

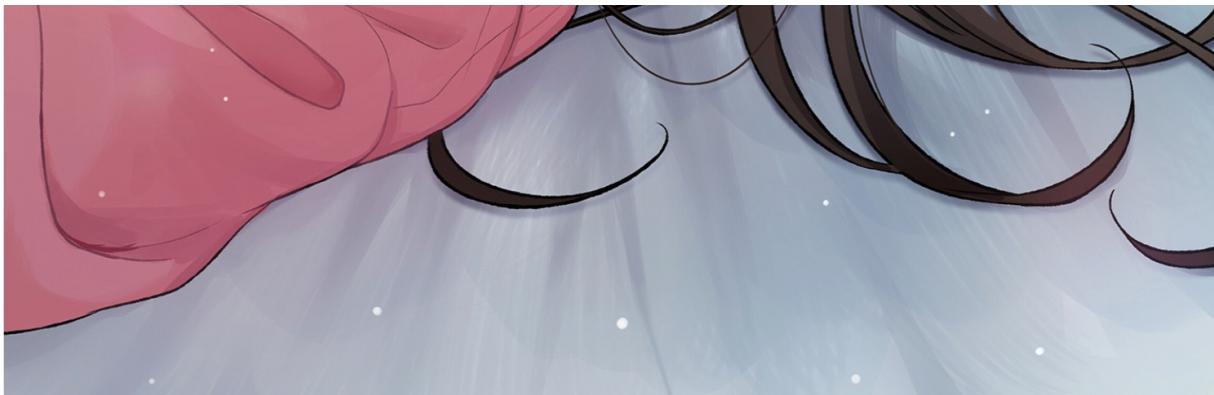
I kissed My Girlfriend's Little Sister ♠

妹とキスをした
力の月の



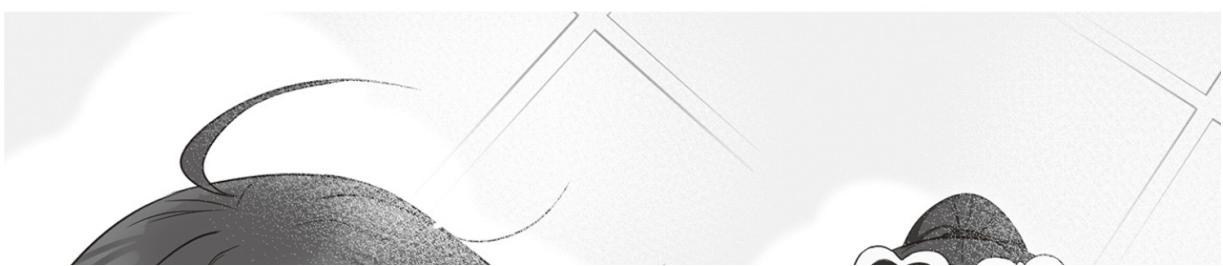
Chapter 0 (Spoilers) - Illustrations



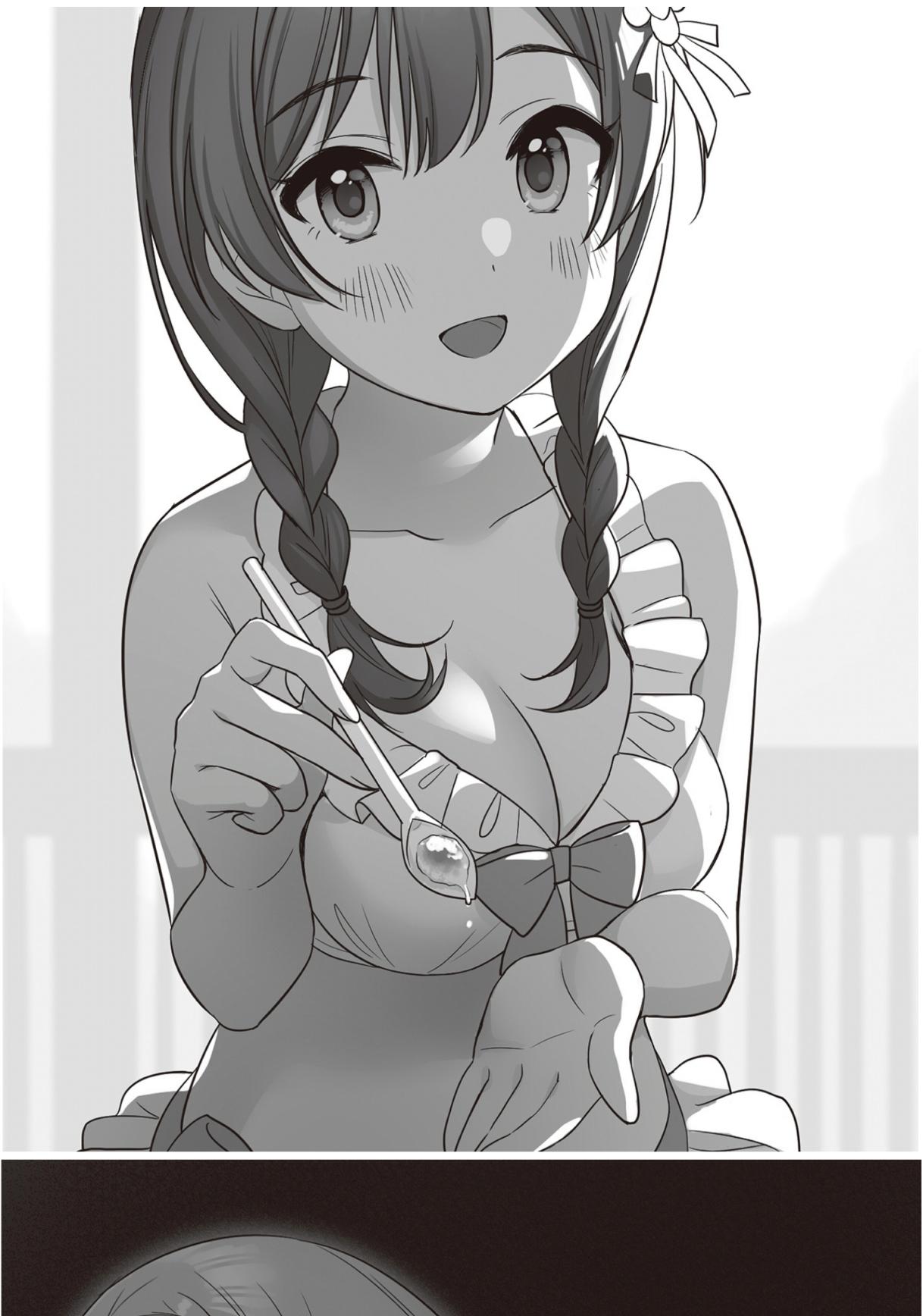


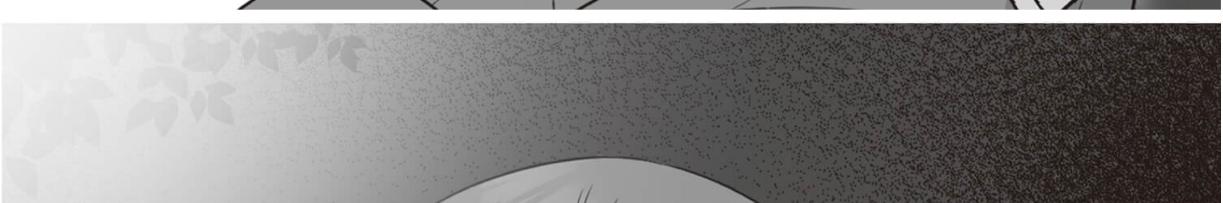






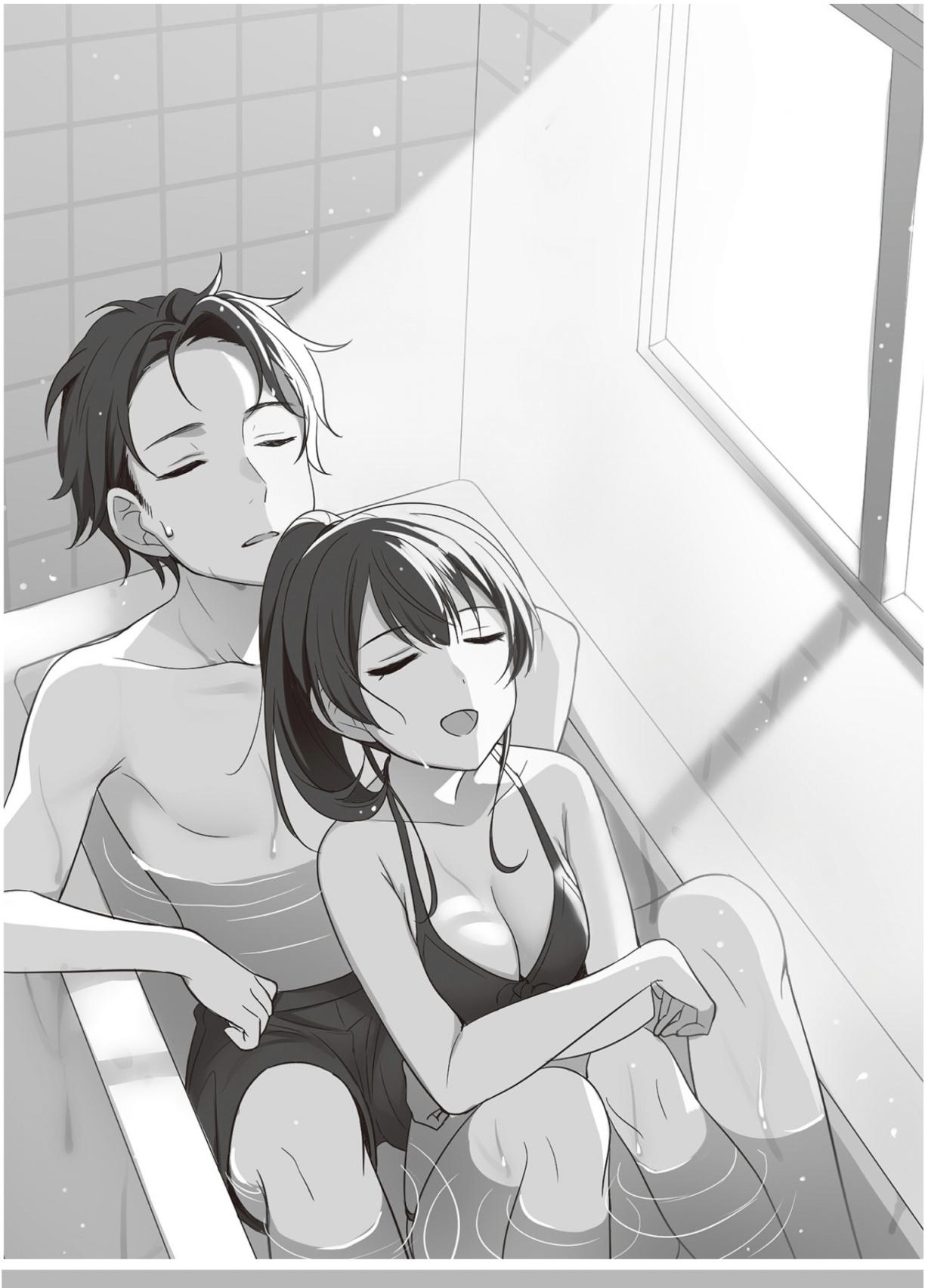














Chapter 15 - Overwriting x First Kiss

The sound of the rain on the other side of the window felt awfully distant.

The humidity of the rainy season that stuck to my skin doesn't even faze me now.

My consciousness was absorbed by the girl in front of me.

The only sounds that reached my ears was the sound of our breathing.

My skin felt her heat from her body.

The only thing in my vision was the figure of my lovely girlfriend, whom I had met in high school.

But... soon I lost sight of all that.

My lover's face came close to mine, and our lips met.

A kiss.

A gentle push on the lips.

In that moment, all of my senses were overtaken with the touch of her lips.

“I love you... hm...”

The kiss was gentle, as if it was the proof of our love, but hot as if it was burning.

The touch, different from a hand or skin, made me dizzy as if I was high.

When I opened my eyes, I saw myself drowning in her eyes. Her eyes were overflowing with love, as tears spilled out behind her long eyelashes.

“Onii-san...”

She murmured. I caught a glimpse of her tongue peeking out from her mouth which was wet with my saliva.

I’ve never seen the color of another person’s tongue.

I don’t know what to do from here.

I wonder what will happen to me if I surrender myself to her like this.

My heart beats faster and faster.

Is it fear or anticipation?

But then it happened.

Ping-pong

“Hm...”

I heard a ringtone from my phone.

It was the sound of an app updating.

The familiar sound pulled my consciousness back to reality.

What the h**l... What was happening?...

The blood, burning all over my body to the point of spurting out, was now flowing back, making me pale.

Because right in front of me was the twin sister, who has the same face as my girlfriend Haruka!

“Get away from me, Shigure!”

“Kya”

I pushed her away from me.

“What you were doing. That’s enough of your pranks.”

It’s not unusual for her to play games with me.

I’ve experienced many of her similar pranks, ever since we became step-siblings after our parents remarried a little over a month ago.

But this time, she went too far.

Shigure’s wet lips parted, and she said,

“Does it look like a joke to you?”

“You...”

I was at a loss for words.

Her glossy eyes were filled with the same affection as before.

As I stared at her, my heart began to heat up again.

... I know.

I’m a virgin with only two months of experience in dating, but I know what it means when someone looks at me like this.

I knew that she was more serious than ever.

‘Onii-san, Will you go out with me?’

Cheating. That’s what she suggested to me. And her intense affection towards me was the proof that she wasn’t joking.

That's right. I've never felt such passion before, not even from my girlfriend Haruka.

But that was why.

I couldn't accept it straight away!

"How can I take it as anything other than a joke? We're siblings, you know!"

It was too large of a matter to accept and too serious to simply throw away.

I was impatient.

If I could, I wanted to forget it.

I just wanted to pretend that it was a little too much of her usual teasing.

If I didn't do that, our relationship, which had finally begun to fall into place, would be destroyed.

A younger sister who looks exactly like my girlfriend.

I was living with her sister together in a perfect balance. But "now" everything is in a mess.

... But,

"Siblings? Onii-san, do you really think of me as your sister?"

"O-of course. I mean, you're my sister."

"Liar."

Shigure smiled mischievously at me, her cunning eyes that seemed to see through all my thoughts. Once again, she got down on her knees and reached out to touch my cheek.

Just her touch stripped me of my false pretenses.

My heart jumped and my face heated up as if it was on fire.

“If you were kissed by someone you really thought of as family, you wouldn’t have such a cute face, would you?”

“...!”

Giggle

“Your cheeks are getting hot... and your ears are also red... you’re so cute, Onii-san. You don’t have to push yourself. There’s no way we could be real siblings after only meeting each other for a month.”

“That’s not true...”

“At least I won’t.”

“...!”

“I tried so hard, you know? I tried to hide my feelings and not destroy the relationships I had with people because of something as trivial as love. After all, you’re my brother and my sister’s boyfriend. And I love both of you... But when I saw the two of you kissing in front of the station, I realized that it was impossible.”

Did you see it?

“I’ve given away a lot of things to my sister over the years. Whether it’s a large piece of cake or a win in a game.

But I’ve never felt bad about it. Because I love her. I loved her smile more than anything in the world.

But... this time it was different.

I thought that no matter what else I could give up, I couldn’t give up this love. Since the moment I was born, I was the ‘younger twin sister’. But I couldn’t bear to watch her monopolize your heart while I’m being tied down to the position of just your younger sister.”

She brushed my cheek gently, whispering in a heated tone.

“I won’t be so brazen as to ask you to leave Nee-san. But, just once, can you give me a chance to be your number one? I won’t let you down.”

With her wet eyes, sweet words, and warm touch, she conveyed her feelings for me. And I felt her affection and her pure love.

But at the same time, she was determined to break the bond with her beloved sister, whom she’d met after ten years.

“...”

... There was no escaping.

It wasn’t a problem that could be solved with the usual jokes.

I understood that very well.

It was a problem that I, as a man, had to answer.

The answer to that question was obvious.

I took a deep breath and stared back into her eyes. Then, accepting her affection that made me feel sorry, I said my answer.

“Please don’t.”

“Onii-san...”

“Shigure, I know exactly how you felt. I know you aren’t playing a joke on me, and that you really like me. But... you can’t.”

“Is it because we’re brother and sister?”

No. I shook my head.

“I’m the same as you. I was trying my best, but I can’t think of you as my real sister after one month.”

“So you don’t find me attractive?”

“Idiot. That’s... I’ve never thought that.”

It was no wonder.

Like Haruka, Shigure is a beautiful girl who can’t be found anywhere else in the world.

Such a cute girl who prepares delicious meals for me everyday, and she seems to really enjoy spending time with me.

It’s impossible to not be attracted to her, even if we weren’t dating.

“Whenever I’m with you, I’m always nervous. And you know that I’m doing my best to hide it.”

Not only is she cute but she’s also a very kind girl.

I’ve noticed that whenever she teases me, it’s because she’s concerned about my natural tendency to put up walls because I’m not good with girls.

If it hadn’t been Shigure, I wouldn’t be able to get to know her so well in just a month.

I’m sure this house would’ve become a much more awkward and reserved place.

I’m usually too embarrassed to call her evil or a little devil, but I know Shigure is a wonderful girl who really looks out for others and cares about them.

“So, this isn’t about us being brother and sister or your beauty.”

It’s simple.

Something simple and important.

It’s about who I love.

“I love Haruka more than Shigure.

Haruka is the only one who can return my feelings.

No matter how much Shigure gives me, I can’t give her anything back.

That’s why I can’t accept your feelings. Your affection should be directed to someone who can properly return the same.”

A bitterness seeped into my chest. I didn’t know that it was so hard to reject the love that was directed at me. It’s not that I liked it. But I knew I had to say it.

So, I said it out loud.

When she heard my answer, she backed away and sat down on the tatami.

“... That’s right. There’s no way Onii-san would cheat with me, right?”

Her voice was weak.

I couldn’t see it through her hair, but it must’ve hurt her deeply.

But... she looked up and smiled.

“Thank you very much, Onii-san. I wouldn’t be surprised if you hate me and never talk to me again after doing this. But you considered my feelings and answered me in your own words. Thanks to you, I understood. Right now, there is no place for me to come between you and my sister.”

She was laughing as if it didn’t hurt. That was impossible.

She was just forcing herself.

But, even if I couldn’t accept her feelings, I couldn’t tell her not to push herself.

Because this time, I’m taking advantage of her understanding.

“I see... I’m glad you understand. Nn...?”

Nnn?

I am?

Wasn’t there something odd in her words a while ago?

“Hey, Shigure. Did you say not now?”

“...? Yes, I did.”

She nodded in affirmation.

It made my heart waver.

Hey! Hey, hey, hey, that means...

“You’re not going to give up on me?”

“Of course. I know that you’re head over heels for my sister. But I’m not going to give up this easily just because you rejected me once.”

What did she say?

What is she talking about, like it’s a matter of course?

“No, no, no, no! Wait a minute! You know what I mean? I told you, I love Haruka!”

“Yes. I heard that, so what?”

“So I can’t return your feelings.”

“Yes. I know that too.”

“T-then... I’m telling you to give up on me and find another man...”

“Oh, I don’t want to do that.”

“Why? That’s easy.”

Shigure gave me a puzzled look.

“It’s nothing. I’ll just wet my pillow with tears for the night and forget about it. How could I do this to my sister’s boyfriend and my brother?”

No, that may be true, but....

“In the first place, if I were to say, ‘Okay, I understand. I’m going to forget all my feelings for you, so let’s go back to being siblings tomorrow,’ and act as if it never happened, would you believe me?”

“Ugh...”

I was at a loss for words to reply.

Because what she was saying was correct.

“It’s okay. It doesn’t matter what I think about you, if you don’t love me, it’s all over.”

“Well, that may be true, but...”

“Or... is Weak Onii-san afraid that if you love me, you’ll be abandoning my sister’s love for you?”

“No, you idiot! That’s not true!”

“Then, you don’t mind if I love you?”

Her expression returned to teasing one. “Nya~” She purred and gave me her usual devious smile.

I wasn’t sure what she was plotting, this brat!

Well... it’s all in her head.

As she said earlier, there is no way that she would forget everything.

That's why I'm going to teach her the strength of my willpower.

"Yeah, do whatever you like. But I'm telling you, I don't care what you think of me, I love Haruka the most! I won't change my mind."

"I think you resisted my kissing a lot less than you should."

"Gah!"





S-she knows...!

“You were saying something cool like,
‘The only person I’ll ever return my feelings to is Haruka.’

But, I remember how you were at my mercy with that cute face about a minute ago.”

“Ohhhh!

Stop it, the same attack won’t work on me twice.

... I’m not sure why I didn’t resist first, but I did!

Maybe I was too shocked by the amount of love that was thrown at me.

Anyway, it was a pathetic story. What kind of foolishness was I exposing in front of her eyes? It was horrible to even think about.

As I flailed in agony, Shigure turned a little more serious and said.

“But I’m sorry about the kiss earlier. To be honest, I was so excited that even I was surprised that I couldn’t control myself. There was no meaning to the kiss that I took from you, ignoring your feelings like that... It was

stupid. I will never do anything like that again. I promise. ——I will try my best to get the next kiss from you, Onii-san ❤”

She pressed her index finger against the bottom lip and pouted.

I felt my face heat up, and I couldn't help but look away. Her moist lips change shape with just a touch.

The softness and warmth of her lips was certainly etched in my memory.

Yes. Painted over the feeling of my kiss with Haruka.

I couldn't remember kissing my girlfriend but I couldn't forget kissing my sister.

I felt dizzy. Will I be okay with this situation?

Will I be able to live with Shigure as her brother?

I thought I was finally getting used to living with Shigure, who looks exactly like Haruka.

A dark cloud that was darker than the sky had begun to loom over their lives.

But... they didn't know at the time.

—That this dark cloud was only an omen of the great storm that was about to come.

Chapter 16.1 - Sweet X Poison(PART 1)

“Um, Sato-kun. Do you remember me?

Seiun High School is located on top of the highest hill in the city.

Behind the school building, I glanced at the beauty of the city through the fence.

That day, after school when the cherry blossoms were in bloom, I was called out by an unfamiliar girl from the Regular Course and asked such a question.

Panicking that an unfamiliar girl had called me out like this, I tried my best to hide my nervousness.

I was stunned by her beauty.

Her eyes were shining as if they were marbles.

Her black hair was swept by the wind.

Her slim waist and slender legs were similar to an idol.

At that moment, I realized that she was gorgeous.

I'd never known anyone like her.

If I ever did have a conversation with such a cute girl, it would be a big deal for me, the last time I had a proper conversation with a girl was back in

junior high school. I wouldn't forget it. In fact, I would have cherished that encounter.

That was why I told her I didn't know.

She lowered her eyebrows in disappointment.

"Um, Ah... You know, I'm Haruka Saikawa. We were in the same daycare in the fourth grade.

I was surprised. Saikawa. I remember that girl.

It was just after the death of my mother, and my father was busy at that time.

So I was sent to a nursery for a year in the fourth grade. [EN: nursery=daycare]

She was the only student in the same grade as me.

But what surprised me, was not that we met again after all these years, but that my impression of Saikawa had completely changed from what I remembered.

This was because the Saikawa I remembered was not a girl with such a strong personality.

It was the truth that now she had grown, but back then she was a shy girl.

"Um, and... When I was in elementary school, I had a lot going on and I was alone until I met you, Sato-kun."

Alone. It was that terrible.

She always had a sad face, a skinny body and unkempt hair. At that time just looking at her was uncomfortable.

The daycare was for younger children, and Saikawa had a hard time keeping up with the kids. They didn't want to play with Saikawa, who was

older than them.

And the reason I got involved with Saikawa so aggressively was because I felt sorry for her.

I invited her to play various games with me, brought comics from the library to read with me, and tickled her senseless.

It was fun to see her smile which was a lot better compared to her usual gloomy expressions.

I remember it well.

However, it was only for one year, and after that I left the daycare, I became so absorbed in playing around with my other friends that I just forgot about her.

It was a memory that I wouldn't have recalled unless it was mentioned to me like this.

And then...

“I remember how you helped me that time. And since then I have been in love with you.”

I was left speechless in front of her words.

“Um, are you dating someone right now or...?”

At that moment, for the first time in my life, I realized that there is someone in this world who loves me so much.

Chapter 16.2

I had a dream.

It was a memory of when Haruka confessed her feelings to me about two months ago.

It wasn't unusual for me to have this dream.

After all, it was the moment I finally got the girlfriend I've wanted since I was in junior high school.

For the first month or so, I used to think about it every day with a grin.

But, today was different. I wasn't smiling...

That's right. It was because of what happened yesterday.

I couldn't believe I kissed a girl other than my lovely girlfriend.

In fact, I felt a kind of guilt towards Haruka that made my heart ache.

But, well, it wasn't my fault.

“Yo! Good morning, Onii-san.”

Yes, it was her fault.

I turned my attention to the kitchen.

As usual, Shigure was preparing breakfast in the kitchen.

Um...

The moment I saw her, I remembered the warmth I felt yesterday on my lips.

Looking away in embarrassment, I replied.

“G-good morning...”

“How are you so late today? Yesterday you were already asleep when I got out of the bath.”

“I was tired...”

It was all because of a certain someone.

By the way, Shigure misunderstood that I was asleep.

Once I got a break, I felt awkward about seeing her again, so I decided to fall asleep. But, to be honest, I was awake till sunrise.

“So, sleepyhead. When you wake up, please pull away the futon and set the table. Breakfast is already ready.”

“Ah! O-Oh...”

At Shigure’s urging, I started to move.

I folded up the futon and brought out the table. Then I helped her to bring the breakfast that she’d just prepared and joined her for the meal.

“Itadakimasu”

“Itadakimasu...”

Today’s menu consisted of crispy buttered toast, a half-boiled fried egg, sausages, and a well balanced salad, served with corn soup and coffee.

The corn soup might have been leftover instant soup, but with the added touch of coffee and parsley, it looked like a hotel morning plate.

It looked delicious.

I enjoyed the meal as if everything was normal, but I wondered if she made this meal for me out of love...

Now that I knew of Shigure's feelings, I naturally became more conscious of her presence.

And the more I became aware of it, the more I couldn't look at her face.

I mean, I hadn't looked her in the eyes since I woke up this morning.

This naturally leads to a lack of conversation.

The Sato family's table was enveloped in heavy silence.

It was... awkward.

"I— I'll just watch the news."

Unable to bear the silence, I turned on the TV for some sound.

I wasn't interested in what was going on in the world, but if it can distract me from Shigure, I'm all for it.

"And now for the next news. A weekly magazine reported that actor Shinichi Kataoka was having an affair with a married woman. Mr. Kataoka admitted that "the content of the report is true" and explained that "I am repenting."

"Heh, Haha,ahaha!"

I screamed internally that I had stepped on a terrible landmine. Shigure however shook her shoulders and began to laugh, as if she couldn't hold it in any longer.

"What's wrong? I can see that you're frightened. Maybe Onii-san, you... you're too conscious of me. Suspicious!"

“Guh, I-I can’t help it. It’s because of what you did yesterday...”

“Let me tell you, that I’ll no longer force you like yesterday.”

But that didn’t change the fact that it was hard for me to relax in front of a girl who loves me so badly.

“Hey. Why don’t you think it over?”

“By this do you mean, my love for you?”

“Yeah. I still haven’t told Haruka that we’re living together.”

The fact that her twin sister is living with her boyfriend after their parents remarried.

Of course, this was the result of our parents’ remarriage, an event that was beyond the control of us children, so there was nothing to be ashamed of.

I am sure that Haruka would understand. But being able to understand and being fine with it are two completely different things.

That was why the both of us agreed that we’d wait until a year after our parents’ return to confide in Haruka, in order to minimize the shock she’d have to bear if I told her about this relationship.

For Haruka’s sake...

... But,

If Shigure has feelings for me, then the meaning of this secret had changed.

“Isn’t this a betrayal?”

“... That’s right. It is indeed betrayal. But it is only me who is the traitor. You outright rejected me Onii-san, so it’s not something you should worry about.”

“B-but you know...”

“... Well, even if I can’t forget my feelings for Onii-san, I won’t be disheartened.”

“R-really? And how are you supposed to do that?”

“If I beat you every morning until your face starts to change shape, maybe it will diminish.”

“As if I’d allow that! You definitely know you can’t do that!”

“We both know that we’re the same, forcing each other to do what we can’t.”

Shigure puffs her cheeks and reveals her dissatisfaction.

I couldn’t talk to girls of my own age until just two months ago, but now I’m loved by both of the pretty twin sisters.

I still couldn’t believe it.

Is this what it means to be popular?

I let out a sigh.

I didn’t know what she liked about me in the first place.

“Um... what do you like about me?”

“You wanna know?”

“Yes. Do you remember what you said the other day? That you wanted a 180 cm tall, handsome, rich guy for a boyfriend.”

“Yup, I did.”

“But, I’m not even 170 cm tall.”

“That’s right. You’re not that tall for your age.”

“And, I’m skinny”

“That’s true, Onii-san. You’re a bit short. You look unreliable. Why don’t you do some muscle training?”

“And, my looks aren’t that good.”

“I think you have good looks, but slightly dull. It lacks perfection. And you’re not really that handsome.”

“And I have no money.”

“Hahaha. I think you’d take me to a ramen shop on a date.”

Hmm?

Maybe she doesn’t really like me, right?

“But I like all of you.”

“Don’t lie to me.”

“I’m not.”

Shigure straightened up and looked in my eyes.

The way she looked at me made me gasp.

Her eyes were filled with the same affection as yesterday, as if I would drown if I kept looking at them.

And then...

“I love your cute face because I can read your thoughts by simply looking at your face.

I love that you’re not so tall, because I can see you up close.

I love that even if you're not that strong, you always pick up the heaviest load first.

I love the fact how you don't stick out like a sore thumb. Being aware of your limits by all means is a great thing, and yet, you still honestly try your best with all your might."

"Eh... that's"

"I also love it when you like my cooking. I felt really happy when you said, 'Thank you for the food.'

I love the way you work hard at your studies. It's nice to be a serious person who can think about the future.

I love the fact that even if I'm mean to you, you notice my good intentions. It makes me happy that you think about me a lot. And there's more..."

"No, no, that's enough!"

What an embarrassing thing to say with such a straight face.

... Shoot! Ahh~ this is dangerous.

My face is about to burst out of embarrassment.

I covered my face with my hands without thinking.

Uwaa, my face is heated up...

"You are a much more attractive man than you think. Both of us sisters can guarantee you that."

"u~~~~"

Shigure said that with an innocent smile.

But it was only for a moment, and right after that she grinned.





“Oh, look at the TV, Morning horoscope. It says that your sign may develop a close relationship with the one you love. Does this mean you miss my lips?”

“No, you idiot! No, of course not!”

I denied with all my might, but my face remained hot.

Shigure’s change in expressions caused my heart to throb the whole morning.

Chapter 16.3 - Sweet X Poison

No matter if I was at home or at school, my mind was filled with thoughts of Shigure the entire time.

The fact that we're brother and sister wasn't just hidden from Haruka, but also from our classmates.

It was an agreement between Shigure, who didn't want to be misunderstood by my classmates, and me, who wanted to choose the right time to tell Haruka.

That's why we rarely interacted at school.

But, because of the events that happened yesterday, I was worried over what might happen in the future.

As she said, "I won't force you," she was surely keeping some distance between us as usual. More like a classmate and less like a friend.

However, no matter how much Shigure behaved normally, I couldn't do the same.

I kept glancing at her at every moment and got nervous when I heard her voice.

When she was chatting with her friends with a cool look that didn't really suit her, I wondered if Shigure showing her true self to me was a way for her to express her affection.

Or... Am I the one who has a crush on her? Because I was aware of her feelings for me in everything she said and did.

I felt apologetic for Haruka.

Thinking from the other way around, this girl, she really likes me, right?
But there's no way I could betray Haruka because of this.

... I felt my stomach wince just by imagining this.

I knew why I was this confused.

It was because of that *kiss*.

The poison from that *kiss* is still lingering in my body, consuming me.

I need to get rid of this poison as soon as possible.

The way to do that is simple.

I need to kiss Haruka.

If I *kiss* her again, then she might be able to erase the feelings of Shigure from my lips.

I'm sure I'd return to my old self.

Before what happened yesterday, my mind was preoccupied with the thoughts of Haruka.

After deciding this, I hid from the teacher's sight and asked her out to dinner.

Right after my text, Haruka replied, "I may be late because of the club, but if you'll wait for me," to which I replied *YES* without hesitation.

Chapter 17.1 - 8PM X Etiquette

Whenever Haruka says she's going to be late because of her club, it usually lasts until 8:00 PM, which was the closing time of the school.

So I killed some time in the library by doing some homework and self-study until 6:00 PM. Then I went to a nearby game centre with Takeshi, who'd just returned from his club.

Then, shortly before the closing time, I headed for the drama club where Haruka belonged.

The drama club is located in a prefab hut by the gym.[EN: prefab hut = a cabin style structure]

The club members always change into their clothes there and practice on the gym's stage.

Today, the volleyball and basketball teams left early, but they were still practicing for the play.

All the members of the club, including Haruka, were sweating so much that they looked as if they had been splashed with a water *bucket*.

I wondered if this drama club was far from being a cultural club and closer to a sports club.

“Oh, Boyfriend-kun. Long time no see.”

“Good evening, team leader.”

“Waiting for Haruka? We’re sorry for interrupting the *lovers’ after-five*. “[EN: alone time for the lovers after 5:00 pm]

A third-year senior casually told me. She's a beautiful girl with big round eyes which seems tired, a little taller than me, with waist-length wavy black hair.

She was the head of the drama club, still in her outfit.

I've visited the drama club several times for Haruka's sake, so many of the members here know about my relationship with Haruka.

"Haruka, she has been performing really well lately."

"I heard. She said she got promoted to a well-flavored *daikon*."

[TN: Daikon: Bad Actor]

"Hahaha. That's right. When she was a freshman, she felt like a boring girl who had a good face but couldn't perform good on stage. You know, she's not a very good liar. That's why anyone can see from the side that she's acting."

I agree.

Unlike Shigure, Haruka's face shows what she's thinking.

Actors are supposed to lie with their whole body, so maybe Haruka isn't the best fit for this job.

"But lately, her acting has become much more realistic. She's still not very good at it, but

I can feel her passion now. I guess you could say that her personality, which was covered up by her weak skills, had come out. If Haruka can give such an interesting performance, I might be able to write a movie where she'll play the lead."

"Eh? Are you serious?"

"Super Serious. Seeing Haruka these days really fires up my creativity. Oh, with this cute little maiden in love I wonder... I'd love to see what kind of

tragedy.”

“Eeh... Really...”

“It’s all thanks to you, Boyfriend-kun, for teaching Haruka about men! Thank you!”

What’re you saying!

“I never taught her anything like that!”

“Ah, is that so? Well excuse me, but she’s supposed to play the role of a *circle-girl* during the summer break. So make sure you have s*x by then.”

[TN: Gyaru]

“I won’t.”

“It would’ve been a lot easier if I had a d*ck.”

“I won’t let you!”

Needless to say, I’m not good with girls like her.

I don’t know how to react when girls talk in this unusual humor like Shigure does...

It’s really embarrassing when the girls are too beautiful.

“Ah! Hiromichi-kun!”

As I was feeling troubled, Haruka found me.

As soon as she saw me, she rushed to my side, ruffling her messy hair even more.

“I’m sorry, you had to wait for me! I had a long practice.”

“It’s okay. It was fun to see you working so hard. Here’s something for you.”

“Hehe. Thank you.”

On my way back from the Game Centre, I picked up a sports drink from the convenience store. Haruka giggled when she saw the sports drink.

Unlike Shigure’s bewitching smile that makes me nervous. Haruka’s smile is kinda heartwarming whenever I look at her.

Her sweet innocent smile, I want to cherish it forever.

If it wasn’t in public, I’d have hugged her.

“Emooooooooii”

[エモい]

“Kyaa!? L-leader?”

When I was thinking about this, her team leader, who was groggy just a moment ago, opened her arms and hugged Haruka while sniffling.

What’s wrong with this woman?

“I like the look on her face! It’s so emoii! I want more of that! Let’s do one more rehearsal before we forget that expression! Everyone get ready!”

“What? It’s almost eight o’clock.”

“Leader went crazy again...”

“The teacher will get mad at you!”

“I’ll get down on my knees naked and ask for forgiveness, it’s no problem!”

“No, that’s a problem.”

“Hey, drama club! How long are you going to stay in school? Get out of here!”

“Look! The teachers are here. They won’t listen to you.”

“Well then, I’ll handle them!”

“KYAAA!”

“Everyone, stop the team leader!”

Without hesitation, their leader begins to take off her shirt.

The teacher’s eyes peeled back in disbelief, and the club members rushed to restrain her.

In the end, that day’s club activity was cancelled after the half-naked leader was taken to the staff room.

Chapter 17.2 - 8PM X Etiquette

Although it was almost midsummer, by the time we left the school, the sun had already set.

The two of us walked side by side along the road, lit only by streetlights.

Haruka apologized for the earlier commotion.

“I’m sorry, Hiromichi-kun. Our leader is a little weird.”

... A little?

“Well, I’ve seen her many times, so I’ve gotten used to her.”

“I follow her as a fellow member, but even though she’s like that, she has a wonderful personality.”

“I know. She’s very well known.”

She’s kinda strange, not only is she the top student in the third year of a special course, but she’s also a pretty famous writer who made her debut two years ago by winning a famous prize with her work.

I suppose she’s in a league of her own.

As we were walking down the streets while chatting, a bike passed by in front of us.

I pulled Haruka by hand to avoid clashing with it.

At that moment, I realized that I was holding her hand as if it was natural.

“...Hihi. Thank you. Holding hands like this reminds me of our date yesterday.”

“O-oh...”

“I had a great time on our date. I was so nervous after we got home that I couldn’t sleep at all. So I’m a little drowsy.”

“Me too... I was up all night till the morning.”

Oh God. I felt like vomiting from the guilt.

Because, while Haruka was thrilled by our kiss, I kissed Shigure, and that was the reason why I couldn’t sleep last night.

Ever since then, I’ve been thinking about Shigure for the whole day.

But that was as far as it goes.

I’ve made up my mind.

Certainly, my pace had slowed down, but to get my mind on the right track I have to kiss Haruka.

And the main problem was, how to kiss her?

That’s right. The topic of yesterday’s date just came up, so should I just continue from that?

“And, you know. Today we asked the weightlifting team to help us carry out the props during lunchtime, but Takeshi-kun started doing dumbbell exercises with an amplifier, and the leader got angry.”

No, no...

While I was busy thinking about it, the subject already changed from yesterday’s date to muscles. Oh my god.

Considering I had no mastery over ‘the art of storytelling’, I couldn’t lead the conversation to the kiss.

“As soon as he grabs something with a reasonable weight, he’ll start muscle training.”

“He’s so stoic.”

“I guess that’s what they call a junkie.”

I was looking for an opportunity that may lead to a kiss, but I couldn’t dodge the topic.

How about a kiss by surprise?

In the middle of this conversation, if I grabbed her shoulders, pulled her close to my chest and followed up with a passionate kiss.

‘Don’t talk about other guys in front of me’.

...Ah! Um... Yes... As if I can do that... It's all c**p!

I felt itchy throughout my whole body...

Only the good looking guys like Tomoe are allowed to do these kinds of things. Mind your own business, Hiromichi Sato.

I thought of it in a more practical way.

I guess I don’t know how we ended up kissing yesterday in the first place.

I fumbled through my memory.

As I recalled, Our date was... pretty awkward.

We were both too conscious, and it was kind of clumsy.

But when we were about to part in front of the station....disappointment filled my mind, and I thought to myself, “This isn’t right.”

...I grabbed Haruka's hand.

And then I said. "I don't want to leave you."

And then Haruka said, "I don't want to go home either."

Then naturally our lips... overlapped.

I was really impressed by what I did yesterday.

I never understood where I got the nerves to do that.

But for sure, I could do the same things that I did yesterday.

Also, I remembered something useful.

"That's right. Hiromichi-kun you wanted to have dinner with me, have you decided where to go?"

"N-no, I want you to choose..."

"Then, there's a place I really want to go now! Can we go there?"

"Of course. Anywhere you want to go."

"Yay!"

Useful Advice. Whenever you're about to say goodbye, the opportunity will arise. This longing strengthens your love because you may not be able to see them again.

In the first place, asking for a kiss right after meeting someone is way too risky.

Don't be greedy.

If you desire it as much as your partner then there's no point thinking too much about it.

I chide myself for being in such a hurry to kiss Haruka.

Don't worry.

Today's horoscope said, that I might be able to develop a close relationship with the opposite s*x.

Believe, and take your time.

You can do this, again.

That was the vibe I wanted to feel before saying goodbye.

It would work for sure.

“So, where is this place you want to go, Haruka?”

Chapter 17.3

“Waa~ that Extra Large Vegetarian Garlic Ramen was delicious!”

“... That’s right.”

I had lost my hope in TV horoscopes!

After we left the restaurant, the two of us walked side by side on the station platform and I was screaming inside.

...Well, it was our usual chatter.

The restaurant Haruka requested was a ramen shop in front of the station.

...To be honest, I didn’t want to eat ramen today. The store was recently opened, and we used to talk about it every time we passed by, but I couldn’t say no to Haruka because I told her it was fine wherever she wanted to go.

And of course, I couldn’t kiss her after eating such food. It’s bad manners.

In other words, the plan I had was ruined.

Sigh

“... Haruka, you like ramen, right?”

“Un. I love it. It’s because after the club, I need to replenish my energy. So sometimes I just want to eat ramen like today. It felt like my body was screaming for water, salt, and oil.”

“That’s true, since you practice a lot.”

“Don’t you like ramen too, Hiromichi-kun? We eat it a lot on our dates.”

“Well, ramen is the only food that a student’s wallet can afford, and you like it. But now that I think about it, I don’t think that many girls like ramen, so I think it’s rather unusual.”

“Eh?”

Haruka’s eyes widened in confusion at my words.

“It’s not like that. All girls like ramen. Like, all the girls in my drama club love to eat ramen.”

“Really? That’s surprising. I was under the impression that they didn’t like the fat and smell of garlic.”

“Oh, I know that there are many girls who ask for it without garlic. Such a waste. Ramen is definitely better with garlic. Oh... Maybe you don’t like girls who put garlic in their ramen.”

At that moment, Haruka’s face turned pale.

Not good.

I said something stupid just because my plan was ruined.

The reason why I wanted to kiss Haruka was because of my weak heart, which was shaken by Shigure.

It wasn’t Haruka’s fault, but I made her feel like this. What have I done?

I immediately denied Haruka’s concern.

“No, no! That’s not true at all! I mean, we ate together, so I wouldn’t be able to smell anything. Don’t worry about it, just eat what you want. By the way, you looked so hot while eating ramen.”

“Waa~ T-that’s a surprise.”

Eh, oh...

Uwaaaaaaa! I was in a hurry so I said too much.

The word “hot” just came out so naturally. But it’s a terrible word I wouldn’t usually say.

“S-sorry.”

Haruka blushed in embarrassment. I, too, was embarrassed, so I apologized.

“Um...”

Then, Haruka gave me a sulky look and said,

“No, sorry. Actually, I want you to praise me more.”

Aa, ack, Wha... (Loss of words)

I can’t believe how cute my girlfriend is.

I’ll praise her as much as she wants.

But just as I was about to speak, an announcement came that the train was arriving.

Train, at least read the mood!

In the end, we parted without anything special happening.

“Sorry... I guess we have to say goodbye.”

“... O-oh. See you tomorrow at school.”

I waved to Haruka as she boarded the train, feeling empty inside.

But then Haruka turned around and said,

“I like dates like yesterday because you made me feel so special. But, you know, Hiromichi-kun. I also like these kinds of dates where we can eat and enjoy ourselves after school! So please make sure to ask me out again!”

“A-ah... Of course.”

When I replied, Haruka giggled.

She looked really happy.

As the door closed, Haruka disappeared from view.

I watched her from the platform until I couldn’t see the train anymore.

“Hm~~~”

I am... ashamed.

Because while Haruka was enjoying today’s dinner date, I couldn’t believe I was feeling empty and unsatisfied.

A while ago, we were both embarrassed just from holding hands.

Am I the only one who was getting bolder, In a bad way?

There was no doubt that I enjoyed my time with Haruka.

All this mishap happened, because of Shigure’s passionate, dangerous, yet painful kiss, filled some desires into me.

This is bad, really bad. This needs to stop.

It wasn’t like I’m uncomfortable, or that I’m thinking too much about Shigure or feeling bad for Haruka.

But, Shigure’s love was changing my sense of value.

It was destroying who I am.

This poison, it's too lethal.

If I take any more of it, it could be irreversible.

I have to do something, anything,..!

Chapter 17.4

Shigure and I live in a two-story wooden apartment which has a Showa-era vibe, and somehow it has survived through the Heisei era.

I climbed up the creaking stairs and took a deep breath before opening the door...

It was dangerous to be exposed to Shigure's affection anymore.

She was changing my heart..

There was only one thing I could do to prevent that from happening.

That was, "Shigure should hate me."

This morning, she said she couldn't forget her love for me, but she could cool it down. This method of mine will probably provoke a fight, but even though being physical would cross the line, using words should be fine.

If you're disappointed by someone you love then your love will cool down.

In other words.

... I'm going to be a bad big brother!

"Ayy!! I'm home, Hey!"

I slammed the door open as hard as I could and stomped my foot as I went inside.

"Wo-wo-wo. Hey! Your brother has returned and you didn't even welcome him. Ayy! I hope you've heated the bath water."

I'm not sure if I'm doing it right, but it feels off.

Wasn't it more like a drunk husband than a violent brother?

But as I had never experienced anything like that, this was the limit of my imagination.

I knew that it'll be a nuisance to our neighbours, but I had to do it.

“Wo-wo-wo! Can’t you hear me? Ayy! I know you’re inside, Shigure!!”

“... But, there was no response.”

She’s not here?

No, that’s not it. Shigure never leaves the house unlocked.

Then she must be listening to music in her room?

“If you don’t answer me, there’ll be no pudding for you! Well then these two are mine now! Don’t expect me to give them to you later!”

While shaking the polybag containing the 3 packs of puddings that I went through the trouble of buying just to say this, I barged into the living room.

And then I saw...

On the wooden floor of the kitchen, which was connected to the living room...

I saw... Shigure lying on the floor, unconscious.

“S-SHIGURE...!?!?”

Chapter 18.1 - Cold X Sister

“38.5°C... It’s pretty high.”

The following morning, her body temperature was very high when I checked.

Shigure had caught a cold.

I heard that, yesterday, around noon, she was feeling a little sluggish, and when she returned home in the evening, she had high fever.

While lying down on the futon in her room, Shigure let out a sigh.

“This... It’s a curse that it rained last weekend.”

“I can’t blame you for not taking an umbrella, since it was sunny during the day, but couldn’t you have bought one somewhere?”

“I wonder why I didn’t?”

“What’s with the vague reply?”

“No, I mean, I don’t remember what happened.”

What she said doesn’t fit her brilliant student character.

“By the way, I forgot to ask, but what were you doing out at the station this weekend? And you even picked up the clothes you don’t normally wear.”

“... Hmm. It’s a secret.”

“Now you’re acting like a stranger?”

“I’m not in the mood to talk about it now. Girls have lots of secrets, you know. Cough.”

Due to her cold, she got a sore throat and seemed to be in pain.

... I was a little curious as to why she was dressed up like she was on a date. But I shouldn’t let her talk too much.

I won’t pursue it any further.

“Um... Onii-san, I’ll take a day off. Can you tell the teacher about it?”

“Oh, alright.”

“Also, Onii-san, your lunch is in the fridge.”

“Don’t worry and go back to sleep. I have to replace your ice bag.”

“Ok...”

I patted her forehead, and told her to stop worrying..

She nodded, closed her eyes, and fell asleep immediately.

Grabbing the ice bag that melted overnight, I left her room and headed for the kitchen.

I washed the rubber ice bag with water and put it in the freezer.

It should be ready to use again by noon.

Then I opened the refrigerator.

Inside was a *Ziplock* full of *Pickled Salmon*.

She must have prepared it last night.

“... If you returned early you should’ve just rested, you idiot.”

I sighed in disbelief.

How can anyone be so willing to put in that much effort for someone else?

When I was on my own, I couldn't even bake a piece of bread in the morning, even for myself.

I wondered if it was because she loves me.

“... Geez.”

I let out a big sigh and made a phone call to school.

Chapter 18.2 - Cold X Sister

Shigure said she had no appetite, but if she didn't eat, she wouldn't be able to recover.

So I decided to make porridge for her.

I grabbed my phone and searched for some easy porridge recipes.

I looked for the ingredients available in the refrigerator that was listed in the topmost recipe that came up.

I had ginger, some eggs. But no rice, green onions, and pickled plums.

No, wait.

When I was putting the ice bag in the freezer earlier, I saw something.

“Oh, there it is!”

As I opened the freezer, I found a ziplock full of chopped vegetables including green peppers, carrots, mushrooms, and onions.

And on the side was a handful of frozen rice packed in a plastic wrap.

I see.

If we stock up ingredients like this in our free time, we can prepare a full menu even in the busy morning hours.

While admiring Shigure's efforts, I borrowed some green onions and rice from the reserve. Too bad there were no dried plums, though I guess it couldn't be helped.

I decided to prepare egg porridge following the instructions in the recipe.

All I have to do is put everything in a pot, mix well and then boil. I should be able to do it, even though I have zero cooking skills.

... I messed up a little while cracking the eggs, but I would use beaten eggs anyway, so it wasn't a big deal.

After it was cooked, I added some green onions in the end... And done.

The aroma of ginger stimulated my appetite, and the porridge looked pretty good.

Let's have a taste.

... Umm. Well, it wasn't that good.

It tastes bland.

But I guess that's how porridge is supposed to taste like.

It wasn't the same as the porridge with plenty of soup that you get after a hot pot.

... I was sure the lack of pickled plums had something to do with it.

Should I add more soy sauce? Maybe not.

“Come to think of it, I can use that.”

I took a few things from the fridge, chopped them up and put them on the porridge.

“Hmm...!”

It was delicious!

Whoa! Am I actually a great cook?

This way, I could feed it to Shigure with pride.

I poured some porridge into a bowl and brought it to Shigure with some random toppings.

“... Huh? Onii-san?”

“Oh. You’re awake. The porridge is ready.”

When I went inside her room, the floor creaked and she woke up.

She meekly looked at me, glanced at her watch, and asked.

“... Why didn’t you go to school?”

“I told the teacher, so don’t worry. And I also took a day off to take care of you.”

“You’re exaggerating over a mere cold. They’ll think you’re lying.”

“I’m usually very serious, and the teacher knows that we’re living alone, so they won’t think so. Besides, even if it’s just a cold, you’d want someone to be there for you when you’re sick.”

I knew, because my father was busy with his job for a long time, and when I was sick, it was pretty lonely to be home alone. Though if I had enough energy to play games, it would be a different story.

“... That’s right. It’s hard to be alone when you’re sick...”

Shigure was also the same as me, a single parent with no siblings.

Guess we had something in common.

She muttered to herself and her cheeks twitched with a bit of happiness.

I sat down next to her and offered the bowl of porridge.

“Here. Can you eat it?”

“That’s my Line.”

“... What do you mean?”

“Ehehe... It’s a Joke.”

Itadakimasu!

After uttering some words of courtesy, Shigure took a spoonful of the steamy porridge.

She blew on it to cool down the heat.

“Fu~ fu~... cough.”

But she coughed mid-way.

No. She won’t be able to eat like this.

I took the bowl and spoon from her hand, and blew on it to cool it down, then offered it to her.

“Here. Open your mouth...”

“... You’re too kind.”

Well, I was overreacting a bit, but I was skipping school to take care of her. So, I should at least do this.





Shigure giggled and opened her mouth...

“Aa...!”

At that moment, my face heated up as if it was on fire.

Her cherry-red lips were opened to welcome the porridge.

Her bright red tongue was wriggling behind it, something I rarely see.

Her mouth wet with saliva, reminded me of that night.

Wait...! You fool! What are you thinking when there's a sick person in front of you!

I squeezed my eyes shut to get rid of the evil thoughts.

While trying to remain calm, I delivered the spoonful of porridge into her mouth.

“... Yummy.”

“T-that's good to hear.”

“Shibazuke stimulates the appetite. It's easier to eat.”

[TN: pickles]

“There weren't any plums pickles, so I put them in instead. It's hard to eat a patient's meal if it doesn't have much flavor.”

“Was it your idea, Onii-san? I'll try it. And I'll make sure to copy it next time.”

The chopped shibazuke that I added as an ad-lib in the end was well received by Shigure.

It was nice to be complimented by Shigure who is a good cook, but I didn't have much time to be happy.

To be honest, I was struggling to keep my facial muscles from twitching at the memory of the event that happened last weekend.

I was hoping that she could hurry up, but I shouldn't rush a sick person.

She took her time to finish the small bowl of porridge.

“Thank you for the food. It was delicious.”

“I’m glad you like it.”

I was against an unexpected trial, but somehow I made it through.

I wondered how I survived.

It was hard to put into words, but I felt like I managed somehow.

I let out a big sigh and asked while cleaning the dishes,

“Is there anything else you want me to do for you? Laundry, cleaning, whatever you want.”

“... Now that I think about it. It’s... already clean. I want to sleep, so there’s no need to do laundry for today.”

Shigure was deep in thought.

Well, if there was nothing to do, guess I should just study in my room.

As I was about to leave, Shigure came up with something...

“Ah... can I ask for a favor?”

“Oh, what is it?”

“I didn’t take a bath yesterday, now I’m sweaty after eating porridge and it feels uncomfortable, so I’d like to change my pajamas.”

I see. Well, that’s certainly uncomfortable.

It was summer, and there was no air conditioner in this house.

“I guess you need some change of clothes. Leave it to me.”

“No, not that either. Would you mind wiping my back with a towel?”

“Eh...”

... Oh, I get it.

It's true that even if you change your clothes, you can't get rid of the discomfort without wiping your body.

Even I can't do it by myself, especially in the middle of the back.

"I understand. Wait for a minute while I bring the towel."

The phrase 'Wiping a girl's body' was quite thrilling, but still, it was just her back in the end. I wouldn't be seeing her b*****s, bu**ocks, thighs, or even her face from her back, and frankly speaking, there was no gender difference.

Even I, who was a virgin, wasn't conscious of it.

"Then, would you please."

Such a foolish miscalculation... The moment I saw Shigure sitting with her arms covering her front, and her back right in front of me, my mind blew up.

Chapter 18.3 - Cold X Sister

“I understand. Wait for a minute while I bring the towel.”

The phrase ‘*Wiping a girl’s body*‘ was quite thrilling, but still, it was just her back in the end. I wouldn’t be seeing her b*****s, bu**ocks, thighs, or even her face from her back, and frankly speaking, there was no gender difference.

Even I, who was a virgin, wasn’t conscious of it.

“Then, would you please.”

Such a foolish miscalculation… The moment I saw Shigure sitting with her arms covering her front, and her back right in front of me, my mind blew up.

At that time, my face became hot as if it was on fire.

… Hey, hey. What’s this?

That smooth white skin with a slight tinge of red.

Those feeble slim shoulders.

The nape is so delicate and slender that it’d fit in one hand.

… It was completely different from a man’s.

I wasn’t seeing her b*****s, bu**ocks, thighs, or even her face.

But… it was definitely “girlish”!

“... aa...”

I felt like I was looking at something that shouldn't be seen.

But I was drawn to it as if I was thirsty.

I'm used to seeing women's backs in shampoo commercials. But I had never felt anything like this before.

Amazing, she's so beautiful...

My blood was rushing and my heart was beating so hard it hurts.

I didn't expect that a girl's back could be so lethal!

Should I touch her... back?

“Achoo...”

At that time Shigure sneezed a little.

I shouldn't keep her half-naked forever.

I squeezed my eyes, like when I was feeding her and made up my mind.

I touched her back, but only with a towel.

It wasn't a direct touch.

So I couldn't feel her. Meaning that there would be nothing to worry about.

I'll just wipe her back and get her dressed.

“Nh... ahn...”

But when I placed the towel right on the middle of her back and rubbed vertically, her body wobbled with my movements, and she let out a moan.

I believe it was because she had gotten weak from the cold.

I should support her body properly.

I shouldn't touch, but... supporting means touching her shoulder with my hand.

Feeling her bare, white, and slim shoulder with my, a man's hand...

I suppose it's a crime?

I had no other choice but to do so.

If I don't then it'll put a lot of strain on her already weakened body.

I gently grabbed her shoulder with as little force as possible.

“Nh~~~~~!”

Her shoulder was so small that it fits well in the palm of my hand, and compared to a man's, it looked like a toy. I felt the moistness and warmth of her body in my palm.

The scent that I smelt from her body was very sweet... Not sweet like the scent of flowers but similar. Guess I had no better words to describe it.

Her scent was different from Haruka's that I smelt when I met with her after her club. But it was somewhat attractive and stimulating which appealed to my instincts.

The scent entered my nostrils and made me feel dizzy.

It all happened with just her scent.

Right now... if I sniff her white nape and inhale her scent as much as I can... I wonder what will happen.

What would happen to... me?

“Onii-san.”

Just then, Shigure called out to me without turning her head.

I was so surprised that my heart almost leaped out of my mouth, but I managed to hold it back and respond,

“Wha-What is it?”

“Onii-san, you’re really stupid, aren’t you?”

“... Why this sudden change in attitude?”

“I knew. I knew, if I do this you’ll be nervous. But still, you’ll try your best to take care of me, just like any brother would do. I was taking advantage of that this whole time while hoping that you could become aware of me.”

“.....”

“If you continue to be kind towards a girl like me, I’ll fall in love with you even more.”

‘*Do you understand?*’ She looked at me as if to say this.

... Well, I’m definitely an idiot. I guessed so.

In fact, yesterday, I was wondering if you could hate me.

But those thoughts were blown away the moment I saw her unconscious.

I wasn’t forcing myself to take care of her.

I care for her. I really do.

Because Shigure cares for me, and so do I.

Of course, I don’t like it when she tries to step out of the siblings’ boundary, but that doesn’t mean you should hurt them by saying things you don’t mean, or by keeping them away from you. If you do then you won’t just be stupid but a scum too.

If I had to choose between being an idiot or a scum, then I'd gladly accept being an idiot.

So I told her.

“Don’t get carried away.”

“.....”

“You indeed make me nervous sometimes, but that’s because you’re Haruka’s twin sister.

Of course, I’d be embarrassed to be kissed by a girl who looks exactly like Haruka. But that just means I’m looking at Haruka through you, and it doesn’t mean that I have no feelings for you, Shigure.

The one I love the most is Haruka. My feelings won’t waver and it’ll never change.

That’s why it doesn’t matter what you think of me.

I’m just... a brother who cares for his only sister.”

After that, I put the towel on her head and pushed it a little so it wouldn’t drop.

“Here. Now that your back is over, wipe the rest yourself and get dressed. I’ll be studying in the living room, so if you need anything, call me right away.”

“... Okay. Thank you for taking good care of me.”

“That’s... it’s mutual.”

If Shigure wasn’t a cute little sister, I wouldn’t have done this either.

With that, I left her room and closed the sliding door so that she could change her clothes.

Chapter 18.4 - Cold X Sister

But you have to admit that you know how to show off, right? Hiromichi Sato!

I scoffed to myself as I left her room.

You were excited like a monkey at the sight of her beautiful back, but then how could you come up with such a cool line?

Such an inappropriate way to show off, and you had no intention to back down either.

But there was no lie in what I said.

I got nervous because sometimes I see Haruka in Shigure.

There wasn't any doubt in my mind that I like Haruka more than Shigure.

In fact, when Shigure confessed her love to me, I was able to say that I liked Haruka more.

I'm confident that my feelings will always be for Haruka.

So... it doesn't matter what Shigure thinks of me.

But... it was just, well...

“The thing is, I'd like to kiss her again...”

I want to remember.

I want the feel of that kiss.

I want to feel her lips, the girl I love the most, the girl I cherish the most.

I couldn't hold back these desires.

But... Unlike me, who was forced to kiss because of Shigure, I don't want to burden Haruka's platonic feelings.

I want something... something that will make Haruka feel that way too.

As I was lost in thoughts, I heard the doorbell from the front door.

We didn't have an intercom, so I looked through the peephole to see who it was.

“Who is it?”

“This is Satake Transport. We're here to deliver a package from America.”

“Whaa? America?”

Why did it come from... so far away? Is it from dad?

By the way, he mailed last week saying a package was on the way here and I should shove it in the closet.

I grabbed my personal seal from the casket which was placed on top of the shoe rack and went outside.

Then I picked up the delivered items.

The package consisted of two large cardboard boxes and a large vinyl bag.

It was quite a large package. All of them were covered in dust, and Shigure would be furious if I threw them in the closet right away.

Let's see what's inside...

“This is...!”

My eyes widened as I looked inside.

The moment I saw what was inside the cardboard, a vision popped into my mind.

It was a romantic vision of me and Haruka kissing on the beach at night with the stars shining in the sky.

I thought, “This could be useful!”

After all, the timing is perfect.

If I can get through the final exams, which will start in a few weeks, then I’ll have my long-awaited summer vacation.

But there’s a problem, I can’t use it on my own.

I need an “adult” to help me.

And there was only one person in my mind who could possibly be the best for it.

I immediately grabbed my smartphone and texted my friend, Tomoe Wakabayashi.

Chapter 19.1 - Cheerful X MTG

It was the middle of July, the depressing final exams were over and the summer vacation was just around the corner.

That night, after dinner, I refused Shigure's request to watch some TV drama, and formed an online team with Tomoe, Takeshi, and Haruka to play a game for the first time in a while.

“Hey Takeshi! You’re rushing in too much! Back off a bit!”

|| “I’ll use my Pablo’s Powers to pry that out! Ora-Ora-Ora-Ora-Ora
—— Ah, dead!”

“H-hold on!”

|| “At least drop something special before you die!”

With our LINE group voice chat on speaker mode, the four of us were making a lot of noise, venting the stress accumulating from the final exam.

|| “Oh, sorry! I’m dead too!”

“Don’t mind, Haruka.”

|| “Well, it can’t be helped if you’re at a disadvantage.”

|| “Wait... Why are you guys treating me unfairly?”

“There’s no way we can treat you the same as Haruka. It’s your fault.”

|| “That’s right.”

By the way, we were playing Turf War in “Splatoon 2”.

It's a multiplayer game where cute comic characters shoot at each other in stages with various rules. But the characters shoot ink, not bullets, so it's a fun game that kids can enjoy.

(If they aren't addicted, that is.)

|| “I can't help it. Even though I'm a X-ranked player, it's hard for me to battle four players at once... Oh, I can't beat Jeppa and Marumi! Sayonara.”

|| “What should I do? I'm going in the wrong direction.”

|| “No, it's okay Haruka-chan. It was unfortunate that Marumi killed me. There's still 3 seconds left for Hiro's special move.”

|| “...Oh. Is it Stingy Ray again, Hiromichi?”

[TN: 壱ニシ (petty, stingy, cheap shot)]

“I'm not cheating. It's a fair play.”

There are several win conditions in this game, and in this mode, all you have to do is to cover the most ground with your team's ink!

This rule has a winning strategy that can only be used at the end of the game. That is Sting Ray. This high pressure hose lets you shoot a concentrated beam of ink with infinite range and is able to shoot through walls. In addition, shooting from behind a wall shows you the Inklings behind it, making this weapon deadly, even when used behind protection.

|| “Wow~. Enemies can't avoid that.”

|| “Well I can say in this kind of play, other enemies will be out eventually.”

|| “It's evil. Truly evil. Won't the muscles in your heart cry out if you do such a despicable thing.”

“It was the right thing to do. If they had Hyper Pressure then they’d have used it on us too.”

That was a fearsome move.

It was Tomoe who taught me about this move.

... And, we enjoyed a few Turf Wars like that.

When we were satisfied with the game,

Tomoe said,

|| “By the way. It’s almost summer vacation, do you guys have any plans until the end of July?”

“Oh, since you brought it up, Tomoe, did Senior give the Okay?”

|| “Yeah, she said to bring some good meat.”

I’d take that as a Gut Punch. It meant that the prerequisite for my plan was fulfilled.

“So, what do you think? And how about you two?”

|| “I have to work part time at a drugstore, but It’ll be fine as long as I adjust my shifts.”

|| “I’m free from my club until August. So I’ll have plenty of time in July. Are you guys planning to go out somewhere?”

|| “Yes, yes. We’ve been discussing with Hiro about going camping at the beach with everyone.”

|| “Oh! Beach...”

|| “Camping? Sounds fun!”

They seem pretty excited. I’ve got a good feeling about this!

Actually, the day when Shigure was sick, my father sent me his camping gear. Dad is a Paleontologist (dinosaur scientist), he often goes camping for excavations. This time, the professor who had called him gave him some new camping gear, and he sent his old stuff here.

When I saw it, an idea came to my mind.

If I don't have an event where I can kiss, make one.

Camping at the beach during summer vacation. It'll be a special date at a different place and time than usual.

If I prepared such a romantic event, Haruka would be able to open up without any difficulty.

And with Tomoe's help, the preparations were in place.

The only question left was whether Haruka would go or not...

|| "I'm up for it, of course. There's a lot of muscle training I want to do at the beach."

|| "Okay, Labor Force acquired. What about you, Haruka?"

|| "I'm okay with it too... but it's all boys, right? I'm sure my dad won't approve of me staying with you guys, no matter how much I insist..."

"No, it's not all guys. The senior I mentioned earlier— Torako-san, who's driving us is Tomoe's girlfriend."

"Hm... I'm not sure... Even if there are other women, my dad is strict about that kind of thing..."

Ugh, Kuu, does it end like this?

Indeed, he seems like a strict father who doesn't like... these things.

But it's summer vacation...

“Onii~san!”

“Waaa!?”

|| “What is it, Hiromichi? What’s with the strange voice out of nowhere?”

“N-nothing! It’s just a big moth that came in through the window!”

|| “Oh, that’s scary. The other day, I saw a big red moth about 15 centimeters in size in my room, and it scared the c***p out of me.”

|| “That’s Atlas Moth. Your room appears to be its natural habitat.”

I put my hand over the microphone and glared at Shigure, who had somehow sneaked up behind me.

“I’m on a group chat with Haruka. What if she finds out...?”

“About that camp, tell Nee~san that I’m coming as well.”

“Ha? I was about to ask you, but why...?”

“Just say it!”

That was what Shigure suggested to me when I whispered in protest.

Oh, I see. If her sister is coming, then it’ll be easier for Haruka to join in.

|| “I’m sorry, Hiromichi-kun. Thanks for inviting me...”

“It’s okay. If your father won’t agree... Too bad, I was about to ask Shigure if you were coming.”

|| “Eh? Shigure will be there too. Then— I’ll definitely go.”

Yay, she’s more eager to go than I expected.

|| “So, can I ask her out right now?”

“Y-yeah. That’s better. Can I count on you?”

|| “Leave it to me! I’ll make sure Shigure will come! There won’t be any problems if she’s with me, Dad can’t say no either!”

Ah, I see.

Unlike in my house, Haruka and Shigure’s parents weren’t bereaved.

Which means their parents should take responsibility for separating them.

Thinking about it makes me uncomfortable as if I was taking advantage of their weakness. But I can’t back down now.

If Haruka doesn’t come, then the whole meaning of this plan will be lost.

|| “Okay, so it’s decided. I’ll create a LINE group later, so if Shigure-chan is coming, you can invite her there.”

|| “Got it!”

|| “I’m going to bed now. Staying up late is muscle’s enemy.”

|| “Me too~ see you at school.”

After that, Takeshi and Tomoe turned off their voice chat.

But Haruka and I stayed behind and chatted about camping for a while.

Chapter 19.2 - Cheerful X MTG

It would be our first trip where we will be able to spend some quality time together.

Although, there wouldn't be just two of us but the anticipation was undeniably high.

|| "Camping with everyone~ I'm looking forward to it!"

"Haruka, is there anything you specially want?"

|| "Hmmm, I think I'd like to have a barbecue for dinner! I don't mind grilled meat, but barbecue is the best! I love to eat it from the side!"

"Got it."

|| "Oh, and like that TV drama where they put roasted marshmallows in between crackers."

"S'mores? They're really sweet, are you okay with that?"

|| "Yes, I'm fine. I love sweets."

"Then I'll buy some marshmallows so we can enjoy it."

|| "Yay! Let's go!"

Even through the phone, I noticed that Haruka was more excited than usual.

We talked about nothing except food since a while ago.

She was just too cute. But,

“Foods are okay. But since we’re going on a trip... isn’t there anything else you want?”

|| “Sea... umm... then it means I need a swimsuit... huff!”

“Haruka?”

Haruka gasped and stayed silent.

When I asked her what happened, she quietly whispered...

|| “Um, you know. Hiromichi-kun..., the thing is... what kind of swimsuit do you like?”

My heart skipped a beat.

My hands began to sweat as I held my phone. *Eh? Is this real? Then if I make a request, will you wear it?*

“W-well, I think you would look good wearing anything, so you can wear whatever you want.”

“That’s a... no. Because you may get distracted by Shigure.”

She was too pure, my heart couldn’t stop pounding.

Haruka was usually very shy, but right now she was stepping up for me.

This... well... this time I should be more forthright,

“Na—”

|| “Na?”

“Navel, I like the ones that show the belly button...”

|| “N-navel. I g-got it... I’ll note it down.”

From the outside, it might look kind of a funny exchange.

Because I heard Shigure choking on her laugh behind me.

She would definitely tease me again.

But I won't bother.

Because I was too happy.

Since our chat was interrupted by this embarrassing topic we decided to call it a day.

We promised to meet again at school and hung up.

Then I turned around and looked at Shigure.

"Thank you, Shigure. Because of you Haruka said she'll come with us."

"Onii-san, I thought it would be a pity to lose the summer plans that you had prepared with all your wits and guts."

"... I'm grateful."

"So before the final exams, you planned to take Nee~san out to the beach with a barbecue and s'mores and wanted to strip her half naked. You're quite daring, Onii-san♪"

"N-no, I'm not going to strip her half naked."

"Two piece swimsuits are half naked. And we won't be just swimming there'll be camp as well. In other words, a sleepover. A man and a woman spend the night in the same tent. There's no way something won't happen..."

"It'll be separated for boys and girls!!"

What were you thinking, you idiot?

It was outrageous and my speech slurred.

My little sister is a beauty, but she's too hard to deal with because sometimes she says some weird things.

But this time, she really saved me.

If Shigure hadn't whispered to me, I wouldn't be able to go on the trip with Haruka.

But, something is off...

"... Hey. Why did you help me? I suppose you don't want me to be with Haruka?"

Shigure tilted her head in surprise.

"Eh? Why do you think so?"

"Well because... you know... you said that... you love me?"

"It's true, but I'm not trying to take away your girlfriend's spot from Nee~san."

..... Ha?

What does this mean?

Then why did she confess to me like that?

"I want to be your favourite person."

I was confused about what she meant?

I didn't understand...

"My favourite girl is Haruka because I love her the most. And the two of you are the different individuals."

"I wonder. But, rest assured. I won't get in the way of you and my sister."

She ended her words with a sad smile.

I saw a glint in her eyes, they were filled with love when she kissed me, I felt as if her tears were about to spill out.

I couldn't figure out why she was smiling.

Chapter 20.1 - Youth X Seaside

My long-awaited summer vacation has begun.

Summer means the beach.

And when it comes to the beaches in Kanagawa, Shonan is probably the first place that comes to everyone's mind.

It's a popular summer leisure spot that has been the setting for many manga and TV dramas.

*... Though, I'm basically an indoor person, so why should I bother to go out under the blazing sun at this s****y time of the year? Last summer, I was at home playing games or studying, and didn't even think of going near the beach, but not this year.*

Because I have a girlfriend this year.

There's no way I won't go to the beach in the summer when I have a girlfriend.

I can't wait to see her in the swimsuit...

I won't let the summer end without that...

Thus we came to the beachfront campground in Shonan.

As soon as we got out of the car, we were greeted by the sound of rippling waves and the scent of the ocean.

“Wow! It's so blue!”

“Whoa! It’s the sea... the sea! I haven’t been here since the second year of junior high school, Hiromichi!”

“That’s right. I remember this smell, it’s nostalgic. Even if we live in Kanagawa, I don’t come here often. Shonan is really... How about you, Haruka?”

“No, I haven’t been to the beach since the second grade. When I was in the third grade, I spent the whole summer studying for exams. Even when I was with my friends, we just went to a pool.”

“Well, I know it’s crowded with people from other prefectures at this time of year, so unless someone takes the initiative, we won’t be able to talk about going to Shonan for fun.”

“Also, the sea makes my hair rough.”

I see. So girls have these kinds of problems too.

By the way, I hate it when sand sticks to the slippers.

It’s a hellish cycle because if I wash it, more sand gets stuck from the beach.

“But, Hiromichi-san. There are many people on this beach, yet it’s not that crowded, why is that?”

“Because this place is one of the lower points and the waves are higher, so there are fewer families here.”

A blonde beauty wearing a tiger-print T-Shirt came out of the driver’s seat of the van we were in and replied to Shigure.

She was Torako Iizawa, Tomoe’s girlfriend and a college student. She was two years ahead of me, Tomoe and Takeshi when we met her in junior high.

“Senpai! Thank you for driving us here!”

“I don’t mind. It was Tomoe’s request. Also, I was interested in the rumored girlfriend that the ‘caring’ Satō was so into that he wanted me as a driver.”

With a bold grin, Torako-san put her hands on my and Haruka's shoulders, and gave us an earful.

"So? How far have you two gone? Hmm? You two did it already?"

"We haven't done anything! Not yet!"

"Hey-hey, there's no way he didn't do anything he has such a hottie as a girlfriend. Haruka-chan, right? Tell this big sister what this guy did to you?"

"E-ehh~~~"

Haruka blushed with embarrassment because of the college student who stepped into her private life without hesitation right after meeting for the first time.

... She was easy to talk to because she was kind and not that womanly, but she was usually interested in other's love life.

"Torako. Let's leave them be. Both of them are no good at that kind of flirting. We need to unload our luggage and secure a place first."

Thus Tomoe saved Haruka from that troublesome situation.

"Tch" Senpai clicked her tongue and walked away.

Thank God.

Chapter 20.2 - Youth X Seaside

After that, we (mostly Takeshi) took our luggage and camping gear out of the cabin and brought them to the free site to prepare.

We had two tents to set up.

The big tent was mine, and a small three-person tent belonged to Torako-san.

We boys put our stuff in the big one, and the girls used the small one.

Tomoe and Takeshi were the ones setting up the larger tent while I supervised them. This tent was not for leisure, but professionals use it as an “outdoor base,” so it was complicated to assemble, but I remembered the procedure because I used to assemble it every summer when my mother was still alive.

With their help, it wasn’t difficult and it took only a few minutes to set up.

“Well, it turns out to be better than expected.”

“Pegging is fast when Takeshi is around.”
(ED: (°) (°))

“It’s not pegging if he’s doing it only with his arm.”

The tent was originally designed to hold six or seven people, so it was about the size of a small room. Together with its high ceiling, it has enough space for us three men to stand up and talk.

It was quite comfortable, but perhaps a little too spacious for just the three of us.

“We should get ready. By the way, I’m wearing something underneath.”

“Same here.”

“Me too.”

We took off our clothes, saying, “Well we’re all boys.”

But then...

When Tomoe and I saw Takeshi’s appearance, our eyes were wide open with shock.

“You’re in a *bikini*, Takeshi!”

“Whoa! Look at his groin, it’s an egg shape...”

“This is the Muscles Tuxedo! There’s no better way to show off your toned body!”

“You! How can you wear that in front of girls?... That’s a bit too much.”

“Fufufu... The beach is the sole domain of muscles when it comes to swimsuits. I’m sure that many girls will fall for me. Oh, don’t worry, both of you. Even if Saikawa and Torako-senpai fall in love with me, I’ll make sure to turn them down.”

“That’s the most shameless thing you’ve ever said, you meatball.”

“Where does your excessive trust in muscles even come from?”

Indeed, Takeshi’s built-up muscles were quite a sight to behold, but it might be limiting his brain function.

“Oh. This tent is huge.”

While we were chatting, Torako-senpai pried open the entrance and walked inside.

She was in a thin black bikini.

As expected of the college girl, she looked mature. I was a little embarrassed, though I was well aware of her coarseness.

“It’s not fair that only you guys are having fun in this comfy space. Switch tents with us.”

“Don’t be absurd. Takeshi’s volume is similar to two adults.”

Torako’s tent was for three people. However, the standard tent for three people means that it would be large enough for three adults to fit tightly together.

Even though it was cooler at the beach, it was still in the middle of summer.

H**l on earth...

“I’ll take care of all your luggage, so please bear with me.”

“So, Torako. Where are the other two?”

“Yeah, they’re ready. Come on, Haruka, come inside.”

Torako-senpai moved from the entrance.

Behind her stood Haruka, wearing a printed T-shirt over her swimsuit and sunglasses large enough to cover half her face.

“I’m sorry, Hiromichi-kun... It’s really embarrassing to wear such a bikini...”

“What...?”

What the heck...

Haruka's words shocked me to the point that I stood dumbfounded.

Why? I just wanted to see her in the swimsuit...

She looks cute in that shirt though. But that wasn't what I desired.

Perhaps I shouldn't have said that I preferred the belly button.

I regretted that.

It couldn't be helped if she says so.

"D-don't worry. You don't have to force yourself if it's embarrassing. It's not like I come here for that reason. As long as we enjoy ourselves, I'll be happy."

"P-pfft—"

Huh? Why are you laughing?

Wait, could it be that this girl is...

"Ahaha. Hiromichi-san, don't be so disappointed."

"Hey! You, are you Shigure?"

She removed her sunglasses and glanced at me.

That was the look of the devil, who will never spare you from her neverending sarcasm.

Haruka never looks at me like that.

"See I told you, he can't figure it out."

"Hey-hey Hiromichi, how could you make this simple mistake?"

"P-please don't be absurd. How could I recognize her without looking at her eyes."

Because not only they had a similar figure but they also had similar hairstyles and voices.

“My bad for teasing you Hiromichi-san. But now that you’ve lost all hope, once you see this you’ll be more excited than ever.”

“What do you mean?”

“Nee-san. Hurry up and come inside.”

After those words, Shigure moved away from the entrance.

“Ah...!”

At that moment, my heart skipped a beat...

Haruka was there in her swimsuit, fidgeting and looking embarrassed!

She was wearing a separate type of swimsuit that exposed her navel as I requested.

“....!”

“Whaa, d-don’t stare at me too much... Hiromichi-kun.”

“S-sorry.”

I looked away with embarrassment.

No, I tried to look in a different direction but I couldn’t. My eyes were drawn to Haruka to the point of no control.

The swimsuit she was wearing was decorated with blue ribbons on a white background with a larger area of clothing, but still, it was exposing most of her white skin.

That was why I could clearly see the shape of her b****s, her waist, her cute navel, and her figure that I love so much.

My girlfriend was the real beauty.

“Well, Hiromichi-san. Since my shy Nee-san did such a great job, why don’t you at least give her a review instead of just staring at her?”

Stop staring at her. It was just too stimulating that I couldn’t help but stare at her.

Haruka fulfilled my desire, so as her boyfriend I should say something nice to her... but what?

“S-Shigure!! I don’t want a review or anything! You don’t have to say anything either, Hiromichi-kun!”

“O-oh, okay.”

When I saw the embarrassed look on Haruka’s face as she waved her hands, I came to my senses and realized that it would be strange for me to comment on her swimsuit.

It was dangerous. The stimulus was so strong that my mind was confused.

I don’t know what I would have said if I had opened my mouth like that.

But... I would like to say one thing to you,

“Haruka. You’re too cute.”

“W-wawa~~~~~!!”

Haruka turned red like an apple and hugged herself tightly.

Then... her b****s were pushed together and her cleavage came into full view.

Guha

My heart was beating loudly.

The sea... is awesome, isn't it?

I mean, she would voluntarily get dressed like this for me.

Isn't that great?

Hooray, give praise to the ocean lord!

For the first time in my life, I understood why so many people in the world love the sea so much.

Chapter 20.3 - Youth X Seaside

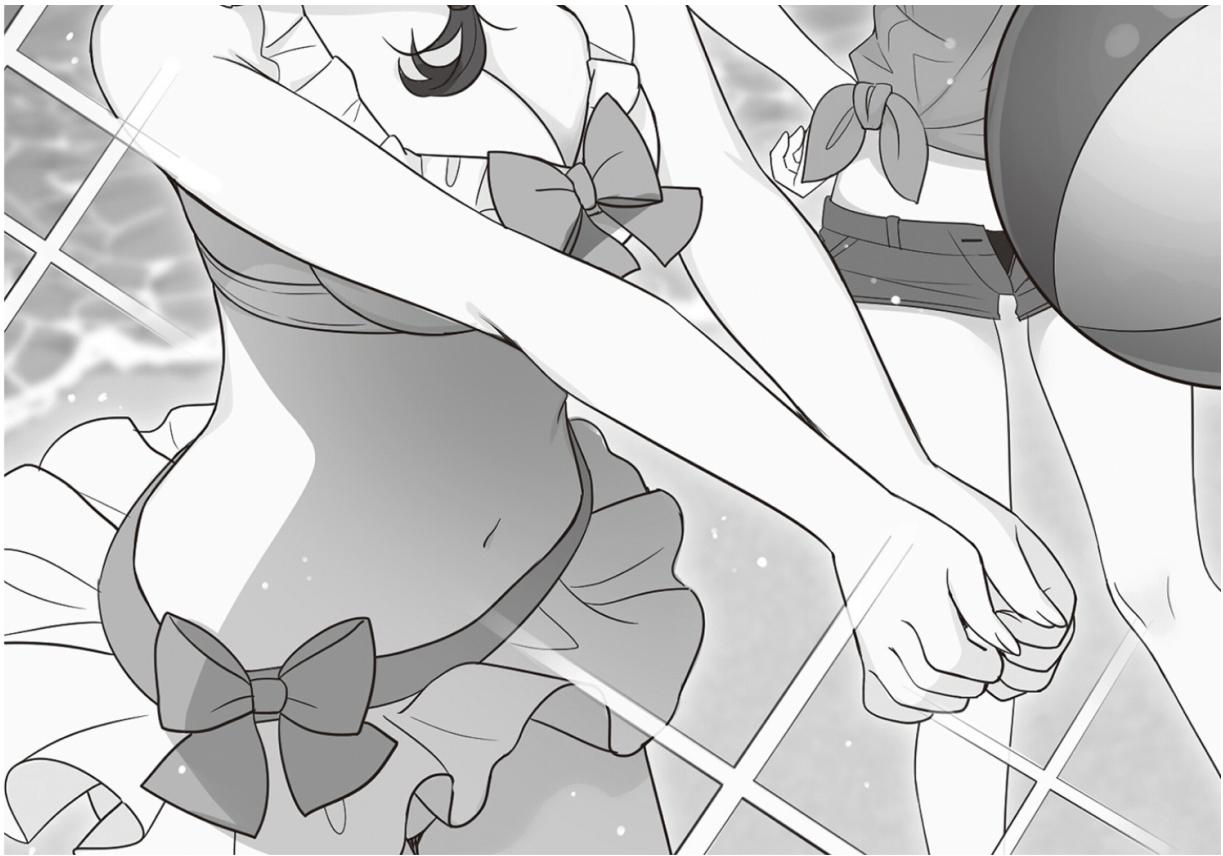
After we finished setting up the tent and having an expensive but filling yakisoba for lunch at a beach house, we headed out to the ocean.

It had been a while since I had been in the sea, and it was surprisingly fun.

Just jumping into the water was strangely exciting, and racing to the offshore reef was also fun. It was also quite exhilarating to search for the hottest swimsuit with the other guys.

And now we were all gathered at the shore playing with the vinyl ball.





The rules were simple.

Six people form a circle and toss the ball while calling out others' names, and if they drop it, they lose.

It was pretty simple, but there is a penalty. If you lose, you'll be forced to buy shaved ice for everyone.

I was desperate, especially since I spent my money on the meat for the barbecue to ask Torako-senpai to be our driver.

“Now, Torako-san!”

“Yo! Then— Hiromichi.”

“Kuh, Takeshi.”

“Hiromichi, you!”

“S-shigure”

“Okay! Hiromichi-san please~”

“Gah——”

But fate was cruel.

“Hiro lost! Now shaved ice for everyone.”

“That’s not fair! You guys were only targeting me.”

“Isn’t it obvious to mark the weakest player in the game? Thanks for the treat though.”

“I’ll have Blue Hawaii.”

“Strawberry for me.”

Gununu. Damn you guys.

It couldn’t be helped, I lost.

I got away from the playground and was about to leave... but,

“I’ll accompany you, Hiromichi-kun. It’ll be hard for you to carry on your own.”

Haruka tagged along with me. She was too sweet.

She was the only one who didn’t target me earlier.

“Thank you. It helps.”

“Um, Hiromichi-kun. Why don’t we have some for ourselves before we buy them for everyone else? Shaved ice.”

“... Eh?”

“Everyone has been mean to you. It’s okay to skip work for a while.”

Haruka whispered to me and smiled mischievously.

Of course, I agreed immediately.

As if my wish to spend some quality time with Haruka had come true.

We went to the beach house, bought shaved ice for just two of us, and sat down at a nearby table.

“Waa—— it’s too cold.”

“If it’s not cold then how would you eat it.”

“I know.”

I guess she was no longer embarrassed after playing with us.

Her eyebrows twitched as she ate the shaved ice, looking as natural as ever.

I was glad that she was having fun without being self-conscious. Though she is cute when she’s shy, I like her cheerful self the most.

As I was having those thoughts while poking my shaved ice, Haruka was staring at my hand.

“Jii——” (stare)

“Hm? What’s up?”

“I was thinking that your green tea flavor also looks good.”

“What’s that about! Then I’ll share it with you. Here.”

“Eh?”

I took some shaved ice with the spoon and offered it to her. But for some reason she was hesitant.

Hm? What happened?

...Oh! I see. That's because it's the spoon I was using!

An indirect kiss...

I stopped for a moment and was about to withdraw my spoon immediately.
But then I thought of a better idea.

Because... we were a couple who had kissed already.

I shouldn't back down this easily!

“Here, say aah—”

“...!”

Haruka looked surprised, but when I pushed even harder, she eventually gave up.

She opened her mouth a little and took a bite.

“Amu...”

“Is it g-good?”

“... I was a little nervous so I don't know what it tastes like... But.”

“But?”

“... It's kind of exciting ❤”

Haruka blushed and giggled.

While I was adoring Haruka, she too scooped up a spoon of shaved ice and thrust it into my mouth.

“Payback ♪”





I was stunned because I didn't expect Haruka to do the same, but since I started it, I couldn't say no.

"So, how is it?"

"... It's exciting."

"Yes!"

But when I thought about that passionate kiss with Shigure, this is like a playful exchange.

Yet for some reason, it felt exciting.

Chapter 20.4 - Youth X Seaside

After our private shaved ice date, before we went to buy it for everyone, I told Haruka to wait for me and went to the bathroom.

When I am alone with her, every second feels so important.

It was so exciting.

I was glad that I came here and enjoyed some quality time with Haruka.

I washed my hands in a hurry and returned back to her.

I wanted to stay with her as long as possible. But...

“Hm?...”

When I returned I saw something unpleasant.

I felt a chill even though it was the middle of summer.

Haruka, who was waiting for me at the table, was surrounded by a group of dark skinned men with piercings. It looked as if they were hitting on her.

“Hey! You’re cute. You in high school?”

“Summer vacation? You’re not from here. Are you interested in surfing? We’re from the surfing club from the university nearby. I can teach you.”

“N-no it’s fine. I’m w-with my boyfriend and sister.”

Haruka refused straight away, but the men pressed on regardless.

“Boyfriend? Bet he must be a high school student too, isn’t he? You know, we adults know how to have more fun.”

“We would be glad if such a cute girl like you could join us.”

“I fell in love with you at the first sight. Don’t worry we don’t do anything weird, we’re good people.”

One of the men grabbed Haruka’s shoulder.

At that moment, the chill inside my mind was blown away with burning fury.

That son of a b***h!

I dashed forward to punch the guy who grabbed her shoulder.

But—

“I TOLD YOU I DON’T WANT TO!!!”

I couldn’t hit him. Because Haruka yelled her loudest scream ever and knocked his hand from her shoulder.

“Ugh”

“Hey why are you yelling?”

“I’m waiting for my boyfriend and I have no interest in you. Please leave!”

Haruka’s scream shook the air and gathered a lot of attention.

It was afternoon and a lot of people were around.

“Tsk, let’s go...”

“Don’t get so arrogant just because you have a good face. You’re just a kid.”

The men seemed to have lost their boldness under the scrutiny.

When they saw that Haruka was strong-minded, they said something about love at first sight and escaped.

“Haruka!”

“Ah, Hiromichi-kun. Welcome back!”

“Haruka, are you all right? I saw those weirdos troubling you.”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

Haruka acted nonchalantly.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have left you alone...”

“You’re exaggerating Hiromichi-kun. It’s nothing. Though it’s scary to get involved with those people when there’s no one around. But there’s a lot of people here, so I can get rid of them by shouting. I’m in the drama club you know. I’m very confident in my voice.”

Ahem. Haruka said that while puffing out her chest.

She looked fine.

Guess I’m getting used to her actions.

“Wait! Does it happen very often?”

“Not that frequently but things like this happen about once or twice in a month.”

Isn’t that quite frequent...?

The only time I’ve experienced something like this was when Shigure did that.

“You know, what they did is rude. They don’t even know my name nor my preference. Yet they still push things on us like that… that’s not “love” at all. I hate those kinds of people.”

Humph saying that, Haruka expressed her frustration

She wasn’t scared, instead she was genuinely disgusted by their frivolity.

But, it was a common occurrence for her.

Because Haruka is a beauty. With pretty round eyes, well combed shiny black hair. Her face was neither too round nor too sharp. She has a well developed bosom with thin legs and high waist.

I wasn’t exaggerating things because she’s my girlfriend.

I thought about it earlier when we were on the hunt to find the hottest girl, but I never saw someone as pretty as Haruka.

I’m sure she’s been confessed to a lot of times without my knowledge. The thought of that scene made me uncomfortable.

Haruka isn’t the kind of girl who would go along with such frivolous guys.

But that doesn’t mean that she’s only going to be noticed by such jerks.

No matter who you are, Haruka must be attractive to you.

There must be someone much smarter, better looking, and a better talker than I am. When a man like that takes a liking to Haruka, do I have what it takes to compete with him?

But... It’s nothing compared to the time I spent with Haruka.

I should not be satisfied just because of the... indirect kiss.

That’s right. Don’t feel like you’ve accomplished anything with this level.

I’m going to kiss her.

And then she'll get to know me better. That I love her.

That shall be the bond between us.

“You know, Haruka...”

“Hmm? What?”

“It’s going to be clear tonight. We’re at the beach, so the stars will be beautiful. Why don’t the two of us sneak out of the tent at night... to see the stars?’

“Yes! Count me in! I’m looking forward to it!”

Haruka agreed with a bright smile.

Chapter 21 (Part 1) - Ripples X

Midnight

Part 1

We still had about half of the day left to enjoy.

Next, we will be staying overnight for leisure.

For dinner, we prepared a barbecue as Haruka had requested.

We put meat and vegetables on iron skewers and grilled them on the stove.

It was a big deal.

I was in charge of the barbecue.

I was also in charge of assembling the tent.

Since I was a kid, I used to go out camping with my dad.

That's why I know about these things.

As we were cooking, Shigure suggested, "Wouldn't it be easier to eat this if we cut it into smaller pieces and cook it like grilled meat?" *But no, that's not how we barbecue.*

In the end, we all feasted on the smoked meat that had been wildly seasoned with sauces, salt, and spices while our mouths were smeared with gravy.

I insisted that this whole experience was what having barbecue is about, and we went ahead with it.

The barbecue, made with my father's philosophy, was a big hit with everyone.

Not to mention that even the stubborn university student, Torako-senpai, praised me, which was rare.

Haruka had a lovely smile beaming on her face.

Most of all, Shigure acknowledged my cooking skill and said, "This is a new experience," which made me feel satisfied.

After filling my stomach with barbecue, the fatigue from the day hit me with a surge of sleepiness.

I guess it was the same for everyone.

From that point on, we didn't move around much, just chit-chatting, asking Torako-senpai what the university was like, and showing funny videos on our phones.

But gradually, everyone started to talk less and less.

Then Takeshi started to daze off, and we returned to our respective tents for men and women.

But I couldn't let sleepiness get the better of me.

After all, I prepared so much for the event that was about to come.

It was midnight, and everyone was probably asleep.

I sneaked out of the tent, muffled by Takeshi's bull-like snoring.

Haruka was already waiting for me outside.

"Ehehe. It's been a while."

"Did I keep you waiting?"

“No, I just came here.”

Then Haruka looked at the sky.

“It’s amazing, isn’t it? I can’t believe how many stars there are... It’s beautiful.”

“True. Now that lanterns are off, I can see the Milky Way much more clearly than before.”

“Is that Altair? I’ve never seen so many stars before.”

“Since we’re here, why don’t we go a little closer to the sea? I found a nice spot during the day.”

“Okay. Let’s go.”

Haruka held my hand, looking full of energy even after playing so much.

It’s no wonder since she is a member of the drama club, which is no different than a sports club.

“... Speaking of which, walking around holding hands like this... It really has become natural. Not too long ago, we were both so embarrassed about it with our hearts throbbing like crazy.”

“Well... we’re a couple, you know. And if it weren’t throbbing, we wouldn’t have a heart.”

I pulled Haruka’s hand and went to the nearby shore.

This area was for tourists so fishing was prohibited. The bank wasn’t crowded either. Here, we could relax while looking up at the starry sky. We could have some time alone together.

But as we approached the bank, we heard someone whispering.

I examined and saw two figures sitting side by side at the top of the cliff.

“Oh, no. There’s someone ahead of us.”

“Huh? But this voice is...”

Haruka heard it too.

Surely this voice was familiar.

I peered at them.

The sea was shining, absorbing starlight. The two figures cutting through it were Tomoe and Torako-senpai.

I see. So those two were thinking the same thing as me.

Guess we were late.

As I was feeling baffled, the direction of the wind changed, and I could hear them talking clearly.

“Torako. Thanks for coming today.”

“Oh— You kids always sleep late at night, right?”

“What are you talking about when you’re only two years older than me?”

“Anyway, I can’t believe that Hiromichi got such a cute girlfriend. How did he manage to find one?”

“I heard they were classmates from elementary school, which he seems to have forgotten.”

“I couldn’t believe my ears when he suddenly asked me to be the driver. It was the first time he’d ever asked me to do something for him.”

“Hiro is the type of person who creates unnecessary hurdles when it comes to relying on others. We’re his friends, so it’s natural for us to help him.”

“So even such a reserved and caring Hiromichi can be brazen for a girl. Though he’s kind of impotent.”

“That’s because he’s willing to work hard for such a cute girlfriend.”

Ugh... It is quite embarrassing to hear what others say about you when you’re not there.

We didn’t know what kind of stray bullets would fly at us, so we’d better get away from them quickly.

I tried to pull Haruka’s hand away, but then Torako’s tone suddenly changed.

“...Cute, you say? Tell me, Tomoe, do you like feminine girls like her?”

“Are you comparing yourself to Haruka?”

“Because... you see, I don’t have that kind of cuteness, I mean, I’m just not cute in general...”

“... Well, Torako is certainly not cute.”

“Humph—”

“Torako who speak stupid things like this isn’t cute. That’s why, I have to make her cute.”

“... Un.”

Immediately after, the shadows of the two faces joined in the starlight.

They Kissed.

Tomoe held her chin and sealed her lips.

I gasped at how easily he did this. Impressive... I couldn't even think of kissing without preparing for such an event.

“Now, you’ve become a little cuter.”

“... Not yet. Because I’ve some more doubts. I want to... kiss you more.”

Their kissing continued.

At first, it was just lips on lips, but then they began to press against each other with passion.

They caressed each other’s bodies and their shadows melted into one...

“...!”

“I-it looks like they’re busy, so let’s go somewhere else.”

“Y-yeah! Let’s go! Let’s go right now!”

Glimpsing such scene made both of us embarrassed and we ran away quickly.

Chapter 21 (Part 2) - Ripples X

Midnight

We fled in the opposite direction to the sea, across the road, to a small rest stop with decaying benches and vending machines.

“Ah, haha... I’m still embarrassed, even though they’re our friends.”

“I know...”

What can I say, it looked so realistic when I saw it from the side. Even though I know how regular couples interact with each other.

Kissing the nape of her neck, hands around the waist, caressing...

They were the veteran couple.

Fervent unlike us rookies.

“But adults are amazing, right? They were kissing so passionately. I envy them...”

Does that mean Haruka wants to be kissed in such a romantic way?

I was a bit shocked for a second, but it wasn’t because of that.

Haruka muttered with a slightly apologetic voice.

“We haven’t kissed since that day, have we? I always wanted to kiss you, Hiromichi-kun. But I was too afraid to tell you... “

“Afraid?”

“... Not long ago, we were too tense to hold hands. But now it doesn’t bother me anymore. You aren’t too nervous either, right Hiromichi-kun? That kiss... felt so thrilling that my heart was pounding so hard that it hurt. I felt so special.

But when you get used to this excitement, and the feeling of being a lover starts to disappear. I was worried about what would happen if... Hiromichi-kun got bored with me. That’s why I couldn’t... tell you.”

... I had no idea.

I didn’t know that Haruka was concerned about such things.

In other words, Haruka envied not their kissing, but the relationship where they could seek each other openly without having to worry about it.

... Oh my god!

I felt an intense resentment towards myself in my heart.

It was shameful to make her worry that one day “*I’ll get tired of her.*”

“I’m sorry...”

“Why are you apologizing, Hiromichi-kun?”

“Because it’s my fault that you were anxious because of that.”

“No, it’s not. This is because I’m not confident in myself, and I’m sorry that I couldn’t... tell you...”

It’s true.

If I had continued to show Haruka that I sincerely love her, I’m sure she wouldn’t have felt so insecure.

But there was one thing that was untrue.

I wanted to correct that.

So I took her hand, who was sitting next to me on the bench and held it tightly.

“... But you know, Haruka. There’s just one thing you get wrong. Well of course now we can hold our hands together naturally. I don’t know if I’m as excited as I used to be. But... I don’t think I would ever feel *bored*.”

This thought never crossed my mind.

“Calling your name, holding your hand like this, it all went from being excited to... a genuine ‘*happiness*’ for me. I appreciate you for that. Because I think that’s what a ‘*connection*’ is. I believe it’s a sign that an irreplaceable ‘*bond*’ is being formed between us.”

“...!”

“That’s why I want to turn our kiss into that kind of ‘*happiness*’.”

And when that happens, I’m sure we’ll have an even stronger bond than we do now.

Then we don’t need to wait for our parents to come home, for us to talk.

It was about the things I had been keeping secret from Haruka. *My relationship with Shigure.*

And for that reason.

“Can I kiss you?”

“... Yes. I want to kiss you too, Hiromichi-kun.”

Haruka was a little embarrassed from my request, but she answered with a smile.

Her moist, shiny eyes reflected neither the moon nor the stars, but only me.

She firmly closed her eyes and pursed her lips as if to invite me in.

My heart began to race.

I felt an urge, close to a craving, to leap on her lips that I've always wanted to feel.

But I felt such an urge along with her nervousness.

I knew everything.

I thought of everything.

I loved it all.

“My heart is beating so fast that it hurts...”

When I separated my lips from hers, Haruka said with moist eyes and her hand held against her chest.

I knew because I could feel her heartbeat through our lips.

But when I asked, “Is it painful?” Haruka shook her head slowly.

“I want to make this throbbing into a natural ‘*happiness*’, so this time, I will do it for you.”

“... Oh. I want Haruka to do it too.”

I requested, and she put her lips on mine.

It wasn't a passionate kiss like Shigure's, the kind that melts your rational mind.

It was like a pecking kiss, but one that was gradually getting deeper and longer... a kiss that was trying to close the gap between us.

Shy. Scared. But she wanted to get closer.

I couldn't help but love her emotions conveyed through her conduct.

"I love you, Haruka."

"...!"

As I broke into Haruka's kiss, I sought her out again myself.

Deeper and longer than the first kiss or the one Haruka gave me.

I love you.

My love for her flowed out like waves.

With every breath I took, I tried to express the love that was welling up in my heart over and over again. If I didn't say the words, I might choke on the overflowing feelings.

But, oh, but...

The more I put it into words, the more frustrating it becomes.

Why are there so few words to express my love for you?

It wasn't enough for me to express the feelings that engulfed my heart.

I want to tell you more. I want you to know more.

I wanted to tell this girl in my arms how much I love her.

What should I do?

When I asked myself that, my body naturally came up with an answer.

"Hn...!"

I slid my hand from Haruka's small shoulder to the nape of her neck.

Brushed it. Held it. Back and forth caressing while hugging her.

Just as Tomoe had done earlier.

It was the first time I learned that touching the body of the opposite s*x wasn't an act of ulterior motives.

I couldn't help but do it to convey my feelings of love, which I couldn't express in words.

Now that I think about it maybe, that was just natural.

Because humans didn't start with the language that we have now.

I guess it's a mechanism engraved in our blood.

So I followed my pure impulse.

Seeking Haruka's warmth, I crawled my hands over her body. On her back, on her waist, on her chest... I press my lips tightly together and extend my tongue, wanting to touch everything of the person I love.

Not yet. It's not enough. I want more.

I have yet to tell her more.

To express the overflowing feelings in my heart that I can't fully convey with words alone.

Closer, deeper...

But then——

“Hya~~~~~, no!!!!”

Right after that, Haruka pushed me away.

Chapter 21 (Part 3) - Ripples X

Midnight

“Haru-ka”

“... Just now. What?”

Haruka, who pushed me away, looks at me with an expression of disbelief.

I could feel my heart freeze at the look on her face.

“Just now, Tongue... and then breast, until...”

“I’m s-sorry. Did you hate it?”

Suddenly, and for the first time, a strong rejection makes me break out in a sweat.

When I looked into her eyes, I saw that they were not as loving as before.

Instead, an emotion came to my mind.

She was... frightened.

“I’m so sorry! I was in too much of a rush! While kissing, I was filled with feelings of love, and I wanted to tell you how much I love you. At first, it was just a little bit, then I couldn’t control it...! You see, that’s what Tomoe and Senpai were doing just now...”

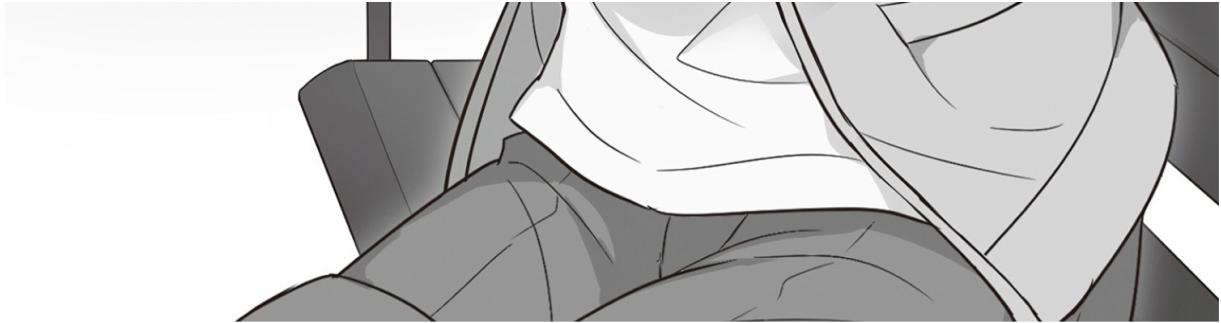
“No... this isn’t ‘love’...”

“Huh?”

Haruka hugged her body to protect herself.

“Because that kind of touching and kissing, is what they do when they’re having s*x. Torako-san is already a college student, but we’re both still in high school, so we’re not supposed to do anything like that, okay? And yet, you did such a thing...”





“Wait! I didn’t mean it that way! I just wanted to hold you, and I didn’t even think about having s*x.”

“You earlier said that you couldn’t control your feelings, and now, how could you say... that you didn’t feel like having s*x after all that kissing and touching?”

But t-that’s...

When Haruka stared at me tearfully, I was at a loss for words.

Because there was no way I could explain that.

“I thought you would understand me, Hiromichi-kun.”

“Haruka...”

I reach out my hand to her trembling self.

But before I could reach, she stood up from the bench and dismissed the contact.

“Sorry. I’m going back.”

And then she walked away as if she was afraid.

No, not like.

Haruka walked away.

From me.

But, she ran away from me.

I was so devastated by this fact that I couldn't even speak until I lost sight of her.

... I wondered how much time had passed after that.

I was leaning on the bench, unable to move, like a doll without its string.

I looked up at the sky.

Before I knew it, the sea of stars that I had seen so clearly was covered by the black veil.

The starlight faded, and the darkness of the night was getting thicker and heavier.

I thought it was just like my heart.

“I thought you would understand me, Hiromichi-kun.”

Haruka's parting words reverberate in my mind.

The sound of her voice filled with bitter disappointment, sadness, and fear.

... What have I done?

I screwed up.

No, I didn't mess up.

I knew that Haruka was a reserved girl, and I imposed my own needs on her.

I wished to connect with her. I hoped to form a ‘*bond*’ with her. As quickly as possible.

I pushed my urgency onto Haruka and frightened her.

“How stupid, I’m...”

Just because Haruka accepted my kiss, I got carried away and sought her out just to satisfy the desire that was welling up inside of me.

... This sucks.

It was no different from those guys who harassed her during the day.

I wanted to change, but I couldn’t care less.

I got no choice in the first place ... but...

“*This isn’t love.*”

I did wrong, wrong... I was wrong.

I might have been too impatient for sure.

Ever since the incident with Shigure, I was craving to kiss Haruka, and I planned this camping trip to do so. It worked out and we actually kissed, but I was overly excited.

Yet there was no doubt in my mind that this excitement was due to my love for Haruka.

I wasn’t like those frivolous people during the day who didn’t even know Haruka’s name and only wanted her body.

I know a lot about Haruka, and I love all of it, so I yearned to... touch her, that didn’t...

And then...

“Huh. What’s...?”

My vision blurred.

Tears gushed out from the corners of my eyes and rolled down my cheeks.

*Why the h**l are these tears for?*

Why am I crying?

Why did I frighten Haruka?

There are some sentiments that you can’t stop, even if you reprimand yourself with reason.

“~~~~~!!”

Sad. Sad. Sad. So frustrating.

My selfish emotions spilled out in tears.

Because she said, it wasn’t ‘love’.

But, I loved her so much that I couldn’t even express it in words, and yet she denied everything, got scared, and rejected me.

Certainly, I didn’t convey it properly.

It might be, ‘*The feelings that welled up in my heart at that time’... was it something that needs to be denied to that extent...!?*

Didn’t Haruka feel the same urge when she said she “loved” me?

If...

If that’s the case...

If she didn’t,

Then, *does she really “love” me* ——?

“Onii-san!”

“——?”

But then,

I heard the same voice as Haruka’s coming from the direction she ran off.

Footsteps stomping on the earth approached.

In the night when the stars were faded, my tear-stained vision could only catch her outline.

Though I couldn’t see who it was, I knew.

“I didn’t expect you to be here, Onii-san.”

“Shigure...”

Chapter 21 (Part 4) - Ripples X

Midnight

“... You look terrible.”

“Why, are you, here...?”

We were in the middle of nowhere, far from the campground and the ocean.

“Nee-san came back to the tent crying, and I wondered if something had happened. Did you fight with her?”

... A fight.

If it was just a fight, we'd both be hurt. It would be our fault.

I shook my head. (denied)

“... It wasn't a fight. it's just me being idiotic. I was really stupid. I'm truly a helpless b*****d, getting carried away just because Haruka was willing to kiss again...!”

“Onii-san...”

“Can you believe it? I caressed her delicate body, touched her hips, and even tried to push my tongue in when we were kissing. It’s no wonder Haruka is scared.! It was almost like an assault!”

In front of Shigure, I blurted out and criticized myself for what I had done.

I’m the bad guy.

It’s my fault.

*I’m a f*****g b*****d.*

I’m a sinner.

It’s all my fault that Haruka is scared.

I burned that into myself. I tried to fill my head with rage at myself.

Because if I didn’t, the “Worst Question” would pop into my head and I might start to get a whack at it.

“I’m such a b*****d! I didn’t even consider Haruka’s feelings! Maybe I was trying to do some terrible things to Haruka.”

“Onii-san...”

“It’s normal to hate such a guy! To such a f*****g b*****d...”

“ONII-SAN!!”

“...?”

That was when...

Shigure yelled and hugged me to her chest.

“Shut up already. Please don’t say anything else.”





“Shigu... muff?”

“I told you not to talk. Come on. Just keep it up and take a deep breath.”

It wasn’t gentle but a forceful hug.

It was a painful restraint.

I sucked in my breath, trying to scream out what she was doing?

Then, softly, the scent rising from her skin, envelopes me.

... This fragrance.

It was the same as Haruka.

The one I was craving for, my beloved girlfriend.

“...”

It extinguished the rage that burned in me that I was trying so hard to kindle.

As the resentment I had created dispersed, so did the strength in my body.

Then she loosened her hold on me.

“...Please don’t hurt yourself unnecessarily by saying such mindless things. This isn’t about the body. You really love her, don’t you? You love her so much that you can’t express it in words, and still want to convey it somehow.”

Then she caressed my hair.

“Why, you...”

How did you know such a thing?

To my question, Shigure reddened and answered,

“Isn’t it obvious? I know because… that’s how I was like that day.”

“…!”

… I see.

So she had such strong feelings too when she approached me that day.

That frightening desperation. That burning affection.

It was so far away from my understanding at the time that I was startled, but now I understand that it hurts so much.

I sure had that… look on my face, too.

“You know, Onii-san. What cats do when they want to express their affection for the opposite s*x? They firmly bite their neck.

Dogs lick the face of the person they love, don’t they? Humans are animals as well, isn’t it natural to touch someone when you love them? You love her, that’s why you wanted to touch her. You weren’t wrong.”

“Shigure…”

“I feel sorry for you Onii-san. You mustered a lot of courage, but she didn’t know that, and it hurt you too. It must be painful when she rejected your feelings of love.”

When Shigure said this, she firmly stroked my head, which she held to her chest.

Every time she brushes my hair, I feel a tingle deep in my heart.

The tears that I have been trying to not let others see, the sadness that I have been avoiding by telling myself that it was my fault, started to seep out.

And once they started, I couldn't stop them.

Cries leaked out from between my clenched teeth.

I clung to Shigure, feeling like I would fall apart if I didn't hold on to something.

For me, Shigure whispered,

"I would've never let you feel this way."

"... Eh"

"If you hugged me, I would gently lean into you and hug you back. If you touched my body, I would also caress your chest and rubbed your cheek against mine. And if... Onii-san wished for a strong kiss, I would've kissed you much more strongly and deeply than you did. I would love to whisper all night long that— I like you, Hiromichi-kun. I love you so much."

Her hand, which had been stroking my head as if to soothe me, slides to my cheek.

She lifted my face delicately.

I looked up, and through my blurred vision, I saw what I was wishing for from the bottom of my heart.

"Hiromichi-kun. Kiss... me."

The image of my beloved girlfriend staring at me, trapping only me in her eyes, and wanting me.

It's an illusion.

I know that.

She's not Haruka. She's not my girlfriend.

But...

The sister in front of me was too similar to the person I longed for, and my heart was too fragile to reject her.

“...”

I can't.

Stop it.

It's impossible.

No, don't...

The voice of my reason cried out, but it was too far away.

I sought her lips like a frozen man yearning for warmth.

Because I knew it was warm here, and I couldn't... resist.

Our lips met.

Unlike before, it firmly touched mine.

There was no rejection.

She returned it with a gentle, sweet kiss.

Just the slightest touch was enough to send heat into my frozen heart.

Affection flowed into my heart. It was the kind of love I shouldn't be receiving. The affection that I rejected before because I was afraid that day.

I devoured it.

I couldn't do the same for her...

What a frivolous thing to do.

But...

"It's not your fault. Because I'm her twin sister. I have the same voice, face, and smell like my sister. If a woman like me comes to you and asks for a kiss when you're hurting from something my sister said to you, you can't help but feel this way. Onii-san, you're not wrong. It's my fault for taking advantage of your weakness, knowing all the painful feelings you've gone through... so don't worry. Rather, take advantage of me! Those feelings of being rejected by Nee-san. Those bad feelings that are forcing you to doubt my sister. Those feelings of trying to blame yourself... Forget all of that for now, and indulge Nee-san you see in me."

She forgave me for being frivolous, for being weak.

She gave me a reason to forgive myself.

"It's okay. You're just looking at Nee-san through me. All these feelings that you sought are not an affair... Come on, say it. Haruka, I love you. Haruka, I love you. Say it out loud."

"H-haruka. Haruka. I love you. Haruka. Haruka..."

"I love you too."

I drowned in her moist eyes.

I dived even deeper.

I knew Haruka wasn't kissing me right now, but I couldn't blame myself for wanting her.

I sought for her lips more than before.

I raised my tongue and went deeper.

Shigure received it with her own.

It was frustrating that our bodies were separated, so I put my hands around her body.

I embraced her.

Shigure rubbed her body against me as if begging for more.

“Love you... mh... I love you!”

Deep kisses. Warm embrace. Sweet whispers.

She was giving me everything I’d ever wished for.

How could I let her go?

I craved her even more. The saliva we exchanged slid down my throat and felt like boiled water.

The heat in my gut propagates through my bones to the depths of my brain, clouding my consciousness like a fever.

In this haze of consciousness, I ruminated on her words from earlier.

This is not an affair.

Yes. It's not an affair. I ain't having an affair.

Because I'm only in love with Haruka.

I see Haruka in Shigure.

I won't do this to Shigure.

Shigure is my sister.

The one I love is Haruka only.

That's why the one I'm kissing right now is Haruka.

There's no hesitation.

We love as we desire, as we wished for.

Because as long as we're doing that, as long as these lips are connected, I won't have to think about the worst question that crossed my mind.

Chapter 21 (Part 5) - Ripples X

Midnight

After that, I continued to seek Shigure's lips until a light shower started to fall from the dark sky.

But once I was done and sobered up, I was forced to be aware of reality.

Like the side effect of a drug, I was tormented by regret until the end of the night.

And even now...

I was staring at the sea till the morning all by myself, with eyes as blank as a dead fish.

“...”

I had done a terrible thing.

I was so lonely that I sought the lips of someone other than my girlfriend, and she was even her sister.

It wasn't something any sane person would do.

I was crazy.

I knew that... but I couldn't stop myself.

If I had stopped, I wouldn't have been able to stand up last night.

I don't know what would have happened to me if I had fallen right there.

I was swallowed up by the swamp of negative emotions that welled up within my heart. To prevent that from happening, I had no choice but to cling to Shigure.

“It seems that you always demand perfection from yourself, but no one, not even adults, can do that. We all have those hard nights when we couldn’t stand without something to cling to... For Onii-san, it’s tonight. That’s all I have to say.”

Shigure said this to me yesterday when I pulled myself away from her after I sobered up.

I think she’s right.

The way I want to be, the ideal man I envision myself to be. I wasn’t strong enough... to be a human being to embody that.

“Hiromichi-kun...”

“...!”

While I was immersed in such regret, I heard a familiar voice behind me.

The voice of someone I didn’t want to face right now.

Because, because... how the h**l am I supposed to talk to her?

I don’t know.

I can’t think of anything else.

... But now that she’s here, I can’t ignore her.

I turned around.

“Haruka...”

“Um, ... I’m sorry about yesterday.”

Haruka's reaction was unexpected.

She bowed her head apologetically.

"I thought about it all night. *It's not "love"*, I overdid it by saying that line. I know that Hiromichi-kun likes me. I know it very well."

"..."

"You know, we had a great time, and I just got a little excited and overdid it. I'm really sorry for saying those things without considering your feelings."

The way Haruka apologized made the guilt boil in the pit of my stomach.

... Please stop.

I had done something worse.

I don't deserve such an apology.

I have to tell you.

I have to tell, what I did.

To Haruka...

"... Ah, I'm the one who should apologize. I'm sorry for making you feel scared."

... Hey. That's not it.

Not that I just scared her, there were more things for her to know.

I knew, but I couldn't stop thinking about it.

"I'm not scared of you. I was just a little ... surprised."

"S-so it was that. That's good."

No, it's not good.

Say it. Why can't you put it into words?

Are you going to... run away without telling the truth?

After doing those things to Haruka's twin sister, you're just going to keep quiet and continue your relationship as before?

Don't be silly. Tell her. Say it.

“... But I still think it's wrong for us high school students to do something like that. If we get too excited and made a... mistake, we'll be in trouble. Besides, I do love you, Hiromichi-kun. And I want to cherish this relationship with you. I don't want to tarnish our relationship by being irresponsible and letting my temporary feelings get the best of me... So let's not do that again, okay?”

“_____”

Haruka's eyes, staring at me, were shaking with a certain '*emotion*'.

That's when I realized,

I realized that I was standing in a very dangerous spot right now.

Haruka wasn't frightened.

She was “disgusted” by me.

And that disgust was still there.

That was why Haruka wanted to keep her distance.

She doesn't want to kiss me anymore. Maybe she thinks it would make her dirty.

If I told her about what happened with Shigure... then,

"O-oh. You're right, Haruka. We're just kids being fed by our parents. We can't... do things without proper moderation, right?"

"Thank you. I knew you would understand!"

I couldn't possibly... say that.

But, still... Come to think of it, it was for the best.

Because I don't think it was fair to say that I cheated on her.

I indeed kissed Shigure.

It's true, but I was calling Haruka's name the whole time.

If Haruka had responded properly to my kiss back then, none of this would have happened in the first place, so I don't think it was right to call this cheating.

Yesterday's kiss was not only my problem. Shigure was also heavily involved. It was also she who asked. If she hadn't asked like that, I wouldn't have kissed her either.

Confessing this could put a big dent in Shigure and Haruka's relationship. That wouldn't be good. It was a choice that will make no one happy. It's better to keep quiet. Just because the other person was my girlfriend doesn't mean I have to expose everything I had done. Even the most amazing couples in the world have more or fewer things to hide.

I shouldn't be afraid of hiding such a thing.

I have to express my gushing love for Haruka, which I expressed to Shigure yesterday, in a way that she can accept. By doing so, she would weave a *bond*. That must be for the best. It has to be. Without doubt ——

I have to list as many reasons as I can think of why I don't have to do penance...

To give a little justification for my actions.

To give a little more reason for my deception.

Because... that's all I can do now.

There's no way I can tell her that I kissed Shigure.

If I did, I'd lose her.

My beloved girlfriend, who is smiling so lovingly, right in front of me.

I love her.

My love for her isn't a lie.

Well, It's not like I have a choice either. I can't... say it.

"Oii... Idiotic Couple. How long are you planning to hang out? I told you we have to move before the roads get too crowded!"

"Okay! Let's go, Hiromichi-kun."

"Y-yeah"

I made up my mind to keep what happened yesterday a secret.

Then, Trying not to show such a gloomy determination on my face, I tried to take Haruka's hand that was extended to me.

But—

To my surprise, my hand froze just before it could touch her hand.

"H..."

"Huh? What's wrong, Hiromichi-kun? Hurry up."

Haruka tilted her head curiously as she reached for my hand.

I shook my hand lightly and responded to Haruka's gesture and held it quickly.

I took her hand.

At that moment, my heart starts to beat fast with anxiety.

I wondered whether the strength of my grip... would be enough. I wasn't sure if it's making her feel uncomfortable. I wasn't sure if it's too strong, too weak, or suspicious.

I didn't know.

I didn't know how long I had been holding her hand.

That was when it all started.

Holding hands. An act that used to be the source of genuine happiness for me... turned into anguish and fear that one day Haruka would hate me...

Chapter 22 - Confusion X Disjoint

The next day, Haruka invited me on a date because after this she had to take part in club activities.

We went to a shopping mall near the station where *we had our first kiss*. After that, we had lunch, watched a movie, and had a short tea break. It was a wholesome, but fun date.

Yeah, it was supposed to be a fun date.

Because... the whole time, my heart was stagnated by feelings that were the exact opposite of fun.

These feelings were the same as what I felt when I was afraid of holding her hand on the beach.

Back then, when we were walking side by side holding hands, I was fearfully thinking, *was that enough strength? Was I properly holding her hand? Would she think it was indecent? Was it too intimate?*

Furthermore, my anxiety didn't stop at the mere act of holding hands.

Even in casual conversations, every time before speaking, I was anxious whether I would be giving the best answer or not. Was it uncomfortable?

I didn't want her to hate me.

Not anymore.

The date progressed normally, but I was constantly frightened.

It was unbearable and exhausting.

The gears were shifting.

It was that damn Sea Lords' fault.

After what happened... Haruka has been labeling my actions as "disgusting", and keeping a distance from me, saying that she didn't want to kiss me like that anymore. This created a fear of Haruka within me.

But even after I stressed over these thoughts, I couldn't change anything.

Though my main concern was, *how should I overcome this fear? How can I behave toward Haruka as naturally as before?*

I couldn't think of anything... nothing at all.

I was terrified for the whole day. In the end, I returned home exhausted without exchanging a kiss.

"Oh, welcome back, Onii-san."

The one who welcomed me with a smile was Shigure, wearing a thin apron over casual clothes.

The moment I saw her, my weary heart cheered up a little.

With that little bit of energy, I smiled.

"... I'm back. Are you preparing dinner right now?"

"Yes. Today we're having the famous stir-fry meat-veggies, without meat though."

"Isn't it just stir-fried vegetables?"

"Nope. It doesn't contain meat, but its flavor is enhanced due to fats, so now it's an outstanding stir-fried meat-veggies. "

They call it *sophistry*.

“I don’t have a choice. I’m saving the money we spent on the trip. Please wait a moment, the rice will be ready soon.”

“… Okay.”

I could talk to Shigure, who has the same face as my girlfriend, without any hesitation.

Sighing, I sat down on the tatami mat in the living room.

Shigure noticed my weak response.

“You didn’t get along with Nee-san?”

“No it’s just, I’m scared of… Haruka.”

I answered honestly. There was no point in hiding things from Shigure.

“Afraid?”

“I’m always on the lookout for what will be the next *No Good* lines. I’m having a hard time holding hands and even when we’re just talking, I had to look out for her mood, afraid that if I make a mistake, she’ll hate me again. I’m under a lot of pressure lately.”

“…”

“I like her. Love her so much. If this pain continues, then one day my heart might change… That’s what I’m afraid of.”

“Don’t let it bother you. Though things are a little out of sync right now. These things are natural, it happens when we spend too much time with someone. You’ve probably experienced it with your friends and family. Besides, you see…”

Shigure untied her apron and sat down next to me.

Then she gently leaned over my shoulder.

“Look at me... You’ll feel... better.”

“Oh...”

I do. Of course, I do.

Her long eyelashes, moist dark eyes, perfect nose, cherry-red lips that look red even without lipstick, pure white cheeks without a single stain making me want to reach out and rub them. I’m in love with all these features. I can look at her face for hours without getting bored.

“I’m her twin sister. I’ve got the same face, the same voice, and features similar to the person you love. And when you’re so close to her, it’s natural for you to be nervous! In other words, that throbbing heart is proof that you love Nee-san. So please don’t worry. Your heart hasn’t changed at all.”

“...”

“If you’re still worried, I’ll make you feel all the proof you need.”

After that, she brushed my cheek and moved my chin down a little.

Then she brought her lips close to mine.

The wetness of her lips reminded me of my mistake at the beach.

That kiss felt so good it almost melted my heart.

... We can’t!

I can’t make the same mistakes again just because I am feeling this...

Though I couldn’t even talk to Haruka if I wanted to.

“We can’t. Shigure.”

“Don’t say you can’t.”

“Why...?”

“Onii-san, I will never ignore your feelings. That’s what I promised. So if you don’t like it say, ‘No’ instead of ‘Can’t’. Otherwise, I won’t listen to you, okay?”

So all I have to say is *No*.

After saying that, she rubbed herself against me.

Her sweet scent tickled my nose and a thought came to my mind... *Come to think of it, I didn't get Haruka's scent today.*

That’s how far we were from each other.

After reminiscing about the past, the pain in my heart, the resentment, became even more intense.

I need her.

I need her love that was so close, I could reach it if I just extended my hand.

She could pour as much as she desired, I just wanted to satisfy my yearning.

But once it started, there was no way anything could stop me...

Her lips were just a few inches away from mine.

I knew how strong the side effects would be, but I couldn’t help wishing for it.

I couldn’t resist the ecstasy brought by her sweet love poison.

Because... because...

There was no other way, I could only touch Haruka through Shigure.

“Onii-san, you were trying your best. It must be so painful that Nee-san distanced herself and rejected your feelings. I know, you were patiently

enduring, so you won't take it out on her."

"Shigure..."

I was drowning.

I was corrupted.

But Shigure... forgave and accepted my pathetic self.

"A wonderful boyfriend, who is trying his best not to upset Nee-san again, has to be rewarded. I'll reward you for being such a good boyfriend."

That said, she giggled and took my hand to her shoulder and moved it further to her breast.

Wha!? Ehhhhh!?

"W-what are you doing?"

"What do you mean? You like big b*****s, don't you?"

"H-How do you know this?"

"I know. That night when we kissed, you touched me as if you wanted to fondle these... Also, I know you peeked at my b*****s regularly..."

"..."

Was it that obvious?

I was so desperate at the time, my mind was clouded that time. I'm not sure if I did that.

"For now, look at Nee-san through me. What if she wants you to touch her b*****s. If you do so, you can feel her heart racing and realize her love for you. I guarantee."

"Hmm~~~~"

Whispering to me, Shigure puts her hand over mine and presses it against her b****s.

Then she moved my hand around her breast.

I felt its shape under my palm.

It was s-soft, firm, round, and bouncy. It was just the right size to fit in the palm of my hand.

It was so stimulating, so exciting.

I know that I couldn't find that sensation anywhere else in this man's body.

But after a while, I felt... something a little different than before.

I don't know what it was?

"Hyan!"

"Huh!?!?"

That's when it happened.

She trembled and let out a sweet voice that I never heard before, that I shouldn't have heard.

In between my fingers, I felt something amazing, a hard round flesh, a pea-size foreign object that made my body heated up instantly.

Don't tell me...

I withdrew my hand and stared at her b****s.

And then, I found it.

In the middle of her breast, that thing was pointing upward.

“S-shigure... You... and t-that.”

“...Yes. I haven’t worn one because I was home all day. My bra, you know.”

“W-whaat!?”





Shigure was right.

She wasn't wearing one. Her thin shirt was flattened over her skin due to the heat of summer. I was feeling her breast and nipples. Their shape was almost visible.

... W-why did you let me touch it in this state?

"W-what were you doing, you idiot?"

"I don't mind though."

"You should care! I-it's not right for a girl to let someone touch her body so carelessly, let alone her b*****s!"

I tried to be a big brother!

But Shigure smiled even more at my response.

"I'm not taking it lightly. I never let anyone touch it. It's only you, Onii-san."

"...!"

"It's fine if it's you, Onii-san. It makes me happy when you touch me. You can let out the feelings that you can't express to Nee-san on me before they rot in your heart. Nee-san doesn't know about this. I won't tell her either. No one will get hurt. No one will lose anything. So, you're free to do... whatever you want."

She then lifts her b*****s with her arms to emphasize.

Through the thin clothing, her b*****s wobbled.

... My hands were craving for them.

I wanted to feel those.

There was a desire to punch past guilt, ethics, and all that to get ahead.

Those b*****s in front of me have so much charm.

I felt a strong attraction that appeals to my instincts.

And there was no lie in her words when she said, “You can do whatever you want.”

Will she really let me do anything I want?

I wasn't sure whether I knew the amount of love she had for me.

Those lovely plums, neither too big nor too small, were right around the size of my palm. And when my curiosity was about to get ahead of me...

I realized...

I didn't have the guts to accept her affection.

“N-no, it's fine! I'm feeling better now! You did more than enough!”

I can still feel the sensation in my fingers.

I don't know what to do anymore.

So I fled to the wall, rubbing my a*s on the mat.

When she saw me running away her eyes narrowed and her lips twisted into a nasty smile.

“You coward ❤”

“Hya—”

“But I love that side of you. Because you’re too cute. Onii-san.”

Suddenly coming to my defense, the rice cooker alarm rang, letting us know that the rice was ready.

At this, Shigure’s earlier mood disappeared and she stood up, fixed her disheveled clothes, and said...

“Well, Let’s eat now. Can you set the table?”

“O-okay”

I got back to my feet while trying to control my thumping heart.

That’s when I realized.

My day, till I returned home, was really exhausting. But before I knew it, all the exhaustion was washed away.

Chapter 23 (Part 1) - Lazy X Summer Days

Part 1

August 1st.

It was a record-breaking hot day in Kanagawa.

This was a big deal for the Sato family, who had no access to air conditioning.

We set up the table in the living room to try to get our homework done before noon. But it was just a bad idea.

It was already torturous hot in the morning.

We ended up running out of steam in no time.

“H-hot...”

“This is even worse... I can’t even do my homework in this weather.”

That Shigure, who usually doesn’t show her sloppy appearance in front of me, was slumped on the table with a dejected look on her face. Or it was more appropriate to say that she has melted away.

I bet I look just as sloppy.

“I want an air conditioner...”

“Do you think we can afford it?”

“We can’t...”

Our parents were spending a lot of money on our education.

Seiun is a private school.

And that's why our life has to be more difficult.

“Oh, I remembered. That game console seems to be in high demand these days. If you sell it, we can buy an air conditioner.”

“Absolutely not. I tried five times to win the lottery at *Big Camera*, and I could barely afford that.”

“... That's fine, but why don't you take off the wind chimes? It's too noisy.”

“... It was naive of me to think that if I put on as much as I had, it would be cooler....”

I stared at those five wind chimes hanging in the window.

I found them when I was cleaning my father's room.

It wasn't my father's hobby, so I thought it might be a memento of my mother, so I put them on. But since a while ago, every time a mild wind blows, it ring-ring-ring-ring-rings.

I was hoping that it would bring more cool breeze to counter the excessive heat, but it seems I was just being stupid.

I acknowledged my mistake and removed the wind chimes, leaving only one.

... Right after I removed the wind chimes, a chorus of locusts rushed into the room.

Summer invaded all of my senses, and I started to feel dizzy.

That was when Shigure finally snapped.

“Aah. I can’t take it anymore. Stop it, Onii-san. No matter how much knowledge you slam into your steamed brain, it will just melt out of your ears.”

pei With a flick, Shigure threw away the mechanical pencil that she had been clutching with all her might.

“We can go to the library... they have AC rooms.”

“In this intense heat?”

“... We will die. For sure.”

“I don’t think I can do my homework in this state. Why not fill the bathtub with water.? It will feel great.”

It’s true that forcing ourselves to do homework in this state would be inefficient.

I can’t even trust my intuition with my head simmering like this.

Above all, Shigure’s proposal seemed really cool and appealing.

The moment I thought about it, the thread that had barely connected me to my studies snapped.

“That’s good. Let’s do it! Do you want to go first?”

“Ehh? Why don’t we put on our swimsuits and go in together?”

Oh, I see.

I thought she was referring to baths like the one you would take at a public bath, but Shigure was talking about something like a swimming pool.

It would be more fun to have a good time together. Furthermore, we don’t have to worry about anyone waiting for us. And so we began to prepare for the water bath.

Though it was just a matter of cleaning the tub, that hadn't been used much since the summer, and filling it with water, which was easy enough to do.

However, the heat that had built up in my body from being forced to exercise in this hot weather had become quite intense.

I couldn't take it anymore.

As soon as I saw that Shigure had returned to her room to change, I stripped off my clothes, changed into a swimsuit, and jumped into the bathtub filled with water.

“Uwaa...!”

It's so cold~~~~!

But it feels so good~~~~!

I can feel the heat in my body wilting away.

“How is it? Are you feeling better?”

“Yeah! It's too good. Come on, Shigure.”

After she asked through the door, I unexpectedly realized,

...Come to think of it, I haven't seen her in a swimsuit. She was wearing a shirt the whole time at the beach.

I wonder what kind of swimsuit she was wearing under that shirt.

While I was imagining, the door to the bathroom opened.

“Excuse me.”

“_____!”

At that moment, I gulped.

Shigure was wearing a black bikini, just like how we healthy high school boys imagine when we hear the word “bikini.” It has less fabric and she looked quite mature.

“Onii-san! Pull back your legs a bit. It’s too cramped.”

“Y-yeah, sorry.”

“Un~~~~, its cold~~~~”

“But it feels so good...” Shigure shuddered as she crouched in front of me.

Her b*****s, squeezed by her arms, formed a clear cleavage.

I felt like I was looking at something I shouldn’t be.

“I bought it when I was out shopping with Nee-san for the trip. She insisted that she had to pick a swimsuit of your liking. And that’s when I recommended this. But she said, ‘Boys like this kind of swimsuit? Isn’t it too thin?’ She was too embarrassed.”

“W-well, the swimsuit doesn’t fit her character.”

“Fufu... But it looks like I made the right choice. I can confirm by that look on your face. You perv ↗”

“Guh...”

Shigure smirked as if to tease me.

I couldn’t see myself, but guess I made a weird face.

It can’t be helped, because she looks so beautiful in that swimsuit.

“It’s too late to look away now. Your face is all red. How cute, Onii-san. Let me cool your face down for you. Take this ↗”

“Wha! Wait— Stop— stop it!”

“No-no!”

splash-splash and then, she scooped up more water in both of her hands and splashed it on my face.

At first, I was on the defensive, but the more I defended myself, the more she got carried away.

She was just too stubborn.

“Why— You... cut it out! Ora!”

“Kya!”

“Sora-sora! A man’s palms are bigger than yours, so there’s no way you can win! Know your place!”

To fight back, I splashed water on her face as well.

In a series of consecutive hits.

I have to make sure that she can’t do anything but protect her face in front of this assault.

“Wha— Buh— I w-won’t lose! I have a secret weapon!”

A secret weapon?

As soon as I tilted my head, this girl stood up and reached for the shower that was held on the wall.

“Wait— Shower is not fair! t-that’s not fair!”

“You can’t win now, can you? You’re the one who should know your place. There’s no way I’m going to lose to a small fry like you! Ahaha!”

Hii, Hiiiii!

It was too cold!

The water coming out of the shower was not the same as in the bathtub, which had become lukewarm from our body heat and the weather.

And since the water gushed from a standing position, I couldn't reach it or even fight back with the bathwater. What a cowardly airstrike!

But since she went this far, I should win, no matter what it takes.

I turned the faucet behind me as fast as I could to the fullest.

There was only one water pipe in the bathroom. So if I turn the faucet on, the amount of water flowing into the shower will decrease and lose momentum.

With this, I could also fight back!

“Kyaaa! Onii-san, it’s c-cold!! You sly...nh!”

I plugged the tap hole with my finger and controlled the pressure with its gap, then slammed the water cannon onto Shigure's face, who was assured of her victory.

When she was hit by the cold water, which was much more powerful than the shower, her face turned into an ugly mess.

That made me laugh.

I would never treat Haruka like this. I couldn't even imagine.

But to deal with Shigure, I had to treat her a little roughly.

I enjoyed that moment with my heart.

Chapter 23 (Part 2) - Lazy X Summer Days

Eventually, when we ran out of breath, we both offered to make peace, and this water war came to an end.

Now that we've made peace, we stopped our cramped posture of facing each other and sat on the small bathtub with her back to me.

While relaxing in the lukewarm water, we listened to the chimes coming through the small air vent.

“Ah, Onii-san, I can hear the sound of the wind chime.”

“It’s true. I guess just one chime was enough to make me feel cool.”

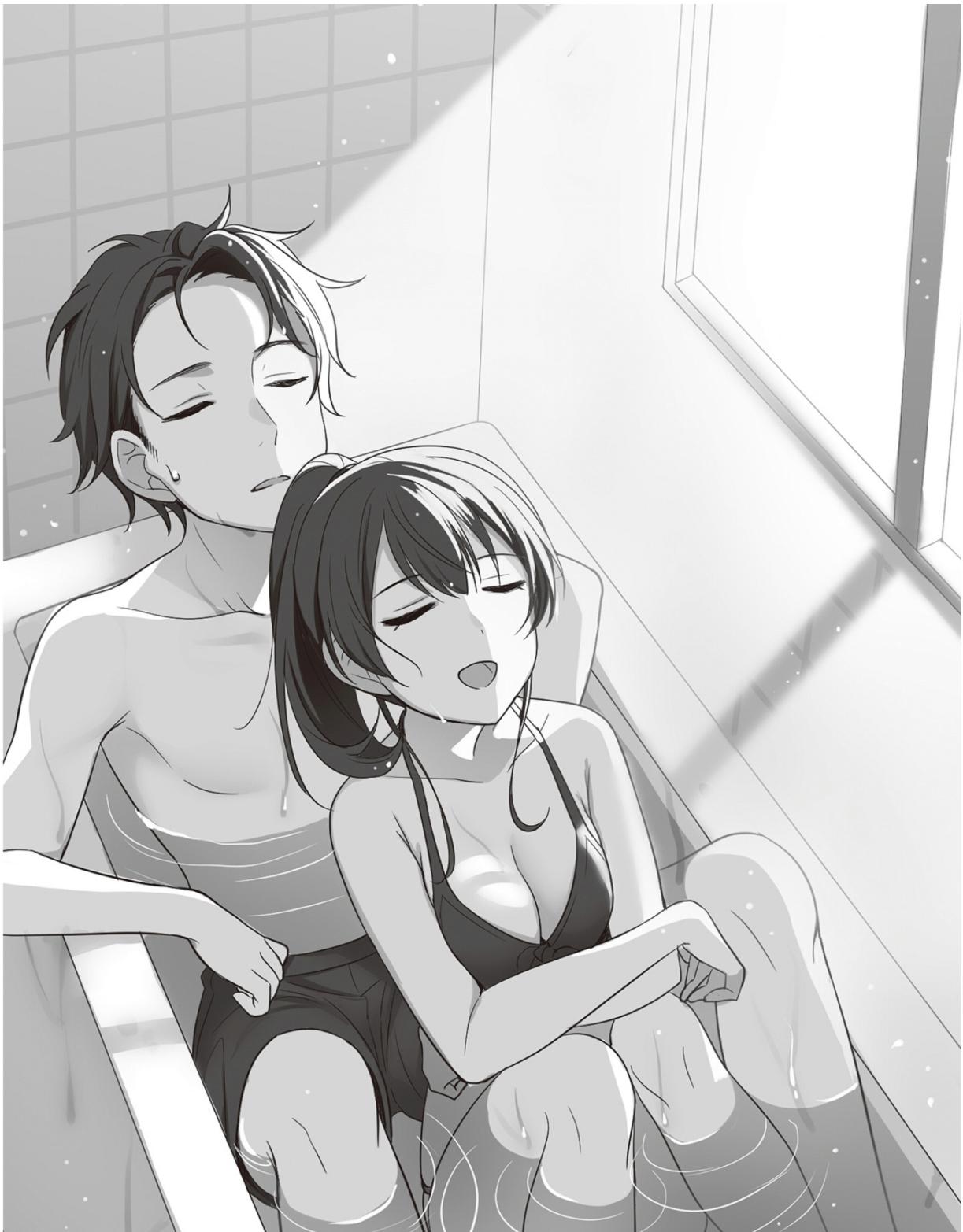
“Well, that’s not surprising. Why did you even decide to put up five wind chimes?”

I don’t know. Maybe I had gone crazy from the heat.

I closed my eyes to listen to the gentle sound of the wind breeze.

Then I noticed that I could hear not only the sound of the wind chime but also many other sounds.





The buzzing of cicadas, the blowing winds, the laughter of children, the sound of cars passing by, and the ring of a bicycle bell.

All of these sounds felt far away and quiet.

Even the cicadas that had been so loud earlier lost to the sound of the water from the bathtub.

“It’s a strange feeling. As if time has stopped.”

“... Yeah.”

... I was feeling the same thing.

I felt that this place was too far away from the outside world.

It felt unreal as if we were in a separate space.

But... it was strangely comfortable.

I wish this time could last forever.

That’s what I thought.

It’s probably because... Shigure’s here with me.

“Ah...”

With that thought, I naturally wrapped my arms around her waist and hugged her.

To this, Shigure looks back over her shoulder and asks me with a watchful expression.

“Oh, dear. You want to be pampered again?”

“... No.”

I shook my head at Shigure’s question.

It's not... like that.

I didn't hug Shigure to feel Haruka.

It's just that...

"I just wanted to do this."

Yes, I wanted to hold her.

I wanted to hug Shigure, who was my cute little sister.

To my words, Shigure rolled her eyes in surprise and turned her face to me.

"You don't like it?"

"... No. It's nothing."

Her voice was low and slightly swaying.

Is it possible that she's embarrassed?

If you don't mind, let me stay like this for a while. I want to hold you like this.

However...

No matter how comfortable the time is, I can't stay like this forever.

If we soak in the water for that long, we will get blistered.

Above all, I'm getting a little hungry.

She must have felt the same way.

She gently untied my arms, stood up, and said,

“Since it’s almost lunchtime, why don’t we enjoy summer through our stomachs?”

“Through our stomach?”

“Yes. I got a share of watermelon from our neighbor yesterday. Let’s have it for lunch.”

“Oh, I like that! Let’s eat!”

Watermelon. By the way, I saw it in the vegetable tray inside the refrigerator.

That’s perfect. There’s nothing better than that to enjoy the summer.

We got out of the bathtub and wiped ourselves off with towels.

Then we left the bathroom and went to our rooms to change back into our clothes.

After all, it’s bad manners to eat in a swimsuit.

“Hm...?”

That’s when...

I realized that I had an incoming call on my phone.

When I looked at the notification, I saw that it was from Haruka.

“.....”

I just checked who it was and let go of my phone.

I didn’t look at the messages that were in there.

Chapter 23 (Part 3) - Lazy X Summer Days

“Aa-Aa-Aa-! Not again, Onii-san. No. Please stop it.”

“Fuhaha! Only an idiot will stop when you say so! And take that!”

“You’re terrible! You did it twice! Aa-Aa-Aa...!”

On a monitor in split-screen mode.

The *Spiny Shell* I threw with pinpoint accuracy hit the right place and blew up Shigure’s bike when she was in the lead, and this turned the tide of the game in my favor.

It happened just before the finish line of the *Grand Prix Finale*.

Then I slipped past Shigure, who was unable to accelerate, and finished the race.

“Yosha! I win!”

“Ahn! I was so close to winning the *Grand Prix*...”

While crying, “It’s not fair- it’s not fair”, Shigure hits me on the shoulder in protests.

Fufu... Nothing feels better than the howling of a loser...

“In *Mario-Kart*, the closer you are to the finish line, the better the items you get, so don’t let your guard down until the end.”

“However, two *Spiny* in a row is terrible. It’s cheating. It’s horrible, so sell it right away. And then let’s buy an air conditioner with it.”

“Absolutely not. Once I sell it, I might not be able to get another one.”

It was a fair game where we had a 50-50 chance to win.

I think games are most fun when played with people of the same level.

Maybe we should change the characters this time.

And then I picked up my controller.

At the end of the day, the announcement from the disaster prevention radio overwhelmed the buzzing of the cicadas.

“Ah, sunset. It’s already this late.”

Really? Seriously?

The clock was already pointing to five o’clock.

It didn’t feel like evening to me, guess I was quite absorbed in games.

“Let’s prepare for dinner.”

“What’s in the menu?”

“To be honest, I’m a little tired today. I don’t want to cook anything too lavish, but since we only had watermelon for lunch, I want to eat something greasy. Maybe it will work. How about some Somen noodles and some veg tempura to go with it?”

Oh. That sounds very summer-like, too.

Today, we tossed away our homework, took a bath, ate watermelon, and played games.

And then this seems to be the perfect way to end a summer day.

“Let me help you.”

“Then prepare the batter for the tempura. Do you know how to make it?”

“It’s written on the back of the packet.”

“Yes, But don’t mix too much. Just enough to leave a few lumps.”

“Hm? Why?”

“If you mix it too much, the batter will become heavy.”

“Shigure knows a lot of things...”

“However, I think Onii-san has the upper hand in outdoor cooking. That barbecue you made was delicious. I tried to make it myself. But it was impossible to get the same taste at home.

I know... I know right...

I feel rather good when Shigure compliments my cooking skills.

“I want to eat again, so when my mom comes back, let’s go camping as a family.”

“Sounds good. I’m sure my dad will join us too.”

As I took out the eggs from the refrigerator for the dough,

My phone alerted me to an incoming call.

“I’ll take care of it, don’t worry.”

At Shigure’s urging, I went to pick up my phone, which was vibrating on the living room floor.

The caller was... I knew it.

“It’s Haruka again?”

“... again?”

S***t. I speak out loud.

“... She called me during the bath in the afternoon.”

“Why didn’t you call back right away?”

I don’t know why.

It wasn’t anything in my mind.

Almost impulsively, I ignored Haruka’s call.

Maybe because I didn’t want to call her back at that time.

Why didn’t I want to call her back? I can only think of one reason.

“Maybe it’s because I wanted to spend some time at home with you, Shigure.”

I enjoyed the time I spent playing with Shigure without a care in the world.

Whenever I talk to Haruka, I couldn’t help but worry about what kind of expressions she’d be making on the other end of the phone.

I wondered if I was giving the proper response, whether it was my choice of words or not.

That’s why I didn’t want to be bothered by such things during our... enjoyable time.

But I didn’t want to ignore her twice.

I picked up my phone and pressed the call button.

|| “Ah. It’s connected. Hello, Hiromichi-kun... Ah, is it evening already?”

“Good evening. Haruka. What’s up? I thought you will be busy in the club from morning to night today.”

|| “Yeah. It’s always like that these days, and I don’t get to see you very often, so I wanted to hear your voice in a while. Is it okay if I talk to you now?”

“... Okay. I’m fine with that.”

I’m sorry, Shigure. I said I’d help, but you have to take care of it for me.

I sat down on the cushion and listened to Haruka.

The content of her conversation was as trivial as she said, she just wanted to hear my voice.

She told me that she had started practicing a new play for the fall festival, that the club members went to the same ramen shop that Haruka and I had gone to before, and that the team leader was about to take off her clothes again.

Haruka loves acting. She said she was influenced by her mother who was separated from her due to the divorce— who is now my step-mother that I have yet to see.

I loved to see and hear Haruka’s enthusiasm for acting. It made her personality shine. I loved it...

But now...

It’s not that I’m not having fun.

I’m glad that Haruka called me because she wanted to hear my voice.

Since I can’t see you, at least I can hear your voice, and the fact that you want me so strongly is reassuring.

But... if that’s the case, a doubt pierced my heart...

If you love me so much, you should have trusted me a little more at the camp.

“Yeah. Yeah... You’re right. I can understand that.”

... Haruka said she was scared in case I couldn’t stop.

But it’s not something that’s going to happen in any scenario.

I can assure. I’m not an animal without reason. I care about her very much, and I have never thought of satisfying my desires while overlooking her body.

It was the same that day.

I just wanted to touch Haruka more and more, more deeply.

I just wanted to convey how much I loved her.

I never had the slightest intention to do anything terrible to Haruka.

In fact, even with Shigure, all I did was to see her as Haruka while kissing her, nothing more.

... And yet.

Haruka looked at me as someone who might do something like that.

When I think about that lack of trust, my heart hurts.

I’m not sure if you really like me, Haruka?

No matter what kind of fun topics she talks about, I always have this black sludge of doubt stuck in the back of my head.

And in order to keep that sludge out of my mind, I have to pay attention to everything I say and do, and it’s exhausting.

It’s like a job interview... I hope you’ll be satisfied soon.

That was when I was lost in thoughts.

Softly, with the gentleness of a mama bird wrapping her baby bird in its wings, I was hugged from behind.

“Huh~~~~?”

It was Shigure who hugged me.

I looked back over my shoulder to see what she was up to, and our eyes met.

“...Just now, that was a slip of the tongue wasn’t it? Onii-san.”

My heart thumped...

It was because her expressions had completely changed from the time she was just joking around.

Her cheeks were flushed as if she had a fever, and her eyes were moist with love.

It was the same passionate look as when she kissed me.

Why all of a sudden...

... Where did I make a mistake in the first place?

As I blinked my eyes in confusion, she said to me

“I felt sorry for you, so I guess I was too nice to you. But did you already forget? *Your sister* is really mean, truly scary, and extremely... fond of you.”

“...!”

“Do you really think I’ll let you get away after saying something cute like you wanted to spend more time with me than with her? Onii-san, you just showed your belly in front of a tiger who was watching you carefully. Your

soft, white belly. You can't complain about being eaten alive by... this tiger, can you?"

Shigure's slender fingers crawled through my stomach.

She tickled me with her claws.

Her words were heated with excitement, but not with rational calmness.

What the h**l is she trying to do, eat me alive?

I gulped at the overly excited words.

|| "Hey! Hiromichi-kun, are you listening?"

"Wha-what happened?"

|| "You didn't hear me...?"

Haruka's voice pierced the other ear.

I can't. I was so preoccupied with Shigure that I didn't hear her at all.

"Oh, I'm sorry, there seems to be something wrong with the signal..."

"You can't do that. You're on the call with your lovely girlfriend. You should focus on Nee-san's voice. Don't listen to *your sister*. She'll get suspicious."

"...!"

Whose fault is it that...!

And, I can't even protest.

Then Haruka says,

|| "It's okay. And I want you to know that we don't have club activities this weekend, so why don't you come to my house and we can do some

homework together?”

“Of course... I’ll-“

“... *Your sister* too had a great time today! We slacked off, didn’t study, bathed together, ate watermelon, played games, etcetera... It was an ordinary day, but it was very exciting and I was happy. So I wished, if only we could stay like this forever.”

I wished for the same, if only we could stay like this forever...

So we had the same thoughts.

I was shocked to hear that.

“I wish time would stop... With my sweet Onii-san.”

“H...!”

Her fingers that were tickling my neck came down to my chest.

She moved her fingers around my chest, that made almost leak out my voice.

“Hm~~~”

|| “Thank God. Hiromichi-kun would you mind—— I was hoping you could stay with me—— Ehehe, and for the next exam——want——will do.”

“Hey. I wonder what will happen if I speak up here and now. I’m sure everything will turn into a mess. The relationship between you and Nee-san that you’re trying so hard to protect, the smile on her face, everything, everything.”

|| “And actually, I want to tell you —————— and also ——————, huh? it’s —————— again.”

“But that’s not a bad idea. Because lately you look really hurt. If you don’t have the courage to destroy it yourself, I can do it for you, right here and now. If you want to have a time like today, Onii-san...”

Shigure’s words whispered so close to me that she almost bit my ear.

I felt a chill run down my spine and... despair.

Haruka may find out.

She might learn about my relationship with Shigure, and what I did to her.

If that happens, my relationship with Haruka will be ruined.

If that was to happen, I might be able to free myself from the pain I feel every time I see or talk to Haruka, but... but...

“Please stop it...”

|| “_____。 _____ ? _____ ! ”

“Do you hate this...?”

Nod.

I don’t like it. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it.

I don’t know how to love or be loved anymore.

When I’m with Haruka, my mind is messed up and all I can see are the painful things.

But... I still want to be with her.

The only thing I know for sure is that I love Haruka.

I don’t want to let her go. I don’t want to lose her.

That’s why I rejected Shigure with a tone like a buzzing mosquito.

Then Shigure gently pulled herself off my back.

... and came to the front.

“Then look at me and say it. Look straight into my eyes, and tell me, do you like me? Right here, right now.”

She put both of her hands on my cheeks and forced me to look only at her...

She looks a little bit sullen though.

But if I do that, Haruka will hear me.

I can't. I can't...

Of all people, to make Haruka hear such words...

“It's okay to lie. If you put it into words here and now, I'll let it sink in. But if you don't tell me... You never know what this beast who is excited by your unintentional comment will do!”

“Wha~~~!!”

A glint, a savage light flickers behind her long eyelashes.

I can feel that Shigure is serious.

I was so careless.

I'm trapped, what a foolish prey...

There was only one choice left for me to make if I wanted to survive.

I looked straight in her eyes and says,

“I love you...”

|| “What? S-s-saying all of that... is really out of the blue, isn’t it? It’s surprising. But I’m happy. You said you like me. I love you too, Hiromichi-kun.”

What I said to Shigure. Haruka, who knew nothing about me, happily replied with the same words.

I felt like I was going to lose my mind over the reality of this messy situation.

|| “Oh, I’m sorry. The train has arrived. I’ve got to go.”

“O-Okay. Good luck with your club.”

|| “I’ll see you on the weekend. Let’s talk about the time later on LINE. Bye bye.”

“Yeah. Bye bye.”

That’s when I finally got off the call with Haruka.

As soon as I confirmed that, I let out a big sigh.

I’m so tired.

My heart is racing so fast that I can’t breathe well.

“Y-you-you... you really, That was too much.”

“Haha. You’re sweating a lot, aren’t you?”

“It’s not funny!”

“I wasn’t serious. I told you, didn’t I? I told you to listen to your precious girlfriend. If Onii-san was able to ignore my voice properly, nothing would have happened.”

“You’re lying! I’m pretty sure you were serious.”

“I’m not lying. It’s like when I love someone, I feel like messing with them a little.”

Shigure laughs without seeming to take responsibility.

But I didn’t have the will to condemn it.

... No, it wasn’t a lack of willpower, but it was a lack of justice.

I know that.

In the end, it’s me who’s in the middle of this troublesome situation.

With Haruka,

With Shigure...

Now I’m totally screwed.

I don’t know how long this will go on.

As a lover and as a brother, I wanted to grow as much as I could.

Not that long ago, I had sworn that to myself.

But now the path I’m on is too dark.

I don’t know how to move forward.

I don’t know where I’m supposed to go.

I don’t know... what I want.

No matter how many times I asked, no answer came back to me.

Chapter 24 (End) - Pure Love X

Fumble

Part 1

I want to go back.

I want to return to the relationship where I can tell Haruka that I love her without hesitation.

That day's phone call helped me reassure my feelings.

If that's true then I shouldn't be intoxicated by Shigure's sweet poison.

Shigure is sweet, kind, and offers me everything, just as I desire.

But if I indulge in those feelings, I will only sink even deeper.

I have to face Haruka.

And I have to make her believe in me.

That I'm not after her body.

That I'm not a man who would impulsively hurt her.

If she believes me, then I'm sure Haruka will forgive me for that kiss from before.

And a stronger bond will form between us.

So the question is, what do I have to do to make her believe me?

To be honest, I have no idea.

I think I should talk to Tomoe about this...

“Excuse me?”

“Oh, excuse me! Welcome!”

Not good.

A customer came to the counter when I was lost in thought.

I asked Takeshi to introduce me to a part-time job at this drugstore so that I could give Haruka a birthday present which will be in October.

I got the job through referral, so I had to do it properly.

I blamed myself, picked up the barcode reader to deal with the customer who came to the cash counter.

—Wow. *This woman is so beautiful.*

Or rather, She was a beautiful girl. From the look on her face and the color of her hair, I’d say she’s not Japanese. Her facial features were truly sharp. In addition, she was tall, and not to mention they were huge.

But her demeanor was elegant as if she was a princess.

Maybe she was younger than me?

Oh no... not good, not good.

I was about to be in a daze again.

I have to give her the bill quickly. Wait, what's that...?

“...!”

I froze the moment I saw the items she brought.

Lipstick. Perfume. Cold-drinks. So far, it was good. But this rectangular package with the words “0.01mm” written in big letters... was “the rubber for that kind of stuff!”

E-even such a beautiful girl buys such things. Heh, heh, eh...

No... It must be because she's beautiful.

In case her boyfriend...I guess it is for that.

I felt like I had seen something that I shouldn't.

If I think about it too much then it's gonna show on my face.

I should hurry up.

“Thank you very much!”

“~~~~~!”

That redhead girl snatched the poly-bag and ran off as if to escape.

I guess it showed on my face.

If so, I'm truly sorry.

“Hiromichi.”

After the girl left the store, Takeshi, who was standing next to her in front of the cash register, spoke about her with a slightly blushing face as if he had been watching her.

“W-well, the thing that cute girl just bought was... “the rubber for that kind of stuff!”, right?”

“Yeah. It was “the rubber for that kind of stuff!””

“So it was the truth, sigh! It's all messed up! Young people in this country are out of control!”

The muscle-head was worried about society.

Though she looked like a foreigner to me.

“I sometimes feel like I’m losing my mind, Hiromichi, when I think about the people I see having s*x.”

“You should go to the hospital, you’re saying weird things.”

But when I think of girls my age using such things, it makes me feel like there’s a completely different world out there.

I’m not sure how many years it will be before the current Haruka and me, who can’t even hug each other, start using these things.

“... No.”

That’s when it happened.

Inside my mind, a flash of light led me to the solution of my problem, an idea came to my mind.

That’s right, this will do it.

This is what I’ve been missing!

“Takeshi!”

“What the heck?”

“Pack me one of these c*ndoms!”

“You traitorous b*****d!!!! Our friendship is over!!!!”

Part 2

Finally, the weekend came.

I went over to Haruka's house and we did our summer homework together.

You might be thinking, "What's the point of doing homework with her during the summer vacation?"

However, studying is the only field where I, a person with low-middle-grade human specs, can impress Haruka, a beautiful S-class girl.

I actually like having study dates where I can respond to her requests.

Besides, the situation of entering a girl's room is quite exciting for a guy.

The time flew by, and before I knew it, it was dusk.

"Thank you, Hiromichi-kun. Thanks to you, I've made a lot of progress! Having a smart boyfriend helps me get my homework done quickly so I can focus on acting."

"It was a small price to pay. You even bought me lunch."

"It's a cheap burger, though! It could've been more expensive, you know?"

"No, no. It's still 600 yen. Besides, you can't have a part-time job because of the drama club. I can't bear to take any more from you like that."

"I'm happy to have a boyfriend who understands what I'm going through."

Haruka made hand gestures of worshipping and muttered thanks and appreciation.

She was giggling like a cat.

I felt like I'm seeing various kinds of expressions today.

"You're in a good mood today. Haruka"

“Ah, do I look like that?”

“Yes. You look cute though. Did something good happen?”

When I asked, Haruka’s expression became like that of a sloppy cat.

“Well... yes. You know Hiromichi-kun. I called you today because, as we talked about on the phone, there was something I wanted to tell you first.”

“To me?”

“Yeah. I haven’t even told my dad or Shigure yet. Fufufu.”

When I asked, she coughed cutely and told me with a proud look.

“Ehem, Haruka Saikawa has been chosen as the leading actress for this year’s festival act!”

“Whoa! Really?”

“It’s for real! The leader informed me the other day that she’s going to write a script for the school festival in which I’ll be the main lead!”

“Really? The leader said that...?”

“When I see Haruka these days, it stimulates my creativity. I was wondering what kind of tragedy would suit this cute little maiden in love...”

“... I’m starting to get anxious. It’s not something weird, right?”

“Hahaha... Leader is usually like that, but she’s a pro when it comes to scripts, so nothing weird will come out of her.”

I see. Well, then I hope it’ll be fine.

“But yeah. You’re playing the lead. Haruka, you’ve been working very hard.”

Seiun's drama club is a fairly large group, thanks to the centripetal force aka the leader of the club, who is also a famous writer.

Even a novice like me can understand how amazing it is to be chosen as the lead from that leader.

When I see Haruka's gleaming face, unable to hide the joy that overflowed from her heart, it makes me even happier than I am.

... I'm relieved that I feel this way.

Because that proves that I love Haruka.

That's right. I love her smile.

Just looking at her bright smile makes my heart skip a beat.

I'm filled with so much love that I wish to hug her.

I want to hug her and kiss her.

I think... I'm about to ride these overflowing feelings once again.

Because these feelings can't be wrong.

Once Haruka denied it, I've been reluctant to do so, but not expressing my love for my beloved lover, hiding it from the public, keeping my distance, and looking for a good mood is still wrong.

My feelings were once rejected by Haruka, and I felt sick all the time, but not expressing my love for her, hiding it from the public, keeping my distance, and looking for a good mood is still wrong.

... It will be fine.

I've made preparations for that. That's why I mustered up the courage I hadn't had in a while and asked,

"Hey, Haruka. To celebrate, can I kiss you?"

“Eh...”

“We haven’t done it in a while, right? Both of us...”

“... yeah, that’s right. I’ve been so busy that I haven’t been able to see you much.”

“No.”

I shook my head in denial.

It’s not because we didn’t see each other much that we couldn’t kiss.

It was because I didn’t even try.

“That day at the beach, I scared you. I thought over it a lot. Why did you blame me that much...?”

“!”

“The reason why I kissed like that was because I was so overwhelmed that I wanted to tell you I love you so much, not because I wanted to have s*x. So when you rejected me saying ‘*this isn’t love*’, I was really shocked, and to be honest, somewhere in the corner of my heart, I doubted Haruka. Why didn’t you believe that I would never do something so irresponsible? Why didn’t you want to touch me, your boyfriend, the same way I do? Do... you really love me...?”

“Hiromichi, kun...”

Haruka’s eyes trembled with surprise.

Her boyfriend doubted her.

It’s natural to be upset when someone close to you blurts out something like that.

But that’s in the past now.

So to reassure Haruka, I gently held her hand on the glass table and said,

“But then I finally realized that I was the one who was stupid.”

“Eh...”

“When I thought about it, it was natural for you to be scared. Because I wasn’t prepared for anything at that time. It’s too easy to ask people to trust you when you don’t have anything to trust them with. No wonder you rejected me. So now I, as a man, had to prepare this kind of thing to reassure Haruka.”

“Pre-pared?”

Haruka’s face shows her confusion.

She can’t seem to understand what I’m saying.

So I said the name, a little embarrassed to put it into words.

“... C*ndom”

“!?”

“I knew there was such a thing, but I never thought I’d need something like this. So I didn’t prepare. And that’s not gonna work.”

Because I’m in a relationship with the opposite s*x, Haruka.

That’s what they said in the s*x education class I took when I was in first year.

It’s not only to prevent unwanted pregnancies but also to prevent diseases, you have to wear a c*ndom when you have s*x.

“To be honest, I still can’t imagine us doing something like this... but this is not a matter of using it or not. If you care about your partner, you should be prepared.”

I didn't care about her enough.

I tried to close the distance between us without knowing.

"It's no wonder you didn't trust me. But it's different now. So... today, can I hug and kiss you again?"

Not only with my words, but also with my actions, I wanted to show my affection for Haruka.

I filled what was missing that night and reached for Haruka's shoulder.

I wanted to return to being a lover who can love her again.

My wish is to...

"Don't touch me!"

She forcefully rejected me.

Part 3

my extended hand was lashed out with a swift blow.

The pain numbed my bones, and I was stunned.

"... Haru-ka?"

"... Terrible, you're terrible, Hiromichi-kun..."

She wasn't smiling anymore...

Rather tears rolled down from her cheeks.

Why... are you crying?

What... did I do to make you cry?

“You promised me. You said that we will wait until we both are grown up and able to take responsibility for our actions... And yet, to bring such a thing is... terrible!”

“P-please listen to me! I didn’t mean to use it now. I just wanted to apologize for my carelessness...”

“Then why would you buy such a filthy thing?”

... is, eh? Dirty...?

C*ndoms?

eh? W-What do you mean?

“C*ndoms are for playful s*x that doesn’t involve making babies. To Hiromichi, s*x with me is just for fun!?”

“—!?”

Haruka’s *hysterical* reaction sent me into a panic.

Of course, I know that it’s for doing erotic things, and that’s embarrassing.

I was a little hesitant to even mention its name.

But I don’t think the purpose of using it is for fun.

I know that contraceptives play an important role in a healthy, caring relationship.

But Haruka’s perception... that it wasn’t.

That it was disgusting.

She expressed her sheer disgust.

Why?

Why would you react that way?

I don't know. I don't know, but this is bad.

I need to calm her down and explain. I wasn't trying to use it right now. I want to touch Haruka, but I'm not going to do anything more than that until she's ready.

But...

"People have s*x to make babies with the person they love. It's not about making a boy feel good."

"Please, just calm down and listen to me! I really didn't mean it! I..."

"Then why did you buy such a disgusting thing? Doesn't it means that you are after my body... I believed you were not like "Takao-san", but you are terrible, terrible..."

"H-Haruka."

"Go home...! Get out of this house right now!"

My voice couldn't reach Haruka anymore.

Haruka's shouting drove me out of her house, and I walked home helplessly through the city.

Falling, stumbling, lethargically

"....."

I thought as I stared at my shadow.

I wonder if I've done it again.

But... am I wrong about this?

I wish she could understand me.

That's what they told us in s*x education classes.

From an ethical standpoint, what I did couldn't have been wrong.

It was wrong to bring up the... topic, is what she meant.

That kind of sexual topic is taboo for Haruka.

Until we grow up and get married, we will keep everything to ourselves, and no matter how much I love Haruka and want to hug her, I have to be patient because it's dangerous to get excited.

Be patient, be patient, but still keep the fire in your heart alive.

"That's impossible."

I can't help but feel the need to touch you.

Because there are too few words to express my feelings for her.

I don't have the confidence to keep our bond without expressing my love.

Or is it that I was just after her body, despite all these reasons?

The truth must be that I never cared about her, I added this and that to justify my savage feelings...

"Ahh... Maybe she was right."

I am after a girl's body...

The love for her wasn't better than sexual craving.

I don't care who satisfies me as long as she has good looks.

And that's why I did those things to Shigure, isn't it?

It was such a frivolous thing to do.

Isn't that right?

I don't know.

Maybe it's right.

But I don't know.

I don't know myself.

I just, I was kind of, tired of...

Thinking about what I don't understand. Being swayed by trivial feelings. Everything.

If it's this hard... I'd rather... rather...

Forget about Haruka.

"Huh? Onii-san? Isn't it early. Welcome back"

When I opened the door of my house, I found Shigure peeking out from the entrance of the living room, probably watching TV.

"... yeah, I'm back."

"I was confused. I thought you were going to have dinner at Nee-san's house, so I didn't prepare anything... Onii-san?"

"Hm? What is it?"

"No, that's my line. What's the matter? How long will you keep dazing in the doorway?"

"...I'm not dazing. I'm starving. Let's get some food."

“That’s what I just said. Food is not prepared.”

“Y-yeah. You just told me right...”

It was hard for me to look at Shigure because it makes me remember Haruka.

I couldn’t look at her, so I turned away and entered inside.

I couldn’t hear much of what she was saying.

She stared at me with a worried expression.

“Um... Did something happen with Nee-san again?”

“Nothing.”

“That’s not a face that says nothing happened. Otherwise, your bright face won’t be so pale.”

“...”

“If you’re having a hard time, you can count on me. I’m her twin, you know. If it’s me, it’s not cheating. And I am happy just to be needed by you in any way.”

“Then let me hold you.”

“What?”

As soon as I heard the excuse she uses to forgive me, something inside me burst into tears.

I roughly grabbed her shoulders and pushed her against the wall.

“O-nii-san?”

Her eyes rolled back in surprise at the sudden violence.

Her expression resembled Haruka's when I asked her to kiss me earlier.

They are really too much alike...

"You said you love me, right? Then let me hold you...! Why I'm the only one who feels this way. I want to get closer and let you know how much I love you, why don't you think the same? If you don't like me, if you regret confessing your love to me, then say so clearly!!"

"Onii-san!"

"... I don't know anymore. Haruka, yours and my "love" are so different that I don't know if you really love me or not. It's just so painful."

It's no use telling Shigure this.

It should be said to Haruka herself.

But when I look at Shigure, who looks very much like Haruka, the negative emotions that have swelled to the point where I can't keep them inside my heart anymore overflowed into tearful words.

And once the dam was broken, there was no stopping it.

"Please... make me forget about Haruka..."

If I'm just after a girl's body, and I'm willing to take any girl, I'll be satisfied with Shigure.

The murky waters of my current emotions will calm down, and I won't have to think about Haruka anymore.

That should do it.

That's why I wanted Shigure, for such a selfish reason.

But in response to my awful request for help, Shigure said in a worried tone.

“That’s not possible.”

“...”

“No matter what I do, you won’t forget Nee-san. It doesn’t matter that I’m her twin. It’s because you’re a person who can’t be disloyal to others.

‘It’s my sister’s fault. It’s not your fault.’

You’re the person who can’t see the difference between those two... I’m sure you’ll regret it. You’ll blame yourself later and it’ll be much more painful than it is now.”

“~~~~!”

“This is why... I’m going to keep comforting you. Until you can forgive yourself. Forever.”

— Forever

I was grabbing her shoulders so hard that my nails dug in, but in return, she gently wrapped her arms around my neck and said,

“It’s fine. Do whatever you want, Onii-san.”

A smile that forgives my inadequacies, my selfishness, and everything else.

Once I looked into her eyes, I saw love, trust, and passion, everything I wanted Haruka to have.

I couldn’t hold myself back.

“Huu... Waaaa...”

I clung to Shigure and cried.

Part 4

After that, “my brother” cried his heart out until he couldn’t anymore, and then he fell asleep as if he had run out of energy.

I caressed his hair as he slept on my lap, trying to not wake him up.

I hope it will help him to dream a little better.

“...”

In the end, he never laid a hand on me.

To be honest, I knew he would.

Because he’s kind and... coward.

I believe that kindness does not necessarily come from strength.

Of course, there are people in this world who can be caring to those around them for every breath they take.

But he’s a coward and doesn’t want others to hate him. So he never thought of hurting others. He is always kind. He tried to be as honest as possible. His kindness comes from such self-love and self-preservation.

Some people say that this kind of kindness is fake.

Some people accuse such people as being dishonest.

But I don’t think so.

At the very least, I much prefer cowards unlike “Takao”, who was overly confident, doesn’t care what others think, and carelessly hurt people around him for his own sake.

My brother is a coward.

He lacks confidence in himself as a human being and needs other's evaluation to establish himself. So he tries to make himself look good.

He will never betray by mistake.

He tries to be as honest as possible, to all extent.

I am sure that such a person will become an ordinary, but honorable father who loves his family in the future.

If only he hadn't met me...

I was the one who set his wheels in motion.

I knew that.

I feel bad about it.

But I can't stop.

Because I love him, I want to get close, I want to hold him. I can't control these feelings.

So... I wouldn't complain about what he wants to do to me.

If he asks for it, I will give him my heart, my body, everything.

The same goes for money. As the daughter of a glamour model, I am blessed with good looks. If I use my looks to my advantage, I will have no trouble making money.

I'll do everything in my power to make him happy, to fulfill his every need.

That's what I'm prepared to do.

... But what about my sister?

How could she hurt him this badly?

As I was wondering about this while caressing my exhausted brother, my brother's phone rang that was lying on the floor.

The name of the person on the display was... my sister.

After ringing for a while, the phone switched to a voice message, and I could hear my sister's hoarse voice, as if she had been crying.

|| “... H-hello it’s me Haruka.”

“Nee-san...”

|| “Um... I’m sorry for yelling at you earlier. I just couldn’t stop feeling disgusted...”

My sister apologizes over the voice message.

“Disgust” is a pretty harsh word.

I wonder what happened between them.

I listen further.

|| “I actually have a very bad recollection about c*ndoms... You know Hiromichi-kun, my parents were divorced. It was because of my mom’s affair, and my dad found out about it... because I took it to him from the trash can. I was a little girl at the time and didn’t know... anything. Of course, it wasn’t that thing’s fault, it was my mom’s. But seeing that thing reminds me of the person who cheated with my mom and separated me and Shigure...”

C*ndom...

I wonder if the reason for the fight was that my brother mentioned it to her.

|| “But I didn’t want to make you feel uneasy about this. That’s why I called... to clearly express my feelings. I’ve never told you anything like

this before because I thought it was too early..."

My sister on the other end of the phone took a deep breath as if to make up her mind and said,

|| “I love you, Hiromichi-kun. I love you so much. When we grow up, I want us to get married...! I really do. I can’t think of anyone, and I don’t want to know anyone but you.

And one day, I want to tell my dad and Shigure that you are the one who cares for me the most, the one I love the most in the world.

... So, you know.

Until then, let's keep our relationship pure and honest, okay?

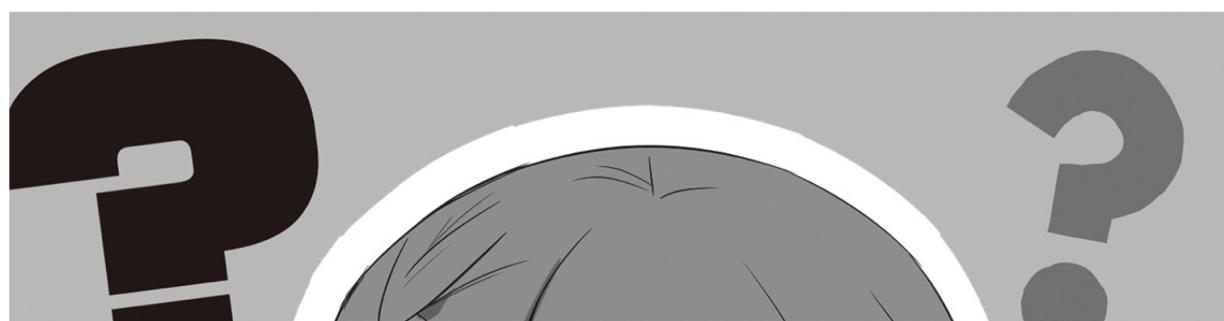
Because even if we don't do anything extreme, I'm sure we'll grow to love each other.

No. I think true love grows like that. It's not lust. It'll be a pure relationship of mutual affection. I want us to be like that. I believe that if it's with you, we can become like that. I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't be saying this over the phone, but I am afraid if I miss now, I might not have the courage to say it anymore... I hope you will understand.”

As if she were squeezing her feelings out, she expressed her innermost thoughts to my brother.

But when I heard her true feelings...

“？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？？”





I couldn't understand a word my sister was saying.

I was honestly surprised...

The fact that my brother was trying to comfort someone who was so far from understanding.

No, it was because...

Love without sexual desire is true love? What the h**l is that?

I don't get it.

Is that a Zen question or something?

The reason why we love the opposite s*x in the first place is because it is our biological mechanism to have offspring.

These physiological impulses are engraved in our genes, and affection exists as a result of these impulses controlling our emotions and thoughts.

Definitely not the other way around.

So isn't it natural that the more you think you love someone, the more you want to touch them? Isn't that what a pure relationship is all about?

Or rather...

If you deny it, then why did you go out with my brother in the first place?

If you were going to force him to wait until he was older, why didn't you just go out with him when he was older?

You talked about love, made him fall in love with you, but never responded to his feelings, in return you explained why you did it, and won't even allow my kind brother to forget you.

How could you be so selfish and irresponsible...?

I met him later than you, and can only touch him by becoming you.

“...”

I felt terrible cold emotions piercing my heart.

In this moment, I hated my twin sister, whom I loved and shared my flesh and blood with.

Because the two of you are... lovers, didn't you know that?

I can't imagine how my brother will feel when he hears what you just said.

A kind brother who always blames himself.

How foolish could he be, to let his temporary emotions get the better of him when my sister wasn't serious about their relationship.

And again, my brother desperately endured.

For better or worse, he's just an ordinary, timid boy, and now he's scattered in a way that he should never be.

It's my fault. It's all my fault.

You put a blade in your heart, to control your desires of a living being.

...To be honest, I never had the slightest intention of depriving my sister of her position as his lover.

Because I know that such a contract, which is similar to a "verbal promise", does not guarantee anything.

To be honest, I wasn't even interested.

So I had no intention of interfering.

All I wanted was to have a place in his heart.

But...

I'm already...

I don't want to be pushed around by my selfish sister and see her hurt my brother.

“_____”

When I thought of that... I had already acted.

With my brother's phone, which I never touched... while it is still connected to my sister,

I,

Pressed the call button.

“You've said a lot of selfish things... Nee-san.”

TN: Vol 3 – September 14 2021.

Thank you everyone for reading. Have a great day