried to give me a piece of karaage. I immediately took my box away from her.

"Forget about that. The two of us should keep some distance, right? Yanami-san has a lot of friends, right?"

The word "scam" flashed in my brain. I put the egg roll inside my mouth. Even though it's a bit burnt, it tastes surprisingly good. It looks like Yanami's egg roll belongs to the sweet faction.

"...Everyone's worried about me when I'm in the classroom."

Yanami laid open her egg roll listlessly.

"Look, Sosuke had always been next to me until Karen-chan transferred here, right? Then, this 'wait, did Yanami get dumped?' mood showed up."

"Well, I don't know what I should say."

I wanted to say something, but a piece of karaage appeared in my bento box.

“How much is it with the karaage now?”

“...350 yen.”

This girl. I’m literally being an idiot to worry about her.

“Come to think of it, Nukumizu-kun, where did you go after school? I saw you were not heading to the shoe shelves.”

“You were really observing me closely.”

“It’s because it’s hard to ignore you going to the shoe shelves alone.”

...What? Do you really have to stab me with every word you say?

Come to think of it, I’ve graduated from the Going Home Club. I chewed the sandwich with a slightly smug look.

“I’m in the Literature Club now. They want me to show up there for a while.”

“Oh, I didn’t know Nukumizu-kun was interested in that.”

Yanami’s enjoying her octopus sausage.

“Well, I should visit and learn from there too. Can I join you?”

“I’m fine with it. Yanami-san, are you interested in the club too?”

“Yeah, I like flowers.”

“...That’s the Gardening Club. I’m in the Literature Club.”

I finally know why this girl’s getting dumped. Even her cheeks are still filled with rice grains.



That's all for today's lessons.

I really want to leave the classroom as soon as possible. However, here's a suggestion from the "observer" in the class.

-At this moment, I should choose to wait. The post-class assembly school is filled with dangers.

Well, let us start with the door to the classroom. To not be left behind after school, the observers are defending the gate. They won't give way even when a background board like me is approaching them.

...Indeed, when you stare into the background, the background stares back. If you truly wish to be on that side, you have to acknowledge the background's existence.

I observed the flow of my classmates as I slowly packed the things on my table.

The people defending the door are trickling away.

However, don't let your guard down yet. Those guys that were next to the door changed places to the shoe shelves. The people waiting for the others or people who don't want to say goodbye are clustered there.

The worst scenario would be for them to start chatting in front of my shelf. It's already July. Excuses like "I forgot where my shoes are" don't work anymore.

...Wait, I don't think I can go back yet. I have to show up at the Literature Club-

Suddenly, a guy walked straight to me after entering the classroom.

"Hey, Nukumizu, I heard that you entered the Literature Club?"

"Uh..."

The guy talking to me is from 1D, Mitsuki Ayano. We came from the same middle school. He's my friend- no, I guess not. We just sometimes chat with each other since we were in the same prep school.

Also, we're in the same prep school. Yet, this dude's grades are much better than mine, and he's wearing glasses.

"Ah, yeah, I'm in the Literature Club."

"I heard from sensei that they have the whole collection of Kobo Abe. Can I borrow those books next time?"

Oh, we have those books too? Well, I've only checked the light novels anyway.

"I guess so. I can ask senpai about it."

"Thank you so much."

Ayano gave me an innocent smile as he patted my shoulder and tried to leave.

During this time, a wheat-colored body entered my sight.

The person who appeared in front of me is Remon Yakishio. She put her healthily tanned hands onto the table.

"Please wait, Mitsuki!"

Yakishio leaned forward in Ayano's direction. The mixture of 8x4 and sweat smells really soft. [KAO 8x4 deodorant]

...She's close, and she's blocking me.

"I don't have any club activities today. Let's go and eat something, okay?"

“Sorry, I have prep school today.”

Ayano gently put his hands together and apologized.

“Heh, aren’t we just first-years? You’ll turn into an idiot if you only care about studying.”

“You’re the one that should care about studying more, or you’ll get hold back a year, you know?”

...These normies. Can you two please stop flirting on my desk?

“Ayano-san, we’ll be late for prep school if you don’t hurry!”

A slim girl suddenly appeared next to the door of the classroom.

Hmm, I think she’s the girl who always sticks with Ayano during class. She’s adorable and has good grades too. She’s quite famous in that prep school. I didn’t know we’re in the same school.

“Alright, I’m coming, Chihaya. Well, next time, Remon.”

“Eh, ...okay, bye-bye.”

Yakishio didn’t hide her disappointment at all. She waved her hand lifelessly.

I wanted to get away quickly since I get a feeling that things will turn troublesome. However, Yakishio blocked me from taking my schoolbag.

“Hey, I’m sorry, ...Yakishio-san...? ...That’s...my schoolbag.”

“Hey, are Nukumizu and Ayano friends? Even though you two are in different classes.”

Yakishio blinked. Her eyelashes are really long. She stared at me with an unbelievable look.

-The ace of the Track and Field Club, Remon Yakishio. She's a star in the class.

Short hair, slim body under her uniform, beautifully tanned skin, I was dazed for a moment. At the next second, I kept my cool and answered her calmly.

"Uh, ...we aren't really friends. We just talk to each other sometimes in prep school."

Yakishio's eyes suddenly brightened up.

"You two were in the same prep school!? So, you should know that girl too, right!?"

Yakishio suddenly leaned forward to me in excitement. I'm a bit freaked out by her.

"Uh, I think she's Asakumo-san. She's in the elite class, along with Ayano. They both have good grades."

"I-I see. Yeah, Mitsuki does favor clever girls in the end..."

Oh? Don't tell me Yakishio is...

"It's because they're both in the elite class. That's why they are together sometimes. I feel like they are just friends."

"Yeah! They are just friends, right!?"

Yakishio showed a blue sky smile.

Hey, I don't know what they will do after the exam, alright?

"Uh, I want to grab my schoolbag."

"Ah, I'm sorry, Nukumizu-kun. Alright, I'll cheer myself up with a run."

Yakishio immediately started stretching after that. Her tanned legs are really attractive.

I watched her left with an excited expression as I stood up with my schoolbag.

It looks like I'm the only one that doesn't know it. I think all kinds of lunchtime soap operas have been on air since a long time ago.

...Ah, so annoying. Can't I just live my days out in peace?

"Are you done talking, popular-kun?"

Oh, right, there's still this annoying girl too. Yanami stood behind me with her schoolbag.

"Eh, Yanami-san, what can I do for you?"

Yakishio is followed by Yanami, right. I can't believe all of the top girls are lining up to see me. What business do they even want with me? Don't tell me she's short on money again.

I'm suspicious, but Yanami smiled defenselessly.

"You're going to the club, right? Didn't you promise to bring me too?"

This girl, are you serious? Literature Club and Anna Yanami-I can't imagine them together, but whatever, she asked for it.

I nodded silently.



I reminded Yanami in the corridor to the clubroom.

"Are you sure, Yanami-san? How should I put it? Are those insignificant clubs really okay for you?"

With yesterday's mood, I wondered whether I should bring a normie there.

"It's fine. I made something like that before. You know, the ones where you randomly poke at a furball."

“That’s the DIY Club. We’re going to the Literature Club.”

Yeah, I should stop worrying about this girl. I opened the door to the clubroom.

“Oh, hello.”

“Hello, Nukumizu-kun.”

Tsukinoki-senpai’s reading as she swept her bangs upward.

“Hmph...”

Komari raised her head with an annoyed look, but she froze after seeing an unfamiliar girl.

“Uh, she’s here to visit.”

“Excuse me. I’m Yanami, in the same class as Nukumizu-kun.”

“Ara, welcome. Sit down first. I’ll make us tea.”

Tsukinoki-senpai fixed her glasses and poked me as she passed by.

“You’re good, Nukumizu-kun. I can’t believe you brought such a cute girl here.”

“Ha?”

“Don’t tell me she’s your girlfriend?”

Uwah, what is she going on about?

“Ah, no, she’s not-“

“Eh, you misunderstood. We’re just classmates.”

Yanami didn’t react at all. She’s not embarrassed or annoyed. It’s as if she was asked how’s the weather today.

She observed the clubroom curiously.

“There are a lot of books in this club. What do you guys usually do?”

“Eh?”

...I think senpai and Komari are staring at me, and they're being serious too.

As if to clear this awkward mood, the door of the room is opened.

“Oh, what a lively day.”

A tall guy walked into the room. He must be the president, Tamaki-senpai, right? Anyway, I'm saved.

“Shintaro, you're an inactive member despite being the president.”

Tsukinoki-senpai pretended to frown and glared at him, yet she couldn't hide her softening lips.

“Sorry, sorry, I'm busy studying.”

Prez just put his hand on senpai's shoulders carefreely.

“You don't study at all, right?”

“I am. Ah, it's been a while, Nukumizu-kun. We have another member too?”

“Oh, nice to meet you. I'm Yanami. I'm here to visit.”

“Take your time.”

Prez showed a charming smile as he approached us. As for Komari, she made up her mind and dashed between us.

“H-Hey, Prez, t-the book you lent me earlier is super good!”

“You already finished it? Glad to hear that. Koto straight-up despises sci-fi novels.”

Prez said that as he glimpsed at Tsukinoki-senpai. Senpai returned with a glaze as if she's deployed for battle.

"I'm not despising them. Doesn't Shintaro hate Haruki's books too?"

"I didn't know you were Haruki Murakami's fan too?"

"I'm not. You didn't read Rin Usami's book I lent you earlier, too, right?"

"I did. I push it. It's really lit." *[Rin Usami's <Oshii, Moyu>, which means "I push, it's lit".]*

Hmm, what's happening. These two are really going out, right?

Just as I'm watching the two of them dazedly, Komari fearlessly interrupts their conversation.

"H-Hey! I-I love Ine's books too! Even though I...don't... really understand...the content."

"Really? Yeah, Komari has good eyes."

Prez smiled and patted Komari's head.

"Ouch!"

Tsukinoki-senpai slapped Prez's hand away immediately.

"Hey, you little, this is something you can find on #metoo. Komari-chan, I can help you explain it to him if you don't like it."

"I-I!"

Komari seemed to be freaking out over her loud voice and lowered her head.

"I...don't...hate...being patted..."

She mumbled. Her face is as red as a tomato.

“Komari-chan is really adorable! You should learn from her, Koto.”

“Sheesh, Komari-chan, don’t spoil him too much. This guy can really go wild.”

Prez looked at his watch and freaked out.

“I have to go. It’s time for the presidents’ meetings. I should show off and tell them someone actually visited this place.”

“I’ll go with you. You’ll definitely doze off in the middle.”

“Well, Koto should be in charge of waking me up then.”

“Who’s waking you up? Of course, I would recommend you to be a cleaner.”

The two of them gave us diabetes as they walked out of the room. What do we even need Prez for?

“A-Adorable, Prez...said...I-I’m adorable. ...Ehehe.”

Komari smiled like an idiot as she mumbled to herself. Sorry to ruin your happiness, but I want to say you were just being used.

Yanami patted my shoulder and got her face up close. Too close. I can smell something good too.

“That’s the president and the vice president, right? Are those two going out?”

“I don’t know, but they surely look like it.”

Komari overheard us with her sharp ears and raised her phone.

<Those two are just close because they are childhood friends! They aren’t dating!>

Yanami suddenly squinted her eyes.

“...Childhood friends?”

<Yes! Childhood friends!>

Komari said that and left angrily- or not. After that, she put on her earphones playing songs so loudly that we can hear them, and started reading. What a selfish girl.

Yanami moved her chair next to mine.

“Can I ask you why she is talking to us with her phone?”

I want to know too.

“Come to think of it, Nukumizu-kun. Prez and the vice are childhood friends.”

“Eh? Oh, I guess.”

“...How come we’re so different despite both being childhood friends?”

Yanami gritted her teeth and mumbled.

“Listen to me, Yanami-san. They didn’t do anything wrong.”

“Wait, this means that...”

Yanami seems to have noticed something. She raised her head and looked at Komari.

“...Mistress?”

She mumbled quietly. Komari shivered in horror.

“N-No, no, no, Prez isn’t dating her. Why are you saying that?”

“No, isn’t this true? A girl who dares to dash in between childhood friends is definitely a mistress. Do you understand?”

Ah, it’s like a guy suddenly showing up in yuri. I see. I can understand. Go die.

“I know, but you shouldn’t say these things. Komari-san is here too.”

“But she can’t hear us when she’s listening to music, right?”

I don’t know whether she felt our sights. Komari recoiled in horror. Uh, what’s with this strange feeling?

“Don’t tell me, ...Komari-san, are you not listening to music?”

“Eh, but she’s wearing headphones.”

“Perhaps she’s pretending to not hear our conversation with her headphones.”

“Wasn’t it so loud that we could hear it?”

“I’m not hearing that right now. This must be a disguise intending to fool us.”

Komari’s face is covered in sweat as she’s reading.

She took off her headphones and glared at me. After that, she took something out.

“Nukumizu-kun. Here’s the...spare key to the clubroom.”

“Oh, thanks.”

“I-I-I-I’ll be leaving!”

Komari walked out of the clubroom while shivering.

...The once lively clubroom quickly turned silent. The remaining people are either irrelevant or almost irrelevant.

Well, what should we do now? Even if she wants to visit, I know nothing about this club.

“Anyway, I’ll make us some tea. You should write your name on the list.”

“Thanks. Oh, I’ll have green tea.”

Yanami started flipping the list after writing her name on it.

“Hey, a lot of people visited. Nukumizu-kun’s name on it. Also, that girl must be Komari-san, right?”

I don’t know whether she’s quickly bored with this. Yanami started looking at the bookshelf. It’ll be troublesome, so please don’t reach for Dazai’s and Mishima’s books.

“I’ll put the tea here.”

“Thanks. Hey, Nukumizu-kun.”

Yanami sipped the tea as she asked me with pure eyes.

“So, what are we doing in this club again?”



After I got home, I started rolling on the sofa in the living room and sighed.

“I’m literally like a normal high school student now.”

I downloaded Line to get the sticker pack of the character I like, but I’ve never used it until now. I stared at Tsukinoki-senpai’s welcome message dazedly.

Yes, I’m in the Literature Club’s Line group now.

I should treat this as the apex of my high school career. All I have to do now is to live my days out carefully like a clam.

Come to think of it, Ayano asked me to borrow some books for him. Very well, this will serve as my first message.

“Someone I know wants to borrow Kobo Abe’s series, ... that’ll do.”

I can finally understand why those old men are saying what they are typing on the keyboard out loud.

Will I really get a reply? I've heard that people left you on read. Otherwise, it's because everyone blocked you for some reason. What should I do if that happens?

Tsukinoki-senpai replied just as I'm swarmed by anxiety. Ah, thank god. It looks like I'm not blocked.

<Tsukino-Mono: Sure, don't just let him go back. Convince him to join the club.>

I have successfully acquired the permission. ...Also, can we do something about senpai's username?

My little sister Kajyu sat down opposite the table as I'm rolling on the sofa.

"Onii-sama is a great person."

She suddenly said that.

"Ha, thanks."

"Onii-sama will always listen to what Kajyu has to say with a smile. You'll never say no."

"I think I've complained a lot."

Yeah, just like right now.

"Onii-sama will patiently spoil my selfishness. You'll never give me an annoyed look."

"Hey, if you know you're selfish, why don't you change that?"

Kajyu ignored me and cleared her throat respectfully.

"So, onii-sama. Kajyu's making a kyaraben." [Character bento]

She proceeded to say something that I don't even want to complain about anymore.

"So, what's up with that? Explain."

“Kajyu’s really worried about onii-sama when you’re smiling like an idiot to the character in your phone.”

I see. That’s why you’re making a kyaraben.

“Sorry, I don’t understand at all.”

“Onii-sama can grasp everyone’s heart with your kyaraben. This will turn into an opportunity for chatting. Let’s heat up the mood and talk about manga and anime. Everyone likes that, right?”

“Why is it just manga and anime?”

“That’s all onii-sama can talk about, right?”

My little sister’s really impolite. Well, not that she’s wrong.

“But, come to think of it, even if I have a kyaraben, there’s no one to show it to.”

“Onii-sama’s not eating alone even if you’re friendless, right?”

“Uh, no, I usually have lunch alone.”

“Eh, seriously?”

Kajyu bulged her eyes and covered her mouth in disbelief.

“But won’t everything go smoothly as long as you can talk to people?”

Your onii-sama won’t be alone if he can do that.

“Onii-sama, Kajyu shall accompany you to school, right? I’ll try to beg everyone to have lunch with you.”

“Please don’t. Think about how people would see me if I’m being treated like that by my middle school little sister.”

“Well, then kyaraben is indeed the best option. Let’s look at the sample.”

She already made it? Kajyu pulled out a bento box from nowhere.

"As my first-time introduction, it just has to be onii-sama's avatar."

Hey, wait, wait, wait, stop, you're creeping me out.

Also, it's made with the old Gekiga style. It's more like seaweed art than a kyaraben."

"I always wrote onii-sama's personal info using black sesame. This way, I bet everyone in the class will know how attractive onii-sama is."

My classmates aren't interested in my height, weight, and first love in the slightest.

"Also, why is my first love Kajyu?"

"Eh, it's because onii-sama has always said that Kajyu is adorable ever since I was little."

No, I'm praising you because you're my little sister.

"In the end, I don't even need a bento. Someone's making it for me."

"...Someone's making bento for onii-sama? Heh? Eh?"

She looks like her brain refused to understand this. Kajyu froze.

"Hey, Kajyu?"

"Onii-sama! Are you going out with a girl despite not having any friends? You didn't even bother to get Kajyu's permission!?"

"No, I'm not! Why would I have a girlfriend when I don't even have friends!?"

“Yeah, why would onii-sama have a girlfriend when you don’t even have friends?”

Why does my little sister have to keep reminding me that I don’t have friends?

“Kajyu heard that there’s this ‘air girlfriend’ culture in the lonely industry. However, an air bento doesn’t have any calories. You should eat properly.”

“Who do you think I am? I’m eating real food, so don’t worry about me.”

After all, it’s something from a convenience store.

“But, normally, a person won’t make a bento for someone if they aren’t friends or a couple, right?”

“I paid for it.”

“I see. She’s in the working class.”

Kajyu seems to have understood and clapped her hands.

“Bento trade, right? Kajyu heard that from my friends.”

“Please choose your friends carefully.”

I unintentionally made contact with my kyaraben version.

...It looks like both of us are going to have a rough time.

<Today’s remaining debt: 3267 yen>



The next day is a Wednesday. Yanami fulfilled her promise and came to the emergency stairs. It looks like she’s really planning to pay me back with bento.

She put a handkerchief on the stairs before sitting down. She sighed loudly to me, who’s neither her friend, nor her

boyfriend.

"I was invited by those two today as well. They asked whether I want to study in Karen-chan's house after school."

"Why don't you just say no?"

Yanami heard my reasonable opinion and started protesting immediately.

"It's because they will be alone if I don't go."

"Give up. Those two have started going out already."

I'm just here for the bento. Stop giving me all these weird plot twists.

"...Indeed, I think Karen-chan is trying to destroy me. I bet she noticed that I'm watching Sosuke with lewd eyes."

Yanami, please keep that inside your mind.

"I told you to stop overthinking things, right? Perhaps they just think that being all alone will be too awkward. That's why they want Yanami-san to be there."

"...In other words, she just used me as a tool to bring Sosuke to her house."

Eh, did I say something bad?

"No, you're overthinking..."

"Just like that, she lowered his guard and made him enter her house. Finally-"

Yanami stared at me.

"...Anna-chan said something showed up, and she can't come."

...She suddenly changed her voice and said that.

"Ha?"

This girl's saying something weird again.

"This is a demo. Imagine a scene where Karen-chan and Sosuke are alone."

"Ha..."

Can you please just stop dragging me in with you?

"Let's start again. Anna-chan can't come today. It's Nukumizu-kun's turn. You'll be Sosuke, quick!"

"Uh, ...well, it's only the two of us alone then."

What kind of insane imagination is this?

"...What if, ...and I'm saying what if. What if I told you that I didn't tell her on purpose? What will you do?"

Yanami lowered her head and closed our distance.

I have to remember it. How will the rom-com MCs answer in this case?

"What will you do if I tell you that I already knew?"

"Sosuke..."

"Karen..."

A moment of silence radiated when we looked at each other. Yanami quickly moved her body away and slammed her knee caps.

"This has to be it! That woman is indeed targeting Sosuke's body..."

Most of this is just your imagination.

"Forget about that. Where's my bento?"

"...Nukumizu-kun, now's not the time for that, right? Don't you have any friends?"

Don't worry about me.

Yanami took out an aluminum bento box. Wait, why is there only one?

“Help me open the lid.”

Yanami made me hold the lid as she stabbed her chopsticks inside the rice.

“What are you doing?”

“I said it yesterday, right? I can only use one bento box.”

Her wrist shivered as she pinched a huge pile of rice and put it onto the lid.

It's heavy. You can see the grains are sticking together like a rice cake if you look closely.

“So, I tried my best to fit two servings into one box. The vegetables are next.”

I got two piles of something. The fried vegetables are in the shape of the box. I won't get any appetite from this.

“Well, thanks for the food.”

“...Oh, help yourself. Let's eat.”

Well, how should I taste the rice cake that Yanami tried her best to make? I was utterly crushed under the hopelessness of not being able to pick up the rice with my disposable chopsticks. At the same time, I disintegrated the pile using the sauce from the boiled food and sent them all into my mouth.

“Uh, does it taste good?”

Eh, you saw what's happening to me, and you're asking me how it tastes?

“Did Yanami-san make the vegetables too?”

“Of course, I put in a lot of effort. How much is this worth?”

Ah, I see. That's great. At least now I know Yanami isn't raised by food like this.

Ah, I tasted a cold fried potato cake in that pile of veggies.

"Uh, 400 yen."

"Nice, I like the price tag."

Yanami chewed the rice ball in a good mood. I'll go ahead and say this first. The standard for that price tag is pretty low. Also, this is a really huge bento...

"I guess I can pay you back before the summer holiday."

Right, our lunch will end after the money's paid. Right, I guess it's not bad to treat this as a limited-time event. Of course, she still has to pay me back.

"Hey, you want to go upstairs? You can see the playground on the 4th floor."

I finished my bento in time. Yanami stood up after picking up her empty bento box. Well, I have no reason to reject it.

Not a single piece of cloud can be seen under the sunny sky of July. The Track and Field Club is practicing on the playground.

"Ah, that's Remon-chan, right?"

Yanami leaned on the handle and reached her hand out.

I can see Remon Yakishio's wheat-colored skin from afar. She already distanced herself from the rest at the start.

"Remon-chan is indeed really fast!"

Having lunch, changing, practicing, and changing again in 50 minutes. I don't think I can do that.

I'm not mocking her. It's just that I'm sighing at my inability to touch something so charming.

“She won the 100m race in town, you know? She even got a good rank in the prefecture-level.”

“Hey, you know a lot.”

You can leave reading the messages on the notice board to me.

“She’s amazing, Remon-chan.”

She unintentionally said that. So, I decided to swallow what I wanted to say back down.

Yanami’s eyes are filled with tears.

The tears she dropped are blown by the wind.

Yanami’s face still has a lingering sense of innocence. I had no interaction with her until a while ago, and now I’m here and seeing her cry. This feels unrealistic.

“Hey, Yanami-san. Are you okay?”

“I was dumped-“

You only realized it now?

“Hey, I bet you’re thinking I only realized it now.”

“Uh, how did you know?”

You shouldn’t read people’s minds.

“How should I put it? I think it finally came to me.”

“Came to you?”

“I feel I got dumped after seeing Remon-chan running.”

The tears on her eyelashes are sparkling.

“My brain can actually understand that I got dumped, but my body still couldn’t acknowledge it.”

Yakishio's in the boy's group now. Under our glances, she was immediately passed by a tall guy.

"I think Nukumizu-kun will understand if you get rejected brutally."

"Maybe."

"Nothing will change even if I'm rejected. I won't feel refreshed as well."

Yanami said that and stretched her back.

"But, everything around me will still move on, and I have to go, whether I want to or not."

I guess it's like the main quest in a game.

"I won't know that because I haven't been rejected yet."

"Oh, that's a line from a popular guy."

Yanami answered my self-mockery that I scrambled my brain for with a gentle smile.

I bet a light novel MC can make the heroine's heart go all flutter with humorous words. But I guess this is the furthest I can go.

For the losing heroine, time passes equally. Her daily life is still going on as usual, just as the couple is creating unforgettable moments.

Both of us went silent. We enjoyed the breeze and watched the students running on the field.

<Today's remaining debt: 2867 yen>

INTERMISSION

EVEN WHEN SHE'S STARVING, SHE'S STILL A GOOD CHILD LIKE A GOD

After pressing the button on the rice cooker, an electric sound played in the dark kitchen. Anna Yanami wore her pajamas and opened the fridge with a yawn.

“Ugh, it’s just eggs...”

Yanami opened the vegetable cooler. There are some withered cole and ham inside. As for the refrigerator, it’s all frozen spaghetti and Garigari-kun popsicles. It wasn’t until she got to the bottom that she found an opened bag of mixed veggies.

“What can I do with these ingredients...?”

Eggs, ham, mixed veggies, she looked at the spoils of war on the table.

Well, what should I do with tomorrow’s bento? Even though I’m not good at cooking, I don’t like that guy’s reaction.

“Wasn’t he saying that my bento tastes awful...?”

A thought suddenly popped up in Yanami’s mind as she opened the shelf for bowls. It’s filled with canned food. Yanami took the innermost can out. It’s filled with dust.

The label is “Produced by Emperor’s Hotel: Secret White Sauce”.

Oh, that's good. It sounds amazing. I bet that guy has to acknowledge my cooking.

Yanami smiled mischievously and looked at the table. She noticed the expiration date on the side.

Wait, which year is it again? Hmm, the first year of Reiwa is 2019-

Yanami stopped thinking and put the can onto the table.

I remembered someone said that Napoleon is the first guy to eat canned food. If someone from so long ago has eaten it, a 2-year expiration date is just a small margin of error, right?

Yanami accepted the mysterious conclusion in her brain and took a big bite of Garigari-kun with her incisors. Then-

(...Ouch!)

She squatted down alone in the dark kitchen.

Anna Yanami, an over-sensitive 15-year old, met another midnight in the summer.

CHAPTER 2

THE NAME OF THE FAILED “EXCALIBRUH” – REMON YAKISHIO

The cicadas are screaming non-stop.

The second day's second lesson is PE until the scorching sun. I wiped my sweat off after putting the last hurdle inside the storage at the end of the lesson.

I've always thought about this. The rule of letting the student with the same number as the date pack up things is going too easy on no. 30.

“I refuse to accept this.”

I complained as I swept away the dust on me.

I should just go change. I just can't handle being the only one in PE clothes after everyone's done changing.

Click. I can hear the storage door getting locked. The surroundings got dark as well.

...Eh, the door's closed? Bullying? Is someone trying to bully me?

I hastily turned around.

In the gloomy storage, Remon Yakishio is standing there embarrassedly. I can see her curves clearly under her PE clothes that are soaked with sweat.

“...Yakishio-san?”

Hey, I’ve seen this in anime. I gulped unconsciously.

Yakishio lowered her head and looked at the ground. She swept the hair sticking on her face and walked to me.

“Nukumizu, there’s something I want to tell you.”

“Ha?”

A normal person would probably look forward to the upcoming fanservice. However, regrettably, I’m not that naïve.

It’s because from a romance novel’s perspective, there’s not enough development between Yakishio and me for that to happen.

“Let me ask you this. What happened to the thing I asked you before?”

“Eh, what?”

In other words, this isn’t a romance event. Instead, I’m just being an idiot for misunderstanding this whole thing. I wouldn’t be so nervous if I knew.

“Ayano asked you to borrow books from the Literature Club, right? Did he borrow it already?”

I see. She’s talking about that. No, not yet. I haven’t told him, after all.

Yakishio put her hands behind and kicked the floor with her legs shyly.

“I-If it’s okay, ...can I be the one to give him those?”

“It’s a whole series, after all. You can’t take them all at once, right? If he just comes to borrow-“

Yakishio looked like she wanted to say something else as her body moved restlessly. Even I can tell what she wants.

"Well, sure, go ahead, Yakishio-san. You can tell him he can come whenever he wants."

"Alright, leave it to me! I'll make sure to tell him!"

Yakishio's smile is as charming as the sun inside the gloomy storage.

The dust is reflecting the sunlight, which makes her very shiny.

"Okay, I'll tell him after school!"

"Wait, this is just an example."

"What?"

Yakishio smiled and tilted her head.

This girl is in the same middle school as I do. I guess I can do a little bit more for her.

"Yakishio-san should tell him when you don't have club activities."

Indeed, she can say something nice first, as long as she can get him to the club. Then, with the opportunity, I can let you two hang out alone for 2 hours in the Literature Club's room-

"My club activities? Why?"

Yakishio immediately bulged her eyes. She's looking at me in disbelief.

"How should I say it? It'll be great for Yakishio-san to visit the Literature Club once in a while, right?"

You should understand what I'm trying to say here, right?"

"Visit, ...me?"

Good lord, seriously? Are you this dense?

“In other words, you’ll have nothing to do after you said it to Ayano, right? If Yakishio-san doesn’t have club activities, you can use this as an excuse to be with him. Even if you fail to invite him, you can see him there as long as you’re in the club room.”

Yakishio is shocked. Her eyes bulged even more, and then she clapped her hands.

“I see. You’re really smart, Nukumizu.”

Yakishio’s expression immediately changed into a cheerful smile. She patted my shoulder. It really hurts.

“Nukumizu, you’re a nice guy. I misunderstood you.”

This class’s misunderstanding for me is already spreading.

“Oh, but please don’t get the wrong picture! Well, Mitsuki and I aren’t like that. He’s just my friend-”

“Seriously? Are you still saying he’s just your friend at this point? Isn’t it too late?”

She’s a high-class and energetic beauty. However, she’s still like a child whenever it involves love. Yakishio curled her lips as if she’s covering up her embarrassment.

“By the way, it’s hot. Let’s get out. How long are you planning to stay here?”

Yakishio pulled her PE shirt as she said that. Why don’t you think about why I am stuck here in the first place?

Yakishio reached her hand to the door.

“Ugh, what?”

“What’s wrong?”

The two of us tried to open the door, yet it's not bulging. Yakishio turned to me in confusion.

"Don't tell me...the door is locked from the outside?"

"Eh!? Hey, anyone!? Someone's still here-"

"Nukumizu! Don't yell so loudly!"

Yakishio choked my neck with her arms from behind. Uwah, I can feel something soft with my back- no, her sticky sweat is really disgusting. This girl sweats way too much.

"Hey, I-I can't breathe."

Even though I want to escape, ...her strength is too much. I can't get her off me at all.

"B-Breathe..."

I kept hitting Yakishio's hands.

"Oh, sorry. Are you okay?"

"Are you trying to kill me? ...Why are you stopping me from calling for help?"

"It's because our PE lessons are with Mitsuki's class too."

"Oh, so you want me to call Mitsuki here?"

"N-Not at all! I don't want Mitsuki seeing me in the store with another guy."

Yakishio twirled her fingers sheepishly.

Huh, she's suddenly quite cute, but now's not the time for that.

"Everyone will be back in the classroom if we don't hurry."

"People from the next lesson will help us. Just hold it."

"Won't that expose the fact that we're alone in here?"

“Well, ...Nukumizu should dress as a girl.”

“Isn’t it faster for Yakishio-san to dress as a guy instead?”

This conversation is meaningless. I think everyone went back when we were talking. Only cicadas can be heard from outside.

Yakishio gripped the window near the ceiling and lifted herself up.

“Eh, why is no one coming?”

“...Yakishio-san. Is everyone having PE lessons in the swimming pool instead?”

“Eh?”

The bell rang.

“By the way, why weren’t we in the swimming pool!?”

“Didn’t sensei say this before? Year 2’s swimming competition wouldn’t be done until the 2nd lesson. That’s why the pool is closed.”

“Oh, right, that’s why the 3rd lesson is swimming. No wonder why no one is on the playground...”

The cicadas are singing happily.

“Hey! We’re still in here!”

“Anyone out there!?”

We sat down exhausted after yelling for a while.

I think the weather forecast said that today’s highest is 35 degrees Celsius. It’s the first hot day of the summer.

The temperature inside the storage is rising mercilessly. My sweat is slowly drying up. Is it because my body’s getting used to it? ...I don’t think so. It’s because there’s no sweat left.

“Crap, when will people come to help us?”

“The Track and Field Club will come during lunch...”

Uwah, there's a puddle of sweat around Yakishio. This girl has a strong metabolism.

“Are you okay, Yakishio?”

“I'm okay. I'm more of an impala than a Thompson's gazelle.”

“Eh, Yakishio-san's an impala?”

...Wait, what is she even talking about?

“That's why I said it's faster when you run with all fours. In other words, it's better than just flinging water at spotted hyenas...”

“Hey.”

I don't think she's okay.

I have to do something. The window near the ceiling is blocked with steel bars. It looks like we can't go out from here.

Let's find something that can make a huge noise. Hmm, there are no whistles or loudspeakers in the storage.

I found a sports bag covered in dust as I was searching the shelves. After I opened it, there are some girls' clothing, a towel, and used bottles.

Even though it immediately gave me hope, the mouth of the bottle is filled with mold. I gave up and put the stuff back into the bag. However, I found a cooling spray at the bottom.

“Look, Yakishio-san! Cooling spray!”

Yakishio's dazed eyes immediately brightened after seeing the spray.

"Nice one, Nukunuku! Spray it onto me!"

Nukunuku means me?

Yakishio turned around and took off her shirt that's utterly soaked with sweat. Something inside her sports bra and her silky skin look really clear to me now.

"Ah, please wait!"

"Quick!"

I've never expected a girl to beg me forcefully.

I sprayed it onto her back with trembling hands. Yakishio immediately moaned. I don't know whether it's a painful one or a happy one.

"It's my front next."

Yakishio turned around. Eh, wait, is this really okay? I can see your stomach. Her tan is quite lewd.

Her stomach is slowly vibrating as I sprayed it onto her. At the same time, weird noises slipped out of her mouth. Anyway, it's not my fault that the mood turned like this.

"Are you feeling better now?"

"A bit...better."

Yakishio sat on the floor dazedly as she reached her hands toward her bra.

"W-Wait, wait, wait! Don't take that off!"

"Eh, sheesh, Nukunuku, what's with the embarrassment? We're both girls. Also, the sweat is really sticky. Please get me a towel."

You think we're in a girls' changing room!? This person lost her damn mind.

I took the towel out of the bag. Then, I looked away as I handed it to Yakishio, who took off her bra.

“G-Get your clothes back on after wiping it!”

“...Oh, this is the bag I lost here. This is where it is.”



Yakishio wiped her body as she looked inside the sports bag.

“Hey! Yakishio-san, clothes! Clothes!”

“Oh, there’s some left!”

Left? Don’t tell me she’s talking about the bottle?

I cautiously looked over there, and Yakishio’s about to put the bottle filled with mold into her mouth.

“Idiot! Don’t drink that!”

“Hey! What are you doing, Nukunuku!?”

Yakishio pressed her body against me after I took away the bottle.

“Woah, I didn’t see! I didn’t see anything!”

“That’s mine!”

Uwah, something’s pressing against me! Something is really pressing against me this time!

“Hey, is somebody in here?”

A familiar voice can be heard from the outside. It’s my class teacher, Konami Amanatsu-sensei.

“Sensei, someone’s in here! Open the door!”

The door was opened forcefully.

Thank god, we’re saved. Amanatsu-sensei dropped her jaws after seeing what’s happening in here.

“What are you two doing?”

Perhaps we aren’t saved.

Yakishio, who’s half-naked, by the way, pushed me over. ... No, we’re totally wiped out already.

“...Sensei will wait after you two are done.”

“No, don’t close it! Please help, sensei!”

“Even though things were quite open in my generation, we wouldn’t do things like this during class.”

“Sensei, I don’t care about that! Please just help me out!”

Yakishio finally collapsed onto the ground from exhaustion after I pushed her away.

...I’ll say this twice since it’s important. I didn’t see anything.



Rehydration solution, saltwater, and glucose solution are all emergency measures for dehydration.

Of course, these are always present in our school’s nurse room.

“Wow, ...OS-1 tastes really nice.” [OS-1 rehydration solution]

“Ah, thank you so much...”

These things are granted to idiots like us without hesitation.

Amanatsu-sensei crossed her arms and looked at us dumbfoundedly.

“Don’t go back to class and rest here, you two. The boy over there, I’ll contact your class teacher. What’s your teacher’s name? Which class are you in?”

“I’m Nukumizu from your class, sensei.”

I already lost hope that she can remember me.

“You’re in my class? Whatever, I’ll leave the rest to Konuki.”

Amanatsu-sensei walked out of the classroom after saying that.

The school nurse sitting in front of us, Konuki-sensei, waved at Amanatsu-sensei.

Usually, a young and lewd school nurse only exists in urban legends. However, Konuki-sensei's crossing her legs as if she's purposely showing me her urban legend-level body. At the same time, she smiled mischievously.

"How do you two feel now?"

"Yeah, much better."

My heart's beating faster. Konuki-sensei is radiating a really lewd aura.

"Sensei, one more, please."

Yakishio still looked wobbly as she handed out an empty bottle.

"Here, take your time."

"Okay!"

Yakishio laughed like a child and started drinking the second OS-1.

After that, Konuki-sensei's expression turned serious.

"Heat strokes are scary. It's a life-and-death matter, and it can cause permanent damage too."

"It's my fault. I'm sorry."

"It's fine. Young people have a lot of frustrations. A sudden surge of horniness or something, or getting even more excited because of the restraints."

"...Ha? What are you talking about?"

"Hiya, no need to pretend in front of sensei. If you know it, you know it."

Konuki-sensei put her finger on my lips and smiled.

"Whenever you two did in that storage...is a secret between us."

I think she misunderstood us completely. Solving it would be too troublesome, so I changed the topic.

"Are Konuki-sensei and Amanatsu-sensei close?"

"Yes, we were in the same class in this school."

"Oh, you're our senpai. What was Amanatsu-sensei like back then?"

"I bet you can't imagine how she looks nowadays at all. She's actually a very clumsy and dangerous person."

Well, it's actually pretty easy to imagine it.

"I used to bring her to the nurse room all the time. You know, cause she trips over all the time."

Sensei laughed as she took a trip down memory lane.

Konuki-sensei's wearing pantyhose. She switched her legs' position and looked at the ceiling nostalgically.

"Sensei, is there someone on the ceiling?"

"The stains on the ceiling are still the same."

"You can remember that?"

This must be the case, right? She always had to rest in the nurse room due to her weak body. Then, after she grew up, she returned here as a school nurse. What a beautiful story.

"It's because of our sex position- ...no, it's because of my body posture. I naturally looked at the ceiling."

...Correction. This person is insane.

"Alright, you should take a nap after drinking it."

Sensei pulled the robes that separated the bed.

Konuki-sensei let Yakishio, who looked exhausted, sleep on the bed. After that, she took away the empty bottle from my hand.

"You should rest and recover too. Your body is worse than you think."

"Thanks, sensei. I'll take a break."

After I got in bed, the stains on the ceiling entered my sight too. My brain can't help but imagine Konuki-sensei in her school uniform. I covered my head with the blanket to remove the lively imagination inside my head.

...Sensei, I don't need you to tell me that.



The ring of the bell is still lingering in my ears. I turned around dazedly.

How long did I sleep? From the noises in the corridor, I guess it's around lunch break now.

I can see Yakishio deep in sleep from the gaps of the robes. Even though I'm a little worried about her getting a cold with her exposed stomach, I can't just go in and pull up her blanket.

"Ah, eating lunch's annoying."

After I said it out loud, I realized, yeah, it's indeed really annoying. I don't have an appetite today. Let's just sleep until lunch's over.

“Nukumizu-kun, you have a guest.”

Yanami waved at me behind Konuki-sensei.

“Ah, why is Yanami-san here?”

“I heard that Nukumizu-kun and Remon-chan are in the nurse room. Are you two okay?”

“Oh, thanks, I’m okay. Yakishio-san’s sleeping soundly too.”

I got out of bed. For some reason, Konuki-sensei looked at me with hopeful eyes.

“Yanami-san brought Nukumizu-kun a bento. Ara ara, you’re surely having it hard.”

“Sensei, I think you misunderstood all kinds of things.”

Konuki-sensei nodded with her seemingly all-knowing look.

“I guess so. It looks like sensei’s being a nuisance. Yanami-san, I’ll leave for a while. You can use the room however you want.”

“Thank you, sensei. Nukumizu-kun, let’s eat.”

Yanami said cheerfully before handing me a bag with the bento.

“You can lock the door from the inside. Well, enjoy yourselves.”

Konuki-sensei’s not even trying to cover up her mischievous smile anymore. Seriously, the same goes for Amanatsu-sensei. How did you two manage to become teachers?

“Hmm? What’s that?”

A phone camera is facing us under the pile of books on sensei’s table.

...What the hell are you trying to record? I turned off the recording.

“What’s wrong, Nukumizu-kun?”

“It’s nothing. Let’s eat.”

We sat down face-to-face. Yanami took out a really large plastic box. Yeah, it looks like she gave up trying to shove two servings into one bento.

Something yellow is inside the plastic box.

“Omurice?”

“Yes, I’m pretty confident this time. The rice is all rolled up round and good-looking.”

Yanami split the omelet rice cleanly with her spoon.

Well, how should we eat it? Don’t tell me we’re taking turns? That’s not possible, right?

Just as I was thinking, Yanami handed me a white plate.

“I borrowed it from the homeroom. Here, hold the plate.”

She casually poured the omurice onto the plate. Uh, isn’t there a better way?

“Alright, close your hands. Let’s eat.”

“Ah, right. Let’s eat.”

It’s been a long time since I’ve last eaten omurice. A familiar taste spread inside my mouth after I took a bite. That’s how omurice tastes.

“It’s good, right? Well, how much do you think this is worth?”

“Hmm, 400 yen.”

“400 yen. Well, it works.”

Yanami held her spoon and nodded in agreement.

It's close, right? That's how much it costs in the nearby supermarket.

"This must be 'sontaku', right?"

I think Yanami threw out a pretty annoying term.

"What's that?"

"It upsets the creator if the price is too low. Moreover, you don't want people to call you stingy. However, you can't accept a high price since you'd end up losing."

You're right. Yanami looked at me, who didn't and didn't need to answer, with a chic face. She continued.

"So, the compromise is 400 yen, ...right? Yes?"

Yeah, I was considerate of your feelings, but are you supposed to be the one to say it?

"Nukumizu-kun. I want to ask you a question. Are you sure that it's 400 yen?"

I see. Well, I shall respond to your passionate speech.

"Well, sure. 300-"

"No, no! That's not what I meant!"

Eh, isn't this what she wanted?

"Ah, you scared me. This is what I want to say, Nukumizu-kun."

About what, Yanami-san?

"I'll break the 400-yen wall with this."

Bam. Yanami took out a thermos.

"I see. You want to get a better price with soup."

However, it's not guaranteed that soup will work. At this point, all soups during lunchtime in the catering industry are

free. I mean, even cafes offer you a piece of jam toast when you order a cup of coffee in the morning.

Yanami opened the lid of the thermos and added the content to the omurice.

“Since when did you think that this is soup?”

“This is...white sauce?”

Oh, that’s why she didn’t add tomato sauce. Even though I like tomato sauce more, this girl did put in effort and promotion. Of course, I have to increase the price to pretend that I know a lot.

“450-”

No, from this girl’s method, I bet she’ll make me add more with another set of side dish hell. Now’s not the time to bring up the price tag yet.

“Eh? What did you say?”

I won’t fall into your trap. I silently put the spoon inside my mouth.

“Hmm!? What’s this!? It tastes super good!”

“Hmph mph, ...I used my precious end-of-the-year present, Emperor Hotel White Sauce. Say it. How much is this worth? This taste is from the Emperor Hotel!”

...Tck, she still got me. After hearing the Emperor Hotel’s name, I knew I can’t just randomly throw out a price tag anymore. Although I’m unsure of the taste, I can predict humiliating scenes like, “This broke-ass dude doesn’t even know what Emperor Hotel is”.

“5-500 yen.”

“500 yen, got it.”

Yanami smiled.

She got me completely. However, I have to reduce my loss to a minimum-

“I feel like you two are doing something interesting.”

Yakishio stretched her body and appeared on the other side of the robe.

“Ah, Remon-chan. Good afternoon. Is your body okay?”

“I’m fine. I feel much better after taking a nap.”

“Thank god, Yakishio-san. I was freaking out back then-”

I can’t help but remember how miserable she was in the storage room. Yakishio looked at me in disbelief as she sat on the chair.

“Hey, Nukunuku. I have lost my memories since the middle part. What happened?”

“Eh? No, well! Amanatsu-sensei came to help us!”

“I see. I had no idea. Did Amanatsu-sensei change my clothes too?”

She pinched her PE shirt from the chest. My brain flashed Yakishio’s silky skin again.

‘Yes! Amanatsu-sensei changed it for you! So, I didn’t see anything. I didn’t see anything!’

“Of course, no one will watch girls changing clothes.”

“Nukumizu-kun, you’re a bit disgusting.”

The two girls looked at me with cold and suspicious eyes. Can you two please don’t say I’m disgusting? I’ll die from this.

“Well, forget about that. What is this? This feels tasty.”

“Right, I made it. Here, open your mouth.”

Yakishio put the spoon that Yanami handed over in her mouth.

“Wow, this tastes really good! What is this sauce? It’s too tasty!”

“See? This is the taste of the Emperor Hotel. Sigh, regrettably, Nukumizu-kun didn’t seem to understand its true value and gave a half-baked price.”

Yanami chuckled and looked at me as she fed another spoonful to Yakishio. Why are you feeding her from my plate?

“Here, another one.”

“Excuse me. Is Remon here?”

The door was opened. Mitsuki Ayano suddenly appeared. Yakishio slowly closed her mouth.

“Mitsuki!?”

Yakishio immediately sat upright. Her wheat-colored skin can’t cover her gradually blushing face.

“I heard you collapsed from a stroke, but you look really energetic now.”

“No, no, no, I’m about to fall down again! Mitsuki, are you here to take care of me?”

“Here’s your prize. You can still eat these, right?”

The bag has jelly and apple juice inside.

“Is it for me?”

“But you look quite energetic now. I guess you don’t need it.”

“I need it! I don’t have an appetite because I’m not feeling well. Thank you.”

“You’re right.”

Ayano reached his hand to Yakishio’s face.

“M-Mitsuki...!?”

“Your face can’t eat, you know?”

Ayano smiled and took a rice grain off Yakishio's face.

“T-Thank you.”

“Well, I’ll be leaving.”

“Mitsuki, you want to eat here too? Yanami-chan’s omurice is really good.”

Yakishio said that just as Ayano’s about to leave.

“Oh, omurice.”

“Ah, Mitsuki-san, you’re here.”

An adorable face suddenly appeared next to the door. She’s Chihaya Asakumo, Ayano’s classmate in prep school.

“What’s wrong, Chihaya?”

“I’m going to the library since there’s no prep school today. You want to go together?”

“Sorry, I have to go home early today. See you at prep school tomorrow.”

“Sure, I’ll message you at night then.”

Chihaya Asakumo left in a flash. Ayano smiled bitterly.

“Sheesh, didn’t I tell her that we’ll see each other tomorrow?”

He looked like he was complaining, but I think it’s more about embarrassment.

...Wait, how come the aura between these two is different than when they were still in prep school with me?

"Well, I'll be heading back to the classroom. Don't push yourself too much, Remon."

"Sure, thanks!"

Yakishio watched Ayano leave. Her expression is completely a girl who fell in love.

"...Look, Remon-chan's love aura is going all over the place."

Yanami came next to me and poked me with her elbow.

"Uh, I think Yakishio-san likes Ayano."

"I see. What an unexpected couple?"

"I was in the same middle school as they were, but I think those two knew each other since elementary."

"In other words, they are childhood friends, right?"

Childhood friends, ...that's how Yanami sees them.

Yanami shrugged at me, who's not resonating at all.

"Nukumizu-kun, there are two types of girls. They are either childhood friends or a cheating cat."

I see. What a bold statement. Yanami looked at me sternly.

"So, who's that person?"

"Asakumo-san. I think she's been in the same prep school since year 3 of middle school."

Yakishio finally snapped out of her dreams and leaned forward. The plates went flying for a moment.

"Let me ask you this. How do you two think about Ayano and Asakumo-san!?"

"I feel like they have a good relationship. They just recently met each other, right? They just look like normal friends to me."

"Right!? They are just friends, right!?"

"...But, from their mood just then, I think they already started going out, right?"

"Ha?"

The two's aura made me recoil. It's scary.

"Eh, what did you say?"

"Nukumizu-kun, do you seriously think that a single year can beat the long journey started in elementary school?"

"Yes, yes! Yanami-chan knows better."

I think I remember seeing a 10-year candidate losing to a 2-month girl not long ago.

"Thanks, I feel much better now!"

It's good that you're cheered up. While that's good-

"Yakishio-san, that's my lunch."

"Oh, really? It tastes really good. Why don't Nukunuku just join us?"

"That's my spoon you're using too, Yakishio-san."

"Hmm? It's fine, here."

Yakishio moved the spoon around while holding the top part with her mouth.

Uwah, I reluctantly took out the spoon from her mouth. The slimy feeling is very erotic- no, sorry, my bad. It's filled with her saliva.

I shoved the spoon back into her mouth depressedly again.

“Ugh!?”

“I don’t have an appetite. You should eat more.”

Come to think of it, I really hate taking turns eating things. I forgot about it since I rarely encounter situations like this.

“No, that’s not good, right? I should leave a little bit for you.”

Thanks for only leaving a little bit for me.

“Right, Nukumizu-kun. Komari-chan asked me to tell you something. She wants you to show up in the club after school.”

Yanami said that as she ate. What is it? Did the student council scold Komari again?

I can’t help but look at the two girls eating.

Even though both Yanami and Yakishio look very cute, their personalities are less than pleasing.

Also, Yakishio has the same losing heroine vibe as Yanami.

“Thanks for the food.”

Just as I’m thinking about these very impolite things, a warm spoon is shoved into my mouth. The taste of egg and sauce is spreading on my tongue.

“!?”

“I told you that I’m leaving you a little bit.”

Yakishio gently said that and stood up.

“Alright, I’ll be going back. Tell sensei I say hi.”

How can you just put a spoon into other people’s mouths? Especially when it was in yours. Do you think you’re pretty cute- well, she is cute, but that doesn’t she should do that.

Yakishio walked outside. As for Yanami, she glanced at me while chuckling.

“Ara, aren’t your face red?”

“T-That’s impossible!”

“It’s an indirect kiss, after all. This isn’t good. You shouldn’t think about weird things in school.”

“I-I told you that’s not the case.”

I took the plate and quickly finished the remaining omurice.

“Oh, right, I remembered. I’m going shopping with my friends, so I won’t be in the Literature Club.”

“I see. Got it.”

By the way, are you seriously joining the Literature Club? You don’t even know what the club is doing.

“Can you go to the club alone? Will you break down in tears from loneliness?”

What was that? Are you messing with me again? I immediately raised my head, and Yanami looked genuinely worried about me.

Eh, is she really worried about me?

“I can go alone.”

“Really? That’s great. Well, give it your all.”

Yanami’s expression immediately turned to relief. Then, she scooped up the remaining rice with her spoon skillfully.

...Right now, what is my character in Yanami’s eyes?



After school, Tsukinoki-senpai is looking at Komari and me with serious eyes in the clubroom.

Komari twirled her fingers nervously. She hid her hands under the table after noticing that I'm looking at her.

"There's only one reason that I called you all here. It's something about the Literature Club's future."

Senpai raised her index fingers pretendingly.

"Something troublesome and something more troublesome, which one do you two want to hear first?"

"Is there something that's not troublesome?"

"Well, there's something very annoying and time-wasting, if I have to say."

"I'm sorry. Please say the troublesome thing first."

Senpai quickly nodded and put down her hands.

"The days of just reading are coming to an end. We have to shift gears to writing."

"Eh, even though the Literature Club wrote nothing before?"

"No, no, we were writing. Once upon a time, the Literature Club wrote club journals. There's also a member praised by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. I wonder if we have a member like that or not. Yeah, I don't think we do."

Which means we don't, right?

"Why did we stop now?"

"You don't understand at all."

Tck, tck, tck. Tsukinoki-senpai swung her finger and smiled confidently.

"Because we all talk with no action."

Komari nodded in agreement. Huh, is this an inside joke of the Literature Club?

“To be honest, it’s because the student council came to the presidents’ meeting. They questioned our lack of writing despite having it on our club activities content.”

“Ha?”

“We used to be able to cover our tracks cleverly. But, it suddenly got out for some reason.”

Eh, don’t tell me that...? A horrifying student council member’s face appeared in my mind.

...No, I have to change the topic.

“So, does that mean we have to start making journals again?”

“No, we don’t have the budget for paper nor printing. Also, there’s no way for us to publish them. So.”

Tsukinoki-senpai raised her phone smugly.

“We’ll be raising our sails in the digital ocean. In other words, we’ll be submitting drafts to <Let’s Become an Author>!..” [A reference to *Shosetsuka ni Naro, Let’s Become a Novelist.*]

Clap, clap, clap. Komari clapped her hands for some reason. Senpai raised her hand to signal Komari to be quiet. I’m confused by the sudden request.

“First of all, whether it’s chapter 1 or short stories, it’s okay as long as we upload something.”

Indeed, you can skip printing if you upload it online. There’s no need to think of a way to publish it. It’s very good for club activities.”

“Well, it’s time for the more troublesome thing.”

Right, there's a second one. I can't help but straighten my back.

"The Literature Club will have a training camp this weekend."

"What?"

"I booked two empty rooms in a hostel in Tahara this weekend." [Tahara, Aichi Prefecture]

"Eh, wait, isn't this weekend the day after tomorrow?"

"The recent publishing industry is all about speed, you know? I'm just as passionate as you young people, alright? Can you two keep up!?"

Komari clapped her hands again. Then, she pulled out her phone after pondering it for a moment.

<Honestly, I want to stay home this weekend.>

Yeah, honestly, I don't feel like it either.

"Hoho, ...it looks like you two don't understand at all. Can you still say that after hearing this?"

Tsukinoki-senpai smiled confidently. For some reason, her glasses suddenly flashed.

"...Canned session."

What? She's not talking about canned tuna, right? It must be that thing where the author locks himself up in a hotel or something when the deadline is near. So, what are you trying to say?

"O-Oh..."

Komari looked like her soul was out of her body. Woah, what's with this reaction?

"You two are looking forward to it, right? Excited?"

“Y-Y-Yes, canned session is awesome!”

Komari nodded rapidly. Is that really true? I don't understand.

“You can write on paper or your phone. Prez will bring a laptop here. Let's use it to upload our stuff.”

“But we haven't decided what to write yet.”

“You can do it during the weekend. The minimum is to have an outline ready before that.”

Even though I do have something I want to write, honestly, this is a bit too sudden.

“Does senpai have an idea already?”

“It's <Let's Become an Author>, after all. I'll write an isekai novel.”

Huh, that's unexpected. I didn't know senpai liked trendy things.

“First of all, Mishima committed seppuku and got reincarnated into another world. Then, Dazai followed him by jumping into the Tamagawa Aqueduct. That's the prologue.”

Senpai, can't you write something a bit more trendy?

“Isn't the order reversed? Dazai died first.”

“I know, but you can ignore trivial things like that during writing. The most important part is their mutual love for each other.”

“Komari-san, is that true?”

I can't help but ask Komari.

<Indeed, Nukumizu, you don't understand at all. Literature is all about writing a person's feelings.>

Komari didn't even bother to look at me as she typed that on the phone.

"Anyway, in my settings, you can recover in a spa even after getting hit by a Yamanote Line train. It's just that this is R-18. So, regrettably, I can't show you."

Isn't this supposed to be a club activity?

"R-18...isn't good."

Yeah, tell her that- wait, who's voice is that?

"Uwah!"

The person standing in the shadow of the bookshelf is the secretary of the student council, Shikiya-san. In contrast to my fear, Tsukinoki-senpai calmly glanced at her.

"Shikiya, since when are you here?"

"I'm not sure. ...I was waiting for people, ...and then I fell asleep."

Shikiya-san tilted her head lazily and stared at me.

"You guys...are taking your club activities seriously. ...That's worthy of praise."

Just like before, she's writing something in her notebook without even looking at it. Then, she collapsed onto the seat next to her.

"Tsukinoki-senpai, ...if you want a training camp, please... submit a request."

"I got it. Prez'll give it to you before school ends."

"The student council...will always be...watching you all."

I don't mind someone watching me, but I hope they only do it for a moment. Look, Komari hid inside the shadow of the bookshelf.

“Shikiya, does the student council hate us?”

“No, all clubs...are under our watch. ...Budget, ...reduce, ...closure, ...eradicate.”

The things that she’s saying are a bit horrifying.

After a while, Shikiya-san departed the room silently.

What happened? I still don’t understand how I should talk to her.

“Senpai, do you and Shikiya-san know each other?”

“Yes, I had something to do with her a while ago. Usually, she would be a bit more honest. She rarely moves or goes outside.”

“Is her high school life really okay?”

“Also, despite her looks, she has really good grades. I think she ranked in the top 10 in the last exam.”

Seriously? Her grades are good despite being a gal. Her character setting is really meeting a lot of my standards. It would be perfect if she can hide her terrifying side.

“I feel like senpai should have good grades too, right?”

Komari kicked my chair right after I said that.

“N-Nukumizu! T-Talking about Tsukinoki-senpai’s grades is banned in this club!”

“Eh, Tsukinoki-senpai doesn’t do well in exams?”

Even though she’s wearing glasses. I hid that sentence inside my brain.

“Please call this a hopeful grade. Well, all that talk. What’s your grade, then? Didn’t we just have an exam recently?”

“37th out of the whole year.”

The two dropped their jaws shockingly. Do I look like a guy who can't study?

"How should I say this? ...I can't feel the possibilities."

"Y-Yes, average-san. You should reflect on yourself."

What? What's with the rash judgment?

"I guess so. It's like an elite and cold boy in glasses fighting with the no.1 in class or a completely opposite character. Something like being forced to accept a masochist class president's secret education to avoid being held back a year. I don't feel these kinds of possibilities on Nukumizu-kun at all."

I don't need these kinds of possibilities at all.

"I-In this sense, it's...better for you to be like senpai and get 222nd."

"Yeah, I guess you can say I'm a person with possibilities."

Out of all the things, this is the one you're not embarrassed about?

There are 6 classes in our high school. Each class has 38 people. ...So, a grade has 228 people.

"Are you sure you're okay, senpai? The entrance exam's this year."

"I'll be fine. I'm determined about it. I'll choose my unis seriously."

"No, the unis are choosing you, no matter how you think about it."

I was tricked by her glasses and pretty face. This person is quite ridiculous.

"S-Senpai, what about Saturday?"

After Komari said that, senpai seemed to have remembered something and started searching for stuff on her phone.

“Let’s see. Take the Atsumi Line and- head south. Then, we’ll find a good chance to drop off. I bet there’ll be buses after we get off. Yeah, there must be.”

Are you sure we’ll be fine?

“Well, I guess we’ll see each other at 7 or 8 AM on Saturday. Let’s meet at the station in front of Aichi University.”

Tsukinoki-senpai smiled.

...I’m pretty sure we won’t be fine.



I took a detour to Toyohashi Station before going home. It’s because I have to investigate new releases in Seibunkan’s flagship store. *[Seibunkan Bookstore]*

Of course, I have to investigate the latest trend for my draft at <Let’s Become an Author>.

I’ve already checked out the hot web novels and jargon. However, most web novels are in large format. Since they are different from actual books, I’m not sure what those really look like. I scanned through the pile.

“Yeah, isekai is still mainstream...”

The isekai genre is sometimes used as comedy or jidaigeki. I don’t hate authors scrambling for ideas while merging them into the same worldview to create something fresh.

“Yeah, I guess this has to be it.”

“Nukumizu, m-move.”

A short girl suddenly pushed me away.

“Eh, why are you here, Komari-san?”

“I-Investigation. It’s because I-I don’t really understand light novels. I-I’m here to learn.”

Komari looked at all kinds of covers with interest.

“T-The size of novels is really large recently...”

“Yeah, those are mostly serialized web novels. These types of fantasy isekai books are called the ‘become type’.”

“O-Oh, i-it’s like reincarnation?”

“Yes, adding OP MCs or slice-of-life elements to the decade-old isekai genre. While the two don’t look relevant on the surface, their source is yearned by people tired of the cruelty of modern society.”

“S-Source?”

“The source is an indiscriminate sense of acknowledgment. Elements that may harm the readers are non-existent. It’s a world that’s kind to everyone.”

“Doesn’t slice-of-life heal people too?”

“While slice-of-life is nice, OP powers are pretty much a requirement. It’s because the main audience is adults. They yearn for something that poor people can’t get, even if they got isekai’d.”

“A-Adults’ lives are really tough...”

Komari can’t help but sigh.

“The praises after the victory in battle and the long-lasting love in slice-of-life are the same. If I have to say it, it’s just that they are presented in different ways. Recently, there are sub-genres like unlucky heroines or MCs who gave up on promised marriages and got exiled-“

“...I-It’s too long. W-Well, are there any rules for these similar titles?”

Isekai, OP powers, and then a super long, self-explanatory book title. I’ve already answered this a dozen times in my mind.

“Book titles are the explanation of a commodity concept targeting readers. Things like ‘you’ll get full from one of our bread with fried ham alone’. In other words, book titles naturally turned into something a bit more summarizing.”

“I-I see. Well, did Nukumizu...come up with a book title?”

“Of course, the best solution I’ve come up with is <An isekai sage uses his OP powers and aims for a self-sufficient slow life>. First of all, let’s set a small goal-“

“T-The novel’s already here.”

“Eh?”

Oh, she’s right, and it’s already on volume 5.

Ah, someone already wrote it? Even though the MC in my book already got his 6th wife.

“H-Haha...”

Komari can’t hide her laughter anymore.

“A-After all that talk, someone already wrote it.”

Tck, I can’t talk back.

“Well, how about you, Komari-san? Did you come up with anything?”

“W-Well, I’m not really interested in isekai. F-Follow me.”

She brought me to the normal books area. These are the originals that got a TV or movie adaptation. They are at the center between romance and occult novels.

“I-In reality, I’ve always been writing stuff like that...”

“Eh, really?”

Shit, she’s getting ahead.

“W-Well, you thought of a title already?”

I pretended nothing’s wrong and asked her. Remember, I can’t despise her even if there’s plagiarism.

Komari pulled her phone embarrassedly.

“<The Warm Chronicles of Youkai Café>.”

From the looks of the title, I think it’s either a short story or sotchi-kei. Regrettably, I’m not talented on that side at all. I casually scanned the bookshelf to see what’s trending in this genre. *[Sotchi-kei, “that” type. A subtle way of saying BL-type.]*

“Hey, there’s one with the exact same name.”

I can’t help but reach out to that novel.

“N-No, look closely. This is ‘records’. Mine is ‘chronicles’.”

“This counts as a different title?”

“Of. Course.”

Komari puffed up her chest smugly.

“In other words, you’re saying that we don’t really need to mind having the same titles?”

“I-I’m not 100% copying it like Nukumizu.”

“Aren’t you the same, Komari?”

“Y-You’re calling my name directly!?”

Komari glared at me. Woah, hold on.

“You’re the one to call me directly first. Also, adding a -san every time is annoying.”

“Ah, uh, I-I guess.”

Komari reluctantly agreed. She complained while pinching the bottom of her uniform. Sigh, she's always giving me a handful.

“Well, I'll go back after buying a book.”

“W-Wait! I-Is Y-Y-Yanami here?”

“Eh? No, I'm alone today.”

“T-That's not what I meant! D-Did Yanami join the Literature Club?”

“It's hard to say. I think she's joining. Are you worried?”

Indeed, Komari probably thinks that it's better to have a girl at her age.

“Yanami's pretty cute, a-after all.”

“Yanami is cute, so what?”

“T-The Literature Club isn't for adorable girls.”

Stop right there. You better apologize to all of the Literature Club girls in Japan. Right. Now.

“No, that's not the case, right? Look, isn't Tsukinoki-senpai beautiful?”

Okay, perhaps I should calm down first. There are only two girls in the Literature Club. I wonder what the other's reaction is when I praise one of them only.

“S-She's different. I-I'm way less charming than her...”

“No, that's not true.”

Yep, I already expected troublesome lines like this. Alright, let's search for her good points.

...I secretly glanced at Komari's face. Her slightly trembling lips are plain. One of her eyes is covered by her hair. Her big eyes are mundane under her double eyelids.

"Komari's face looks pretty too. There's no need to go so hard on yourself."

"Wha!?"

Komari threw her schoolbag onto the ground and immediately distanced herself away from me. She squeezed this sentence out with her face as red as tomatoes.



“#-#MeToo...”

“What!? No! I said that in a normal tone. I didn’t say anything weird!”

Look, you have to say that to me when I’m just trying to praise you?

Komari trembled as she glared at me. I sighed. Fine, whatever. I can’t do anything if you hate me so much.

“Indeed, I shouldn’t just judge a girl’s face, even if I want to praise her. I’m sorry.”

“Ah, o-oh, i-it’s good that you understand.”

You know, why even bother to drag me into the club if you hate me so much? What do you want?

“I’ll tell Yanami-san to come to the club. I guess I’ll show up less frequently.”

“E-Eh? Hey, ...p-please wait.”

I’ve had enough. She’s getting increasingly annoying. Let’s just randomly pick one and go home.

Just as I’m about to turn around, Komari hits the back of my head.

“Ouch! What are you doing!?”

“W-Well, no! That’s not what I meant!”

Komari approached me furiously

Uwah, I have no idea why she’s mad. I should be the one in #MeToo, right?

“S-Senpai will get mad at me! S-So, you must show up in the club!”

“What do you even want from me? Alright, I’ll be there tomorrow. Calm down.”

Can you just calm down already? Komari typed something on her phone and handed it to me.

<It’s not just tomorrow. Always.>

“...Always?”

“Yes!”

Komari ran away after saying that.

What just happened...? I don’t understand. Her saliva is all over my face now.

I wiped it off helplessly.



It’s really late now.

Even though summer’s reaching the end, the sunset still stains the streets with a faint red glow.

The sky will turn deep blue in just a little bit. Then, the remnants of the day will be swallowed by darkness.

The unknown insecurities inside my chest made me speed up.

A familiar person in a school uniform appeared in front of me. She’s my little sister, Kajyu. The red sunset between the buildings is shining next to her feet. She’s holding a shopping bag that looks really heavy. For some reason, this calmed me down. I went behind her and took the bag.

“That scared me! Onii-sama, did you just get here?”

“Yeah, Kajyu’s going home late too.”

“Dad and mom will be home a bit later, so Kajyu chatted with my friends for a while.”

I looked inside the book. There are raw udon, onions, quail eggs, and yams. ...I guess she's trying to make our house's classic dish, Toyohashi curry udon.

Suddenly, I noticed Kajyu looking at me.

“What’s wrong?”

“Onii-sama, there’s no one in the house during the weekend. Are you sure you’ll be okay?”

“I’m fine. Why did you ask?”

“It’s because Kajyu thinks that you may get lonely. Won’t you bathe in tears alone?”

Okay, first of all, why does everyone think I get lonely very easily?

“I’ll be okay. Also, I’ll be going on a trip with my club this weekend.”

“Eh!? In other words, onii-sama finally has friends!?”

“Well, no, that’s not-”

Kajyu ignored me and dashed cheerfully. Then, she came across a store.

“Shopkeeper, can I have some good red beans!? I want to make red bean rice!”

“Oh, Kajyu-chan. Did something good happen?”

The shopkeeper wiped his hand with his apron as he walked out. Huh, I guess Kajyu knows a lot of people.

“My onii-san finally got a friend for the first time! I want to make red bean rice as a celebration.”

"I'm glad to hear that. You must be Kajyu-chan's onii-san, right? Everyone in the shopping district is really worried about you."

Wait, when the hell did that happen? I don't want to come to this shopping district anymore.

"I was going to invite you as the checkpoint person of our shopping district's stamp race. It looks like that's out of the question now."

Don't. Please don't. I'm serious.

"But, congrats. Kajyu-chan, here's some rice crackers too."

"Thank you, shopkeeper! Well, what does onii-sama's friend look like? I bet he must be just as elite as onii-sama."

Kajyu got close to me with bright eyes.

"Eh, no, how should I put it?"

"Don't tell it's a girl!? What should I do now? Kajyu has to be responsible for the interview—"

"Hey, ...they aren't actually my friends, okay?"

"Oh."

The store immediately went quiet. The sound-controlled lights turned off after making a clean noise. It's dark.

"...Shopkeeper, I'll have some soybeans instead. I'm making a seaweed stew."

"Yeah, right. ...I'll put in some wheat for you too."

How did this turn from a celebration to a funeral? Did I do something wrong?

"W-Well, I'll try my best too."

"Okay, ...but don't push yourself too hard."

We started making our way home.

“By the way, onii-sama’s going on a trip with the club? This must be a first-time for you, right?”

“The last time was when I got dragged into boy’s scout in 5th grade.”

That summer has forever traumatized me.

“Clubs and trips. Onii-sama is always making progress little by little.”

“Wait, this counts? I feel like I’m just living with the flow.”

“Isn’t this nice too? Onii-sama’s following a good flow.”

Kajyu gently smiled as she patted my head.

“Onii-sama is working hard. Good boy.”

Then, Kajyu took the shopping bag from my hand.

“What? Are we splitting?”

“Yes, I’ll spoil onii-sama a lot today.”

Kajyu’s smile is shining under the sunset.

I gave her a bitter smile. After that, I slowed down my pace for Kajyu.

By the way, I don’t know whether I should feel embarrassed or sorry when my little sister’s spoiling me.

...Anyway, as her onii-san, I guess I’ll work a bit harder.

<Today’s remaining debt: 2367 yen>



Literature Club Report

<Is it more painful to wait or to sleep alone?> by Koto Tsukinoki.

[The following report is rated G for Gay. Skip it if you don't want to see BL.]

The corridor is echoing with sounds of someone putting pieces on the board.

The man in a military uniform pulled the door open. A man wearing kasuri clothing is sitting in front of the chessboard. He stroked his long and messy mustache without paying any attention to the surroundings as usual. *[Kasuri, fabric woven with fibers]*

The man in a military uniform yelled loudly.

“Why are you here?”

To the sudden intruder, the man in kasuri clothing raised his head with fear for a moment. After seeing his military uniform, his eyes returned to the board.

“It’s you, Mishima-kun.”

He lazily fiddled the pieces with his hand as he continued.

“My wish finally came true. I’m here now. That’s good. However, I still don’t understand how I’m supposed to win this match.”

He moved another piece again as if he’s saying half of his reason here is to play chess.

“Those elves have some exquisite craftsmanship. They can make something they have never seen with such details, whether it’s clothes or chess.”

Mishima glanced at him.

“Also, elf girls are really good at taking ‘care’ of people.”

He laughed self-mockingly before moving yet another piece.

Mishima sat down opposite him respectfully.

“Dazai-san, do you know where we are?”

“Even though I wanted to say we’re somewhere in another world, it’s not that different from Tsugaru. The Master of the Forest is just as imposing.” *[Tsugaru, Aomori Prefecture]*

“You already met with the Master of the Forest?”

“Yeah, he ended up sending me a blonde girl as my servant. I guess humans never change wherever we are.”

The pieces in his hand are knocking each other as he smiles.

“You’re always making excuses like this. There’s no way you should be rotting your life away in here. Please visit the Master of the Forest again and acquire a way to keep living.”

“You’re always talking about the Master. What, aren’t you here to see me?”

He got really close to Mishima with his long and messy mustache. The latter fell silent.

“I heard this before. You committed seppuku. So, does it hurt?”

Mishima didn’t answer. Instead, he moved the king a step forward on the board.

“...My mind hasn’t changed. I still can’t fall in love with Dazai-san.”

“That’s just what you said. You still came here to see me, right? Doesn’t this mean you’re in love with me?”

Dazai pushed the chessboard away. His hands are now tightly holding Mishima’s instead of the pieces.

“Dazai-san, I’m-“

“See? You love me, don’t you?”

Despite having pneumonia, his strength is still strong enough to press Mishima's masculine body onto the tatami with ease-

The following content requires Prez's permission.



The second day is Friday. I can sense restlessness from the morning classroom.

The classmates are greeting their friends. At the same time, they must be talking about hanging out this weekend, right? Even though phones are everywhere, face-to-face conversation is the foundation of all interpersonal relationships.

This is how healthy people should be. However, their freedom is slightly restricted.

“...Freedom, right?”

I crossed my fingers on the table and mumbled to myself.

People always say freedom comes along with being alone. A guy like me doesn't need to adjust my weekend schedule at all.

...That should've been the case.

Yesterday, I took the unreliable Tsukinoki-senpai's place and checked the trains and buses for tomorrow's trip.

Incidentally, I also checked out the tourist's hotspots too, and I say incidentally. This is definitely not because I'm looking forward to the trip.

“Good morning, Nukunuku!”

“Eh, good...morning.”

Why is she greeting me? Yakishio sat down in front of me.

“Yakishio-san? Eh, why?”

“What do you mean by why? It’s morning, right? I came here to say hi.”

That’s true, but are we close enough to chat with each other after saying good morning?

Yakishio ignored my confusion. She tilted her head and said this.

“Hey, I remembered what happened in the storage room yesterday. Let’s not dilly-dally around. After school—”

“What!? Y-You remembered it!?”

This girl remembered how lewd she was. How can she be so calm?

“I didn’t see anything! I didn’t see anything!”

Even though I didn’t, the touch over her PE shirts certainly left a long-lasting mark on me. It’s soft, ...or not, but I can feel how bouncy she was. I can’t help but look away from her.

“Hmm? What are you saying? I’m talking about Ayano coming to borrow books.”

“Eh? Books?”

“Didn’t you say he can come? Did Nukunuku get a heat stroke too?”

“Oh, right. Yeah, I remember now. Okay, sure.”

“Well, see you after school.”

Yakishio waved her hands and quickly returned to her seat. I pressed my chest in relief.

...Wait, what's happening? Everyone in the class is looking at me. Most of them are boys.

Why are all the guys staring at a background character like me? Also, these are definitely menacing glares. They are hostile and jealous...



"-and then that happened. Why?"

I'm at the emergency stairs right now. It's lunch break. Yanami took out a basket as she answered my question calmly.

"It's because Remon-chan is pretty popular. I bet it's because Nukumizu-chan is chatting with her intimately, right?"

"Yeah, she's very popular. I see."

I see. She's very popular.

"...Who's popular?"

"Ha? I told you it's Remon-chan. Are you okay?"

Seriously? She's popular? Even though she's indeed energetic and adorable, her personality is like that, you know?

"Remon-chan's cheerful and cute. Although she's a bit handful sometimes, also, how she passed the entrance exam remains one of the Seven Wonders of Tsuwabuki High School."

Yanami nodded in agreement.

"Cheerful and cute."

I see. Well, I don't have anything else to say. She's cheerful and adorable, after all.

I took a look at today's bento. The basket has two servings of lunch. Aside from rice balls, it's filled with sausages, karaage, broccoli, and some others. It's all easy food with toothpicks on it.

I see. It's more convenient to eat them separately. By the way.

"...Why didn't you just make this at the start?"

"You're right. This should've been the case."

Yanami mumbled to herself in disbelief.

"Yeah, this is the correct answer."

I took a rice ball. Images of the bento box made of leaflets, disintegrating rice piles, omurice that has been in another person's mouth flashed inside my mind like I'm about to die. Oh, the last part has nothing to do with the bento.

"Forget about that. Nukumizu-kun, the trip you just said feels kind of interesting."

"Who knows. It's supposed to be an author's lockdown session. I'm not sure whether it's interesting."

I tasted the filling rice balls calmly. The sharp chewing sound from my teeth made me look down. The rice ball has Mikawa's famous pickled cucumbers. [Mikawa, an old province in Eastern Aichi]

"It's a single night, right? The girls are only Tsukinoki-senpai and Komari-chan, right?"

"Yeah, Shintaro-senpai and I are the boys."

Yanami started looking up something on her phone.

“There’s a sea bath nearby. I wonder whether my swimsuit last year still fits.”

“Wait, you have to change swimsuits every year?”

Or actually, you’re planning to come?

“It’s not like I have to change every year, but don’t you want to see me in a new swimsuit?”

“It’s not about whether I want to see or not. Didn’t we just buy new swimsuits this year?”

“Eh? I didn’t. Nukumizu-kun, what are you talking about?”

Yanami’s face twitched as she distanced herself from me.

“You’re a bit disgusting, …no, you’re pretty disgusting.”

This girl just said disgusting twice. Not once, but twice.

“Didn’t we buy them? All first-years bought the same swimsuits as a group, right?”

“…Oh, that’s what you’re talking about?”

Yanami’s face immediately cooled down. She shook her head in regret.

“It’s a bit too much to wear school swimsuits in a sea bath. That’s even worse than just underwear alone.”

“Ha, is it that bad?”

In other words, have all these people been wearing such embarrassing clothing during swimming lessons?

“Of course, also, you can’t say that, Nukumizu-kun. Even though I know I just misunderstood, that’s an ungodly amount of disgusting.”

That was her third disgusting. I should change the topic before she completes a tally.

“It takes the whole weekend. Are you sure your schedule allows it?”

“Well, ...I bumped into Auntie when I was going home yesterday.”

Yanami suddenly plopped her head down. Her tone turned a bit gloomy too.

“Auntie?”

“Souske’s mom. Our families are very close since we’re childhood friends.”

Yeah, I can tell she’s going to say something troublesome again.

“Auntie asked me why I didn’t pick up Sosuke in the morning recently. She wondered if something happened. Haha, it’s funny, right? He already has a girlfriend, and I still have to wake him up in the morning. Isn’t this weird?”

“Ah, well, you’re right.”

“Then, Auntie asked me whether I had a fight with Sosuke. We used to argue on all kinds of small things, after all.”

Yanami looked at the clouds afar.

“...We would’ve made up long ago if this was just a fight.”

Please don’t say things that are hard for me to respond to.

“After that, both families misunderstood that I’m fighting with Sosuke. So, they are now planning to have a BBQ this weekend- and it’s supposed to be a surprise.”

Yanami suddenly leaned forward.

“So, please! Bring me to the ocean!”

Her line is straight out of a 20th century TV drama.

“No, why didn’t you just say you’ll be playing outside? It’s not as bad as you think, right?”

“Are you underestimating how much of a BBQ fan my dad is!? He’ll stay there and keep grilling until I’m back!”

“Well, just say you’ll sleep at a friend’s house.”

“If I’m in a friend’s house, we have to talk about romance or the mood will get worse, okay? Unlike you, I don’t want to lose my friends.”

How impolite. Also, I won’t lose friends because I don’t have any to start with.

Just as I’m racking my brain to come up with a way to reject her, Yanami glared at me.

“Hey, are you thinking about how to stop me from coming?”

“No, I’m not. Right, why don’t you explain this whole thing to your friends and ask them for help?”

After I said that, Yanami looked pretty upset.

“...Well, I don’t want my friends to be involved in something about Sosuke.”

“Wait, so you didn’t tell anyone about this?”

“I didn’t go out of my way to say it. My friends won’t get themselves involved even if I told them, so I just kept my usual appearance.”

Yanami squinted her eyes as if it’s too bright.

“Despite my looks, I’m very considerate of other people’s feelings, you know?”

“If only you can be considerate to me too.”

Yanami mumbled quietly to my complaint.

“After all, ..Nukumizu-kun is the only person I can say these things to.”

“Sigh, ...alright, sure.”

I think she already said something like this before.

I guess I’ll let her go. I took out my phone in defeat.

“I’ll ask Tsukinoki-senpai, alright? Yanami-san isn’t a club member yet, after all.”

“I’ll join! I’ll join right now! Can you give me Tsukinoki-senpai’s info? I’ll ask her.”

“You can see her ID in Line, but even if I want to tell you, I don’t know your ID, Yanami-san.”

Yanami looked at me dazedly.

“You can just click on my profile in the class group.”

Oh, our class’s group. The class-

“Wait, there’s a class group?”

“...Huh?”

Yanami seems to have remembered something after going silent for a moment. She looked at her phone in embarrassment.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I don’t know what I should say.”

Yanami’s moving her eyes.

“But, this feels like Nukumizu-kun. I guess it’s your character, right.”

Can you at least comfort me properly? The word “character” isn’t that all-powerful, alright?

“It’s fine. I don’t really care since I didn’t start using Line until recently.”

“I-I see. Yeah, it’s your character. Well, let’s exchange IDs. Do you know how to add me?”

“Leave it to me. We just shake our phones, right?”

I gave my phone to Tsukinoki-senpai since I didn’t know how it worked when joining the Literature Club’s group. After that, I also looked it up online.

“What’s that? That doesn’t exist, right?”

“Eh?”

No? There’s no shaky-shaky? Where did it go?

“Here, give me your QR code.”

How...does this work? Yanami handed her phone to me just as I’m still confused.

“Alright, I added you. Accept it.”

“Oh, I see. That’s how you add people.”

“Yes, and then Nukumizu-kun should add me to the club’s group.”

Yanami nodded in satisfaction after I clicked on my phone multiple times.

“By the way, since when did Remon-chan and Nukumizu-kun get so close?”

Yanami counted the karaage with a toothpick as she asked.

“Do we look like we’re close?”

“Didn’t she give you a nickname?”

Nukunuku. I think she just spewed that out when she was half-unconscious in the storage room. The name kept, I guess. Also, if I have to talk about the contact point between Yakishio and me-

“Well, the one you also met in the nurse room. Mitsuki Ayano from class D.”

“Oh, the guy who received Remon-chan’s love beam. He’s quite handsome.”

“Ayano said he’ll be coming to the Literature Club to borrow books, and then she injected herself into the situation.”

Hmph. Yanami hmphed before putting the karaage and broccoli in her mouth.

“How about I call you Nukunuku too?”

Eh, that’s sudden.

“50 yen per day.”

I averted Yanami’s sparkling eyes.

“No, I’m good.”

...Kajyu, I know how to reject salesman calls now.



The 5th lesson is over. I avoided people as I crossed the corridor to kill time.

I have to discuss the trip in the club after the next lesson. I think Ayano and Yakishio are coming too. It suddenly got really busy. Ah, last week’s peaceful days look pretty nostalgic now.

I walked outside the school building. The taps next to the playground are always full of people after PE lessons are over.

That’s under normal circumstances. I slowly turned the tap. However, when the swimming pool’s open, this place turns into a quiet paradise. It’s not too far or close to the

classrooms. The most important part is that it's outside, which gives me a sense of accomplishment. This is different from other taps.

Water that has a scent of dirt is pleasing in its own way too. I took a sip of the warm water, wiped my lips, and raised my head.

...Then, a familiar face appeared in front of me. She's wiping her mouth too.

"N-Nukumizu, why are you here?"

Chika Komari's tasting the water of the tap opposite to mine. Also, she showed an explicitly annoyed look.

"I'm thirsty."

"Y-You went all the way out here?"

Komari's straight-up looking down on me now. What's wrong with her? She pisses me off.

"Aren't you the same? You're here because you don't feel like staying in the classroom, right?"

"N-None of your business. I-I came here to investigate tap water."

Oh ho, an investigation, huh? I'm pretty excited. Who do you think the man in front of you is?

"Komari, I know a lot about our school's water too. If you said that, this means that you must have conducted a lot of research, right?"

"W-Well, let me ask you then. Where did you go in the morning?"

Komari looked at me seriously. The tap water game. Starts.

"East side of the 4th floor, next to year 3's classrooms. I often go there before the 2nd lesson starts."

“R-Reason?”

“It’s because the water from this period is the ones left in the water pipe yesterday. In other words, there’s less smell of bleaching powder, and colder because of the summer. Water turns stale in the morning. So, the water on the 4th floor satisfied all of the conditions, making it the best.”

Komari sighed.

“Yeah, water is better the closer it is to the tank. However, the freshness comes from the bleaching powder. So, the water on the 4th floor is perfectly balanced between freshness and the smell of bleaching powder.”

After that, I swept up my bangs smugly. Literal perfection.

However, Komari laughed out loud as she looked at me, who believed my victory was absolute.

“H-Ho, h-how shallow.”

“What? What do you mean?”

“T-The water on the 4th floor should be tasted r-right before lunch.”

Lunch? Water on the higher floors shouldn’t be consumed at such a late time.

“Why? It’s full of the smell of bleaching powder at noon. The water turns stale too.”

“T-That’s why I said you’re shallow. W-Warm water has the least burden on your stomach.”

Komari’s face looked like she won already. I kept up the pressure despite the worsening fight.

“What!? But the bleaching powder is so intense that you can’t drink it-“

“W-Why don’t you just get used to the smell of the powder with your nose?”

“Get used to it?”

Is it really necessary to smell bleaching powder before lunch? ...Wait, don’t tell me.

“T-The smell of the toilet covers the bleaching powder...”

“!?”

Ah, I should’ve never asked that.

“At least go inside the clubroom!”

“Y-You can’t use clubrooms during lunch because people always skip lessons there.”

A tragedy like this is born from someone’s laziness.

“Komari, do you want to have lunch at my place?”

“Eh!?”

What kind of reaction is that? You’re just as impolite.

“I didn’t say we’re eating together. There’s no one at the emergency stairs in the old building. Just don’t sit next to me, okay?”

“I-I’ll consider it.”

Komari quickly left without looking at me. Even though she’s like this now, I already got used to her. Well, at least she doesn’t need her phone to talk to me now.

...Oh, shit, the next lesson’s starting.

I followed Komari and dashed inside.

[If you’re wondering about all of this water talk, the name Nukumizu literally means “warm water”.]



After school, the Literature Club.

Mitsuki Ayano visited the club with Yakishio. He's holding the final volume of Kobo Abe's series.

"Wow, it's really amazing when I look at it. Which one should I borrow?"

Tsukinoki-senpai looked at him crossing his arms in satisfaction. Yanami joined the club. Yakishio and Ayano are visiting now. Senpai is in a very good mood.

"No need to be polite. You can borrow as many as you like."

"Did senpai read this already?"

Ayano looked at the index as he stroked the books.

"I've only read <The Woman in the Dunes> and <The Box Man>. That <S. Karma> on the side isn't interesting to me, so I stopped after beginning."

"Isn't that the beginning of the entire series?"

Ayano laughed at Tsukinoki-senpai's joke as he took out a book.

"Well, I'll borrow Volume 12 today."

Yakishio stood behind me. She looked at Ayano's book in disbelief.

"Ayano, won't you miss something if you start from the middle? Shouldn't you start from Volume 1?"

She said that.

"Eh? Oh, I got it. Relax, I won't miss anything. The stories aren't connected."

"I see. It's different from One Piece."

"Yes, it's a bit different. This volume has the script I want to read."

This guy's really good at dealing with Yakishio. Even though Chihaya's there, these two suit each other unexpectedly.

I turned to Yanami. A crown that said "new member" is on her head. She's humming songs as she's eating pocky. It looks like the reception's going well.

"By the way, Ayano-kun. Are you interested in the Literature Club?"

Senpai took the opportunity and started persuading Ayano.

"I'm interested, but prep school is too busy. I may cause trouble for you guys if I don't partake in any club activities."

"No worries. There's none. You can borrow books whenever you like. Leave it to Nukumizu-kun for club activities. You can read all the books on this shelf. Also-"

Tsukinoki-senpai's glasses flashed eerily.

"A librarian is bound to be in the Literature Club every year. So, you can take a shortcut when there are new books in the library."

"Eh, really?"

"Yes."

Although I'm not sure what Ayano's thinking, I think he's interested, judging from the conversation. Ayano took the registration handbook and started reading it.

"Why don't that cute girlfriend over there join as well?"

You want all of them? Tsukinoki-senpai targeted Yakishio this time.

"Eh!? M-Me? I'm the girlfriend you're talking about? Ah, sheesh-"

Yakishio took the handbook cheerfully.

“But I’m already in the Track and Field Club. I don’t think it works.”

“Multiple clubs are welcomed here. By the way, all of our members are in multiple clubs.”

Really? Which club did I join as well?

“You can use the Literature Club as a shield when you want to skip the Track and Field Club. You know, just say our Prez asked you to do something.”

This must be a devil’s whisper. Tsukinoki-senpai’s expression is that of an antagonist completely.

“You have to use everything you can to create a joyful school life, alright? The boyfriend over there, you’ll be happier when you can spend more time with your girlfriend, right?”

“Eh? Will Mitsuki be happy too?”

Yakishio leaned forward with bright eyes. No, I mean, shouldn’t you at least deny being his girlfriend?

“Haha, you shouldn’t say that to Remon. We’re not dating.”

Ayano carefully put the borrowed book in his schoolbag.

“Ah, really?”

“This girl has always been really popular. I don’t really fit with her.”

Ayano took his schoolbag after saying that.

“Well, I’ll be borrowing this one. Let’s see each other again when I don’t have prep school-“

“I don’t have a boyfriend! Being popular doesn’t mean I can just go out with anyone!”

Yakishio grabbed Ayano's shirt and approached him. Ayano blinked in surprise as he looked at Yakishio's wheat-colored cheeks confusedly.

"I-I see. ...Sorry, did I say something weird?"

"It's not like that. Well, I'm...sorry."

Tsukinoki-senpai noticed the unusual atmosphere between those two. She looked at them worriedly.

"Wait, you two aren't dating? Even you two are flirting with each other so much."

"Eh, no, no, no, we aren't flirting at all!"

"I told you that's not the case. I already have a girlfriend."



Ayano said that calmly, while Yakishio's embarrassed smile solidified.

"Hey, what? Are you guys okay?"

Ayano is totally confused.

Click. The door of the clubroom is opened.

"H-Hello."

Komari took a look at the club-

Bam. She slammed the door shut and escaped.

"Remon, did I say something weird again?"

"Hey, Mitsuki, you said you...have a girlfriend?"

Yakishio finally rebooted and squeezed that sentence out.

"Yeah, I just started going out with her. I didn't get to tell Remon yet. Let me introduce her to you when we have time."

Mitsuki Ayano lowered his head in embarrassment.

"Sorry, I keep talking about myself. Well, I'll be leaving."

"Wait, Ayano. Is your girlfriend Chihaya-san?"

Let's investigate a bit.

"You got me. Yeah, I'll introduce her to Nukumizu too."

His refreshing smile remained as he turned to Yakishio.

"Well, let's go, Remon."

"Eh?"

"Didn't you want me to go shopping with you? There's some time before prep school."

His eyes aren't malicious in a single bit. I didn't expect Ayano to be denser than a black hole.

"U-Uh, I suddenly have something to do. Yes, right, I'm planning to join the Literature Club, so I have to stay for a while."

"I see. Well, I'll be leaving."

Ayano greeted us and left. ...Well, what should we do about this mood?

A silence that felt like an eternity ensued. I quickly handed Yakishio a chair before she collapsed.

Yakishio reached her hand out to me when she barely made it to the chair.

"Eh, what?"

"Club registration form, give me."

Yakishio wrote her name on the form as she mumbled.

"Sigh, ...Mitsuki...already has a girlfriend. ...Ahaha, ...what am I...even doing...?"

I guess it's because she worked hard for nothing, but I won't say it.

Yanami reacted by putting the new member's crown on her head.

"Anyway, thanks for the work."

"...Yeah, I'm already tired."

Yakishio wrapped her hands around Yanami and buried her face in her stomach deeply.

Tsukinoki-senpai pulled me away from the room before I could hear her cry.

"Can I ask...whether I messed up?"

Tsukinoki-senpai's brain finally caught up. She turned around and glanced at the room tremblingly.

"Yeah, you goofed up. Don't do that next time."

I took out my phone and checked the notes as I complained.

"Hey, about the trip tomorrow. I already checked the train and bus schedules. I'll upload them to the group later. We'll be meeting in front of Aichi University, right?"

"Yes, but please wait, Nukumizu-kun."

"Let's send the list of necessary items to everyone one more time. Also, Prez didn't give us a reply. Can you please check up on him just in case?"

"Wait, Nukumizu-kun. Didn't a lot of things just happen inside the room? Shouldn't we talk about the trip later?"

"We could've landed softly, but isn't senpai the one to charge straight into the landmine?"

"Uwah, ...you surely don't pick your words."

It can't be helped. After all, I don't think this person will understand if I don't be blunt with her.

"I'll take care of them. Senpai, you should go somewhere-

Oh, I think half of Komari's face is poking out of the shadow of the corridor. Is she paying attention to us?

"Sorry, senpai. Can you do something about Komari?"

"Alright, I'm good at that. Leave it to me."

Tsukinoki-senpai twirled her fingers as she walked toward Komari, who immediately ran away. Senpai quickly chased after her.

Ah, a bunch of troubles. It's not all bad to be alone. Sometimes, it's better to distance yourself from annoying

things.

Yanami sent me a message just as I'm leaning on the wall and checking my phone.

She asked whether I wanted to eat something. Whatever, girl. Why are you inviting me?

I would reject her, but I stared at the screen again after seeing the following message.

The restaurant she invited me to is quite far away from school- yeah, the one where she was rejected.



"Welcome! Please choose a seat you like!"

With a cheerful voice, the waiter greeted us as usual. The three of us spent 20 minutes getting to this family restaurant in another town from school.

Yanami sat on the sofa and patted the seat next to her.

"Remon-chan, sit next to me."

"Yes, thanks."

Yakishio sat down obediently. Perhaps she would've had a chance to get Ayano if she's always like this.

"Yanami-chan, I didn't know there's a restaurant in such a place."

"Right? Also, unexpectedly, very few Tsuwabuki students will come here. It's a nice restaurant."

I can't help but look at Yanami, who's looking at the dessert menu happily.

...This is where you got rejected by Sosuke Hakamada, you know? What's with this girl's ultra psychological resistance? Normally, no one will bring their dumped friend to a place where she got dumped herself.

"What's wrong, Nukumizu-kun? You're not even looking at the menu."

"It's because this restaurant—"

"Hmm? What's with this restaurant?"

Yanami tilted her head in confusion.

"No, it's nothing. We're splitting the bill, by the way."

"Of course, Nukumizu-kun."

Everything's fine if she's fine. Yanami pressed the order bell.

"How inconsiderate for you to talk about money in front of a rejected girl. Remon-chan, we'll be paying for you today."

It's kind of unacceptable to be called inconsiderate by Yanami. Also, she just shoved the "we" in the last part without hesitation.

"Alright, we'll pay for Yakishio-san."

"This isn't good, right?"

"You can think of it as a celebration of joining the Literature Club. Order whatever you like."

"Remon-chan, we'll spoil you a lot today."

Yanami tilted her head in disbelief after that.

"...By the way, I joined the club today too."

"We'll talk about this later, Yanami-san. Ah, we're ordering.

Nothing good can happen if I keep spoiling this girl. Even though she's holding the dessert menu, the girl ordered a

hamburger steak for some reason.

“Right, I’ll have a medium bowl of rice.”

“Yanami-san, are you sure you want to eat that much before dinner?”

“Don’t you know this? Sweets are the greatest enemy to losing weight.”

So hamburger steaks are the greatest ally to losing weight?

Yakishio pointed at something on the menu.

“Well, I’ll have this Black Thunder Parfait.”

“What is that!? I’ll order that afterward, too!”

Yanami immediately followed the order. Didn’t you just say sweets are your enemy?

“3 cups of drinks and large fries, please. Pay for your own meal, Yanami-san.”

I’ll keep saying that because it’s very important.

“Alright, alright. That’s why Nukumizu-kun doesn’t have any friends.”

I looked at those two from the drink bar.

Yanami’s being her normal self. I’m relieved but slightly disappointed at the same time.

In the end, I just listened to those two complaining about their lives. It took Yanami nearly an hour to finish her hamburger steak.

Finally, Yakishio also smiled from time to time. I guess that’s good.

“Yakishio-san, we’ll pay up. You should go outside and wait.”

We let Yakishio go out first before lining up for the bill. Yanami looked at me surprisedly.

“Yo, Nukumizu-kun’s quite smart.”

“Isn’t this normal? Be gentle to the losing heroines-“

“-losing?”

...Shit, I think I said something I’m not supposed to do. I was too careless.

“Well, uh, ...lose...”

“What are you trying to say? Tell me.”

Yanami looked at me suspiciously. I turned my head away like an owl.

“Well, uh, ...m, ...Mc, ...McCain, that’s a real person, right?”

[Losing heroine: Make hiroin. McCain: Makein. The first two sounds are the same.]

“Who? Your friend?”

Why would I have a friend?

“I think he’s an amazing U.S. politician.”

“Why did you bring that up?”

That’s a very good question.

I looked at the surroundings for help. There’s an “American Hamburger Festival” leaflet on the wall. Yanami looked at that and clapped her hands.

“I see. You want to eat hamburgers next time, right? Yeah, I’m looking forward to it.”

So, you mean I have to pay for you next time? But, at least I managed to minimize my loss.

The waiter handed me the bill when it’s our turn.

“Nukumizu-kun, you haven’t given my bento a price tag, right?”

“Right. Hmm, 500 yen? It’s good.”

“Thanks for your 500 yen!”

Yanami clapped cheerfully.

Hmm, she owes me 2367 yen. After that 500-yen lunch, ... there’s 1867 yen left.

Also, the bill easily exceeded the amount she owes me.

“Seriously, I don’t think we should pay for her. You’re still owing me money, Yanami-san.”

“Shut up, I told you this is why Nukumizu-kun doesn’t have any friends. Ah, I have a points card.”

“Here’s half of Yakishio-san’s money and mine.”

I put the money onto the plate.

“Got it. There’s-“

Yanami suddenly stopped when she opened her wallet.

“Hey, what’s wrong?”

Please don’t tell me you don’t have enough money. That’s impossible, even for Yanami, right? She’s really an idiot if that’s the case.

Yanami’s hands are shivering.

“I don’t have enough.”

Yanami raised her head and looked at me with her watery eyes.

“Hey, ...Nukimizu-kun...”

Is this girl...an honest-to-good...idiot?

I took out a 1000-yen bill silently.

<Today's remaining debt: 2867 yen>

INTERMISSION

SENSEI WILL TELL YOU WHY YOU'RE SO NERVOUS

“...But, from their mood just then, I think they already started going out, right?”

“Ha?”

The scene is the nurse's room at midnight. The school nurse Sayo Konuki is listening to the voices in her headphones as she jotted notes.

“I feel like I'm also responsible for Remon-chan's love. I'll support you.”

“Thank you, I feel much better now!”

Nukimizu's name is circled in the center of the paper. His left and right are Yakishio's and Yanami's names. The three of them are connected with lines.

“A love triangle, ...right.”

Even though the phone was found, the recording device wasn't.

Well, what should I make up from this conversation?

The two girls are pretty close despite being in a love triangle. Some parts of the conversation are hard to understand. However, these two aren't giving that tense, tied feeling.

If that's the case, here are the only possibilities.

1. Nukumizu and Yakishio are doing those extreme plays under Yanami's eyes.
2. Yanami agreed to let Yakishio join the play.

Konuki spun her pen as she wrote another one.

3. Yanami pretends that she doesn't know they are cheating, and she's enjoying it.

Konuki-sensei's body shivered after writing them all.

(What's with this 200 IQ play!?)

That Nukumizu boy has such clever strategies despite being a background character.

At my height, I was dating three guys at the same time when I was a student. I didn't expect him to enter this world in year 1 of high school.

"I'm getting old..."

The room's echoing with the AC's noise. Konuki leaned on the chair as she looked at the ceiling. Then, she heard someone kicking the sand gently.

Such a quiet noise would be covered by others if it was during the day. Konuki stood up and immediately switched to her teacher mode. After all, she has to urge students to go home if they are still here at such a late time.

Konuki looked outside the window. A girl in school uniform stepped on the starting block before dashing out into the dark playground. Konuki-sensei immediately becomes attracted to the girl seemingly fused into the night.

"Hey, what are you doing here this late?"

Konuki's wearing flops because she was in a hurry. She's very shocked after seeing the girl's face. Is this coincidence

too?

“Oh, you’re the one from before.”

“Eh, sensei, what are you doing here this late?”

The girl asked the same question before continuing cheerfully.

“It’s already Friday night.”

“...Sensei has my reasons.”

As the teacher, she can’t possibly say she’s listening to her secret recordings during a weekend night.

“Also, this is sensei’s line. It’s already 9 PM.”

“I just suddenly wanted to run. Also, I’m not in a club today.”

She took out a bottle of sports drink and chugged it.

“Go back, or you want me to drive you home?”

“Sensei, can I run 100m for the last time?”

“You’re still running?”

Konuki smiled bitterly. The girl only answered her with a charming smile.

“I feel like I can do better next time.”

She forgot to wipe her sweat. The girl stared at the darkness ahead of her. Her eyes are fixed at the finishing line.

“I feel like I’ll be able to grasp something.”

Konuki thought that if she was so passionate about something at her age, her youthful days could’ve been completely different.

“Sure, go for it.”

Of course, Konuki didn’t have any regrets.

“But, give it everything you got.”

It's just that she thinks that the girl is too charming for her.

The girl with wheat-colored skin answered her with the brightest smile of the day.

“Of course!”

CHAPTER 3

A LOSS WHEN THE BATTLE HASN'T EVEN STARTED YET - CHIKA KOMARI'S DUNKIRK

The first day of the trip is incredibly sunny.

The TV said there's no rain in this year's rainy season. By the way, is this even the rainy season?

The Literature Club took the train before switching to a bus. We're at Shiroya Beach now. It's pretty close to the hostel.

I stared at the scorching beach dazedly as I laid opened the beach blanket. My brain's getting dizzy from the intense light.

"Hey, Nukumizu. Nice work."

The person cheerfully opening the umbrella on the beach is our long-awaited Shintaro-senpai. I owe a lot to him. Thanks to him, I can avoid an all-girls sleepover.

"Ah, what are you talking about?"

"Yanami and Yakishio. I didn't expect you to bring two very adorable girls here."

He looked at the changing room restlessly.

"Also, we're suddenly here at the beach."

“Sorry, this is all because of Yanami-san’s-“

“-Thank you so much! I mean it!”

He grabbed my hands and shook them.

“Ha? Do you really love beaches?”

“Swimsuits. It’s swimsuits. It’s very rare for us to see 4 of our club members in swimsuits, you know?”

“But those two are my classmates. I’ve already seen them in swimsuits during swimming lessons.”

“What are you saying? School swimsuits and personal swimsuits are two different things.”

Indeed, the design and exposure are different.

I’m unfazed by it. Prez shrugged helplessly.

“Listen closely. School swimsuits are mandatory. You’re forced to wear it.”

Yes.

“In other words, personal swimsuits are worn because girls like them. Can you understand the difference between these two?”

“...Please go on.”

What senpai said piqued my interest.

“Normally, girls are too embarrassed to show their shoulders or thighs. People even think of them as bitches if they show their bellies. However, with the legitimate reason of being on a beach, they’ll wear swimsuits that are not really different from underwear on their own.”

Tamaki-senpai clenched his fists and looked at the sky throbbingly.

“I can be forgiven even if we look at them. ...No, it’s more like it’s impolite to not look at them.”

I see. I can’t really argue with his reasoning. This must be the so-called summer’s magic.

“I got it. I didn’t think this through.”

“Yes.”

“But I do want to ask about something you just said.”

“It’s fine. Go ahead.”

“You said school swimsuits are mandatory, right?”

“Yes, I did say that.”

“In other words, they have to show their skin unwillingly, ... am I correct?”

“I see. From your perspective, this just makes PE lessons all that more charming.”

Prez nodded his head thoughtfully after hearing my opinion.

“For example, it’s like watching the animal girls listed on slave markets. You sure know a lot.”

“No, I don’t understand your example.”

I’m not on your side about this part.

“What are you two talking about?”

Tsukinoki-senpai pinched senpai’s ears as soon as she appeared.

“Ouch! By the way, Koto, you’re not in a bikini?”

Tsukinoki-senpai pinched even harder after hearing that. Prez’s screams reached a whole new level of decibel too. Looking at senpai, she’s wearing a black one-piece swimsuit with laces on the chest.

“Alright, stop messing around. Let’s play in the sea.”

Prez was brought away.

“Oh, there’s an umbrella. Thanks, Nukumizu-kun.”

“Yanami-san-”

The Yanami-san in question immediately grabbed a cup of shaved ice. Just as I was about to say something about the ice, Yanami’s pale skin immediately covered my consciousness.

She’s wearing a normal bikini- no, isn’t the exposure too high because of how normal it is?

Even though she kept eating for days, her waist is unexpectedly thin. In comparison, well, how should I put it? The parts that are actually correspondingly growing to her appetite can’t be covered by “last year’s swimsuit” anymore. It’s about to overflow.

It’s not actually about whether it’s suitable or not. All I can do is praise the gods.

“What? Are you so attracted to me in a swimsuit that you can’t say anything?”

“Eh, no, why would I? I-I’m not looking.”

Even I think that I ain’t fooling anyone. Yanami crawled into the shades of the umbrella cheerfully.

“I’ll eat before going to the sea.”

“Eh, you should come with us, Yana-chan! The sea is beautiful!”

The next girl is Yakishio. She’s holding a beach volleyball in one hand as she’s looking at the sea excitedly.

Yakishio’s in a bikini too. It’s the type without any staps on the shoulders. Even though the comparison between her tan

and pale skin is a bit much, the chest part does have strings.

And, if I have to say what I can see between the chest part- I can only praise the designer of the swimsuit. I wonder if he'll accept an Amazon gift card.

"You too, Nukunuku! Let's go!"

"I'll look after the luggage for a while. Yanami-san has to eat too. Yakishio-san can go ahead-

"Oh-ho, Nukunizu-kun, are you challenging me?"

...Challenge? What? Yanami-san already finished the shaved ice before I could ask.

"Thanks for the food!"

"Eh, it's gone?"

"Shaved ices are just drinks, Nukumizu-kun- ouch, ouch, ouch!"

Yanami recoiled as she pressed the back of her head.

"See, don't eat cold things so quickly."

"Are you okay? Yana-chan."

"My head hurts..."

Yanami said that with teary eyes.

I've already sensed this before. This girl is a bit dumb, isn't she?



“Yanami-san should go after your pain goes away. I’ll watch over our bags.”

“Thanks, I’m already okay. Let’s go.”

“Nukunuku should come later too!”

The two girls are dashing on the beach being washed by waves. Yakishio threw the beach volleyball onto Prez’s back forcefully. Wait, isn’t this the first time they meet each other?

Just as I was engraving their silhouette into my eyes, an unusual feeling suddenly surfaced. I feel like I forgot something...

Someone kicked my back with her barefoot when I’m thinking about that.

“N-Nukimizu. Y-Your eyes are p-pretty lewd.”

Ah, I completely forgot about this girl.

Komari’s wearing a long-sleeved jacket and sat down on the blanket a bit far away from me.

“You’re not going to join them?”

“I-I’m f-fine t-to be here.”

Prez showed an unprecedented smile as he’s surrounded by three girls. It looks like he’s really happy. I think they took out an inflatable tiger whale too.

As for Komari, she looked at everyone having fun with a slightly irritated expression.

“Why don’t you go to Prez? It’s rare for all of us to be at the beach.”

“S-Shut up.”

Komari started playing with her phone in a waterproof bag. Suddenly, she said this without even raising her face.

“M-Moreover, Nukumizu, d-do you like Yanami?”

“Ah? Why?”

I've never thought about that. After all, that girl still loves Sosuke Hakamada, and she was rejected just a while ago.

“I-It's because y-you two are always together.”

“Isn't that because you can only see Yanami-san whenever you're with me?”

Uh, is that really what people think whenever a guy and a girl are together?

We still won't greet or talk to each other in the classroom. I guess Yakishio's the only one who knows that we know each other.

“Also, Yanami-san and I only made contact because something happened. If this counts as liking her, doesn't that make me like those guys who fall in love with people just because she talked to him?”

“Eh.”

Komari zipped up her jacket. I think she's distancing herself from me even more.

“...So, what I'm trying to say is that I won't love someone just because I talk to her.”

This girl is really impolite. At this moment, I glanced at Komari's swimsuit under her jacket.

“Ah, you're wearing your school swimsuit.”

“O-Only o-one day. I-I didn't buy.”

Komari stared at me impolitely.

“I-I bet Nukumizu hastily bought your s-swimsuit, right?”

“Haha, that’s impossible. Even though it looks old-school, I bought it last year.”

“B-But the label is still there.”

What!? She got me. Komari chuckled like a little devil as she looked at me frantically searching for the label with my hands.

“...Alright, yes, I bought it on my way home yesterday.”

Damn you, Komari. I clenched my fists.

“It’s a beach party with girls, okay? Even I can be excited about it.”

Even though I don’t know whether I should say that to a girl like Komari, her despising eyes are certainly stabbing me.

“I-Isn’t swimming just something we do in lessons?”

“We’re playing, alright? Isn’t it normal to feel excited?”

“W-Well, imagine this. F-For example, you’re playing with your friends.”

Well, my imagination stopped as soon as you said the word friend. Komari noticed my expression.

“W-Well, h-how about you hiring a friend.”

The normieness is immediately overflowing.

“If people ask you what do you want to play, will you choose...to play ball games?”

“No.”

I dropped that without hesitation.

“W-Water race?”

No, but.

“...Komari, you missed a big premise.”

Yanami’s having fun as the girls are sitting on the inflated tiger whale.

Yakishio tripped as she stood up. The water splashes along with laughter.

“P-Premise...?”

“If that’s a girl, and she’s wearing a swimsuit.”

This whole hired friend thing sounds a lot lewder.

“I bet I’ll play, whether it’s ball games or races.”

I stood up and made the decisive conclusion. Komari looked at me like she just saw a stinky ditch.

“W-Well, how about you leave!?”



I closed my eyes and spread my limbs on the scorching sand.

...Perhaps I’ll never forget about this day. Playing with girls in swimsuits when I was young. I bet this will support my lonely life forever.

Something cold is on my head. Yanami’s handing out cups for the juice to everyone.

“Remember to stay hydrated. How about our lunch?”

Yanami split the chopsticks as she said that. I can’t help but look at the yakisoba on her lap. Wait, isn’t this supposed to be your lunch?

Tsukinoki-senpai tied her hair as she looked at all of us.

“Let’s buy something and eat here. What should we get?”

Yanami raised her hand just as senpai's asking for everyone's suggestions.

"Well, how about yakisoba?"

The scent of the sauce does raise my appetite. The taste makes you hungry.

"...Yanami-san, aren't you eating yakisoba right now?"

"That's just because I'm hungry. It doesn't taste good. My intuition tells me that the store at the corner is the tastiest."

Yanami slurped the noodles as she said that. Obviously, she's going for another serving.

"Well, I'll go."

Yakishio wiped her body with a towel and stood up.

"Thanks, Nukumizu should tag along too."

Prez said that as he looked around vigilantly.

"People always try to talk to girls when they are alone, so we have to prevent that as soon as possible."

"That only happens in 2D, right?"

Well, you can't go wrong with a bit more mindfulness.

Yakishio and I walked across the beach. Even though walking together with a girl in a swimsuit is quite nerve-wracking for me, it feels kind of nice. ...I just sounded like an elementary kid right there, didn't I?

"We went home a bit late yesterday. Did you get home safe?"

"Of course, I often go home at that time after the club."

The conversation ended. By the way, I wasn't supposed to bring up what happened yesterday, right? At this moment, I'm utterly disappointed in my communication skills.

“Eh, don’t tell me Nukunuku is worried about what happened to me yesterday?”

Yakishio looked at me, who fell silent awkwardly.

“Well, I just felt like I did something unnecessary and just made you even more upset.”

“Hiya, how should I put it? I’m really upset. Even right now, I can cry in like 2 seconds if I want to, you know? But that’s another thing. I decide whether I want to cry or not. Also, I just want to have fun with everyone today.”

Yakishio squeezed out a smile. She kicked the sand forcefully.

“As dense as he is, he managed to skillfully get a girlfriend for himself-“

“Yeah, Ayano is indeed smart and handsome.”

“Right!? That’s not all. He’s humorous and kind to anyone-“

After that, Yakishio dropped her shoulders depressedly.

“...Even though we’ve been together for a few years. He’s not even viewing me as a proper girl, right?”

“Well, uh, it’s possible, but I don’t think it’s a bad thing, right?”

“No, that’s a really weird way to comfort me.”

Yakishio approached me with a stern face. Yeah, I think so too.

“Yakishio-san. Well, anyway, ...let’s just forget everything and have fun today.”

“Yes, you’re right.”

Yakishio suddenly stopped and gave me a big smile. Her teeth are really white.

“Hehehe.”

“...What?”

She chuckled and held my hand suddenly.

Hiya!? What!?

“Alright, let’s go!”

What’s happening? Yakishio ignored my confusion and started dashing. I quickly followed her.

“W-Wait up!”

Uwah, she is speed. I feel like she’s about to tear my arm away from my shoulder.

I’m about to die. I can’t keep up at all. My legs tripped over, and I fell onto the beach. Yakishio followed the same fate as I dragged her down too.

“Nukunuku, too slow! You’re too slow!”

“No, you’re too fast, Yakishio-san!”

I stood up with my body covered in sand. Yakishio remained laid down on the beach as she laughed.

“You’re so slow! It’s kind of funny that you’re covered in sand!”

Yakishio burst into laughter.

“Ha!? What does that have to do with me running slow!?”

What are you even trying to say?

I wiped my face with my arm. My face is now covered in sand.

“Stop! My stomach hurts-“

Yakishio could barely contain her laughter as she rolled on the ground. As for me, I patted the sand away in silence.

“Ah, ...that’s enough.”

Yakishio’s face is covered with sand too. She wiped the tears dripping from the corner of her eyes.

“...Yakishio-san, let’s get lunch..”

“It’s okay to not add honorifics, you know. Aren’t we the same age?”

Yakishio reached her hand out to me. Her body remained on the ground.

“Here.”

“Hmm? What, there are bugs on your hand?”

Yakishio blinked. Then, she cleaned the sand as she stood up.

“Yeah, you’re just like what Yana-chan said. I don’t like this part of yours.”

“Which part of me are you talking about?”

Yakishio gently knocked my chest.

“You know, girls want to be spoiled sometimes.”

“Oh, I see.”

I learned something today. I quickly agreed with her.

Yakishio bulged her eyes as she looked at me. She mumbled something.

“Sheesh, that’s why I don’t like this part of yours.”

So, which part of mine are we talking about here?



“Thanks for the wait. We’re back.”

“Hey, Yakishio, stop shaking your body.”

We got the yakisoba from the “furthest store” with our bodies covered in sand.

“Sheesh, you two are surely making us wait.”

Yanami already finished her first yakisoba as she happily took the second serving.

This girl is always hungry. You’re amazing, Anna Yanami. No wonder people always say they feel secure around you. Also, I shouldn’t underestimate her ability to save the most yakisoba for herself as she’s splitting it.

“Hmm, Komari, you’re not going to eat?”

Komari isn’t eating. Instead, she’s fiddling the sand with her fingers worriedly.

“P-Prez is reading my novel.”

Oh, I see. This finally feels like a Literature Club trip. I split the chopsticks with my mouth.

Prez raised his head from his phone as he took the yakisoba.

“I read it. Hmm, the writing’s interesting. Let’s submit it tonight.”

“I-I see.”

Komari smiled in relief.

“It’s around 10,000 words in total, right? Let’s proofread the submitted part again and split it into 3 chapters.”

“S-Split...?”

“Yes, works are usually submitted in chapters between 3 to 4,000 words. The hook must be interesting enough to satisfy the readers. Titles and introductions are mandatory too.”

I listened to their conversation as I ate the yakisoba.

The spiciness is overflowing in my nose. I see. This is indeed worthy of Yanami's recommendation. The sauce is really unique.

"I-I've already added the t-title."

"Hmm, I think the title's nice. How about we add a subtitle that can express the content?"

Prez adapted Komari's title and even suggested a subtitle like the ones you see in <Let's Become an Author!>.

...By the way, this noodle is really chewy. It's not something cheap you can get from a supermarket. I guess it's fresh from a factory that delivers it every day.

I looked at Yanami. She smugly raised her thumb at me.

"W-What should t-the subtitle be?"

"Hmm, ...for example, let's say the title is <Literature Club at the Beach>. Nukumizu, what would you add?"

"Eh, it's my turn?"

The ball was suddenly tossed to me. I was paying full attention to my yakisoba, you know? But, girls in swimsuits are surrounding me, so I don't want to say anything stupid.

"Well, how about <And Then There Were None>?"

I tried my best to follow Prez's idea. He nodded deeply.

"This is a nice one if it's a mystery novel. Readers can be guided easily with a title of a famous work."

"W-What would P-Prez use?"

"Let me think. ...From my experience, I prefer titles like <We didn't know this is a nudist's beach!?!> or <Is it true that the more you take off, the higher score you get!?!> I bet titles like this will attract a lot of views-"

Tsukinoki-senpai smacked Prez's head before he could even finish. Then, Prez squatted down in pain.

"Alright, Shintaro, you should stop."

"K-Koto, ...hey, I'm not asking you to take off, right?"

"S-T-O-P!"

Okay, you two should stop too. It's really annoying to see you two flirting.

"Eh, Yana-chan, I think the Literature Club is doing something incomprehensible."

Yakishio said that as she searched for the sides in her yakisoba using her chopsticks.

"Yeah, by the way, Remon-chan, does yours have meat in it?"

"There's octopus, but I don't see any meat."

"I want meat-"

"I want-"

Yanami and Yakishio slurped the noodles with their crystal-clear eyes. They are like two idiots who get along with each other.

"T-Take off...? A-Are we taking o-off?"

Komari mumbled something as she looked at her phone.

"Komari, that was just an example. It's unnecessary to make the characters take off their clothes."

"I-In other words, will you take y-your clothes off too, Nukumizu?"

How did things end up like this?

"I won't. No one needs to. You should eat."



It's post-lunch break now. Yakishio suddenly stood up. Perhaps she's bored with sitting around.

"Isn't there an event over that side of the beach? Let's check it out."

"...I think there are stalls."

Yanami chewed on her post-lunch fried corn and mumbled. Of course, Yanami stood up too.

She just finished eating. What an energetic girl. I unintentionally raised my head. Yanami's stomach appeared in front of me.

"Ah, wait, Yanami-san. Your jacket."

Yanami looked at the jacket I handed to her. She bulged her eyes in disbelief.

"Jacket? I should be fine with sunscreen, right?"

"No, I mean...your stomach..."

I looked away after saying that too.

2 servings of yakisoba + fried corn = chubby stomach.

Yanami robbed the jacket from my hands and just threw it straight to my face.

"I-I have my own jacket! That's why I don't like this part of yours, Nukumizu-kun!"

She got on her jacket and quickly left. The fried corn is still in her hand.

Yakishio gave Komari a refreshing smile as she looked at her phone.

“Komari-chan should tag along too. You’ve been sitting for the whole day?”

“Eh!?”

Komari’s eyes floated around as she struggled to answer Yakishio with her phone. Prez held Komari’s hand.

“P-Prez!?”

“Komari-chan should go too. You can treat it as getting ideas for your novel.”

“I-If Prez says so, I’ll...”

“What a good child. Koto, you should follow them too.”

“Okay, Komari-chan, let’s go.”

Senpai held Komari’s hand and chased after them. Prez and I stood side-by-side and watched them silently.

“Is it okay to leave the girls alone? Won’t somebody try to strike up a conversation with them?”

“It’s fine if Koto’s there. She’s known as the Flag Destroyer.”

I don’t know whether this is Prez’s trust for her. He took his phone out.

“Also, I want to prepare for tonight’s submission.”

“Right, this trip is supposed to be a canned session.”

I have to write something too.

Just as I was anxiously checking my notes on my phone, I got Prez’s message. I think there’s an attachment too.

“What’s this?”

“Don’t you want to see Komari-chan’s novel?”

Prez’s attitude is a bit smug. I opened the document in curiosity.



Literature Club Report

<The Warm Chronicles of Youkai Café> by Chika Komari

Yuri Mizuhara, year 1 of high school.

One day, she bumped into an animal on her way home.

“A fox...?”

Then, Yuri’s eyes are attracted to the color of its fur. The silver reflection is brimming with elegance. Yuri can’t help but chase after it.

She accidentally entered an unfamiliar street. A café covered in Japanese ivy appeared in front of her. As if it’s inviting Yuri, the door opened by itself.

“Sorry, I want to ask for directions.”

There’s a tall man in chef clothes inside. Yuri looked at his long, tied silver hair in shock.

“Hiya, you followed me. Have a seat. The least I can do is pour you a cup of tea.”

“Hello, I want to ask for directions-”

“Here’s known as Interval Street. You can’t leave without eating something.”

A young waiter walked out just as Yuri was confused.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve seen customers. Here, have a seat.”

The young man called himself Sumire as he greeted Yuri with his dreamy smile.

“Welcome to the Lost Home of the Interval Street-“

-The girl already forgot how many times she visited the café. As usual, Yuri is sitting next to the window as she observes the relieving scene here.

The shopkeeper, who's called “young master”, only appears every 3 days. Sumire-san is usually the only one present. This isn't much of an issue since there are nearly no customers.

Yuri picked up the cup and wrapped herself in the scent of chamomile tea as usual. Suddenly, a man entered from the door. His body is radiating a ghostly aura that humans don't have.

Sumire-san's face immediately went pale.

“Master!”

“Today's the promised day. Bring me that dish.”

“S-Sorry, I haven't seen the young master today...”

“Well, as we've promised, everything will shatter within the Interval.”

Sumire-san grabbed Yuri tremblingly.

“Please, Yuri! I'll disappear within the Interval if the promise isn't fulfilled. Please make a dish in my place!”

“Eh? I'm no good. Does Sumire-san not know how to cook?”

Sumire-san mumbled aggrievedly.

“I can't use fire.”

Yuri never had proper cooking experience. So, she can only put out the omurice she made with her mother when she was a little worried. Meanwhile, the man picked up the spoon suspiciously.

One, two, ...the man finished Yuri's dish a spoon at the time. His expression tells me that he's not enjoying it. After that, he shook his head and put down the spoon.

"Next time, make something that's actually edible when I come."

There's half of the omurice left on the plate. The man went back after saying that.

"You're amazing, Yuri! Master always goes home after having a single bite!"

Then, the shopkeeper appeared behind the joyful Sumire-san.

"Sheesh, Dad finally went back."

"Young master!"

The man had a spoon of the remaining omurice.

"Plain."

He threw the spoon into the plate.

"But it's not too bad."

"What do you mean!? I'm the one that made it for you! Also, is this the attitude you should have for a customer?"

"Well, how about you stop being our customer? You'll be our chef starting tomorrow."

"Who's going to be the chef in your café!?"

Yuri tried to rebel, but the man forced Yuri into the wall.

"Weren't you the one that chased after me first? You stalking girl."

"I was chasing a silver fox, not you-"

The man raised Yuri's chin with the tip of his finger.

“My name is Tsukiko. Remember it.” *[Literal translation: moon fox]*

The man whispered next to Yuri’s ear.

“I’ll engrave my scent deep into your bones.”



...I see. That’s how it is.

I looked at the clouds in the sky after I finished reading Komari’s novel.

“I see. That’s how it is.”

This time, I said what I thought out loud. This isn’t my field.

But the writing is pretty smooth. I finished it in one go.

“It’s quite good, right?”

Tamaki-senpai looked at me happily.

“Komari-chan’s writing is nice.”

“Yes, she is. At least I don’t think I can write something like this.”

I’m unwilling to give up so easily, so I’ll say something a bit pretentious.

“We have some new members too. It looks like the Literature Club can finally settle in.”

People are cheering in the stalls. Prez glanced in that direction to see what was going on.

“By the way, what did Prez write?”

“Me? Well, I uploaded something to <Let’s Become an Author> 3 years ago.”

“Eh, aren’t you amazing? Can I see it?”

“It’s quite nerve-wracking to show other people what I’ve done again.”

Prez took out his phone embarrassedly. A slightly familiar title came into view.

<The slave girl I picked is actually an S-class adventurer, so I started living off her>

...No, wait, I’ve actually read it.

“I actually know about this one. I’ve even read it.”

“For real? This is the first time I’m meeting a reader in real life.”

Although I’ve heard of many student novelists online, I didn’t expect Prez to be one of them either. He’s the author with over 20,000 accumulated points with his novel, Tarosuke-sensei.

“That’s an amazing score. You can publish books for real, right?”

“It’s not nearly close. A lot of people are better than me.”

Is that really the case? A few thousand people are reading your work, you know?

“Yanami-san also said that she’ll send over her draft once it’s done. How are things going for you, Nukimizu?”

“I just wrote a summary. The main content is still bone dry. How should I put it? In reality, I don’t even know what I should write when I’m actually doing it.”

“Well, you should start with a title and intro for the day. At times like this, the most important part is to start writing, even if there’s only a single line.”

This is coming from a person who wrote more than 1 million words. I nodded obediently.

"Well, I sent you my summary yesterday. What do you think? I'm going to start writing the plot at the start tonight."

"Well, ...the female MC doesn't have enough monologues."

"You mean the plot of the FMC falling in love with MC isn't solid?"

Yeah, I have to write more about what the MC and FMC are thinking.

"No, it's the exact opposite. You wrote that the FMC fell in love with the MC after he helped her, right?"

"Well, yes. The FMC was impressed by how gentle the MC is and lowered her guard, and then she became attracted to him."

"This is just plotting."

"Eh?"

"Loving someone because they helped you or treated you nicely is just a kind of spiritual trade deal. Love that comes along with conditions isn't pure."

I thought Prez was joking around, but he looks pretty serious.

"Just like how water always flows to a lower place, in a novel's world, the MC will be loved without doing anything. The so-called being attracted to someone also means that they will eventually separate one day. The FMCs aren't attracted to the MC. Instead, they have to play by the rules and yearn and praise the MC unconditionally."

After saying all that in one go, Prez looked at the sky throbbingly.

"I want to get isekai'd and be loved by everyone too. ...I wonder whether a post-drinking swimming session will do."

"Wait until the Ghost Festival. I feel like you'll have an easier time going over to that side."

However, I certainly didn't expect Prez to be such a troublesome guy. Even though he's handsome, cheerful, and has a beautiful childhood friend. I guess everyone has their own troubles.

The girls came back while we were chatting.

"Hey, we're back! These are the presents!"

Yakishio is holding a lot of fireworks.

"That's a lot. Did you girls buy them?"

Yakishio handed me the fireworks chickly.

"I dashed out and started running, and then, bam, I got the flag and the fireworks."

I see. I don't understand at all. So, Tsukinoki-senpai explained it to me.

"Yakishio-chan suddenly participated in a capture-the-flag race, and these are her prizes."

"Y-Yeah, s-she's fast."

Komari nodded excitedly.

"Hiya, I'm not bad. Praise me more."

In contrast to Yakishio twisting around joyfully, one girl looks pretty depressed.

"What's wrong, Yanami-san? You're so gloomy."

"There's no...stalls."

Yanami looked at the shop hungrily. I can see her lips saying the word "takoyaki".

"You can't eat dinner if you eat too much."

“Eh, ...why?”

What do you mean by...why?

Yanami’s face looks genuinely confused. By the way, why?
This must be philosophy.

“By the way, we have to cook dinner by ourselves. What are we making?”

“Hmph, mph, mph. Nukimizu-kun, you don’t need to worry about not having enough meat.”

Yanami smiled confidently.

“I’ve already booked a place near the camping ground.
We’re having a barbecue for dinner.”

“Eh...”

Wait, didn’t this girl say she came here to escape barbecue?
I love curry more. Rice grilled in a box tastes good too.

“What? Nukumizu, you don’t look too interested.”

Yanami is in disbelief of my plain reaction.

“It’s a barbecue, okay!? Meat!? What else do you want?”

Yanami suddenly clapped her hands as if she realized something.

“Oh, I get it. Relax, we’ll definitely have beef. We’re in high school, after all.”

Yanami’s expression looks pretty smug. She gave me a thumbs-up.

“I want to ask, what does beef have to do with being a high school student?”

“You can’t eat beef at home during mandatory education, right?”

“...No.”

“Eh? But Dad said that.”

Wait, why does this sound a bit depressing?

“Huh? Is that a law? Maybe school rules?”

“I bet it must be because of your father’s company. You know, like the ones where the employees can only buy Toyota cars.”

Nice, my conclusion is perfect. This topic ends here.

“Company, ...right. I wonder what Dad is doing now...?”

Yanami lowered her head. The depressing chain isn’t over yet.

“No, well, he must be working, right?”

“Y-Yes! Dad is working really hard, okay? But Dad is really bad at working in the company.”

Stop, Yanami. I’ll really cry if you continue.

[If you’re wondering, Yanami’s family told her she can’t eat beef because of how expensive it is and her appetite. The Toyota joke is about nationalist companies only supporting cars made in Japan.]



It’s almost time to take the bus.

It’s time for us to leave, considering the time for a shower and changing. I think Yanami’s done eating takoyaki too.

Yakishio didn’t seem to have enough fun when I was packing stuff. She started doing stretches facing the sea.

“By the way, Komari-chan. You haven’t got into the sea, right?”

“Eh, well...”

Komari hastily tried to take out the phone in her bag.

Yakishio took the opportunity. She smiled and princess-carried Komari.

“Ah!?”

“Well, let’s go!”

“Have fun.”

We waved at Yakishio as she dashed out. She’s totally unfazed by Komari’s struggle. Strong girls, I’m telling you.

“Well, I’ll close the umbrella.”

“You should return this inflated tiger whale too. I still have to pack up.”

I can hear splashes in the sea. At the same time, somebody’s screaming too. Hey, Komari’s scream is unexpectedly adorable.

“Shintaro, the girls have to get off the bus in the middle and stop by the supermarket. Can you two move our things to the hostel first?”

Tsukinoki-senpai took off her hairband. Her black hair is scattered on her naked shoulder.

Senpai used the towel to dry her hair as she leaned on Prez to check the schedule.

“Just in time for the next bus when we’re done shopping.”

“Koto, your hair is touching me. It’s cold.”

“Shut up. I will touch you.”

They are flirting with each other just as usual. Go explode.

“Ugh, ...I’m all wet.”

Komari's soaked as she twisted her jacket. The beach portrays the stomach of her school swimsuit. ...I see. I finally understood what Yanami said back then. It's an unusual product of embarrassment and immorality. Perhaps only high-level people will appreciate her clothing.

"Komari-chan, how do you feel? The seawater is nice, right!"

Yakishio swept up her wet hair and wrapped her hands around Komari's shoulders.

"S-Salty..."

"Right, it's nice."

"I-I told you it's salty!"

"It's the sea, after all! What are you talking about, Komari-chan?"

Yakishio laughed cheerfully. Komari, you can't have a normal conversation with this girl.

Tsukinoki-senpai clapped her hands.

"Alright, play time's over! It's time to change and get to the hostel!"

...I had fun. Isn't it time to disband?

I put the umbrella on my shoulder as I thought about that



The sun is setting. The scorching heat during the day is quickly residing too.

Bugs that I have never heard of are calling. Scary.

"I'll put the washed vegetables here."

“Thanks. Can you help me put the stuff I’ve finished cutting on the plate?”

We’re at the outdoor kitchen in the camping ground now. Yanami volunteered to make dinner, but she asked me to help her for some reason.

Well, if she volunteered, I think she would be good with knives- no, it’s not good, very not good. She’s chipping away the carrot with a pretty dangerous technique.

“Yanami-san, do you want to tell me something?”

“Eh? No, just help me cut the carrots I’ve peeled. Is that okay?”

Of course, I cut the carrot with skills that are just as bad as Yanami.

“It’s because you wanted my help instead of Yakishio’s.”

Yanami’s hands stopped.

“...Cooking lessons. Have you ever been in the same group as Remon-chan?”

“Hmm, no, I haven’t.”

Yanami suddenly looked into the distance.

“She still can’t control fire or use knives yet.”

What the hell happened between them? From Yakishio’s look, she’s a sporty and attractive girl who’s untouchable. But after actually making contact, I realized she’s actually pretty useless.

“I’ll tell you that girl is a potential candidate for arson.”

“Nevermind.”

They will deal with their own issues, anyway. I changed the topic to something I’m interested in.

“By the way, Yanami-san. I read the novel you wrote.”

“Eh, you’ve checked it out already? It’s a bit embarrassing.”

“It’s fun. The writing is pretty smooth too.”

Yanami’s novel is a simple slice-of-life story. The scene is going to school. The genuine conversation really conveyed the feelings of the girl hesitating whether she should say hi to the boy she’s in love with.

“Also, I didn’t know there is so much knowledge about teriyaki in convenience stores. I learned something.”

“Right, no one knows for some reason.”

Wait, what were we talking about? Whatever, as long as Yanami is happy about it.

I walked to the camping ground after finishing the prep work. Prez is fanning the charcoal fire, while Tsukinoki-senpai is fanning Prez.

“Uh, where did Yakishio go?”

I don’t see her.

“I think she’s over there.”

She’s outside the light’s coverage. Yakishio is hugging her kneecaps as she peeled broad beans. Her face is covered in coal powder too.

...I think something bad happened.

“Leave her alone. Don’t bother her.”

“Yeah, leave her alone.”



Meat > meat > green pepper > meat > meat > sausage.

As if she didn't have enough meat during the day, Yanami's momentum isn't stopping at all.

As for me, my sequence is cabbage > onion > corn. As for the meat I'm raising, Yanami swiftly robbed that away from me.

"Hey, that wasn't done—"

"It's fine. Nukumizu-kun is unexpectedly mindful about these things."

Yanami's enjoying the meat dripping with blood.

There's a huge canyon between the half-done and well-done faction. I immediately acknowledged my failure and took a bite of the burnt carrot as I looked at other members.

"Tasty! Is this from Mexico?"

Yakishio's chewing non-stop. Red meat juice is leaking out of her mouth.

"Shintaro, I'm done here. Give me your plate."

"P-Prez, I-I'm done grilling too."

"Thanks, yeah, having food outdoors tastes better."

Shintaro-senpai is constructing his harem. As usual, I don't know whether I should be envious.

"Nukumizu, are you eating? This meat tastes really good. Eat up."

"Okay, sure."

What's happening? I have a bad feeling. I noticed something after observing them.

...Why is everyone eating meat?

It's too late for me to feel shocked. Yanami clapped the cramp and put the meat on the net.

“Remon-chan, this one is pretty chewy. It’s from Argentina, right? Yeah, beef just has to come from the Americas.”

“Eh, Yanami knows a lot. Argentina is...uh, pretty far away from here, right? Is this aged beef?”

Yakishio admired Yanami as she threw another piece of meat in her mouth. Tsukinoki-senpai shrugged helplessly.

“Yakishio-chan, that’s not what aged beef is. You should come on the trip next year too. I’ll let you taste real aged beef.”

Isn’t she a third-year already? Is she going to stay in the Literature Club next year too?

“I-It’s been a long time since I’ve eaten b-beef...”

Komari shoved the beef inside her mouth throbbing. Everything that Yanami had put on the net is already in everyone’s stomach.

...Undoubtedly, these people are in the “I don’t mind it’s half-done” faction.

I never thought that I would be surrounded by enemies. However, I can’t just sit around and wait for my death here. So, I paid attention to a certain kind of food.

I can eat this even if it’s raw. My chopsticks pointed toward the sausage that was put on the net just a while ago.

“Nukunuku, I just put it on there. Wait for a bit.”

“W-What a g-gluttonous person.”

Why must you hurt me in this way? How can y’all say that when every single one of you is eating raw meat? Their unreasonable demands crushed me. Yanami approached me with a plate of meat.

“Nukumizu-kun, you must be hungry, right? Here, this one is done.”

I quickly took my plate away from the half-done pork. ...I feel like I've experienced something like this before.

Tsukinoki-senpai handed me another plate.

“You must be hungry. Here.”

There's a rice ball on the plate, and it's a red bean rice ball.

“Where did this come from?”

“From the other camp, and it's properly grilled.”

I see. This is tastier than those made with sesame salt.

“An adorable middle school girl gave us that. I was going to give her some meat in return, but I couldn't find her anymore.”

I immediately looked around again. It's all strangers.

...Sigh, that should be impossible, right? I waved my hand at the converging bugs and started biting the red bean rice ball.



The sunset is swallowed up by the dark blue sky. The night is covering us everywhere at once.

Insects and frogs can be heard everywhere. The woods are rustling too. If you listen closely, the mountain at night is unexpectedly lively.

Tsukinoki-senpai reached her hand forward. A yellow beam of light flew out from the paper roll and made a parabola. The light turned from yellow to green. Finally, it scattered into shining red sparkles before gradually disappearing.

Tsukinoki-senpai smiled charmingly. The smile is for Tamaki-senpai. He didn't notice senpai because he was choosing the fireworks. Senpai silently kicked Prez's back.

"Watch the fireworks."

"That's why I'm picking which one is next."

"Eh, but, ...look, this one's too big. A single person can't play it! Play with me!"

"You can take it alone. Hey, alright, alright, I got it. Stop kicking me!"

These two. Can you two just get married already?

I sighed and put the remaining meat onto the net. With the remaining fire, I promised that I must raise my creation properly. Alright, your name shall be Setsuko.

Exploding gunpowder can be heard throughout the place. Yakishio's shaking the firework stick around as Komari squeaked and escaped.

"Those two got really close super fast."

Yanami chewed the remaining green peppers bit by bit, which are raw, by the way.

Are they close? Anyway, I guess so.

"You're not going to play with the fireworks, Yanami-san?"

"I want to have desserts first."

"Ah, speaking of desserts for barbecues—"

"Hmph, mph, mph. Yes, this is the one!"

"Marshmallow—"

"Offal platter!"

Yanami took out a package with a cheerful smile. Are you serious?

“That’s how my house ends a barbecue.”

We don’t talk about Yanami’s family here. But, at this point, I can only go with the flow.

The other side of Setsuko is already starting to smell good. If it’s a person, she should be around elementary school right now. Hmm, the red school bag matches her. Well, it’s time to flip you and give you a well-done.

“Ah, I’ll have that one.”

The meat that I’ve poured my soul and heart into raising is robbed by Yanami’s chopsticks.

“Setsuko!?”

Ah, Setsuko, I’ve spent so much time raising you. The imaginary memories are flashing in my brain.

“Setsuko?”

“No, well...”

Yanami laughed mischievously as she raised her chopsticks.

“You should say it if you want to eat. Here, ah.”

“Huh!? Eh?”

I carefully opened my mouth after confirming that no one was around. The taste of blood and fat is spreading on my tongue.

“Is it good?”

“Y-Yes.”

“So, how much is this worth?”

-Huh!? That's what you're up to!? I can't believe this girl dares to mess with a young man's pure heart.

But, if I have to say how much this is worth.

"7-700-"

"Sheesh, I'm just joking."

Yanami cracked into laughter.

"Ehehe, what were you trying to say? Eh? 700 yen?"

"I-I didn't..."

I plopped my head down and avoided looking at her. Yanami chuckled as she got really close to me.

"Hiya, I didn't know me feeding you worth so much. Ehehe."

"No, uh. Girls aren't supposed to do this on a whim. Things like this are, well, based on rarity."

"Hehe, you're right. Do you want another bite? I'll go easy on you."

She's just messing with me. I want to fight back, but I don't think I'll win.

I looked at everyone playing with the fireworks silently.

Yakishio's drawing circles with her new fireworks as she cheered around. The sparkles are shining around her before disappearing into the night. As usual, she's energetic, but not in a cute way.

As for Komari, she's entirely focused on burning the ground with fireworks. Did the ground kill your parents?

Everyone likes to have fun in different ways. Like Yanami, she likes to eat meat more than fireworks.

Alright, now that Setsuko's life is over and Yanami's still indulging herself in meat, I should play with fireworks too.

I stood up and took a small one out of the large package of fireworks. It's a cheap one with a gun-shaped handle. However, I do remember I used to like this when I was little.

I grilled the pebbles on the ground with fireworks as if I was executing them- isn't this the same as Komari?

I ignited the fireworks as I glanced at Komari.

Next to the slightly glistening fire, Komari's about to light up a big one. However, it didn't go off after she tried a couple times. At last, sparkles started spewing out of the tube

But it immediately went off.

I guess the fireworks got damp. Komari turned over the tube and looked inside when I was thinking that.

"Idiot!"

Boom. The fireworks exploded before I could voice out.

My eyes were immediately stunned by light.

After my vision recovered, Prez appeared. His hand is holding the tube. He frowned and threw out the crushed fireworks.

"Komari-chan, are you hurt!?"

"I-I'm fine-"

"Are you okay?"

Prez observed Komari's hand and finally held her face. He looked into her eyes.

"Are your vision clear? Does it hurt?"

"N-No, ... I'm fine."

"Glad to hear that. ...What should I do if you hurt your face?"

Prez calmed down with a relieved expression.

"I-It's fine even if my face is hurt. ...F-Forget about me. P-Prez, your hand..."

"Are you an idiot? How can you say it's fine?"

Prez shoved his hands into his pocket like it was nothing.

"N-No one will look at my face anyway..."

"At least you'll look at it yourself, right?"

"Eh, ...m-maybe."

"Bad memories will surface if you see your scar on the face every day. I hate that."

"P-Prez..."

"So, don't look down on yourself. Be more confident-"

"T-Tamaki-senpai!"

Her voice echoes throughout the night sky.

Even I can hear how loud Komari's breathing is. At the next moment-

"I-I love you!"

The sudden confession stopped time.

Yanami's flipping over the meat. The fiery pillar charging out from the fireworks burnt Yakishio's hair, who stood completely still.

Prez opened his mouth after recovering from the shock. His body is still stiff.

"Komari-chan? Uh, what does that mean-"

Komari took another deep breath. Then, she said a bunch of things at once.

“I-It means I love you! I love Prez! I-I-I’ve always loved Prez!”

Komari’s words are overflowing like a destroyed dam.

“I-I’m happy that Prez is always watching over me! I love Prez, so! P-Please go out with me!”

Her voice grew hoarse at the end. After she said everything, Komari seemed to have exhausted herself and plopped her head down with tears.

Seeing the unfolding scene in front of her, Tsukinoki-senpai stood still like a stone.

Yanami’s still eating. Yakishio’s hitting her burnt hair with her hands. What’s with these two?

“...No, well, this is a bit sudden.”

Prez broke the eternal silence. His mouth opened and closed as if he was considering what he should say.

Finally, he squeezed a sentence. Time started again.

“Give me some time. I’ll think about it.”

Komari nodded. At the next moment, she looked at Tsukinoki-senpai in fear before running away.

...Ah, don’t tell me.

Tsukinoki-senpai slowly walked towards Prez as three spectators were watching them silently.

“...Shintaro. What is this?”

“Koto. Are you going to ask me that? ...Don’t you think this is also too sudden?”

Tsukinoki-senpai pulled Prez’s hand out from his pocket and sprayed water on it.

“Sorry, it’s just a bit of gunpowder. There’s no burn damage.”

“...So, you even said you’ll think about it. Aren’t you making things worse to leave her with a cliffhanger?”

Tsukinoki-senpai carefully wrapped Prez’s hand with a handkerchief.

“Hey, Koto.”

“The most gentle thing you can do is to reject her clearly!”

Senpai held Prez’s hand and glared at him.

“Wait, Koto-“

“Why!? Why didn’t you reject her!?”

Facing Tsukinoki-senpai’s demand, Prez looked away awkwardly.

“...This is between Komari-chan and me, whether I accepted or rejected her. It has nothing to do with you, right?”

Silence ensued again. I can only hear the bugs’ call and meat being grilled.

“...Right, Shintaro and I are just childhood friends.”

Senpai said that calmly. After a moment of silence, she slapped Prez’s face as hard as she could.

“We’re just childhood friends!”

She also ran away after repeating that. Tamaki-senpai remained still.

There’s a snake-shaped firework stick next to Yakishio.

...That must be nice. I want to forget everything and play with snake-shaped fireworks too. Just as I tried to escape reality, Yanami and Yakishio urged me by blinking and

frowning constantly. Do they want me to say something to him?

I'm scared. Yanami and Yakishio urged me. I can hear them saying, "Go, go!"

"Uh, Prez."

Prez looked at me with empty eyes.

"Nukumizu. ...Sorry for ruining our trip."

"I-It's fine. You can leave things here to us. Well, chase after her."

"Which one?"

Think about it yourself, dude. I barely stopped myself from saying that.

"You decide."

Even though this sounds the same.

"Got it. ...Sorry, I'll leave the rest to you."

Prez wobbled as he disappeared into the darkness.

The remaining people sighed at the same. This is certainly unexpected.

"Uh, ...can you guys extinguish the fire and pack up?"

The staff member of the camping ground spoke up tremblingly. He looks genuinely awkward.

I bet he was interrupted before he could come out. He must've watched us from afar.

"Sorry, we'll clean up now."

"Sorry about that. It looked like you guys were busy."

Isn't this person too nice? I quickly started packing the dishes.

“Got it.”

Yanami nodded.

“I’ll eat them all up right now.”



“I didn’t know Komari-chan loves Prez. Wow, she’s bold.”

In front of the washing tub, Yakishio’s squishing the sponge full of bubbles. She’s looking at the sky like a young maiden in love.

“She took the initiative and confessed to her most beloved person under the starry sky! How romantic! The era of girls going on the attack is here-“

After that, her spontaneous excitement suddenly died down. The sponge fell down from the plate.

“...Yeah, I can’t just sit around and wait. I finally know that now.”

For some reason, these two losing heroines really love to open their wounds again. I tied the garbage bag as I thought, “There’s no way I can deal with her.”

“But, Nukunuku. Isn’t Prez going out with Tsukinoki-senpai?”

“They look like it, but they aren’t. I think it’s just a matter of time.”

However, from what Prez said, I think Komari has a chance too, right? I didn’t expect Tsukinoki-senpai to be a potential losing heroine candidate.

“Yes. Those two nom nom nom nom nom.”

Yanami’s cheeks are stuffed with meat as she’s chewing it. She answered with an expression like she knew it all.

“Yeah, Prez and vice really suit each other.”

“Yeah, Prez nom nom nom nom nom.”

“Indeed, I agree.”

For some reason, these two are having a meaningful conversation. Yakishio has a unique trick up her sleeve.

I quietly left my seat since I felt a bit distant from them. My confidence in making myself disappear without a trace is quite high. Those two didn't even know I wasn't there already.

...After strolling for a while, I saw the camping ground bathroom in the dark. It's dimly lit. Anyway, I shall finish my business first.

The urinals in this one have a wall that reaches eye level. The woods in front of me are rustling, and the shadows are shaking.

While a lonely silence is certainly scary, it's just as horrifying when someone's there.

“Nukumizu...”

“Uwah!”

A voice from behind made me pissed out. Thank god I'm facing the urinal.

“Hey, Prez, don't scare me like that!”

“Nukumizu, please listen to me...”

“Please wait until I finish my business! Uwah, don't grab my shoulders!”

After I zipped up, I took my time washing my hands. Alright, let's hear him out.

“Prez, did you stay in the bathroom for the whole time?”

“Well, I don’t know what I should do...”

Shouldn’t you chase after those two first? Aren’t you dragging your feet by complaining to your kouhai in the toilet?

“Nukumizu, can we talk about this?”

Seriously? Are you going to ask for my opinion on relationships? I looked at senpai in disbelief.

Also, this is a love triangle. It’s better for him to ask how a worm should defeat a goldfish instead.

“How should I say this? Prez, you’re really popular from all angles. Now’s not the time to talk with me.”

“Wait, my age is the same as how long I’m single. No one has even given Valentine’s chocolates besides Koto, not to mention a confession.”

“Doesn’t this mean you have someone to give it to you?”

“She has given me her ‘obligatory’ chocolate every year ever since we were little. It’s more like I’m amazed by how persistent she is.”

Why the hell are two guys talking about this in a toilet? Is this some kind of overseas game?

“Also, girls never invite me when they go out and play. Perhaps the term ‘weak in love’ is talking about me.”

Raise your head. I’ll show you who’s truly weak in love.

“Putting that all aside, you can’t get over Komari’s confession, right? Doesn’t this mean you have feelings for her?”

“Komari-chan is very adorable as a kouhai, but I’m not treating her as a girl at all.”

“Then why did you say you’ll think about it?”

“It’s hard for an unpopular guy to not be impressed by a kouhai’s confession. I have to think about it, right?”

Eh, really? But you missed a big premise.

“But, look, doesn’t Prez have Tsukinoki-senpai already?”

By the way, isn’t that person the reason you don’t get chocolates or confessions?

Prez dropped his shoulders deflatedly.

“Sigh, I’ll be honest when this involves her.”

“Ah.”

“...She rejected my confession.”

“Eh!?”

That’s impossible. You two are giving people diabetes left and right.

“Ha, did that happen when you two were 4 or 5 years old?”

“No, it happened last year’s Christmas.”

That’s awkwardly close. Come to think of it, I guess I can understand Prez’s reaction. A cute kouhai confessed to him when he’s trying to forget his rejection a few months ago.

It’s hard for him to not be frustrated, even though the person confessing is Komari.

“So, recently, I’ve been trying to limit myself from going to the club. However, Koto is still very close to me when I do that.”

Prez squatted down and hugged his kneecaps. You know this is a toilet, right?

“Think about it. Why was I slapped in the face by a person who rejected me? I have no idea anymore.”

Indeed, I can't understand Tsukinoki-senpai's violent reaction too.

"Anyway, the least you can do is go back and talk this out."

I patted Prez's shoulder.

"With her look, I bet there are all kinds of misunderstandings."

"Are you... a love expert?"

That's what you're thinking? I finally gave up and smiled.

"Despite my look, I'm actually a master of love."



After returning to the camping ground, Yanami and Yakishio are still cleaning up at the washing tubs.

I guess it's over. It all comes down to Prez now. Yanami approached me when I was about to roll up my sleeves and continue washing things.

"Hey, Nukumizu, where did you go!?"

I think she's not in a good mood. Is it because I left when they were cleaning up?

"Uh, I went to the bathroom..."

"That doesn't matter!"

Even though you're the one who asked first? Aren't you being very mean?

"Tsukinoki-senpai just packed up and walked away from the hostel!"

Eh, really? It's too dangerous due to the darkness. I looked in the direction that Yanami pointed dazedly. After that, I

also noticed that she gave me an unbelievable look.

“Are you listening, Nukumizu-kun?”

“Eh? What?”

“It’s dangerous for a girl to walk alone at night!”

So, you want me to go after her? Eh, I’m afraid of the dark.

I’m still doing the dishes leisurely. Yanami directly punched my back.

“Remon-chan went to Komari-chan. I’ll look for Prez. You hurry up and chase after Tsukinoki-senpai!”

“Me? But it’s dark- ah, alright, I’ll go now.”

...Yanami’s scarier than the night.

I dashed in Tsukinoki-senpai’s direction and used the flashlight on my phone to guide myself.

After a while, I saw a girl hugging her luggage under the lights of the bus post. I called senpai’s name as I ran over there.

“Ah, ...it’s Nukumizu-un.”

Senpai looks visibly disappointed after realizing it’s me. I’m so sorry that I’m not Prez.

“Where are you going, senpai? This is the opposite direction as the hostel.”

“Home. I don’t want to hang out with a guy like that.”

Senpai packed the luggage on her shoulders and sped up.

“Please wait. The last bus already left.”

“There’ll be a way if I make it to the station.”

It takes a long time to walk there, and there aren’t any lights either.

“Anyway, let’s sit down and talk. There’s a bench here.”

“Hey, wait, Nukumizu-kun!”

I took senpai’s bags away forcefully.

“I’m in a rush. Give me back my stuff.”

“Let’s take a break.”

I handed her some drinks I bought as I sat on the bench.

“Gogo no Kocha and Kochahanaden, which one?”

“...Gogo no Kocha.”

Tsukinoki-senpai finally gave up and sighed before sitting down. Right, at least I stopped her.

But what should I say? I should’ve asked Yanami first. Both of us stared at the dark mountain road.

“What did Shintaro say to get you here?”

“Eh? No, how should I put it?”

Tsukinoki-senpai frowned after I struggled to answer.

“...No?”

“Well, Prez went into the hostel’s direction to look for senpai. That’s why he didn’t see you.”

I think that’s the case. Please don’t mess up, Prez.

Tsukinoki-senpai took a sip of the red tea. After that, she recoiled onto the bench.

“Sorry, even though this is supposed to be a once-in-a-lifetime trip.”

This person said the same thing as Prez. I opened the bottle.

Things would have been easier if it were just between Prez and this person. However, right now, Komari’s in the

equation too. I can't deal with love triangles, man.

"How's Komari-chan?"

"No idea. Yakishio went to her, so no worries."

Senpai remained silent with a heavy heart. She spoke up after a while.

"...Boys just love girls who can be protected more, right?"

Are we still talking about love at this point? Everyone loves throwing topics like this at me. It looks like they are desperate.

"Indeed, it's a pretty classic trope."

"Girls like Komari are more popular..."

No, I don't think so.

"Compared to the norm, I think how the couple feels is more important. Senpai and Prez are, well, pretty flirty with each other."

"That's what I thought too, until just then."

What's with your confidence? Also, Prez said that you rejected him. What happened?

"I feel like you two should explain things properly. As a spectator, I can sense misunderstandings between you two."

"What misunderstandings? That guy kept Komari's confession. Doesn't that mean he's hesitating whether he should go out with her?"

How much should I even say? I tried my best to formulate my words.

"Well, Prez, uh, he thinks that senpai may hate him."

"Ha!? Why!?"

I called it. I knew there was a misunderstanding when she rejected Prez's confession. Things will tangle up even more if I interrupt directly. Well, time to go around and search for the answer.

"You were with Prez during last year's Christmas, right?"

"That guy even told you about this?"

"I guess. Uh, did Prez, well, ...did he say anything to you?"

"What?"

"Please remember it. Did Prez say what he was thinking?"

"...I think that guy just expressed his passionate love for DomDom Burgers while eating Mos Burgers."

Is that really what you two did at Christmas? I feel like even Prez wouldn't confess to senpai while eating a burger.

"Is there anything else? Like bringing you to see the night sky or neon lights? Was there an especially romantic scene?"

"How can an idiot like him bring me to those places?"

"It's not limited to places too. Like holding your hand because of the cold, sharing the same scarf, taking a ring out of the cake? Or neon lights suddenly appearing, and Kazumasa Oda's jazz played when you two met each other's eyes."

"Isn't the last one too old school?"

Then how in the world did he confess to you? I don't think Tsukinoki-senpai has the power to ignore a confession under Christmas's enchantment.

"Ah, but he did say something to me next to the Christmas Tree at the station."

Yes, this is it! Nice work, Prez. DomDom Burgers don't even matter.

"Well, what did Prez say!?"

"I think...he said, 'I will take you if no one wants to, so don't worry.' after tormenting me for a while."

Don't tell me that's the confession Prez was talking about. It's more ridiculous than I thought.

"Then how did you answer him?"

"Don't appear before me. I think that was my answer."

Senpai probably didn't understand where this conversation was going. She looked at me in shock.

"What's wrong, Nukumizu-kun?"

"Ah, I guess that answer is reasonable. I'm thinking how that counts as a confession too."

Tamaki-senpai is the exact opposite of what he looks like. I should recommend some rom-com novels to him later.

"...Confession?"

Tsukinoki-senpai mumbled quietly.

"Huh!? That's the confession? That guy thought that was the confession!?"

Senpai screamed into the night.

"Uh, well, that's like 'I want your miso soup every day.' I think."

Yeah, senpai didn't realize it at all. But seriously, should I be the one to point this out?

"We're talking about Christmas here, okay!? That's not what a confession in a year 2's Christmas looks like!? Is he an idiot!? He wants to die, right!?"

Shit, I spoke too much. It's my responsibility that this got worse.

"Hey, that's just one explanation or possibility-"

"I still have to eradicate him from this world."

I can hear someone stepping on the rustling sand as senpai yells.

"Don't. Please don't-"

I turned back. Prez's running out of breath as he dashed here.

"Prez!"

Great, I'll leave the rest to them. I silently disappeared and started making my way back to the hostel.

I don't have anything to do with what comes next. Yep, I'm saved.

-Suddenly, someone covered my mouth and dragged me into the bushes.

"Hey!"

"Shush! Be quiet!"

It's Yanami's voice. I nodded.

"As a club member, I have to witness this moment. Hey, put your head down."

My heart's racing a bit when Yanami's whispering into my ears.

"Hey, aren't we eavesdropping-"

Yanami pinched my waist silently. It looks like I can't object to this.

We stayed in the bush and paid attention to Prez's conversation. Our wrists often touched each other. The smell of meat, sweat, and deodorant are stimulating my nose.

...Prez embarrassedly walked to Tsukinoki-senpai, who lowered her head.

"Well, I'm sorry."

"I've already heard from Nukumizu. Is that true?"

"You mean...what happened on Christmas?"

Tsukinoki-senpai continued instead of answering the question.

"We've been together for over 10 years, right?"

"Well, yes. Since 1st grade, even our class is the same."

"...Girls in the class used to hate me because of how not cute I am."

Perhaps senpai remembered something. She closed her eyes and bit her lips.

"You don't have to say it if you don't want to."

"But Shintaro protected me, right? You saved me despite everyone around mocking us."

"It's because I hate you being bullied more than people laughing at us."

Prez isn't forcing himself to say that at all. He just answered calmly.

"That's why I don't like this part of you..."

Senpai's face is blushing so much that even I can see it. She covered her mouth.

"You've grown a lot taller since middle school. I spent a lot of time trying to get those bad bugs away."

"What? Aren't you saying that like you're the reason why I'm not popular?"

No, that's exactly the reason. I complained silently.

"I've waited for you for a long time. It's been too long. Even though I've been waiting for you for so long..."

Tsukinoki-senpai took a deep breath, and then she cried to Prez.

"After waiting for you for so long, that's the confession you gave me!? That won't work! Even a 100-year love with cool down!"

Tsukinoki-senpai ran out of breath after saying that. She looked at Prez.

"...Haha, you're right."

Prez smiled and patted Tsukinoki-senpai's head. Senpai trembled in shock.

"Well, I'll make you fall in love with me for another 100 years again."

"...I would like to see you try."

Tsukinoki-senpai's head leaned on Prez's chest.

Prez hesitated for a moment before carefully hugging Tsukinoki-senpai's body as if she were a piece of glass art.



"So romantic..."

Yanami looked at those two intoxicatedly with her hands closed. No, I can't watch this anymore.

"It's time to go, Yanami-san."

"Eh, but the climax is next~"

"No, we'll be eavesdropping if we stay here."

Even though we are eavesdropping right now. I grabbed Yanami's hand and left.

"Wait, Nukumizu."

"We can leave the rest to those two."

"So, how long are you going to hold my hand?"

Huh!? I hastily let go. Shit, it's because of that romantic aura and how close I was to Yanami. I became a lot bolder than normal.

"Uh, s-sorry! I-I didn't mean to!"

"No, I don't think you have to apologize this much."

Yanami noticed how red my face is right now. Her expression turned into a mischievous smile.

"Eh, what? Does Nukumizu-kun want to confess to me?"

"I won't."

"It's fine. Go for it, even though I'll reject you."

"I told you I won't."

I quickly walked outside. Yanami chuckled as she followed me.

"Hey, weren't you impressed by what happened just then!? Don't you want to fall in love?"

She looked at my face with a little devil's smile after saying that.

"I want, but you'll reject me, anyway, right?"

"Well, yes, but—"

She suddenly turned serious.

"But maybe I can still kiss your face, you know?"

"But you'll reject me, right?"

"...You're so dense, Nukumizu-kun."

Yanami shrugged dumbfoundedly.

"Forget about that."

"Eh, forget about that?"

Yanami raised her eyebrows in disbelief. What kind of reaction is that?

"I'm quite worried about Komari. Let's go back."

"Yeah, I guess so. But, but..."

Yanami tilted her head stiffly as she mumbled quietly again.

"...Forget about that?"



I realized the door was locked when pressing down the handle leading into the boys' room.

The worst part is that Prez has the key. Well, I should chill out in the girls' room before he comes back- I won't be in such miserable shape if I can do that.

Yanami's cold attitude when we split up further reduced my courage too. Even though she was messing with me in the middle, her aura suddenly got cold. I can't understand girls.

I sighed and wandered around the hostel. Beetles won't fall from the trees, right?

I heard people making a scene when I passed by the window. I think there's a joint student council trip from schools all over the place.

I distanced myself from this lit window and continued walking forward. Someone squatted down. There's a shaking orange orb of light on her hands.

It's Komari. Isn't Yakishio supposed to be with Komari?

I got too close when I was thinking about whether I should talk to her.

"Hey, Komari. I didn't know that you're here."

"...S-Sheesh, it's Nukumizu."

Shit, this girl just got rejected.

I saw Prez and senpai hugging each other before I left. My heart can't take what happens next if I tell her. Prez has to be the one to say it-

Komari ignored how suspicious I was. Instead, she reached her hand into her pocket.

"S-Sparklers. There are too many for me to play alone."

I accepted her invitation, bent down, and ignited one.

A small orange fire quickly broke out that's nothing like my memories. I looked at the fireworks dazedly. Its shape slowly turned into an orb.

At the next moment, familiar sparkles exploded around the orb.

"...I see. That's what sparklers look like."

It's been a long, long time since I've played sparklers. I should probably play with fireworks with Kajyu when I get home.

After I lit a couple more in silence, I carefully glanced at Komari. Our eyes' met.

“...W-W-What?”

“It’s nothing. Aren’t Yakishio supposed to be with you?”

“W-We were together just then. S-She got bored of it after lighting one up and got back to her room.”

Sparklers won’t explode or fly into the sky, after all.

“But it’s good to know that you got really close with Yakishio.”

I said that without thinking much. Komari bulged her eyes in disbelief.

“I-Is this what you call a close relationship...? A-Are you a hole?”

Is that how you use the word ‘hole’? I think I just turned into a kind of concept. *[The original sentence is 有眼无见. The whole thing means “have eyes but can’t see”. Komari just said the last word 看, which means “hole”.]*

...Alright, it looks like Komari can at least talk properly. I bet her confession’s momentum is still there.

I should send her back to the girls’ room before she knows her tragic ending. The rest is up to the girls-

“P-Prez came before you.”

Dump. The fire orb fell to the ground.

“I see. What happened next?”

“...I-I was rejected.”

She answered without hesitation and handed me another sparkler.

“I was f-formally rejected.”

She said that in a completely emotionless tone and ignited my sparkler.

“I-I see. ...Hmm, well, Prez did answer you properly.”

If I was him, I would probably keep the answer and confess to my true love first.

“I-I bet N-Nukumizu will keep t-the answer first.”

“How did you know that?”

“...Y-You’re the worst.”

I can’t say anything.

The front part of the sparkler already turned into a dim orange fireball.

Sparkles exploded from Komari and my fireworks at the same time. It lit up Komari’s face.

“Prez c-considered. H-He considered about g-going out with me for real.”

Komari was about to break into tears as she cracked up and smiled.

“Ehehe, ...for a short moment, I-I defeated Tsukinoki-senpai.”

Her petite back is shivering. The exhausted fireball fizzled out and fell onto the ground.

Komari stared at the ground and mumbled with her raucous voice.

“I-I’m going to cry. ...G-Go away.”

She held the extinguished firework and whispered in a nearly inaudible voice.

“Please...”



I went back to the hostel silently and sat on the bench in the lobby. I pulled open the ring of the canned coffee, yet I was not in the mood to drink it.

Everything that happened today is too fast for my brain and emotions.

The lights in the lobby are flickering.

I looked at the ceiling and thought about everyone.

The five of us had no interactions at all before. However, we still came to the same place like this.

What will happen after this trip?

Yanami and Yakishio aren't really interested in the Literature Club either. They are like birds that are resting when it's raining. Perhaps they will fly away once the sky clears.

Komari will probably stop showing up because of her awkward stance. On the other hand, Prez and senpai may have the same idea too.

The closing ceremony is next week. What will happen to the lunch promise between Yanami and me?

I took a sip of the coffee.

-and thought about what kind of novel I should write.



We all gathered up in the meeting room on the morning of the second day.

"Well, I'll go submit the first chapter."

Prez knocked on the laptop. The enter key made a clear noise.

Chapter 1 of my first submission, <The Runaways of the First Love Path> is published.

“It feels different from the summary you gave me earlier.”

I guess Prez’s comment can’t be helped. After all, the summary was still about a quiet life in another world yesterday. Right now, it’s a rom-com based on a shopping district in a small city. I’m actually the most surprised one.

“I suddenly have the urge to write this.”

I just wrote the very beginning. You can finish it within 3 minutes.

“I want to write little by little according to my rhythm.”

“I think it’s nice. Right, someone already commented on Yanami-san’s novel yesterday.”

“Eh? Really?”

Yanami looked at the screen as she took a bite of her breakfast melon bread. She’s reading it excitedly. After that, Yanami chuckled and looked at me with a smile.

“This is written by Nukumizu-kun, right?”

“Eh, well, yes.”

It feels a bit embarrassing. Shouldn’t the author be more embarrassed? It’s quite unbelievable for the readers to handle this.

“Hmph, I feel happy. What is this score thing?”

“Uh, the score is based on whether the readers bookmarked or commented on the novel. Someone left feedback for you.”

Prez moved the mouse as he was slurping the jelly.

“T-That should be me.”

Komari walked into the meeting room with her tracksuit. The room returned to silence due to the confusion.

Komari ignored the mood and walked straight to Prez.

“...Good morning, Komari-chan.”

“G-Good morning. I-I’ve already sent my novel to Prez. ...P-Please help me publish it.”

Komari lowered her head. Prez nodded slightly stiffly before pulling the laptop back to himself.

“The main text and, ...these are the title and the intro, right? Alright, it’s all done.”

Prez’s hand stopped just as he was about to add the title to the text.

“Komari-chan. Are you sure this is okay?”

“Yes, this title is okay.”

Komari gulped and continued.

“P-Please don’t split the content too. I-I want to read Chapter 1 like this.”

She said that in one sitting.

Facing Komari’s serious eyes, Prez’s expression finally calmed down.

“I got it. I guess you’re right. It’s a better way to show the good points about Komari-chan’s novel.”

He faced the laptop again after smiling at Komari gently.

“Alright, the submission is complete. Look, it’s out on the new releases page.”

Komari stared at the screen and chuckled cheerfully. She faced Prez again with the same smile.

“T-Thank you. I-I’m not sure about this website. P-Please continue to teach me from now on.”

“Yeah, leave it to me.”

This is the first time I’ve seen this side of Komari. Even though she always looks at me like I’m a piece of moist trash.

Then, there’s someone who hasn’t done anything yet. Tsukinoki-senpai has been really quiet since morning. She sat at the table far away from ours.

Komari clenched and released her fist repeatedly before sitting in front of Tsukinoki-senpai. She looked a bit insane.

“G-Good morning, s-senpai.”

“G-Good morning, Komari-chan.”

After that, both of them went silent. Just as the heavy silence was enveloping the room, Komari spoke up.

“I-I’ve already submitted my novel. Please read it.”

“Uh, ...I’ll leave feedback.”

“T-Thank you.”

...They went quiet again.

The suspense kept up for some time. Komari spoke up.

“U-Uh, p-please come to the club tomorrow too. I-I’ll be lonely if s-senpai isn’t there.”

Komari lowered her head embarrassedly and continued.

“A-Also, that scary person from the student council will show up.”

“Y-Yes! Leave it to me. I’ll help you kick her out!”

Tsukinoki-senpai's smile finally reappeared. However, just as I was thinking that, huge drops of tears started falling from her eyes.

"Ugh, ...ha? Sorry, I can't hold back there. Eh?"

Komari quickly sat next to senpai.

"S-Senpai, I'll be fine. So."

"Komari-chan, ...I thought you wouldn't be here anymore. Thank you, ...thank you."

Komari hugged Tsukinoki-senpai as she broke down in tears.

Tsukinoki-senpai calmed down after a while. She wiped her eyes and raised her head.

"...Komari-chan's novels have always been interesting. I'm looking forward to it this time too."

"T-Thank. D-Did senpai not write anything?"

"Well, if I make it into a General Audience version, it'll end in 20 lines."

Tsukinoki-senpai said that as she looked at her phone confusedly.

"Isn't making this like my novel is nothing but lewdness?"

No, that's the truth, right? The numbers won't lie.

"S-Senpai, let's go."

"Oh, sure."

...The two of them held each other's hands as they walked to everyone's table. Prez greeted them with a smile.

Of course, this doesn't mean it's a happy ending. Tamaki-senpai and Tsukinoki-senpai started going out, and Komari was rejected. This fact will never change.

Things won't be the same anymore. We can only construct new relationships one step at a time. I just decided to distance myself from this, but other people live in this way. There's no escape as long as you're alive.

Eventually, I'll have to make decisions like this one day. After all, I'm already included in everyone's relationships.

Something weird popped up in my mind as I looked at Prez. I feel like they are moving far away from me. At this moment, somebody handed me a piece of paper.

"Here, Nukumizu-un. Can you put this on that website thing?"

Her tan got even darker even when only a day had passed.

"Is this a picture diary?"

"Yes, there are colored pencils in the lobby. I drew a picture diary with that."

She drew the scene on the beach yesterday. Eh, who's this guy that fell onto the ground? The person next to him is exactly Yakishio.

"Wait, is this me?"

"Hehe, you're correct. This is Nukunuku."

It looks like Yakishio's pulling a corpse.

"Oh, isn't this nice? It's funny."

Prez mumbled quietly after taking a look.

"But this can't be uploaded to the website. It's a place for words, after all."

"Well, why don't we make a Twitter account for the Literature Club?"

Prez clapped after hearing my suggestion.

“This is nice. We have an account that was unused for a long time. Let’s use that one.”

Tsukinoki-senpai sniffed and took the picture diary.

“I think there’s a scanner in the office. I’ll ask them to let us use it. You should come too, Komari-chan.”

Tsukinoki-senpai led Yakishio away from the room.

I casually read my own novel on my phone. It’s already published online. It feels quite unrealistic.

“Oh, somebody already left me a comment.”

I clicked on it nervously, and I realized it was the lowest score. There’s only one comment: “A virgin’s fantasy.”

Huh!? What an impolite person. Can I blacklist this guy?

...No, wait. How the hell did this person know I’m a virgin?

“Komari, ...did you write this?”

Komari smiled mischievously.

“I-I’ll change my mind i-if you write the later parts properly.”

“...Witness me. I’ll make you give me a 10/10.”

INTERMISSION

EVEN IF YOU DON'T TURN BACK, SHE'S THERE

A group of teenagers gathered up in the canteen of the hostel.

Among them, there's a girl with very outstanding white hair. She looked at the paper stuck onto the wall leisurely.

<Toyohashi City Student Council League - High School Middle School Joint Trip>

The 2nd year secretary of Tsuwabuki High School, Yumeko Shikiya, is waiting for her lunch.

She's wearing white contacts. Her eyes are observing the hardworking kouhais.

One of the students attracted her. The girl in an apron is working actively.

She's in charge of handing out the curry. Her speed of pouring rice and curry into plates is faster than people lining up.

She made sure to give the hungry boys more curry. The opposite goes for the girls.

Shikiya casually took a plate used by a guy. A smile appeared on her face.

...She still gave her a girl's amount despite using a boy's plate.

When distributing the rice, the girl will carefully smooth out the rice grains. After that, she slightly spread the rice flat before pouring curry on it. The lower part is hidden inside.

"Girls, please wait at this table. I'll start handing out salads now."

"You...sure work hard..."

The girl was surprised when Shikiya spoke up. She stared at Shikiya's exposed shoulders and belly.

"Erotic..."

"...Eh, ...what...?"

"It's nothing. I just feel like students in Tsuwabuki High School really know how to dress maturely."

"People...always say that."

The girl handed out the salads to other schools' students as she arranged the orders. Under the girl's guidance, preparations for dinner are going smoothly.

"Do you wish...to get in our school...?"

"Yes, my onii-san is a 1st year in Tsuwabuki High School. We can go to school together the year after."

The girl smiled charmingly. After taking off the towel on her head, a stream of beautiful black hair flowed down.

"I heard many precious conversations today. Can I ask you more about your high school later?"

"Sure, ...if you don't mind, ...want to sit with me?"

The girl looked in the direction that Shikiya pointed. The student council president of Tsuwabuki High School, Hibari

Hokobaru, is waving at them.

“I would love to. I’ll go ask for permission now.”

The girl tidied her apron as she looked around the room.
Everyone has a plate of curry rice.

“By the way, ...did you make something in the afternoon. ...
Red bean rice balls...?”

“Yes, I made some as greetings.”

The girl raised her finger mysteriously.

“I see. ...Right, I’m...the secretary of Tsuwabuki High
School’s student council, ...Yumeko Shikiya. Yours...?”

The petite girl smiled as she held a plate filled with curry.

“I'm the committee of Momozono Middle School’s student
council, Kajyu Nukumizu. Looking forward to working with
you, senpai.”

CHAPTER 4

WHEN YOU STARE AT THE LOSING HEROINE, THE LOSING HEROINE STARES BACK

I silently put my hand on my cheeks inside the lively classroom as I listened to the chatters around.

Some are talking about the TV show yesterday. Some are talking about baseball. Some are talking about their friends or homework. Also, some people seem to be complaining but are actually showing off their relationship.

Nothing unusual. I don't really need to pay attention. The people in my class are just living out their school life normally. They are doing it normally. They are accepting it normally. They are ending it normally.

"G'day!"

Remon Yakishio awoke me from my thoughts with her loud greeting as she walked inside. A couple of people answered her.

"Good morning- Nukunuku, I had fun during the trip."

"Uh, ah, ...good morning."

"Oh, right, here. This is for yesterday."

She took a piece of paper out of her school bag and handed it to me.

You finished the new picture diary this quickly? I can see a girl running next to the train on it.

“What is this scene?”

“I slept too much on the train back home yesterday. This is me running back to the station.”

Why did you choose that scene?

“Well, I’ll upload it tonight.”

“Thank you-“

Yakishio waved and walked back to her seat. She greeted and high-fived her friends. Where does her energy come from? She’s already getting all worked up in the morning.

I’m already exhausted from the noise around in the morning. I stretched my back. Yanami’s body came across my view.

Recently, Yanami hasn’t been staying with Sosuke Hakamada and Karen Himemiya. Instead, she’s hanging out with different groups. Her adorable smile is already available in the morning as she is chatting with her friends happily.

Yanami probably notices that I’m looking at her. She smiled at me while I looked away cautiously.

We still don’t interact with each other in the classroom. I don’t mean to reject any kind of interaction. It’s just that our relationship isn’t really a secret one, after all.

I can hear people laughing from the other class. I bet our class teacher Amanatsu-sensei walked into the wrong classroom. This happens twice a month.

Everyone in the class is used to it. The class assembly started as everyone got back to their seats in groups.

Today started just as usual, even though this only belongs to today.



Yanami left the classroom during the lunch break. I made my way to the promised place with a slight delay. We didn't talk about this. Instead, it's just a habit incubated over time.

I bought a carton of milk from the vending machine as I went around the school. After that, I walked outside the building and headed to the emergency stairs.

Just as I'm about to make a turn, I can hear girls laughing cheerfully. I stopped.

I remember those voices. It's a small group of girls that are attractive because of their slightly exaggerated looks.

Subconsciously, I don't think that I can deal with them. I heard a familiar name just as my mind was searching for an alternate route.

-Yanami. They indeed mentioned this name.

Also, what they are talking about sounds really ear-piercing. I shoved the straw inside the carton of milk as I listened to them.

"Yanami still got NTR'd by a transfer student after making it so apparent. I can't stop laughing."

"Right, I won't even come to school if that happened to me."

They burst into laughter nonchalantly.

...This must be the “Don’t tell me Yanami got dumped?” mood she talked about, right?

Of course, they won’t say those things to her directly.

However, these background insults will stay in the air and slowly sink into a person’s heart. Yanami already has to deal with this when I’m going around drinking water.

I shouldn’t listen to conversations like this anymore. Just as I was about to leave, the following discussion stopped me from doing so.

“Did you know? I think Yanami got a new guy.”

“Seriously!?”

...Seriously? I can’t help but lean on the wall and listen closely.

Yanami certainly didn’t act like she had a boyfriend during the trip.

But a guy like me can’t explain it for her. So, I can only hide my presence. After that, I can hear those shocked girls squeaking like a flock of birds.

“Who is it? I think the captain of the Basketball Club asked her out!”

“It’s that guy. He’s in the same class. I think he’s called... Nuku...mizu?”

“Nuku...?”

Oh, someone else is named Nukumizu- no, there isn’t.

So they are talking about me!? Was my presence already well-known to them?

Shit, where did it go wrong? Did people see us when we were having lunch? At the family restaurant? Or were we spotted on the beach coincidentally?

“Ahh, I think a guy like that existed. I think he’s, …uh, …in the middle of the class’s name list…”

That’s the only impression you girls have for me?

In contrast to my turbulent heart, the girls are silent. One of the girls yelled in disbelief.

“But Yanami is quite popular! There’s no way she’ll choose that kind of guy, right!?”

“Yeah, Yanami has some weird fetishes.”

“Yeah, even though I’m not sure how he looks.”

I remembered what happened all the way until now in my mind.

If gossips between Yanami and a guy like me got out-

The most important thing is that- she still loves Hakamada.

“Hey, Yanami’s really getting over herself just because she’s a bit cute, isn’t she? A proper guy won’t even get close to her, right?”

“They do match each other in a sense-“

The girls exploded into laughter again. I couldn’t listen to them anymore, so I left.

I also threw away the carton of milk that was crushed by my hands.



“No, listen to me, Nukumizu-kun. Don’t you think you’re pretty mean?”

The scene is now on the emergency stairs. The first thing Yanami said was about her long-awaited protest.

“Uh, what do you mean?”

“Didn’t I give you eye contact? You just ignored me.”

“No, look, it’ll be troublesome if people know that you have something to do with me, right? I didn’t say anything because of that.”

After I said that, I remembered the chatters of that group of girls.

What’s with this feeling of pressure on my chest?

“We’re in the same club. It’s normal for us to have something to do with each other, right?”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to ignore you.”

“Glad to hear that.”

Yanami understood what I was trying to say. She took out a bento box.

“A lot of things happened during the trip.”

“Eh? Ahh, yes.”

Even though a lot happened, I think it was quite fun.

I can follow up my own novel too. I thought writing books was a pretty lonely thing to do. However, it feels unbelievable after you have companions.

“I showed my cooking skills too. Here, your bento of the day.”

What did she show again? Yanami opened the lid as I struggled to remember stuff. There’s a sandwich inside. It’s not from the convenience stores. She made it herself.

I can see ham, cabbage, eggs, ...huh, what’s the third one? I think I’m looking at cucumber slices.

What is that? I grabbed the sandwich with my hand.

“Cucumbers and, ...is this wheat miso?”

So, it’s wheat miso cucumbers. The chewy cucumber and the sweet saltiness of the whet miso make an excellent pair.

“So, how does it taste?”

“Let me try. ...Hmm, it’s better than I thought. This is nice.”

Even though the bread soaked up the water content of the cucumbers.

“Well, honestly, you should put a layer of margarine on it.”

“Ah, I forgot about that. The price tag will be lower, right?”

Right, I have to give her a price tag. Hmm, how much does she owe me again?

Since you have to prepare the ingredients beforehand, making a sandwich is actually quite hard. Well, let’s give her a 500 yen-

“They do match each other in a sense-“

The chatter just then suddenly played in my brain.

The adorable and attractive Yanami versus me, a background.

The only real possibility here is I’ve fallen for Yanami, not to mention whether we match or not.

“What’s wrong, Nukumizu-kun?”

“...2867 yen.”

“Eh, that’s a new record. It’s more like-“

Yanami tilted her head in confusion after a moment of excitement.

“Eh, isn’t that how much I owe you?”

“Yeah, you’re off now.”

“You know this is just a plain sandwich, right?”

I don’t think Yanami understands what’s happening. Her eyes switched between my face and the bento.

...Anna Yanami. Honestly, I still don’t understand her.

I have no idea when she’s being serious and joking.

She’ll mess with me whenever she finds it funny.

“I feel like I’m taking advantage of Yanami-san, and that’s not good.”

Originally, she wouldn’t talk to a person like me.

She’s the upper-class in this school, a cheerful, popular, and adorable girl.

She’ll act like an idiot whenever it suits, but she also loves to cry sometimes.

“The bento is good. Thanks for making them.”

She’s a 12/10 main heroine. Hakamada will regret dumping her one day.

...Yanami looked at me quietly and spoke up.

“Even though I initially did this because I didn’t have enough money, I had fun making it.”

She took a bite of the wheat miso cucumber sandwich.

“I don’t like such a rash ending.”

She stared at her half of the sandwich. The mood around her began to destabilize.

“People started talking about you and I having lunch together.”

I observed Yanami’s reaction after saying that.

She stared at her bread with green stains without moving an inch.

"Yanami-san also hates weird rumors between you and me, right?"

Worrying about the silence, I continued.

"Yanami-san still has a lot of friends. There's no need for you to hang out with a guy like-"

"Stop. I can't follow you."

Yanami put back the lid on the bento box and interrupted me.

"Did I do something that made you angry?"

"No!"

I was surprised at how loud I was. I shook my head and calmed down.

"...No, I don't hate you."

"Really?"

I looked away from Yanami's face.

However- I hate what's happening now.

The Yanami I know loves Hakamada.

The Yanami who still loves that guy is right here.

Therefore, I don't want to acknowledge gossip that isn't true to Yanami's appearance and feelings.

"I...hate people talking bad about us."

I looked at my unfinished sandwich after finally explaining everything.

Yanami didn't answer.

I feel like I should say something. Just as I struggle to come up with words, Yanami puts the bento box onto my lap.

“...I got it. Yeah, I understand.”

Yanami ended the conversation with a forceful tone.

“I won’t talk to you from now on.”

Yanami stood up after saying that.

“Thanks for what you’ve been doing. It’s been fun. Goodbye.”

Yanami was so cold that I forgot to breathe. She quickly finished saying all that, shoved the bento box to me, and left the emergency stairs.

...It's all over, with a couple simple sentences like that.

Yanami didn't even look back at me.

She'll at least glance back at me. I was probably looking forward to things like that.

I'm the only one left on the emergency stairs. I opened the box.

Her handmade sandwich is tidily put inside the box. If you take a closer look, she added two small tomatoes in the corners to make it less plain.

I bet she woke up pretty early to prepare for our lunch meeting.

There are only 3 days left until the closing ceremony. It wasn't until now that I realized I was already losing things that used to exist next to me.



I'm already on my bed without even eating much at dinner.

How many times do I have to go through this? My mind keeps replaying the conversation during the afternoon.

...That's alright.

Yanami and I probably aren't even friends, not to mention lovers. I don't think two people living in different worlds communicating with each other can always stay happy.

Moreover, I'm the reason why people started talking shit about her-

"Onii-sama looks really out of it. Did something happen in school?"

As if I got caught in a dead-end, I trapped myself in endless thoughts. Kajyu was already lying next to me when I snapped out of it.

"...Kajyu, don't just crawl into onii-san's blanket."

I looked at the ceiling dazedly. I didn't really have the energy to complain, so I just casually reminded her.

Kajyu started chuckling as she poked my cheeks.

"Hmph-hmph, did you get dumped?"

"Well, you can put it that way."

Kajyu's aura immediately turned murderous after I let that slip out.

"Onii-sama!? I knew it. Kajyu is really suspicious of what onii-sama is doing recently!"

Suddenly, Yanami's charming and innocent smile appeared in front of me. I turned around to avoid Kajyu's suspicious glances.

“Don’t tell me you’re into that cute girl that had a barbecue with you?”

“Wait, how the hell did you know that!?”

I immediately jumped up from my bed after saying that. Kajyu gave me a pretty fake smile.

“Onii-sama is finally looking at Kajyu.”

“You were there too? By the way, how much did you see?”

“Hmm, well, Kajyu will answer this question if onii-sama tells Kajyu about that person.”

Kajyu put her finger onto her lips naughtily.

“Right, you can also open Kajyu’s lips forcefully, okay?”

I ignored what Kajyu said and laid back on the bed again.

“Don’t get the wrong idea. She and I are just classmates in the same club. Also, that girl already has someone she loves.”

“Well, what about that other short-haired girl? Onii-sama really matches a cheerful girl like her too.”

“That girl is also just a normal classmate. She has someone she loves too.”

Kajyu thought for a second and clapped her hands.

“Don’t tell me it’s that glasses girl with a mature look. But, I think things will get messy.”

“That person is going out with our Prez.”

“...There’s also a girl who looks relatively insignificant. Don’t tell me-”

Clouds formed on Kajyu’s face.

“No, but, ...if she’s really what onii-sama has chosen, ... Kajyu will try her best to accept it.”

You’ve been talking nonsense since then. Anyway, now I know that Kajyu has already seen everything clearly.

“That’s why I said don’t get the wrong idea. I’m just a bit tired after the trip.”

I turned my back against Kajyu again.

“Onii-san has to rest. Kajyu should go back too.”

“N-o, Kajyu won’t move an inch until I know who’s onii-sama’s true love, even if you come at me with a crowbar. Kajyu must witness whether that person suits onii-sama-hiya!”

I carefully wrapped a towel around Kajyu. I guess she’ll be quieter this way.

“...Kajyu is surrounded by onii-sama’s scent.”

I think my little sister just said something insanely disgusting.

“Onii-sama’s feelings are radiating all over Kajyu’s body. Kajyu will try to fathom that feeling and find the best partner for onii-sama-“

She’s even noisier than before.

I added another blanket onto her as I became lost in thought again.

My choice, actions, and the last conversation with Yanami-

I didn’t find any answers. So, I have to face the feeling hiding inside my heart that mere words can’t describe.

<Today’s remaining debt: 0 yen>



The next day. 2 days until the closing ceremony.

I returned to my daily life - having lunch alone. I'm sitting at the familiar emergency stairs after finishing my tuna sandwich and milk in a couple bites. Then, I started writing the novel from where I left it. At the same time, I also have to pay attention to when I should go back to the classroom.

It's only been a day after our lunch, yet it already feels like a distant memory. Did I really spend my lunch breaks with Yanami?

I didn't talk to anyone. I paid attention to when the bell would ring as I got back to my own seat.

I glanced at her. She's chatting happily with her classmates.

"What's wrong, Nukunuku? You seem pretty out of it."

Yakishio dashed into my loneliness. She squatted down and put her arms on my table, raised her head, and looked at me.

"Relax, I'm always out of it."

Yakishio, please. I'm sorry, but I have something on my mind now. No matter how cute you are, I don't want to deal with you-

"Hmph, you say that, but you keep paying attention to someone."

...You little. Don't say that in the classroom.

Yakishio stood up and looked at me silently. A smile appeared on her wheat-color cheeks.

"Even though I'm not sure what's happening, you'll regret it if you don't say things properly."

“...Regret?”

Yakishio showed her shiny white teeth and brutally hit my back as I repeated her line like a parrot.

“This is coming from someone who experienced it before.”

This heavy sentence is filled with realism.



It's after school. I'm leisurely walking on the path to the clubroom that no one passes through.

I noticed one thing after our lunch was over. A day in school seems to be so much longer now.

Until yesterday, I was thinking about our lunch from morning and remembering it after lunch. In contrast to yesterday's me, you can say I've lost my soul today.

“...Shit, am I a puppy waiting to be fed?”

The after-school club activity is the only thing on my schedule in school.

Even though I'll only be listening to Komari talking shit about me there, it's pretty useful for me to avoid the crowd next to the shoe shelves.

I pressed on the handle on the clubroom's door. It's not locked. The earliest to arrive is usually Komari or me.

Is Komari already here? My body froze after opening the door.

“Yanami-san.”

Anna Yanami is inside.

She stopped reaching her hand to the bookshelf. I can see my reflection in her eyes that I can't interpret any feelings from.

"Ah, Nukumizu-kun. It's been a long time."

We were in the same classroom, not to mention yesterday. It's anything but a long time. However, I can't find anything better to say.

"You're here. Are you staying?"

"I'm just here to return the books. My friends are waiting for me. I'll be leaving."

Yanami looked away and put on her schoolbag.

I realized one thing when Yanami was leaving the clubroom.

There's no logic, and I'm not sure of the reason too, but I do understand.

-If I don't say anything now, things will really be over between her and me.

"Yanami-san, can you wait for just a second?"

"...What? My friends are still waiting for me. Make it quick."

Yanami didn't turn back. She answered me calmly. Her tone reduced my courage.

"If you don't have anything to say, I'll-"

"Wait, Yanami-san."

Yanami and Yakishio didn't get to express their feelings. I can feel their confusion and regret.

"Didn't we share a lot of bentos together these days? Actually, I've been looking forward to what bento I can eat every day."

Komari tried her best despite knowing her feelings wouldn't be returned. I can feel her determination.

"So-"

"So?"

Yanami seemed to have interrupted me on purpose.

So...?

Of course, we aren't lovers. Friends- we probably aren't even that.

It's just an unclear relationship constructed by money.

"I've been...happy too. I just want to tell you that."

Yanami held the door handle tightly. She just stood there.

After the time the two of us needed has passed-

"...Oh."

She said that emotionlessly and opened the door in silence.

Due to the light coming in from the corridor, I didn't see her expression when she turned back.

"Well, goodbye."



So, I greeted the next day dazedly. The closing ceremony is tomorrow.

The mood in the classroom is even more lively due to the imminent summer holiday. Even Amanatsu-sensei, who messed up the date and gave us the summer holiday notice, looks incredibly adorable too.

It's the last lunch break of this semester. I'm already used to killing time in the emergency stairs. I watched the playground as I chewed curry bread.

Since the highest temperature is over 35 degrees, lunch practices are banned. I can see Yakishio brought away by the PE teacher when she tried to run.

"What is that girl doing...?"

I lowered my head due to the dry wind blowing from the playground. Someone's walking up just as I'm picking away the sand grains on the bread.

I can't help but straighten my back.

"Y-You are here."

What was I even expecting? Chika Komari appeared in front of me. She came next to me with a carefree attitude.

"Komari, why are you here?"

"Y-You said it, right? I-I can come here to have lunch."

Right, why did you have to say unnecessary stuff like that, me in the past?

"A-Also, I-I've heard that Nukumizu g-got dumped."

As if she couldn't hold it anymore, Komari's lips curled upward.

"I-I want to say that's what you deserve. So, I-I can't help but come to you."

I'll shove a bunch of wrapping papers into her mouth.

"Why did you know that?"

"O-Of course I do, you two did that in the clubroom, after all."

"By the way, Yanami-san and I aren't like that."

“Y-You really hate giving up.”

Komari took out butter rolls from her pocket and started eating slowly. It's the 6-in-1 pack from the supermarket.

“M-Moreover, how can Nukumizu be the only one to feel happy? T-That's too arrogant.”

“Right, you got rejected a while ago.”

“S-Shut up.”

However, do Yanami and I really look like a couple in a fight in other people's eyes?

That's impossible. That's...that's...what is it? I can't help but smile bitterly.

...In the end, I'm not really Yanami's anyone. This temporary contact disappears when the debt has been paid. That's all.

My appetite went away after acknowledging that. I put the half-finished curry bread into the package.

“That's the only thing you're eating for lunch?”

I looked at Komari. She frowned as she ate the second butter roll. This girl, did she not even bring something to drink? Without hesitation, I handed her the carton of milk I had bought from the vending machine.

“Here, this is for you. You'll choke if you don't drink something.”

“A-Are you sure? What about you, Nukumizu?”

“I have tea.”

“Content: raw milk...”

Komari shoved the straw inside with sparkling eyes. I feel like I'm feeding a stray cat.

Even so, you have to feed stray cats responsibly. You either have to keep a suitable distance from it or take responsibility and bring it back home.

Komari noticed and looked at me vigilantly.

“I-It’s too late even if you want it back.”

...By the way, I remembered.

Pets are banned in my house.



Expectedly, I didn’t have much fun talking with Komari. I left the old school building when there was half of the time left.

Well, I’ll lend the emergency stairs to Komari today.

“You’re here, Nukumizu. I had a hard time finding you. -Ah, hey, wait!”

For a moment, I almost left because I didn’t realize someone was talking to me.

The person in question is Yanami’s dream lover, Sosuke Hakamada.

“Uh, ...what’s wrong?”

Huh, why is everyone looking for me today?

“I’m sorry. It’s hard to say this in front of too many people. Can you come with me for a bit?”

I followed him into the desolate old school building.

...Yep, I bet it’s that plot.

“I’m sorry, Nukumizu. I want to talk about-“

I handed out my wallet silently.

“Why are you handing out your wallet?”

“Uh, no, I thought it was something else.”

I quickly put my wallet back. I messed up. It's not blackmailing.

“I didn't know Nukumizu likes to play dumb.”

Sosuke Hakamada laughed. It's my honor to amuse you.

Well, why did you talk to me then? Hakamada looked around as if it was a hard thing to say.

“Nukumizu, you...have been seeing Anna, right?”

Anna. Oh, he's talking about Yanami-

“...Eh!? No, right? Do I even know her?”

I freaked out as Hakamada watched me. His expression calmed down.

“Stop pretending. There are rumors about a loving couple proposing and doing something secretly everywhere.”

Eh- what the hell is that? This is too much for a misunderstanding.

“No, no, that's not true. Well, I mean, you're not wrong, but you got the fundamentals incorrectly.”

“Don't feel embarrassed. When did you two start going out?”

That didn't even happen. Also, is this why this dude called me here?

So, is it another cliché plot again? Is he going to say things like, “don't you dare lay a finger on my childhood friend”?

Hakamada is especially impressive during PE lessons. Even though it's obvious who'll win in a fight, I'm still a male. I guess I can still last for 2 seconds-

“I’ll leave Anna in your hands!”

Hakamada suddenly bowed at me.

...Ha? What do you mean? What did he just say?

“Wait! There’s a lot of misunderstandings!”

“Also, I’m really glad too. If Yanami has someone she loves, I want to support her as well.”

“No, that’s why I said...”

Can you please just listen to me? Is this guy deaf? Or is he a rom-com MC?

“Sorry, I just want to chat with you since I don’t really know you.”

“Ah, well, sure, a chat is fine with me.”

By the way, Hakamada is the guy that rejected Yanami. Perhaps a misunderstanding like this won’t cause any trouble to him.

However, what’s with this hard-to-describe feeling in my heart?

Hakamada smiled at me. I can’t sense any trace of hostility from him.

“If it’s possible, let’s hang out with the 4 of us-”

“No, I’ve said this a lot of times before. Please listen to me.”

“Ah, sorry, I’ve been the one doing all the talking.”

That’s not why you should apologize.

...Ah, right. This is the only thing that matters now.

I walked toward Hakamada with a stern face.

“...Yanami-san has always been in love with Hakamada since a long time ago, right?”

"Uh, hey, why are we suddenly talking about this?"

"You know that, right? She loves you."

I'm not Yanami's friend. Why do I have to say that to a guy that rejected her?

Hakamada looked away a bit confusedly. He rubbed his nose to cover his embarrassment.

"Uh, well, I do know. So, if she finds someone new to love—"

"She still loves you now! Present continuous tense! Don't try to hide these things with a misunderstanding!"

It's nice that I followed the momentum and said that, but how should I end this conversation? Ahh, right. I have to explain one more thing too."

"...Also, Yanami-san and I aren't like that."

"Well, then why did you two have lunch together?"

It's because you rejected Yanami and ordered a steak set in the family restaurant. At least none of this would happen if Yanami didn't add desserts and udon.

In other words-

"It's because you two ate too much."

"Uh? What was that?"

I missed the opportunity to end the conversation again.

"It's nothing. The problem is on my end."

By the way, this guy is really hard to deal with. Is this what a rom-com MC feels like in real life?

Just as I'm complaining why I didn't end this sooner, Hakamada's face suddenly turned stiff.

What? He looks like he just saw a wild bear-

I followed his direction. A girl is shivering in front of us.

“Eh!? Anna!?”

“Hey, what were you two...t-talking about?”

I don’t know whether she’s angry or embarrassed. She blushed and glared at us.

“Yanami-san, why are you here!?”

“Komari-chan just texted me. She said Nukumizu got into a fight with a handsome delinquent, and it got very hot. I was guessing maybe it’s Sosuke, so I came here-“

She looked at Hakamada and me in disbelief.

“...So, what’s going on?”

What’s going on? I don’t know. Also, what was the “hot” part Komari talked about?

“By the way, Nukumizu-kun. What did you just say to Sosuke?”

“Ah, well, we were talking about the limited mint chocolate Garigari-kun popsicle tastes very good.”

“...Be honest when I can still forgive you.”

That’s definitely a lie. She’s giving me a serial killer’s stare.

I feel like she has seen everything, but I must not admit it right now. For some reason, I feel like my punishment will be lighter if I remain silent until things get exposed than pleading guilty.

“Wait, I just forced him to spill everything out. Nukumizu didn’t do anything wrong.”

Hakamada covered me and said unnecessary things.

“Everything!? What do you mean by everything!?”

Yanami is shivering intensely. She's shivering harder than a chihuahua during cold weather. Perhaps Hakamada is trying to comfort her. He put his hands on her shoulders.

"I'm sorry, Anna. I was thinking it will be great if you can find someone new to love."

"Eh?"

Yanami seems to have finally understood. Her face immediately went pale.

"...Stop it."

Her murderous aura just then disappeared suddenly. Yanami recoiled. She almost looks like a size smaller. However, Hakamada is unaware of it as he approaches Yanami.

"I want you to be happy. There's a better person than me—"

"Stop it—" Yanami's about to collapse. At that moment, my body moved on its own. I grabbed Hakamada's hand and dashed in between them.

"You! Stop it!"

I know I'm wrong. I don't have a role here. Even so, I.

"Hey, Hakamada! It's fine for you to reject someone. Reject anyone you want, whether it's Yanami or some other girl!"

...I can feel Yanami's glare saying that she'll absolutely murder me on the spot.

"But if you just decide Yanami's feeling on your own, that is equal to throwing her love for you away!"

The vague feelings inside my heart are all pouring out as crystal-clear words.

"If you rejected her, don't say things like you want her to be happy or finding someone else to love! You're the only person unqualified to say those things!"

...Ah, damn it. This guy, Hakamada, looks just as handsome up close.

Hakamada isn't all looks either. He's very kind and humble to everyone. I'm just getting mad on my own.

Unlike this guy, I've only spent a short time with Yanami. Of course, not to mention that I'm in no way special or close to her.

However, even though I'm an irrelevant person, I saw her tears and determination next to her.

"Protect her as a friend! Don't just swirl her up into your guilt just because you rejected her!"

I don't scream often. I choked after doing that.

Hakamada stroked my back worriedly.

"Hey, are you okay?"

"A-Ahh, ...I'm fine."

...Holy shit, I can't believe I said something so cringy.

If I'm as attractive as him, can I face Yanami directly?

My body gave up suddenly.

"...Indeed, you're right, Nukumizu."

"Eh? Ahh, well. I'm sorry for doing all the talking."

I can't help but apologize. Hakamada reached his hand out to me. I also reached my hand worriedly-

"Stop saying who's rejecting who!"

I was sent flying after I heard that scream.

"Who gave you two the right to end this on a happy note!? Don't just get back on good terms on your own! Are you two's brains filled with bubble tea!?"

“Uh, well-“

Yanami stepped on the gas and rushed toward us.

Hakamada made the first sacrifice.

Yanami grabbed Hakamada’s chest and buried her face into it.



“I’ve always loved Sosuke! Right now too! I’ve never let go!”

“Anna, I’m sorry-“

“But, don’t apologize! What do you mean by someone new to love? Mind your own business!”

A 12-year serving of feelings started falling out of Yanami’s eyes. She buried herself harder into Hakamada’s chest.

“I will still continue to love you! So, you should be happy together with Karen Himemiya! Mind your own happiness!”

She leaned on Hakamada after saying that with tears.

I’m still waiting for my chance to escape. Suddenly, Yanami raised her head from Hakamada’s chest.

“I’ve fallen with you on my own. So, I don’t know whether I’ll fall in love with someone else on my own too!”

Yanami released her hands and pushed Hakamada away as if she had let go of something.

Then, as if she was searching for her next prey, she gritted her teeth and turned around. Scary.

“Nukumizu-kun! Uh, what was I going to say to you earlier!?”

“Well, uh, there’s nothing to say to me, right?”

“You’re right! I have nothing to say to you!”

Bam. Yanami smacked my head. Hard. It hurts.

“So, why was I punched?”

“No reason!”

Eh, that’s impossible. I just stood there without doing anything. Next, Yanami poked my chest and started complaining to me non-stop.

“Listen, even though you’re probably considerate to me when you’re doing things! Don’t you dare to decide who’s close to who for me without asking me first! You even ignored everyone and charged straight ahead! At least ask for my opinion before doing dumb stuff like that!”

“But, ...I don’t think I should talk to you.”

Yanami dropped her jaws after saying that.

“Don’t give me crap like that! Just come and talk to me! You can do whatever the hell you want!”

“Eh, can I?”

“You need permission to talk to someone in school!? What kind of mindset is that!?”

But it’s not good to talk to girls on a whim, right...? This is literally a criminal offense in the world I live in.

“I’ll decide whether that’s annoying on my own! Also, even I won’t know what you’re thinking!”

Eh- well, ...really...? I guess...

Even though I’m quite a suspicious person, I’m still pretty lonely. Whether it’s about being or not being with someone, talking or not talking to who, what I’m going to do, all of these are decided by myself.

Then, how they should accept or answer it is decided by that person.

“In other words, I can talk to...Yanami-san?”

“Depending on when and where!”

She’s right. I can’t smile but smile. Yanami looked at me suspiciously.

“Uh, why do you look happy now? You’re disgusting, Nukumizu-kun.”

“Well, Yanami-san. Thank you very much in every way.”

“...You’re just as hard to understand as usual.”

Yanami sighed and shook her head helplessly.

“Anyway, think about what you two did today!”

“Yes, madam!”

The answer is clean and synchronized. This is where Hakamada and my heart connected for a moment.

“Also, Sosuke. Apologize properly to Nukumizu-kun.”

Why? Hakamada already bowed down before I could understand.

“I’m sorry, Nukumizu. I got you into this mess because I was overthinking.”

No, no, that’s not true. I feel a bit guilty. What’s with this conversation?

“Then, Nukumizu-kun. Apologize to me.”

“Eh?”

I don’t understand, but I should obey her.

“Sorry, I won’t say dumb things like that anymore.”

“Fine, I forgive you.”

Yanami crossed her arms and nodded in satisfaction.

...Suddenly, Yanami tilted her head in confusion.

“So, where should we settle on this?”

I wonder where? The three of us looked at each other. The bell that signals the end of the lunch break rang.

Yanami wiped the tears lingering on her eyelashes and smiled at us.

“Anyway, you two should go back to the classroom first. Get ready, set, turn around!”

Facing Yanami’s momentum, we turned around quickly.

Yanami brutally slapped us on our backs and walked between us.

“Quick, don’t be late, you two!”

Yanami waved and left after turning around.

Hakamada patted my shoulder.

“Let’s go, Nukumizu.”

“Yeah, let’s go.”

We glanced at each other with a bitter smile and chased after Yanami.



The second day, which is also the last day of the first semester.

Everyone is getting restless for the closing ceremony. Amanatsu-sensei screamed at us from the podium.

“Settle down. Take your stuff according to your number—”

Amanatsu-sensei’s face looks surprised. I took the grade sheet from her and opened it in my seat.

I did alright in the first exam of my high school life. Forget about that. I paid attention to the comment section.

“Very passionate about club activities.”

...Who got switched with me? In other words, the comment of one of my classmate’s sheets is, “This person doesn’t seem to have friends in the class. How are they like at

home?" Well, it looks like they will be having a family conference tonight.

I put my hand on my cheek as I looked around. People are showing their grade sheets to each other and talking about it.

I thought Yakishio would be pretty noisy too, but she's laying on the table and wrapping her hands around her head. It looks like that girl has a family conference waiting for her too.

"Nukumizu, you're good at Japanese and maths."

Hakamada peeked at my grade sheet.

"It's okay, ...but I'm really average on other subjects."

"I have to get a tutor for maths. Seriously, spare me. I don't want to come to school during the summer holiday."

"Eh, Hakamada is in the Going Home Club too?"

That's unexpected. Affection +1.

"It's because I joined the rock climbing team outside of school, so I can't join any clubs."

Eh, are you kidding me? Not just satisfied in school, you have to do that outside too? The affection points I accumulated yesterday are all gone.

"Well, let's go for karaoke next time."

Himemiya said that as she walked toward my table. I think I'm getting addicted to normal conversations like this. A true outgoing character really has a good personality. Even though she's super dense.

I looked for Yanami. She's messing with her friends by pretending to be hesitating whether to show her grade sheet or not.

"Alright, stop messing around and go back to your seats. I can't start your summer holiday if you guys don't settle down."

Amanatsu-sensei said that loudly after she saw everyone's about to be done.

Everyone quickly returned to their seats. The petite Amanatsu-sensei spoke up in a heavy tone after the classmates calmed down.

"I'll teach you all about the summer holiday."

She cleared her throat.

Everyone looked at her due to sensei's uncharacteristically serious attitude.

"There are 40 days. I hope all of you have a goal in mind. Don't just live out the days aimlessly. Time is interconnected. Every day you spend right now will affect the exam 2 years later."

She's pretty serious. I looked forward to what she will say next. Amanatsu-sensei continued with a heavy heart.

"Some people may say that it's good that sensei has such a long summer holiday-

I think Amanatsu-sensei remembered something bad. She suddenly punched the podium.

"In the end, I'm still working when you guys are having fun! I'm a civil servant! Also, there are tutorials, preparing for check-ups, writing the next semester's material, teacher's meetings, study meetings, club trips, and school business-

Sensei's dark side suddenly erupted. The classroom went silent.

"Don't say that I already became a Vtuber during the second semester, okay!? Data is really expensive, you

know!?"

I'll switch to a flip phone then. *[Flip phone's data plans are much cheaper than smartphones in Japan.]*

"Do you guys even understand what it means to receive sarcasm when I ask for leave during the Ghost Festival!? Even if I ask for holidays at different times, people are still saying stuff like, 'How nice for you to be resting when everyone's working.' You know how annoying is that!?"

This is just complaining. Sensei, don't say that to your students.

"Listen to me! This summer! The rest of sensei's life depends on the classmates' meeting at the Ghost Festival! Don't mess sensei's paid leave with illegal and obscene crap! Take things one step at a time!"

...Sensei, what are you talking about?

However, we're just teenagers. So, sensei's momentum completely overwhelmed us. The classroom is quiet.

Amanatsu-sensei adjusted her breathing. With a slam, she hit the podium with the student list.

"Sensei is just showing off her consideration to you guys as a senpai in life. The summer holiday starts now, you little brats!"



This semester is finally over. I looked at my watch. It's still the morning.

I escaped from the loudness and am now observing the clouds in the summer sky at the old building's emergency

stairs. Most of the clubs are on break today. There's almost no one on the playground.

Buying a carton of milk on the way already became a habit of mine. I threw the carton between my hands. Well, what should I do next?

The new volume of <The twin sister who started traveling to become adventurers came back as gals> is released. Let's get that and chill out at the family restaurant-

"H-Huh, y-you're here?"

I can actually predict it. I bet she couldn't tolerate how noisy today is too. Komari put her school bag on the ground. It seems heavy.

"What? You're not going back?"

"I-I'm just killing time."

Komari took out butter rolls from her school bag. I guess that was from yesterday.

I handed Komari the carton of milk.

"Here. It's not opened."

"Eh, no, I didn't ask for you to give me."

In contrast to what she said, Komari's eyes are sparkling.

"T-Today's milk is concentrated. ...I-It's 10 yen more expensive."

Hey, you do know that. Well, at least I know it's worth feeding you.

"It's the closing ceremony, after all."

"...B-But, I still feel sorry. Here."

There are coins on her palm. It's all 1 yen and 10 yen pocket changes.

“Eh? No, it’s fine.”

“I-It’s because that guy r-robbed Nukimizu yesterday, right?”

“I wasn’t robbed.”

“Wait, d-don’t tell me he robbed...something else?”

Why are your eyes so shiny right now? Don’t get hyped up for no reason.

“No, both my heart and virginity are still intact.”

No, I think half of my heart is already taken away.

Perhaps Komari already walked out of her confusion. She showed me a smile I hadn’t seen before as she raised her head and peeked at me.

“T-This is indeed v-very suspicious. W-When did t-this start?”

Her eyes are sparkling, and her cheeks are filled with excitement.

Hey, wait, why do I suddenly feel she’s quite adorable? Even though her brain has clearly malfunctioned.

“I won’t say anything even if you look at me like that. Alright, you should just eat.”

“Ehehe, ...I-I won’t miss out on such a tasty t-topic like this.”

A dangerous person just knew something dangerous. I have to tell Tsukinoki-senpai. ...No, things will only go worse if I tell her.

As I struggled to answer, I heard a cheerful and refreshing voice coming from below the stairs. It’s Yakishio.

“Eh, I didn’t know there’s a place like this. The wind feels pretty good—”

Yakishio saw us after she came up. She pretended to be surprised and turned around.

“Yana-chan, things aren’t going well. I feel like those two are in a good mood.”

Seriously? That’s what you’re feeling right now?

...Also, did she just say Yana-chan?

“Even though I’m not sure what you’re saying, it’s alright. It’s Nukumizu-kun, after all.”

Yanami said something really impolite as she followed Yakishio.

“Uh, Yanami-san. Why are you here?”

“What why? I discovered this place first, you know?”

Yanami smiled mischievously.

“What, did we really interrupt you two?”

“Stop. I was even thinking whether I should change places.”

“We’re all single. Let’s get along with each other.”

Yanami is just teasing us now. As for Yakishio, her eyes were all bright as she listened to our conversation.

“Eh? What did Nukunuku just experience? Don’t tell me it happened just then? Just then?”

Why are you so excited, Yakishio? This is why I don’t like this part of you.

“Forget about that. Why are you two here?”

“There’s still sometime before the Track and Field Club’s meeting, so I made Yana-chan brought me to her secret base.”

It looks like Yakishio really loves high places. She leaned forward on the railing and watched the playground. Hey, don't fall.

Yanami came next to me. She's neither too close nor too far. What a subtle distance.

"Nukumizu-kun. What will the Literature Club do during the summer holiday?"

"Well, ...Tsukinoki-senpai said that everyone should do something together."

Yakishio pressed on the railing. Her legs are off the ground. She raised her hand.

"That's nice. Invite me too! Why don't we go catch cicadas since it's summer?"

Really? That's a cicada, though.

However, we were swimming and barbecuing on the last trip. Yet, we're still hanging out this summer? I totally turned into a normie now. This isn't like the Literature Club at all.

If it's the Literature Club, we should be coming up with drafts alone in a gloomy corner, right?

Yanami looked at Yakishio moving her legs around as she got half a step closer.

"You know, I had fun during the last trip. I really look forward to what will happen next."

"But Prez and Tsukinoki-senpai are already together. Is it really okay for me to barge in between them?"

"Sigh, I feel happy because everyone's here. That includes you too, Nukumizu-kun."

Yanami said that dumbfoundedly. I plopped my head down in embarrassment.

“Well, ...you’re right. Also, I want to-“

“Hmm? What do you want?”

“It’s not that important. I just want to say, ...nevermind.”

...Komari is very interested in what’s going on between us.

She gave me a meaningful glance and pulled Yakishio’s uniform.

“Hmm? What’s wrong, Komari-chan?”

Now that Yakishio’s facing her, Komari can’t help but reach her hand to her phone.

“W-Well, ...I-I want to start practicing running.”

Komari lowered her head and put her phone back into her pocket.

“C-Can you teach me a-about postures and stuff?”

Yakishio bulged her eyes in shock, but she quickly smiled and grabbed Komari’s hand.

“Leave it to me!”

“Eep!”

“Let’s start by finishing 100m in 12 seconds!”

“Eh? I-I think I’m better suited t-to long runs.”

“Well, please relax! I have my self-imposed Yakishio’s Training Method.”

“Y-Yakishio’s...Training Method?”

Komari’s a bit scared. I get a bad feeling from the name.

“If you can dash 100m in one go, doesn’t that mean you can finish 1500m if you dash 15 times? I’m trying to prove this theory.”

“A-Anyway, i-it’s better to start somewhere more suited to a beginner, ...or s-someone making a recovery.”

“Well, it’s time for the second rule in Yakishio’s Training Method. As long as we keep running today, I can prove whether 1500m feels like 100m. First off, let’s start by running!”

Yakishio dragged Komari away. She whispered to me just as our shoulders touched.

“...Y-You owe me o-one.”

Thank you, I’ll prepare a liter of milk next time.

Yanami looked at them walking down the stairs.

“Those two are pretty close.”

“Uh, maybe.”

There’s no need to correct this misunderstanding.

“This feels unbelievable.”

Yanami mumbled quietly.

“Hmm, what is unbelievable?”

Yanami put her arms on the railing before giving me a complicated stare.

“It’s because Komari, Nukumizu-kun, and I have no interaction before this, right? I didn’t even know what does the Literature Club do before the trip-“

This girl, are you serious? I can’t believe she still went on the trip.

“I tried to write novels, and it’s unexpectedly fun. Komari’s recommendations are pretty interesting too. Books are really quite nice-“

Yanami observed the students playing on the ground lovingly.

Either way, it's good that Yanami can move on after getting in the club. Indeed, a high-quality reading experience can enrich one's soul and life-

"Reading makes people forget about their painful realities. Perhaps everyone will go my way in novels."

Correction. She's going backward.

"Hey, Yanami-san. Don't be too stubborn. Should you try ordination or fasting this summer?"

Yanami quickly waved her hands after hearing what I said.

"Wait, I'm not being stubborn! Also, I can't accept fasting at all. Yes, it's not okay to not eat, Nukumizu-kun!"

She's vehemently disagreeing with fasting. Nice, she's the Yanami I know.

I was still worrying whether we would be awkward because of what happened yesterday with Hakamada. I didn't expect us to talk normally.

Well, right now-

"Hmm? What's wrong?"

Yanami's watery eyes blinked. I put my hand on my chest and took a deep breath.

"...Yanami-san. There's something I want to say."

"Ha."

She answered me listlessly.

Yanami blinked and suddenly straightened her back as if she thought of something.

“Eh!? You have something to say!? Right here!? Right now!?”

“Yes, it’s rare for the two of us to talk alone, after all.”

Yanami freaked out and tidied her hair.

“Please wait! Nukumizu-kun, you should give this more thought, right!? Think about the timing-“

“I thought about this many times. However, I will definitely regret it if I don’t say things properly now.”

She finally acknowledged my seriousness.

Yanami tidied her hair, her uniform collar, the bowtie, and her skirt in order. After that, she cleared her throat in a lovely voice.

“W-Well, i-if it’s...just hearing you out-“

She’s making me nervous with how formal she is. I took another deep breath and faced Yanami.



— / \ — / \ — / \ —

“Yanami-san. Please-“

“I-I...”

My mouth is getting dry from how nervous I am.

I mustered my last bit of courage and took a step closer to Yanami. Her shoulders shivered.

“-Please be friends with me!” “Sorry! I only see you as a friend-“

Our lines overlapped.

...Silence ensued.

A blue rock thrush landed on the railing and moaned in pain.

[Blue birds symbolize happiness.]

We finally stopped freezing. Yanami titled her head.

“...Friend?”

I nodded gently.

“...Yes.”

“.....”

Yanami put her arms on the railing again silently. She sighed for a long moment.

“...I see-“

Yanami’s mumble was so quiet that it was covered by the voice of that blue rock thrush flying away.

...Eh, what’s with this atmosphere? It looks like I need to explain properly.

“Look, we won’t have lunch together since you paid back your debt. Indeed, we’re classmates and club members. But, well, I want to be with you as a friend-“

My limbs flailed around as I talked. I finally noticed something very important.

“...Hmm? Wait, Yanami-san.”

“I’ve been waiting since then.”

“I think...I just got rejected, even though I didn’t confess?”

“Hmm, yes, I guess you can say you were rejected.”

Yanami nodded with an all-knowing attitude as she patted my shoulder.

“Welcome to the rejected people’s world.”

“I wasn’t rejected. Also, I didn’t even confess. Aren’t you being too self-conscious, Yanami-san?”

Yanami-san is deeply dissatisfied with what I said.

“Wait right there! You were definitely going to confess to me with that conversation, alright!? And then I will reject you. This is how it is supposed to end.”

“Please calm down, Yanami-san. Listen, that’s not what a confession looks like.”

“Eh, ...is Nukumizu-kun teaching me about love right now...?”

Well, think about it. Compared to the “Win: 0, Lose: 1” Yanami, my “Win: 0, Lose: 0” is definitely better, right? Indeed, I know more about love.

“First of all, the two people should hang out for at least 2 to 3 years before the confession, right? They need to understand and confirm their feelings for each other. After that, they have to visit a place vivid in their memories to achieve that final step.”

“Isn’t that a proposal?”

I think she's right.

"In other words, Nukumizu-kun will propose to me 3 years later? Should I reject you ahead of time?"

"I won't. Please don't put that on your schedule."

This girl is just as impolite as usual. The overly familiar conversation already made me forget this. By the way, what's the result of my friend request?

"Well, uh..."

"Hmm?"

"A-About becoming friends with me, ...what's your answer...?"

My voice grew quieter as I said that.

"Why did you go back to stuttering again...? Also, we are already friends, right?"

"Eh, ...really?" "What else could it be...?"

Yanami gave me a soft smile as she leaned on the railing.

"...What? You keep staring at my face."

"Sigh, this part of you, Nukumizu-kun."

"This part is which part, Yanami-san?"

Instead of answering, Yanami laughed cheerfully. I squeezed out a stiff smile and looked at Yanami.

...I still think being alone isn't a bad thing. Whether it's my connections with others or how I should live, I still think it's alright to follow what I believe is true.

I just simply love hanging out with Yanami like this.

"Thank you, Yanami-san."

That was sincere from the bottom of my heart.

Yanami was a bit surprised after seeing my natural and sincere smile, but she quickly returned with the same smile.

“No sweat.”

She reached her fist out to me.

“I’ll be counting on you, my partner who’s also rejected.”

I smiled after hearing Yanami as our fists bumped.

“I wasn’t rejected.”

AFTERWORD

Nice to meet you. I'm Takibi Amamori, who got the Gagaga Award in the 15th Shogakukan Light Novel Awards.

If this book is in your hands, it's safe to say that all ladies and gentlemen here are interested in the losing heroines, right? (I bet)

The bravery and tears of girls in love, the heartache after losing her love, the determination of the smile to cheer their favorite boys up, ...losing heroines include everything of a rom-com. The goal of this novel is to convey the attractiveness of the losing heroine to the readers.

Then, being my first debut, please allow me to express my gratitude.

First of all, props to the staff members who reviewed my work. This novel wouldn't be published without you guys' suggestions.

Zen Karuro-sensei, who is the guest reviewer, your warm comments became my goals during the first draft editing. Thank you so much.

Imigimuru-sensei drew all these fantastic illustrations for all characters. Sensei created a wonderful world where Nukumizu and Yanami can spend their happy life in. Mere words can't describe my excitement. Here's my sincere gratitude.

The staff members and stores who participated in the making and selling of this novel. Thanks to your hard work,

this book can be delivered to our readers' hands.

When I was writing the draft, I-senpai and D-san gave me many suggestions after they read the initial part. Your ideas really brightened up the path for this novel.

T-senpai, N-san, and W-san, who read all of the first drafts and gave me feedback, this work will be presented in a different shape without you three's suggestions.

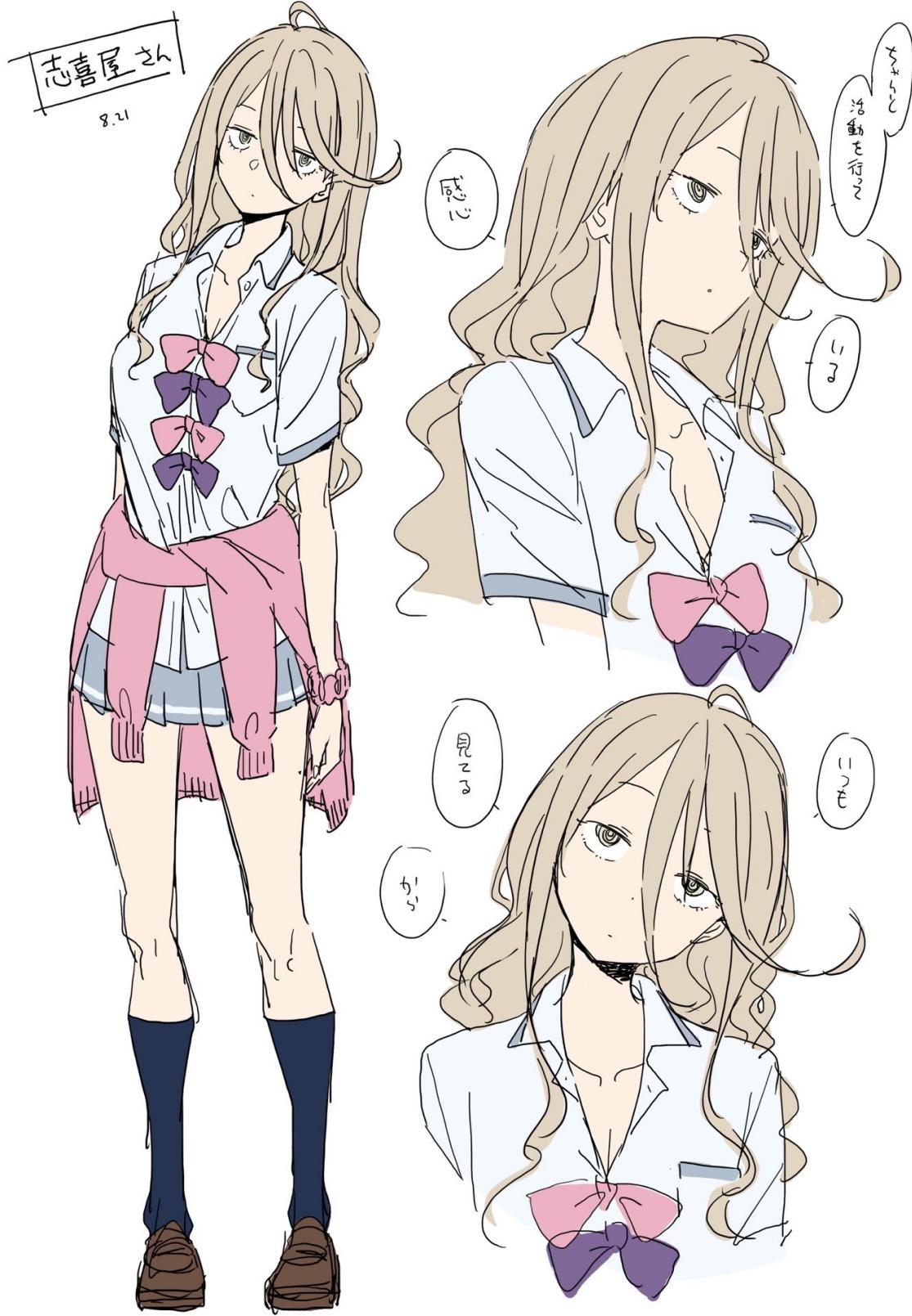
Next, it's the readers who read the web version. The comments and feedback from you guys trained my fundamentals as a novelist. Please continue to support me as a reader and writer from now on.

Finally, it's the editor, Iwaasa-san. Thank you for accompanying a newbie author who made her debut too late. I can't express my gratitude enough. Come to think of it, everything's finished without me understanding it. I didn't realize, "oh, that's how it works" before the drafts are made into a complete novel.

Even though I'm just standing in this industry world's entrance, I still hope to utilize the experience from my senpais.

At last, this book is also for my father. He didn't say anything and let me stay home when I aimed to be a novelist despite being unemployed. Rest in peace.

[Official concept arts for Shikiya and Chihiya.]

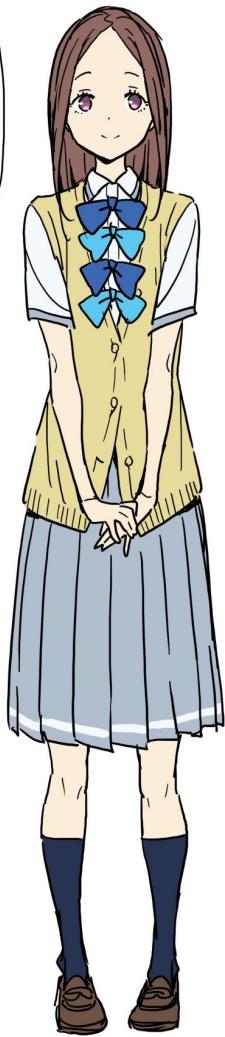


朝雲さん

8.22.



恥じらいで泣いてます



光希くん





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BOOK☆WALKER SPECIAL

INTERMISSION

CURIOSITY KILLED THE HIGH SCHOOL Boy

The end of July. The first day in the summer holiday where I have to go back to school.

The class assembly was over in the morning. I'm enjoying my elegant yet short-lived relaxation in the clubroom.

The wind from the window is blowing on the curtains.

The rainy season is over. It's really hot right now.

Even so, dry winds comfortably cooled down the heat on my body.

I felt the gentle gusts as I leisurely turned over a page of the latest volume of <Even though there's a JK as a bonus from the apartment I rented, she's too expensive to feed>.

Just as I'm about to pick up from where I left, the clubroom's door is suddenly slammed open.

Yakishio walked inside with a jelly drink in her hand. After she slurped all of it, she shot it toward the trash bin accurately.

“Oh, Nukunuku is the only one here today?”

"Yeah, year 3 students don't need to come back today. Yanami-san went to lunch with her friends."

"Ugh, it's a bit lonely."

Yakishio said that as she put her school bag on the table.

"Yakishio, what about your club's training?"

"I'm going there. Sensei called me to the office just then. I'll go to the playground from here since there's no time to go to the Track and Field Club's room."

By the way, the rooms for sports clubs are in the opposite direction to the playground.

"The location of the Literature Club is quite convenient, unexpectedly. It's close to the backdoor. I can slip out and buy bread easily."

Yakishio said that as she took off the bowtie on her chest.

"Uh, hey."

"I often borrow this place when I'm alone since it's so convenient. Also-"

After taking off her bowtie, Yakishio started unbuttoning her shirt.

"Wait, tell me when you're changing. I'll leave. Also, please shut the curtains-"

Yakishio looked at me dazedly as I hastily closed the windows.

"Eh? It's fine. My training clothes are right below. I can just take off the outside."

Ah, I see. I feel like an idiot for freaking out.

However, girls taking off their clothes is too much for a guy in puberty.

“Anyway, I’ll go outside. The curtains are shut too.”

“You’re such a gentleman, Nukunuku. It’s even more embarrassing when you’re so nice to me, so you can just stay here.”

“You’re embarrassed when you change without me here?”

“I already said my training clothes are underneath, so Nukunuku can act normal.”

...Ugh, I guess she’s right. In a sense, Yakishio is just taking off her jacket. Perhaps I’m overthinking too much.

After Yakishio took off her shirt, I could see her undershirt in full view. I quickly lowered my head.

“Eh, what’s wrong, Nukunuku?”

“No, sorry. It’s because this looks like a...sports...bra?”

“Calm down, my guy.”

Right, she already said this is training clothes, after all. I took a sip from my bottled tea to cool off my head.

“Yeah, you won’t show your underwear to someone else, after all.”

“Eh? This is a sports bra.”

I spat all my tea out and coughed non-stop. Yakishio smacked my back. It hurts.

“Slow down, Nukunuku. What’s wrong?”

“Stop right there! In other words, this is underwear instead of training clothes, right!?”

“This is the sports bra I wear during training. I’ll wear a vest on top when I’m in session, so this is training clothes.”

What a mysterious and awe-inspiring theory.

“I got it. I got it, so I’ll leave-“

Yakishio quickly got on her vest.

“Look, it’s fine now, right?”

“Uh, yeah...”

“Nukunuku has no resistance to girls. Do you want to join the Track and Field Club?”

Yakishio patted my shoulder with a bitter smile.

“No. By the way, are guys giving you a weird look? Don’t go to a guy’s room alone.”

“I won’t do something this vulgar. Also, guys in the Track and Field Club won’t look at girls like that.”

Bullshit. Even I can barely contain myself anymore. Those healthy and energetic track boys must stare at such adorable and defenseless girls with lewd eyes (personal bias).

Yakishio ignored my anxiety. She gasped after looking at the clock on the wall.

“Oh no, the training’s starting!”

Yakishio pulled the zipper. Her skirt fell to the ground.

“Oi, hey!”

“Sorry, Nukunuku! Help me pack up my clothes!”

“Eh? Wait-“

Yakishio sprinted out of the room.

I sighed as I stared at the clothes randomly thrown on the ground. Packing up clothes left a girl, what kind of event is this...?

By the way, I will probably be in a dangerous position if anyone sees this scene. I took care of the shirt on the back of the chair and picked up the skirt.

After school- there's no one in the clubroom. I'm now holding a classmate's skirt in my hands.

...Even though it's impossible to not have any weird thoughts, a small observation is good for now.

It's a light grey flared skirt designed for summer. There's an adjustment device to fix up the waistline.

I unintentionally compared it to my waistline. If I set the adjustment device to the widest-

“Even I can wear it?”

...I'll say this ahead. I'm not really planning to try it. I'm not into cross-dressing, nor am I interested in clothes taken off by a girl.

The only thing here is the pure curiosity about the unknown world that drives human development.

Adventurers used it as a weapon and sailed across the sea. They are the ones that built the world we're living in.

Compared to the grand projects the nameless heroes have built, what I'm about to do is basically nothing. I'm just comparing the sizes in front of the mirror.

Even so, since there's no mirror in the room, I have to take a photo with my phone. I put the skirt on the table and adjusted my camera to see the whole body.

“The camera's done. What's with this...bowtie...?”

Although there's no need to wear Yakishio's shirt, the biggest difference between guys' and girls' uniforms is this bowtie, aside from the skirt.

In for a penny, in for a pound. It's meaningless to back out at this point.

I followed my curiosity and took off the bowtie. Then, I observed the four connected knots as I hung them below my neck.

...Well, the last part is to put the skirt on my waist. I looked at the skirt in my hands.

Hiya, I should check whether I shut the curtains. If this is an anime, people will definitely see me if I don't do something.

Good, it's shut.

The door of the clubroom is closed too. Everything is within my expectation-

"N-Nukumizu, ...t-thanks for the work..."

"...Ah, thanks."

The only thing. I didn't expect Komari is already standing inside the door. She dropped her jaw.

"...When were you here?"

"W-When you start p-putting on the bowtie."

Ah, hmm, I feel like it's better for her to watch the entire thing from start to end.

Alright, let's start the explanation time.

"Wait, Komari. This isn't what it looks like. It's just pure and innocent curiosity—"

"I-It's fine. G-Go on."

Komari ignored my anxiety and leisurely clicked on her phone on the chair.

"...Komari? I actually don't have fetishes like that. This is just impulse...."

“I-It’s fine. ...Everyone...has what they like...”

Komari nodded with a gentle mother’s smile.

Uh, please don’t. Don’t treat me so nicely at times like this.

I quickly took off the bowtie and put it on the table carefully.

Then, I sat next to Komari and cleared my throat on purpose.

“Komari, listen to me. Yakishio just asked me to pack up her clothes, okay?”

“I-I got it, so...stay away from me...”

“Are you sure? Look at this bowtie. I’m just curious about its structure. I definitely am not trying to wear it-“

I got close to Komari intensely. However, Komari pushed me away with her phone on my face.

“W-Wait, d-don’t c-come at me. ...This is different from what I imagined...”

“I-I’m not coming at you! By the way, what is your image of mine, Komari?”

“D-Do you really want to hear it from my mouth? Y-You want to...listen?”

“...No, it’s fine.”

“S-Smart choice...”

Komari nodded with an all-knowing attitude as she returned to her phone. I sat down on a chair slightly further away and turned over the latest volume of <Feed JK> again.

“...Komari.”

“W-What?”

"I'll say this again. I'm not into cross-dressing, alright? This is important."

Komari looked at me like she knew everything.

"I-I know. ...I-It's important to meet your man's interests..."

"I don't have someone with a special relationship like that! Also, why is it a man!?"

"T-That's why I said s-stay away from me..."

This is a certain day in summer- where all the elegance has already been blown away.



MELONBOOKS SPECIAL

INTERMISSION

SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN APPETITE

In the after-school club room, I'm facing a high school girl over a snack box.

“This box was already opened when I entered the clubroom. At that time, you were the only one present- Yanami-san.”

That girl- Anna Yanami, looked at me calmly. She's my classmate, a year 1 student who belongs to the Literature Club.

“...Nukumizu-kun, I do agree that this box of soft red bean daifuku is opened, alright?”

“Well, so the person who ate them is really-”

Yanami slowly shook her head.

“Do you have any evidence that I was the one who opened the box? Or- the evidence that I ate them?”

...She's trying to find an excuse. I put both arms on the table and covered my mouth to hide my expression.

“I put the box here this morning. I was planning to enjoy it with everyone during the after-school meeting.”

"Uh, wait, this is just a hypothesis. It's fine even if I ate them ahead, right? I'm part of the club, too, right? It's okay for me to share them."

"It's indeed fine. However—"

I pointed at the empty spots in the box. There are 5 of them.

"You ate 5 of them on your own. That's ridiculous. I can't believe you can—"

"Wait! I just ate 4, not 5! The innermost corner is for desiccant—"

Yanami looked up and gasped in the middle.

"I've been bamboozled...! You baited me with your evil and tempting question..."

"...The person who took the bait has more issues. Also, Yanami-san is really the one who ate them."

Yanami nodded in silence. A daifuku wrapping paper fell onto the table after she slowly opened her palm.

"It's me. Yes, I did eat them. They are so soft and sweet."

This girl has nothing to lose.

"But, Nukumizu-kun. There are still 6 left after I ate 4. Didn't I save one for everyone in the club?"

"Everyone? Prez, Tsukinoki-senpai, Komari, me, ...there are only 5 people even if you include Yakishio."

Yanami put a daifuku in front of her without hesitation.

"You're still trying to eat yours after all that...?"

During this time, outside the half-open door, someone with a small face is peeking at us worriedly.

Chika Komari, a year 1 student who's also in the Literature Club.

“What’s wrong, Komari? You’re not coming in.”

“I-I just feel like you g-guys are doing something weird. ...I-I don’t want to interrupt.”

“It’s nothing. We’re just sharing daifukus. Here, you can have one too, Komari.”

“Oh, ...it’s soft.”

Komari wrapped the daifuku with a towel as she carefully put them into her school bag.

“You’re not eating it?”

“M-My grandma is staying in my home t-tonight. ...G-Grandma loves Japanese snacks.”

After hearing that, Yanami’s hands stopped opening the daifuku wrapping paper.

I gently shook my head and took the daifuku away from Yanami’s hands before handing it to Komari.

“Hey! W-W-W-Wait, Nukumizu-kun. Stop right there!”

“Yanami-san, just give it to Komari-“

“That’s not what I meant, Nukumizu-kun. I feel like I just lost something more important than a daifuku.”

“Oh- right. That’s what I thought. With this opportunity, you should review your attitude toward life.”

“...Nukumizu-kun should try to help me out here, right?”

Komari listened to our conversation. She freaked out with the daifuku in her hands as she looked at Yanami’s face.

“Uh, well, c-can I take this...?”

“Of course, take it! That’s Nukumizu-kun’s daifuku, anyway. No need to be polite!”

“...Eh? You gave her mine?”

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