

笠原 勝  
KINUGASA SYOUGO  
トモセシユンサク  
TOMOSESHUNSAKU

年生編

ようこそ実力主義の教室へ  
Welcome to the Classroom of the Second-year





9

ようこそ実力至上主義の教室へ 2年生編 衣笠彰梧 ×  
トモセシュンサク  
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When I arrived at the location a little before the appointed time,  
Ichinose was already waiting, holding an umbrella behind her.

"Oh, Good morning Ayanokoji-kun."

ANIME ANYWAY  
FAN TRANSLATION



"Hey, Ayanokoji-kun, is it okay if I touch your face?"

"You won't get a gift from me even if you do."

When I jokingly said so, Ichinose gently laughed and nodded. Then, she reached out with her right hand and touched my cheek.

A rain that won't stop. Ichinose Honami and Ryuuen Kakeru.



ANIME ANYWAY  
FAN TRANSLATION

9



ようこそ実力至上主義の教室へ 2年生編<sup>6</sup>

Welcome to the Classroom of the Second-year

# **CLASSROOM OF THE ELITE**

## **YEAR 2 VOLUME 9**

**A Fan Translation  
by Anime Anyway**

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# Classroom of the Elite

## Year 2 Volume 9

### Fan Translation by Anime Anyway

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## Prologue

### The Monologue of Miyabi Nagumo

Before long, I was the best both in academics and sports.

Before long, I was surrounded by people trying to take advantage of me.

It's not like I worked that hard.

Even though we learned the same things at the same time, I had the ability to learn much better than the others.

Surprisingly, that's almost a necessary condition to becoming popular here.

Popularity is a talent.

Ever since I was a child, I had the talent to become popular.

Of course, I do know that not everyone likes me.

I'm sure the guys who consider me their rival especially hate me.

I don't care, though.

Leaving good and evil aside, I was happy as long as people saw me as a popular person.

Such is my life as a popular person, unchanged all through primary and middle school, a dazzling road.

Still, I have been unable to shake off the strange sense of discomfort I feel from time to time.

A sense of discomfort with no answer.

In a life without even the slightest discomfort, that feeling alone always remained in my head.

A sense of discomfort that remains even after being accepted by and controlling everyone.

I decided not to care about it, though.

As long as I can continue being popular, this feeling of discomfort or whatever it is doesn't matter.

That's what I thought.

However, things completely changed when I enrolled in high school.

I could no longer ignore this feeling of discomfort swelling up in me.

Horikita Manabu.

That man a year above me had the respect of all those around him.

He was much more dazzling and intelligent than me, and had a certain conviction on top of that.

Then, another man who had a different type of talent than Horikita Manabu showed up under me.

Ayanokoji Kiyotaka.

He is very different and has a cocky attitude, but his ability is undeniable.

My accomplishments aren't inferior to theirs.

Along with the feeling of discomfort, sometimes, I think about it.

Is my ability truly the real thing?

Or, am I a *naked emperor*<sup>1</sup> who was simply not ever blessed with a good opponent?

[<sup>1</sup>TL Note 1 : *Naked emperor* - The phrase here is a reference to another story. You can have a look at it [here](#).]

I can't stop thinking about that.

That is the true form of my feeling of discomfort.

So, I have to bring things to a conclusion and get rid of this feeling.

I have to defeat Ayanokoji, and prove that I am the most talented.

If I don't——

# Chapter 1

## A Sign of Things to Come

### Intro

The 2nd term is finally coming to an end.

The school trip passed away like a fading dream, but it's soon the winter vacation for the second years.

Winter is the end of the year, the season of farewells.

The lowest temperature today is 1°C, so it's been quite cold.

The students running through the road are also chatting about the cold while blowing out their white breaths.

Every morning, I watch this uneventful daily scene and carve it into my memory.

This may be pointless for someone who only lives in the now.

However, what about the ones who know this time is limited?

What would happen if they knew that they could only look at this scene for one more year?

I think that they would see this daily life as a glittering gem.

While waiting for someone to come and gazing at the scenery of daily life, a message arrived.

“Come to the student council room after school today.”

The forceful text that didn't let me say yes or no came from Nagumo.

"The student council room?"

I'm not very interested, but, thinking about the future, I can't refuse him so easily.

Besides, even if we had a conflict of interest, we cooperated in the culture festival.

I gave a short reply only saying "okay", and turned the screen off.

As I returned to gazing at the students and the scenery, Kushida entered my line of sight.

She smiled and waved, not really giving me a proper greeting. So I raised my hand up in response, but — just before she passed, she glared right at me.

"What are you doing...? Since the morning."

I waved at her because she waved at me, but why do I have to be glared at? I think she wanted to confirm no one else saw her face, but I don't know what I did.

I understand if this is because she simply hates me because of our history but...

I feel like she just did a hit and run on me.

"Sorry Kiyotaka! I'm here!"

Just then, she came running from the direction of the dormitory and called out to me.

"You're only a few minutes late, don't worry about it so much."

"But...! Anyway, isn't it too cold to wait out here?"

We were supposed to meet in the dormitory's lobby, so she showed me a suspicious expression.

“I’m fine. More importantly, you missed a part.”

Kei must have been in quite a hurry, as it is unlike her to make a mistake like this.

“No way!”

She covered her face in shame. Then, she used her fingers as a comb to try and fix it.

However, no matter how many times she tried, it jumped back up.

“Uaah, what should I do..!?”

“I don’t think you need to worry that much. Hondou and Ike come to class with way worse bed-hair.”

“Don’t compare me with boys!! Ugh, I’ll go to the toilet when we get to school...”

Kei started walking while hiding her bed-hair with embarrassment.

Well, there’s nothing wrong with caring about the way you look.

## Part 1

Reaching the classroom first by myself, I sat down on my seat.

“Good morning, Kiyotaka-kun.”

“Yeah, good morning.”

Surrounded by girls, Yousuke called out to me.

I'm happy that he greeted me, but I don't like that all the girls are staring at me as if saying “give me back my Hirata-kun”.

“This may be necessary, but please tell me if I can help you out with anything.”

I was wondering what he'd say, but it's this again?

“Haven't you been saying that every day recently?”

Yousuke looks concerned about the group of 3 looking over here from a distance.

I used to be a member of that group, so I guess they are concerned after I left.

Yousuke really hasn't been himself since the school trip ended.

Yousuke also worries about people even if they say he shouldn't.

“I'll let you know if that time comes, thanks. It'll be a lot of help if you could keep quiet and watch over me.”

So, I made sure that I conveyed the fact that I can see his good will.

I guess Yousuke will keep speaking out to me on a regular basis until our relationship is restored.

“I'm really no good. I just can't stand to see the instability in the class, so...”

He seems to dislike the fact that he can't stop himself from putting his feelings into words.

Yousuke always blames himself, even if he hasn't done anything wrong.

"Anyway, the girls are waiting for you. That's what I'm worried about."

The envious looks that say "How long are you going to monopolize Yousuke?" have grown more intense.

As Kei entered the class, Yousuke returned to the girls.

With the bell ringing and Chabashira-sensei entering the class, a new school day started.

"I'm sure the lack of warning won't surprise you any more, but you will be taking the 2nd term's special test right before winter break."

My classmates had gotten used to the special exams, but they were quite shaken, as everyone thought things would remain the same until winter break.

"Oops. Looks like I surprised you a little this time."

There were also a lot of big events going on like the culture festival and the school trip, so.

For a school like this, all that stuff and the special exam are different matters, though.

However, there's only a little more than two weeks left to conduct the special exam.

I suppose long term preparations and measures weren't needed, so I wonder what it'll be about?

"I understand why you're nervous, but there's no need for that. In the first place, it isn't the kind of special exam that has a risk of causing dropouts."

It looks like the most important factor, which is expulsions, will not be relevant this time.

“Of course, there is no avoiding the change of class points. Since you’re aiming for the A Class, I’m sure this isn’t something you can afford to lose.”

We can’t catch up and overtake them by just winning one or two times. So, we have to be prepared to win all of our battles from now on.

“For this special exam, there aren’t any complicated rules that have to be beaten into your heads. It will be a one versus one of academic ability with the other classes.”

A duel of academic ability.

It’s not a surprising test for this school, or this school’s students.

Rather, it’s the standard.

We compete with each other even in the midterms or the finals.

However, needless to say, when it’s a special exam, there are always some special rules that affect the outcome.

“The winner will receive 50 class points from the loser. You get 50 class points for winning, and lose 50 class points if you lose.”

I can’t say that it’s a big number, it would be a rather low fluctuation.

“If it’s a class-based competition, then wouldn’t it be a bad idea to fight Class A!?”

“Rejoice, Ike, because you will be fighting Class A.”

It seems that our opponent was already decided, so we were confronted with a cruel reality by Chabashira-sensei.

“The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th place classes with the highest average scores in the recently held final test will be competing in a straightforward fashion. There are some special rules, but the fact that the lower ranked classes and A Class are competing against each other will also have a significant impact on the outcome.”

As of December, the class points are 1250 for Sakayanagi's A class and 985 for Horikita's B Class.

If we win the head-to-head match up, we will be close to 165 points after deducting 100 class points.

We will also be on our way to surpassing the 1000 class points mark for the first time since our enrollment.

On the other hand, Ryuuen's C Class has 684, and Ichinose's D Class has 655. If Ichinose wins, she will reach C class again, and if she loses, there will be one more step between her and A Class. It's a tough development.

However, even if it's an easy fight, they haven't won even once with academic ability up until now. One could say they are 1st and 2nd place, but the difference in their academic ability still isn't small.

"The questions are from all permanent subjects on the midterm and final exams. From the easiest to the most difficult questions, it will be the same as the regular written tests, no, perhaps more difficult."

Although the academic level of this class is growing at a rate that is head and shoulders above the others, the possibility of turning things around is low, even if my classmates study to death for the next two weeks.

"Now, let's talk about how you guys can win."

The detailed contents of the special test appeared on the screen.

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## Second Term Final Special Exam - Cooperative Comprehensive Written Test

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### Summary:

The class will solve 100 questions in total.

### Rules:

The students will solve the questions in a determined order.

Each student can solve 5 questions at most, but everyone has to solve at least 2 questions, correctly or not.

Regardless of if it's correct or incorrect, a student's solution cannot be changed by another student.

Each student will be given a maximum of 10 minutes, including time to enter and exit the room.

All students except those challenging the test must wait in a separate room.

The next student must wait for their turn behind the door.

If a student goes over the time limit, he will fail and gain no points.

Leaving a written or verbal hint is a violation of the rules.

If a violation is found, the test will be forcibly terminated and a score of zero will be given.

There will be a special bonus added on according to the remaining time.

Leaving more than an hour.... 10 points

Leaving more than 30 minutes... 5 points

Leaving more than 10 minutes... 2 points

All problems are scored according to the solver's ability (see below), regardless of difficulty.

(The solver's abilities are based on the OAA Academic Ability on December the 1st.)

Academic Ability A....1 point

Academic Ability B....2 points

Academic Ability C....3 points

Academic Ability D....4 points

Academic Ability E....5 points

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A test in which the number of points obtained increases or decreases according to the student's ability, regardless of difficulty.

It seems out of the norm, but it is a very fitting rule for a special exam.

There is also A + for academic ability in the OAA and there seem to be 5 categories, so the students with A + may have a slight advantage.

"These are the written test's rules. It may seem advantageous for the A Class who has a lot of members with high academic ability, but there is a high percentage of students in the OAA with Academic Ability B or above. In other words, they will earn less points for solving problems. Do you understand what that means?"

While there are many students in the Horikita's Class who have made remarkable academic progress, there are also some students like Kei, Satou, Ike, and Shinohara, who are still stuck at the bottom.

Although they won't be able to solve many questions, this means that they can get 4 or 5 points by just managing to solve one question.

This certainly can't be said to be a purely academic contest, and I can't say that this is disadvantageous for the A Class.

Rather, it can be said that the developments and the outcomes will be beyond the scope of our imaginations.

There is a point bonus for the remaining time, but I'm not sure if this is that realistic.

Including the time you enter the room, the count-down starts from the moment you put your hand on the door handle.

There are 38 people in the Horikita Class.

If they can't manage to solve the questions in one or two minutes each, then it's impossible to leave at least an hour remaining. There is also a risk of the students with low academic ability making mistakes because of the time limit

. This addition from remaining time is more of a consideration for the side that is winning in the Academic Ability OAA.

No, paying too much attention to the time loss is also a danger.

"We have plenty chance of winning - that's the kind of special exam this is."

It looks like Horikita also understands the winning chance that the rules give us.

"That's right. Of course, the students in A Class are well rounded academically from the top to the bottom. I'm sure they'll score well. Even though we have many Academic ability D or below students here with a potential for high scores, if they don't answer the questions correctly, they'll still receive 0 points."

Still this is much better than facing them head on.

"I would also like to add something about the acts of cheating stated in the rules. Conversations are forbidden while in the waiting classroom or with students who have finished their tests. There will be a few students waiting in each classroom, but please refrain from needless conversations. I recommend you don't throw away the test with one simple mistake."

I'm sure the students will already take the fact that we will be strongly observed into consideration.

"Umm, if someone is absent on the test day... What happens then?"

"If one person is absent, two questions will be unanswerable. If two people are absent, four questions will be unanswerable and they'll get 0 points. The time limit will remain the same. Further, the questions that will be unanswerable are decided at random before the test starts. Also, it's unlikely, but if there is a tie, there will be no change in class points."

Which means that intentionally making someone absent would be a useless strategy.

Classes with a lot of students like the Ichinose and Ryuumen classes have the advantage of being given more time, but I can say that this has no effect on the points they can earn by solving questions.

As it is the most efficient and ideal thing for an unexpected student with a low OAA rating to solve five questions and get a score, the number of students only has a minimal impact.

Well, we each coincidentally have the same number of people anyhow, so this talk is in itself meaningless.

"You gotta talk among each other and think about what is your best chance to win against A Class."

Chabashira-sensei said these words, like a mother watching over her children.

"About the date for the special exam, we decided to give you some time until right before the winter break. The test subjects are very numerous, so we decided some time was necessary. This will be difficult, but if you succeed, you will get closer to A Class. That's all."

It looks like the scope of the test will be announced tomorrow, so this is the end of the discussion here.

## Schedule

December 22....The Special Test

December 23.... Announcement of the special test's results, 2nd term closing ceremony

So it's right before the 2nd term ends.

Still, there's only 3 weeks remaining until the test.

While the students with high academic ability usually have a different attitude towards their studies and wouldn't mind this time restraint, the key to victory lies with the students who are below average in academic ability.

"I looked at each class's academic ability on the OAA and investigated the situation. As we have a lot of students with D or E academic ability here in B Class, our points will be increased. In other words, in the most ideal situation, we have a 100% chance of winning."

As the students with lower academic ability in the OAA can gain more points, no matter how much they study, the points that A Class can gain are limited.

Well, this is just in theory. The probability is as thin as a sheet of paper.

With almost 40 students participating, a perfect score is almost impossible.

Taking Chabashira-sensei's comments and the rules of the special test into account, I can expect that there will be a high percentage of difficult questions.

If the questions could be solved by students with E or D in academic ability, that would be rather unbalanced.

It would be an absurd test that gave a disadvantage to the classes with higher academic ability.

We need something like a study group, but I doubt that alone will lead to victory.

“It’s also important who solves how many problems before passing the baton on to the next person.”

Yousuke asked so to Horikita in a calm tone of voice.

“Yes. The simplest way would be to put the students with low academic ability in front and have them solve as many problems as they can, but...”

The time limit is 10 minutes.

The ability to read through and understand the problems will also vary depending on the student.

It can be challenging to quickly find the easy problems out of the 100 problems on the test.

If the students with high academic ability get through the difficult questions first, it will take the lower students less time to find the right problems and they will be able to be more calm and focused.

Who can solve which problems?

Understanding that and directing the students accordingly is also a winning strategy.

I’m sure there are several other ways to do this. In the end, the important thing is to decide the strategy early on and get the class moving.

“Chabashira-sensei said there’s a chance we can win, but... We’re still in an unfavourable position.”

"If they score well, we probably won't win. Our opponent is the A Class, so."

My classmates began talking.

Up until now, A Class has never been below the others in total score in a pure written test.

Even with the special rules, there's no changing the fact that they are a formidable foe.

"We're up against A Class this time, but we're actually competing with ourselves. It doesn't matter what strategy they come up with. There's no need to get too worked up just because our opponent is Sakayanagi-san."

She emphasized that we should be facing inside, and not outside.

"I will think as much as I can about a strategy. In the meantime, I would like you all to study as much as you can, even one second counts."

Up until now, no, until a few weeks ago to be precise, the students were studying for the final test. Even though it's a student's job to study, I'm sure everyone will get sick of it after having to study again in such a short period of time.

Still, I can't even see one student expressing their dissatisfaction.

"We'll back you up as much as we can."

Yousuke replied so to Horikita, and the students like Yousuke and Mii-chan who do the teaching part in the study groups took the initiative and started moving.

"Alright! I'm getting excited! Personally, I have mixed feelings about my OAA going up, but I'm going to contribute as much as I can!"

Sudou, who had received a grade of E in academic ability, is up to C+ now.

The score he can earn now is lower than before, but he's made a big leap in his ability.

If he was still E in academic ability, he would have a hard time even solving the problems.

## Part 2

After school, I slipped out of the class as they started their discussion and arrived at my destination pretty much right on time.

I almost knocked right away, but I heard people talking inside the room.

However, I can't hear what they're talking about through the thick door.

I might be able to hear some things clearly if I keep listening for a while, but my appointment was just a moment away, so I quickly discarded the option of eavesdropping.

“...Hi.”

I entered the student council room right at the instructed time.

Two boys were already sitting in the student council room, and one of them quickly stood up.

“Sorry for calling you out here, Ayanokoji.”

“I don’t mind, but I’m a little nervous seeing the student council president and vice president standing ready like this.”

I said something that an average student would say.

“Sorry, but you don’t look so nervous to me.”

Nagumo crossed his legs and pointed at me after he spoke, signalling me to approach him.

Kiriyama moved to a position slightly behind Nagumo where he could still be seen.



Then, he looked at the screen of his phone after taking it out of his pocket.

However, in less than a second, he turned it off and returned it to his pocket.

The one who spoke after that wasn't student council president Nagumo, but vice president Kiriyama.

"After this, I also called in student council members Horikita and Ichinose."

"Horikita and Ichinose?"

Assuming this combination is not a coincidence, they're both second-year students who are in the student council.

"There's no need to rush things, Kiriyama. Don't you think Ayanokoji wants to chat with us for a bit too?"

"Sorry, but it doesn't look like it. I can see from his face that he wants to keep this short."

I felt gratitude in my heart for Vice President Kiriyama's accurate judgement.

"Still, there's a lot of things I want to prepare for the next special test too."

"The special test? Us year-threes aren't going to have another special test in the second term, are we? Besides, it doesn't matter if you've already decided that you'll be the winner, right?"

Not understanding why he said this, Nagumo gave a suspicious side-ways glance at Kiriyama.

"Still. I want to be prepared for any unexpected situation. Many more year-three students than you think are aiming for victory. What if a student who can catch me off guard shows up?"

"Those fools are already all expelled. There's no one else left for you to call an enemy."

"I hope so."

The year-three students don't have much time left.

With Nagumo holding all the authority, they have to somehow get the ticket for 20,000,000 points, so they're still fighting over that.

It's no wonder that Nagumo is so optimistic that he has no enemies. Since Nagumo holds all the necessary tickets, no one can defy him. If someone doesn't comply with him, including Kiriyama, they might be stripped of their ticket to advance to the finals.

On the other hand, however, those who have not been given a ticket are not bound by it.

It's a grandiose idea, but one could expel Nagumo and accumulate private points from there. ...No, I doubt that would be profitable for them, though.

If Nagumo is expelled, his huge amount of private points will probably return to the school. Because without such a contract, he would not be able to protect himself.

In other words, Nagumo's existence also includes the funds for their own rise to power. Except for Nagumo's private points, the private points collected in the 3rd term would only be enough to save one or two students.

"Is there something in your mind? Kiriyama. You've been flaring up at me all day since this morning today."

"It doesn't matter if there's something in my mind or not, does it? Even if I say something now, you're not going to stop in your tracks on "this matter", right?"

"Am I wrong?" Nagumo nodded at the strong verification and laughed.

"Sorry, Kiriyama. This is a personal decision that I have to settle while I'm still in this school."

"In that case, please take into account my desire to quickly get it over with."

It seemed like there was a bit of an argument going on before I entered the room too.

It's certain that "this matter" Kiriyama has been pestering Nagumo about all day isn't something that Kiriyama likes. No, it's probably not something I'd like either.

"Fine, fine. I'll make our chat quick. Okay?"

I suppose there is no choice but to have this chat, so Nagumo got confirmation from Kiriyama.

"There will be another matter about a different student council issue, so please keep it short."

In the end, Kiriyama agreed, and Nagumo began what he judged to be a necessary chat or whatever.

"You year-two students seem to be in an unusually tight race."

"Looks like it."

"In our generation, and in Horikita-senpai's generation, A Class always had a big lead by the middle of the second year. I'm a little envious that you get to enjoy it until this time of the year."

In the past, the war between classes was usually settled by the end of the first year to the middle of the second year when the difference in class points became too large.

The class that started as A Class detached from B Class and below and graduated as A Class.

There were rare cases such as Student Council President Nagumo's B Class turning into A class, but in any case, one class always had the lead by the middle of the second year.

On the other hand, in our year, the point difference is so tight that even the D Class still has a chance of turning around.

"It looks like all four classes have a chance for now, but I'm sure that'll end by the final test."

“I think so too. There’ll be two classes… at most three classes competing for the seat of A Class.”

Nagumo and Kiriyma both made that judgement without hesitation.

“The final test for the year-two students is going to be intense, huh?”

“Yeah. The contents of the test are of course different, but the results will mostly be a tragedy. Last year, I had all of the year-two students under my control at the time of the final test, and was in a position to control the test itself. I kept the damage to a minimum, but three students still dropped out.”

Nagumo tried to prevent it from happening, but there were inevitable casualties.

“There was a way to reduce the number of expulsions to zero, but there was nothing I could do when I weighed the decrease in class points and private points I could gain.”

This story may be true, but whether it’s helpful or not is another matter.

It is unlikely that the final test we’ll take and the final test Nagumo and the generation above experienced are the same in content.

However, the scale will mostly be the same. Anyone can easily see that if they’ve been spending their lives in this school all this time.

“I think that’s enough idle talk. Please enter the main subject, Nagumo.”

Quietly urged so by Kiriyma, Nagumo shrugged and showed his white teeth.

“In the first place, I’m about to finish my role as Student Council President. Which means that we have to decide the next Student Council President.”

“You’ve already had a longer term in office than the previous presidents, right?”

From Horikita Manabu to Nagumo Miyabi.

The baton of the Student Council President should have been passed earlier.

I also remember that Nagumo himself said that he would extend his term in office.

“That was my intent, but the school approached me many times, you see. Apparently, I would be depriving my juniors of gaining experience if I put it off any longer. Well, there is some truth to that.”

“Except me and Nagumo, all of the year-three students have finished their duties in the Student Council.”

The next Student Council President will be decided, and these two will be relieved of their posts.

But, I see.

So, Nagumo decided to give up his position as Student Council President.

That would explain why they are calling in the names they mentioned earlier.

“Suzune or Honami? I have to decide which of the two is more suitable to be the next Student Council President.”

“You have the power to appoint someone, don’t you, President Nagumo?”

“Yeah. I do have that authority.”

“Then, shouldn’t you be talking with Horikita or Ichinose instead of me?”

I said something very obvious, but I can see from his lack of surprise that he is already aware of this.

“But it’s a waste to just pick one myself, right?”

“Considering the fact that you called me here... Well, I can guess.”

“You and I are going to decide who the next Student Council President will be.”

“You want more than just support from me, right?”

“I’ve been thinking about various methods of competing with you, and this should be a good way to do it. Horikita and Ichinose are both second-years like you. They probably have as much information as we do.”

It’s not surprising that Nagumo wants to settle this as soon as possible, seeing as he does not have a lot of time left.

I don’t think Nagumo would believe this is the ideal way to fight.

Still, he must have decided that this was better than nothing at all.

“There is still the option of postponing it. Taking last year as an example, I wouldn’t be surprised if there was a special test where we team up and compete with each other like in the training camp.”

“Well, if that time comes, we can call this matter the warm-up match.”

Not wanting to delay it any further, Nagumo wants to surround me so that I can’t flee.

“I agreed to have a duel, but I won’t agree to have a second one.”

I am interested in Nagumo, but I can’t keep wasting my time on him forever. There are things I want to do for the future too.

“Are you saying you have the right to refuse?”

“I just don’t want to turn this into a senseless game. If you really want this battle of deciding the Student Council President, then I’d like you to consider this our real duel.”

“That’s fine with me, but it’ll be a fight where you have a high chance of losing. You know that, right?”

“As long as the current students are given a right to vote, all of the year-threes will vote as you want them to. In other words, one-third of the votes have already been cast. That’s what you’re saying, right?”

“Yeah. You can barely make things equal even if you gather all the year-twos together. Well, that may be impossible, though.”

Since our opponent Ichinose is in the same year, the votes of the year-two students will inevitably be split.

“If you could do me one favour, I think it’ll be a good match.”

“Very interesting. Try me.”

“I only want you to make the voting anonymous. If it’s only the school who knows who voted for whom, I can think that we’re even.”

“I don’t get it. Do you think that the year-threes won’t vote for my candidate then?”

“Well, I can at least imagine the possibility of that increasing.”

If anonymity is ensured, there will be no need to follow the rules.

Even if there was the promise of a reward like private points, it’s impossible to prove unless the Nagumo side gets close to zero votes.

“Still, do you really think that half the people in year three will become your allies? That’s ridiculous.”

“I can’t know until I try.”

Kiriyama is watching quietly as Nagumo and I talk.

“So, with only that condition added in, you accept the duel?”

“Yes. I do.”

“You’re strangely confident, as usual. Well, whatever. If you believe that it will be an equal duel then, I have no complaints either. But, before determining this affair, you should know that I want something to bet on the duel.”

Of course. If there are no bets, it won’t hurt or itch to lose.

I'm sure Nagumo doesn't want to cut any corners with me.

So, it's inevitable that there will be a bet where I'll have no choice but to win.

"Are you ready to bet everything? Ayanokoji."

"May I return those words right back to you? We can even bet over dropping out."

"That's fine. That's what I'd like to say, but that's a bit difficult."

"I'm sure. You have not just your own fate, but the fate of all the year-three students in your hands. No one would accept the risk of dropping out in that situation. I am willing to bet on dropping out, but in that case, please let me demand a corresponding reward."

"A corresponding reward?"

"If I win, I want to receive your private points. Enough points. Enough to buy a ticket to move to another class, if possible. Even under the Special Test's rules, I need that many private points to prevent expulsion. It shouldn't be too much to ask."

"Well, betting over expulsion itself has that much value, so."

With both of our interests aligned, we came to an agreement on the duel's direction.

However, it was Kiriyma listening from the side, who called a halt to this.

"I knew that you'd be dueling with Ayanokoji, but I can't agree on the contents of the bet. I can't let you gamble such a large amount of money on a game."

"Wait, Kiriyma. Do you think I'll lose with these rules? Ayanokoji said we'd be even just with the votes being anonymous, but he's way off the mark."

"I don't think you'll lose, but the possibility still isn't zero. It also depends on whether you will support Horikita or Ichinose. Most of all, 20,000,000 points is too many. If you can pay that much to Ayanokoji, use that money to save one of the year-three students instead."

It's no surprise that Kiriyama is objecting, but Nagumo shows no signs of backing down.

"I can spend the money I acquired through my ability however I want. It's always been that way."

"...No matter what?"

"No matter what. I'm going to win this fight and get Ayanokoji expelled."

"I don't get it. Why do you care about a year-two? I can't agree with this method."

Kiriyama kept opposing him, but Nagumo doesn't look like he intends to listen.

"I'll accept your wish, Ayanokoji. If you beat me, you'll definitely be in A Class."

"Thank you."

"Are you really sure? We could end this with you simply going down on your knees with a small bet, but with 20,000,000 points, I'm going to adhere to the term of expulsion no matter what. If you want to lessen the bet, now is the time."

"Is that what you want?"

"Hah. I thought this threat would scare you a little, but you don't seem upset."

"I've already factored in the risks to get this large amount of money."

"I'll prepare the contract. It's one of two things: expulsion or 20,000,000 points."

All that's left is for us to decide who to support, and the match is on.

"I get the game you're going to play. But whether it will work or not is up to..."

Just as Kiriyama was about to make his last opposition to stop the match, in which a huge amount of points will be at stake, we heard a knock on the student council room's door.

"Nagumo-senpai, it's Ichinose. Horikita-san is with me too."

A clear voice. It seems that both candidates have arrived.

"...Nagumo, if possible, don't talk to them about the match, and don't talk to them about the bet either, of course."

Kiriyama has a point, as this is probably not something that Horikita and Ichinose should be told about.

I doubt they would feel good about the fact that they are the object of a match or bet.

"You have no objection to that proposal, do you, Ayanokoji?"

"I'm okay with it."

"But... Are you really sure? If we call those two in here, that means the match has already started."

Kiriyama looked at me and stopped me, signaling that there is no turning back after this.

"There's no need to risk dropping out to go along with Nagumo's games."

"Getting a ticket to A Class isn't easy though, is it? So, it's only natural that there is a corresponding risk to it."

"You're really not hiding your true colours anymore either, are you?"

Passing into bewilderment from anger, Kiriyama took out his phone and looked at the screen for a second time.

"Fine. You two can do as you please. Come in, you two."

Kiriyama approached the door and urged the two to enter as he opened it.

Nagumo always acts on his own accord, so Kiriyama must have a really hard time as the Vice President.

In that sense too, moving forward with this matter of changing the Student Council President isn't a bad idea.

As soon as they entered the room, they noticed my presence.

It's obviously not normal for me to be here, so I have no need of a special mention.

"Please sit next to Ayanokoji."

"Excuse me."

Horikita sat next to me, and Ichinose next to her.

For a moment, I could see Horikita saying "are you getting wrapped up in something weird again?" with her eyes.

With the exception of Kiriyama who returned behind Nagumo, the conversation resumed when everyone sat down.

"I decided to have you conduct the election for the next Student Council President."

"Election, is it?"

"Wasn't this common in middle school too? The candidates will give speeches, and the students will vote for who is the most suitable for the post of Student Council President. Whoever gets the most votes is the next Student Council Body President."

"I see. I don't remember an election like that happening last year, though."

"Yeah. Normally, the current Student Council President, like me, would decide the next president. If the person I pick accepts it, they become the Student Council President. Of course, I would not name someone who hasn't achieved the results that would convince the people around them."

The Student Council President is decided not at random, but on a proper foundation.

Nagumo made sure that we would remember that point.

"However, the situation is a little different for you year-two students. We've always had at least two, or ideally three names from the same year as Student Council Members, but only Honami served on the Student Council last year, and Suzune who joined in year-two hasn't been a member for even a year."

"I can understand that there were no students who joined at the same time, but I think it would be fine to pick Ichinose-san as the Student Council President. I don't think she has any weak points."

Horikita stated that she wants to give up the seat to her opponent Ichinose without hesitation.

It's not like she entered the Student Council to become the Student Council President in the first place.

"You don't want to become Student Council President?"

"No, that's not it. I'm feeling positive at the moment, including in the sense of following in my brother's footsteps. If the current students want me to run for election, I'd be happy to do so, but at the same time I think that there are no problems with the president being Ichinose-san either."

"Honami certainly has no weak points. She's a good choice. However, there are other things to be concerned about."

Ichinose reacted by slightly shrugging.

"Currently, the possibility of Honami's class graduating as A Class is extremely low. This is a problem. Historically, all of the Student Council Presidents have graduated in A Class. This isn't a tradition or any such thing, but it is something of a silent understanding. I will be among them, of course."

It is true that her position quickly becomes dangerous when you cut out the part of whether Ichinose can graduate in A Class or not.

Horikita on the other hand is in B Class and going for A Class, so the probability of her fulfilling that silent understanding or whatever is higher.

"Honami has a lot of achievements, but Suzune who has less is closer to A Class. After taking a lot of things into account, I decided that you two are currently almost evenly matched. That is why I decided to hold an election."

As long as Nagumo has the authority to decide the Student Council President, even if it is on a far-fetched basis, no one can object to his instructions.

The only thing left is the decision of the persons in question.

"I understand. In that case, I will be running."

"It's decided, then."

So the duel between Horikita and Ichinose to become the Student Council President begins.

"Ayanokoji, I'll let you pick who to support."

"Are you sure?"

"I can do that much."

Horikita or Ichinose? Honestly, it doesn't matter to me, but... If he is letting me decide, then I have to think about who would be the more beneficial choice for me in the future.

However, Horikita stood up quicker than I could name her.

"Please wait a bit, Student Council President. Why is Ayanokoji here?"

"We're going to have a match to see who can become Student Council President, you or Honami."

I thought we weren't going to talk about that to these two.

Kiriyama seems to be holding his forehead, but I guess there was no way Nagumo was going to listen to him.

“...You’re really doing this..?”

“No, it wasn’t me who suggested it, so?”

“Even so, don’t you think there are any problems with how things got here?”

She’s insightful. That’s something I can’t deny.

Perhaps Nagumo has a conscience too, as he isn’t mentioning the bet.

“Come on, pick whoever you’d like.”

“Then...”

I had made up my mind and was about to say out loud the name I picked, but I was stopped again.

“Wait. This is an unprecedeted experiment. I think I should add a few more words.”

Kiriyama, who had been listening up until now, interrupted us.

“What is it? Are you still dissatisfied with where this conversation is going?”

“This is a Student Council election. It will be a big psychological load on both sides. I want to confirm whether or not they really want to run, and that they have the qualifications to become president.”

“We’ve already confirmed that, haven’t we?”

“No, we haven’t. We got an answer from Horikita, but I haven’t heard anything from Ichinose yet.”

“Do we really need to ask?”

“Of course.”

As Kiriyama turned his gaze to Ichinose, the door suddenly opened.

“I’m gonna bother you guys a bit, Nagumo.”

It was Kiryuuin who suddenly entered the room without permission as if simply visiting a friend.

We haven’t met face to face like this since summer, but she looked to be in a bad mood and her usual smile was lacking.

“What an unexpected guest. Didn’t you think to knock once, at least?”

I’m sure Nagumo doesn’t welcome this guest, as he wanted to finish the discussion about the election.

“We’re busy now. Let’s do this later.”

Nagumo tried to chase Kiryuuin out, but she didn’t look to be listening.

“I already asked Kiriyama to make some time for me. Are you trying to put me off?”

While looking gloomy because of Kiryuuin, Nagumo looked at Kiriyama for confirmation.

“I’m sorry Nagumo, but what she’s saying is mostly true. I made a mistake with the time coordination.”

“That was a very careless mistake for you.”

“There’s no excuse for it. She’s involved in another matter that I wanted to have you solve today.”

I don’t know the details, but that was the exchange between Nagumo and Kiriyama.

“You heard him. So, won’t you listen to me, Nagumo?”

“I understand the situation, but I’m talking about something very important relating to the Student Council with these guys right now.”

“I can see that you’re busy, but I don’t have that much time either. I got an appointment for this time, so I think you should respect that.”

There’s certainly no reason for Kiryuuin to back down. It’s Kiriyama’s responsibility for having made a mistake with the appointment’s timing.

“My priority is to talk with Suzune and Honami right now. If you really are in that much of a rush, you can quietly sit and wait there.”

It seems that Kiriyama is currently the only one who knows the reason for Kiryuuin showing up here, so Nagumo tried to handle it as he could.

However, it’s obvious Kiryuuin is very annoyed.

“I refuse.”

After saying so with a slightly raised voice, she put her foot up on an empty chair.

“What are you doing?”

“First of all, I’ll be the one asking you a question. Depending on the answer, this chair may become the victim.”

Is she going to kick it off, or break it?

It’s obvious that the fate of the chair that Kiryuuin is putting her foot on depends on what’s about to happen.

Kiryama looked at Kiryuuin, who was showing no signs of leaving, and apologized again to Nagumo.

“She’s Kiryuuin, so it might be counterproductive to clumsily chase her out. It would be better to stop this discussion for a moment and hear her out.”

Even though Horikita and Ichinose are the priority, if Nagumo says to wait, then I’m sure they will do so.

Kiryuuin on the other hand looks very grumpy, so it’s clear she wouldn’t wait.

If we can't chase her out or make her wait, the quickest thing is to talk to her first.

"Please do not worry about us and talk with Kiryuuin-senpai first. You are fine with that, right, Horikita-san?"

"Yes, I think that would be best."

As both parties came to that conclusion without waiting for a direct confirmation, Nagumo seems to have no choice but to decide to deal with Kiryuuin.

"Good grief... Fine, I'll listen. Why did you come here?"

"Didn't you tell Nagumo about it, Kiriyama? You really are bad at arranging things."

"I understand how you feel, but I'm very busy too. I also thought it would be best if you talk to him directly about something this ridiculous."

It seems he deliberately didn't inform Nagumo of the reason she came visiting. Kiryuuin kept glaring at Kiriyama with cold eyes, but it seemed like there was no choice but to clear things up.

"Let's get to the main subject, then. I wanted to talk to you first before making a decision. So, I'll ask you. Who is the one that asked a third party to harass me?"

"Harassment? That doesn't really tell me much."

"I'll be more concrete, then. This underhanded, dirty plan of setting me up to look like a shoplifter - was it you who put it in motion?"

Shoplifter, an unexpected word.

Ichinose reacted more quickly than anyone else.

She tried to stay calm, but it was clear that she was nervous on the inside.

Even if it is for the sake of her family, she does have a history of dirtying her hands with crime.

“Shoplifter? I really can’t see what you’re talking about.”

“Let me supplement, Nagumo. It looks like Kiryuuin was framed as a shoplifter in Keyaki Mall the other day. She says that while shopping in a cosmetics store, Yamanaka, a year three D Class student, tried to hide lipstick and other goods in her bag. When Kiryuuin noticed this and confronted her, she told Kiryuuin that you ordered her to do this.”

Kiriyama delivered Kiryuuin’s accusations in simple words.

“I see. So that’s why she came over here like this.”

“The reason I didn’t convey this directly to you is that I know you wouldn’t have ordered something like that. Right?”

Kiriyama implicitly conveyed that he trusts Nagumo on this point.

Nagumo is showing a neutral attitude both to Kiryuuin and Kiriyama’s questions.

“Can you state definitely that you weren’t involved?”

It looks like Kiryuuin clearly accuses Nagumo of setting her up.

“Well, I don’t know. It looks like you’ve already made up your mind.”

“Yamanaka said so herself when I caught her on the act. Is that not enough?”

“Maybe she just used me as a convenient excuse?”

Kiryuuin lightly shook her head in response.

“Yamanaka would know it’s a bad idea to give your name if you’re unrelated. In fact, there would be a lot less trouble later if she gave the name of another student. Am I wrong?”

It’s true that Kiryuuin’s words and thoughts make sense.

Most of the year-threes are controlled by Nagumo.

It doesn't matter if they have a ticket to Class A or not.

I can't think of a merit to lying about being ordered by Nagumo while under his control.

If she got in trouble with Nagumo for this, it would be a great hindrance to the student named Yamanaka.

That's precisely why after Nagumo's name came out, it can't be helped that Kiryuuin thinks it was by his order.

If I were in the same situation, I would be blaming Nagumo too.

"Still, are you really so angry about shoplifting? This isn't like you."

"You don't know me well enough to say that it isn't like me. Unfortunately, I already hate acts like shoplifting. I'd hate to hurt someone else for my own sake just because there won't be a problem if it doesn't get revealed."

From the way she's talking, I don't think Kiryuuin knows about Ichinose's past.

As Kiryuuin is clearly expressing her disgust about the subject matter, Ichinose's expression is rapidly darkening.

Nagumo noticed the change in Ichinose's attitude, and knowing the circumstances, he interrupted.

"Fine, I understand what you're trying to say."

It looked like Nagumo was making light of the subject of shoplifting on purpose in front of Ichinose, but it seems to have had the opposite effect.

"Do you admit it? That you tried to frame me."

"That's a different issue."

Nagumo didn't look to be admitting it, and Kiryuuin continued as if she was expecting this.

"Don't worry. If you admit your crime here, I promise I'll overlook it this time."

If Nagumo gave the instruction, then he is a criminal instigator.

In a case like this, he would receive an even heavier punishment than the person who actually carried out the crime.

It's clear that Kiryuuin has no plans of making a big deal out of it even if it was Nagumo, the leader of the year-threes who was involved in this scandal.

"And what if I don't apologize? Will you be satisfied with breaking the chair?"

"I haven't thought that far."

"I see. Then..."

Nagumo turned his gaze away from Kiryuuin, and looked at me.

"This is the end of my chat with you. Can I ask you to leave, Kiryuuin?"

Let alone apologize, Nagumo tried to end the talk without even confirming if it was him or not.

"You weren't expecting that, huh?"

Nagumo coldly said so to Kiryuuin who was utterly amazed.

"You said you got Yamanaka to confess, but how reliable can a confession under duress be? Do you think the school will take this seriously even if you skip the Student Council and go directly to them?"

"At the very least, there's a high possibility that Yamanaka's movements as she was trying to frame me were caught on camera in the shop. It's not something that can just be ignored."

"Pull up that footage, then. But that's the end of it. It's pointless if there's nothing connecting me and Yamanaka."

Only Yamanaka will be punished.

There won't be any proof of Nagumo's involvement. Nagumo is confident of that.

The school will do their best to investigate if they hear Kiryuuin's accusation, but there's a limit to what they can do.

Yamanaka lied to cause the downfall of Nagumo, the Student Council president and the leader of the year-three students.

If no conclusive evidence emerges, it's obvious that such an outcome will be the result.

"We were interrupted, but let's return to our talk. You don't have any objections about the election, right?"

Completely ignoring Kiryuuin, Nagumo began to take the final confirmation.

"Yes. I'm fine with it."

Horikita agreed, while still worrying about Kiryuuin who had her foot on a chair.

I thought Kiryuuin might kick the chair away now, but she continued observing, as if trying to see through Nagumo's mind.

Then, Nagumo quickly moved onto Ichinose.

It looks like they're both going to consent if things go well, but...

Perhaps because of the word "shoplifter", Ichinose still has a dark expression.

"Honami, you're going to run for election too, right?"

"...Umm, about that... May I have a word, Nagumo-senpai?"

"What is it?"

"I... I do not want to run in this Student Council election."

I didn't expect her to say that after coming this far.

"You don't want to become the Student Council President?"

"I think the problem is before that. Up until now, I always believed that being in the Student Council and becoming the Student Council President was for my own good, and for the good of those around me. But I can see now that I was being arrogant. As you said, Nagumo-senpai, the fact that my class is so far from A Class is also proof of that."

So she wants to decline this because of the disappointing position of her class.

"Besides, someone like me would not be a good Student Council President. I am a criminal, so..."

It seems Kiryuuin unintentionally created a big shadow in Ichinose with her words.

"A criminal?"

Not knowing the circumstances, Kiryuuin muttered so, but this isn't the place to explain what happened.

"That's a different matter. That doesn't have anything to do with you now, right?"

"I don't think so. No matter how much time passes, my past crimes won't disappear."

After replying so, Ichinose continued speaking what was on her mind.

"Rather than run for election, I wanted to quit the Student Council today."

"Wait a bit, Ichinose-san. That might be a hasty decision. You have nothing to..."

"N-no. It's not about today. I've been thinking about it since before the school trip."

Ichinose bitterly laughed and confessed that she didn't come to this decision today.

"I think you know already, but the Student Council isn't just a burden for a student. There are some tedious chores, but it's definitely a plus to be in the Student Council in this school. You've benefited from it too, even if you can't see it."

Nagumo is right, it's not a bad thing to be a member of the Student Council.

One would already know this after spending time living in this school, but being a member of the student council contributes to your class points, even if only slightly.

It's like throwing away a weapon for the Ichinose class, which is in a big predicament.

"I am sorry, but I am not going to change my mind."

Not only does she not want to run for Student Council President, but she wants to quit the Student Council.

Kiriyama must be surprised after hearing that.

"It looks like you're serious, Ichinose."

"I know you helped me out a lot, Vice President Kiriyama... I am sorry that I could not be more dependable."

"No, continuing or not is of course your decision. I have no right to stop you, but..."

As Kiryuuin also seems to have gathered from the flow of the conversation, it would be a rather unreasonable idea to say that Ichinose should not be connected with shoplifting.

All we can do now is regret the fact that this subject came up at such a bad time.

No, I think she would have quit even if it wasn't for the shoplifting matter.

"I apologize for not being able to live up to your expectations."

Ichinose stood up and deeply bowed to Nagumo and Kiriyama.

"I think you would make a wonderful Student Council President, Horikita-san. I'll be supporting you."

"Ichinose-san..."

Ichinose, who was supposed to be the rival in this election, said so with a smile and encouraged Horikita.

"I'm feeling a little unwell, so I will be taking my leave. If there are any documents that need to be filled out, please send them to me at a later date. See you later, Ayanokoji-kun."

After saying so and lightly waving, Ichinose left the Student Council Room.

The shoplifting affair definitely put her morale down, but Ichinose showed no signs of changing her mind on quitting, and she didn't show any signs of regret.

I think she was being serious when she said she was already thinking about it before.

It wasn't only Nagumo and me who felt that this was an unexpected development.

Horikita, who expressed that she would be running for presidency also felt the same way.

"Ichinose-san has resigned from the Student Council, so what should I do now?"

It seems like Ichinose's departure from the Student Council will carry this fight away with her.

I'm sure that even Nagumo won't have any other choice now.

“It’s also impossible to come up with a replacement for Honami this late.”

I don’t know the rules of other schools, but in this school, a student who has not done some voluntary service in the Student Council may not be qualified to become Student Council President.

“I don’t like how this went, but I’m going to have you become the Student Council President, Suzune.”

The most important thing to avoid would be the absence of a Student Council President.

Suddenly selecting an inexperienced year-two is also quite unreasonable.

“I thought there would be an election so I am a little disappointed, but… I understand.”

With this uncontested victory, Horikita is going to become the Student Council.

“Before that though, I have one job for you.”

“What would that be?”

“Fill in the hole left by Ichinose as soon as possible. Call at least one person from year two to join the Student Council.”

Indeed, after Ichinose’s departure, Horikita is the only year-two student in the Student Council.

If something unforeseen was to happen, the Student Council could become dysfunctional.

“Are there any conditions for who can join?”

“Only one. They need to be someone that is thought to be fitting for the Student Council by those around them.”

“I see, that is very reasonable.”

I'm sorry to use him as a reference, but I think he means that he won't let anyone with a bad reputation like Ryuuen enter the Student Council.

I can see that there are no restrictions on whether she can pick from her class or the other classes, but...

"So, as long as they meet that condition, I can move to acquire anyone I want?"

"Saying it simply, you're free to bring in anyone from your own class. Even Horikita-senpai had people from his own class in the Student Council, right?"

"That's right, I understand."

"One more thing. You need to pick a member from year one too. There was a vacancy created when Yagami unexpectedly dropped out."

Horikita's expression became stiff as she was handed down this difficult order from Nagumo.

"Recruiting two people is the same as recruiting one. I will do my best."

Not being in a position to refuse, Horikita honestly answered so.

"Looks like you've reached an agreement."

Kiryuuin, who had been watching over us, called out to Nagumo once again.

She may have thought that she couldn't talk freely with a year two student in the room.

Horikita, who had been given a new duty, read the atmosphere in the room and stood up.

"Excuse me, then. I will report back to you after deciding on the two names."

"Yeah. After that, I'll officially hand you the seat of the Student Council President."

Horikita also slightly bowed to Kiryuuin who had been watching over the situation, and left the Student Council room.

With the Student Council President election gone, the battle between me and Nagumo also went along with it.

If I'm going to leave, this would be the best time.

"I'm sorry, but I should be going too."

"Wait a bit, Ayanokoji. I'm not done talking with you yet."

Nagumo wasn't going to let me leave so easily, so he strongly stopped me.

"Don't keep forcing this. The conversation with Ayanokoji ended with Ichinose's refusal. It's okay to back down here, you should be handling the affair with Kiryuuin instead."

Kiryuuin agreed with Kiriyma's thinking that they should not be leaving the problem unaddressed.

"You're pretty useless, but I appreciate that remark. Please make a wise decision, Nagumo."

"Tsch..."

Nagumo clicked his tongue in frustration, but he had no choice but to agree.

However, he made sure at the end that I know he doesn't like the idea of letting me go like this.

"You're a student in Suzune's class. Help her out with gathering members for the Student Council."

"Me?"

"There are no other Student Council members in year two. Further, the Student Council President will be from year two B Class without any conditions. I'm not gonna let you off without any work<sup>2</sup>."

[<sup>2</sup>TL Note 2 : 甘い汁を吸う、*Amai Shiru wo Suu*, expression. Literally “sipping the sweet soup”. Means profiting without doing any work.]

I think that's true for everyone in my class, though.

First of all, there's nothing for me to help out with that.

This seems completely arbitrary, but it's pointless to oppose him here.

“Well, I am not sure how much I can help, but I'll try my best, then. Probably.”

Nagumo won't let go of this point that leaves me an escape route.

“I'll make sure that Suzune knows you'll help her out. Don't slack off, okay?”

I was considering acting innocently and not going along with him, but he beat me to the punch.

“I understand, I will help her out. Are we good now?”

At this point, Nagumo finally showed his understanding and his opposition to letting me go disappeared.

“That's right. Here, a present for you.”

I took out one of the few extra Hokkaido souvenirs I bought and handed Nagumo a bag.

“This is a pretty strange timing to be so conscientious.”

“I'm here meeting with the Student Council President, after all. I thought I should give you a present.”

It was a failure to hand this over at the last moment instead of at a better time, though.

“Isn't there one for me?”

“I didn't know you were going to be here, so you can share with Student Council President Nagumo if you want.”

I handed a souvenir to Kiriyama, and Nagumo started muttering as if he remembered something.

“Since the school trip has ended... The next special test should be announced around now, right?”

Ignoring Kiryuuin, Nagumo started talking to me again.

“It was announced just today.”

“Yeah, it looks like it’s the custom to announce the special test after a school trip. So, your opponent class will be Sakayanagi and the A Class, right?”

“You’re quite good at predicting things.”

From the way Nagumo speaks, it looks like the top classes and the bottom classes compete with each other every year.

“It was your class and Student Council Vice President Kiriyama’s class facing each other last year, right?”

“Well, yeah.”

“What was the result?”

“Your class was the winner, right, Kiriyama?”

“...Yeah.”

Kirayama calmly replied so without much joy.

Kiryuuin from the same class doesn’t seem to have much to think about here, so she’s quietly ignoring this matter.

“Normally, it would be really difficult to win against A Class, but you should have a pretty good chance with this test, right?”

“I think it depends on your viewpoint, but you may be right.”

“I think the special tests they conduct around this time are usually advantageous for the bottom classes in order to make for a better competition between the classes. So they set things up in a way where it’s easier to win for a class starting from the bottom.”

Indeed, the classes that hold the key in this special test are the Horikita Class and the Ryuuuen Class. Both bottom classes.

In other words, Nagumo allowed Kiriyama’s B Class to catch up to them.

“I think you’d be able to win in any situation, Student Council President Nagumo.”

“Don’t say that. It doesn’t matter if I win if it’s not going to have concrete effects.”

Nagumo’s class is already running solo at the top, so I think he’s saying that an insignificant victory isn’t worth the effort.

“Just as usual, A Class got ahead of the others from the start in Horikita Senpai’s time too. I was in B Class, but I quickly rose up to A Class and we got far ahead of the others. As a result, the difference between A and the classes below was massive at this time. But it’s different for you guys. A Class is certainly in the lead, but it’s not in an absolute safe zone like in the past.”

That’s very true, as the reason that the Horikita Class’ motivation is so high right now is because of the fact that they are still in reach of A Class.

I wonder how things would be if the difference between A class and B class was around 1000 points at this time. It wouldn’t have mattered who won.

“Well, good luck.”

“Yes. I will contact you again.”

I was finally allowed to leave after saying that, so I left the room.

“Phew... I’m finally free.”

After what happened with Ichinose resigning from the election, the matter with 20 million points came to nothing, but it's not a hindrance to my plans.

After my brief moment of relief, someone who's been watching from afar started approaching.

"They kept you there for a long time, huh?"

"Have you been waiting?"

"I was very curious about what you were talking about. Did you get some kind of order?"

"No, it looks like I lost my part in this."

"Still, you were in there talking for a long time, though."

"I handed them souvenirs from the school trip and discussed some unrelated things."

For now, I won't mention the fact that I've been asked to help out.

I'll wait for Nagumo to convey the order to Horikita and for her to directly ask me for help.

"For you, it's just one job to become the Student Council President."

"Well, I never thought that Ichinose-san would decline and even quit the Student Council."

"Same here. Leaving aside the duel about who gets the seat of Student Council President, I thought she would stay in the Student Council until the end."

I never imagined that she would throw away her position by her own hands.

This matter may be one of the reasons for the tears she showed me at the school trip.

"Is Kiryuuin-senpai still in there talking with them?"

“Looks like it. I’m sure you could also tell how mad she was.”

“Yes. I don’t know much about that person, but I wouldn’t want her to be my enemy. Student Council President Nagumo looked to be having a hard time with her too.”

From the viewpoint of a Student Council member, I’m sure Nagumo always looks like he’s in control, so there’s no wonder Horikita noticed the difference.

“About Student Council President Nagumo ordering another year-three student to frame her for shoplifting, how much of that do you think is true?”

“Who knows? One thing is for certain though, which is that the student named Yamanaka is being blamed for it.”

It’s also unclear if there’s another third party involved.

“Whether the perpetrator is Nagumo or someone else, I can’t see any reason or objective to entrapping Kiryuuin.”

“What about someone seeking revenge on her for something?”

“It’s possible, of course. It’s easy to imagine that there’s someone out there who hates her.”

There’s no point for us to strain ourselves thinking about this matter, though.

“More importantly, shouldn’t you be focusing on the Student Council?”

“You’re right. Things will be a lot easier just with you becoming an officer in the Student Council, though. I’m sure I can easily clear Student Council President Nagumo’s terms with your help.”

“We’ll see about that. At the very least, I know that Nagumo doesn’t like me.”

“It’s not a matter of liking or hating you.”

“That’s not true. This must be unpleasant for Nagumo, it has to be.”

“You just don’t want to enter the Student Council.”

“That’s right.”

If I enter the Student Council, I’m going to have a lot less free time. I’d like to avoid that.

“Can I ask you to help me out with finding some personnel, at least? You’re responsible for pulling me into the Student Council in the first place, so I don’t think you’d decline.”

She quickly finished off with that, cutting off my path of retreat.

“No, I’m not really interested in something like that. Sorry, but it’s a pass. You’re the one involved in the Student Council, so you should be the one solving their matters.”

Perhaps getting used to my uncooperativeness, Horikita sighed and backed down.

“Personally, I’d like to enlist someone from my own class. As the Student Council President already said, it’s a plus for the class to have someone in the Student Council.”

“I think Yousuke would gladly cooperate on most things.”

“Indeed. It would be hard to get him to give up his club activities, though.”

You can’t participate both in the Student Council and in club activities, and Yousuke is showing great results in the soccer club.

There’s little merit for him in moving over to the Student Council.

“I’m leaving.”

I tried to get away from this place, but Horikita got in front of me and blocked my path.

“Let’s leave the Student Council aside for now. Ayanokoji-kun, about the special test-”

“Sorry, but there’s nothing I can do about that either.”

“You told me that the Student Council should solve its own issues, right? But the special test relates to our class. Shouldn’t you be shutting up and helping me out here as my classmate?”

“Isn’t there anyone else you can ask for help? You have almost 40 classmates.”

There’s no reason for her to specifically rely on me.

“Good grief. You’re really not going to help me out, huh?”

“It’s not like things will suddenly change just because of my cooperation.”

“Aren’t you being too humble? I’d feel reassured if you lend me your help. I mean, our opponent is Sakayanagi-san. If you help us out in the strategic stage, we’ll have a better chance of getting through this, like the Athletic Festival.”

If we lose, there’ll be 100 more points between us and A Class, but we can still recover after that.

“There’s no advice for me to give you. But, as your classmate, I will follow your instructions. If you order me to solve a highly difficult problem, then I will obey.”

I won’t lend a hand at this stage, but I let her know that I will cooperate in the test.

“...Are you saying that you’ll solve any problem, no matter the subject or difficulty?”

“That’s right. My Academic Ability in the OAA was B Rank in December. I can’t get many points, but be it the minimum of 2 or the maximum of 5, I’ll solve as many problems as you want me to.”

This must be very important for Horikita, so I’ll make sure to guarantee her on this point.

“You don’t mind helping me out as an individual, but you won’t lend a hand in the preliminary stage. Is that it?”

“That’s right.”

“What’s the possibility of you being wrong?”

“Almost 0.”

As long as there are no problems outside the fundamental subjects or questions of miscellaneous knowledge, I won’t have any issues.

“How confident. But I’ve been hearing that maths is your only specialty, though?”

“I don’t remember that.”

Good grief. After muttering so, she nodded back in agreement with my offer.

“Let’s agree on that, then. If I can take into account that a student with a B in Academic Ability will reliably solve 5 questions, that’ll definitely make things easier.”

Handling this is a necessary experience for Horikita to gain as a leader.

Letting aside winning or losing, I’m sure she’d want to learn what she can from this test.

“I do sympathize with you. This was a really bad timing to be made Student Council President.”

It would have been better to solve this issue at a less busy time.

“There’s no helping it now. I knew things like this might happen when I entered the Student Council.”

It’s more like I (not really, but...) made her join the Student Council. I’m sure she has a few worries, but Horikita walking by my side seems relatively positive.

"Thinking negatively won't help anyone. We need to be positive and look at things on the bright side here. My reputation in the school will increase after becoming Student Council President, and I'll also have some more power. I won't abuse my authority, but I'm going to be in a gray area very close to that."

One has to use any means they can to rise to A Class.

That's a good thing. In fact, I think Horikita should be a little more greedy.

"You can help me out too, you know? With picking new Student Council members."

"Stop repeating yourself."

"I thought you might have forgotten now."

"I'll keep declining."

I just hope things get settled before Horikita learns that Nagumo told me to help her.

## Part 3

Even though I sowed the seeds myself, I got wrapped up in something that's almost unrelated to me.

I would have liked to have done something like the Student Council election to settle the value of my relationship with Nagumo, but no one could have predicted Ichinose's resignation, so I guess it can't be helped.

I decided to call my girlfriend to give her a report, who I was making wait in the dorms.

“Aren’t you coming back yet!?”

Just as soon as the call began, Kei’s discontent voice came through.

“I just left the Student Council room. I’ll be back in about 15 minutes.”

I thought she would still be mad, but it looks like the fact that I made the timing clear won her over.

“Fine. I’ve been waiting here without bothering you. Aren’t I great?”

She suddenly started speaking more gently and asked me so.

“Very admirable.”

Girls like Kei use their cellphones well.

So, I’m sure she could keep sending messages every few seconds.

“Ehehehe.”

I’m not sure if it’s a compliment, but she seems happy so far.

“I’ll be waiting for you, then.”

After the short exchange, I put my cellphone into my pocket.

Even without lengthy conversations or such, I realize that the romance phase has progressed and we've established a relationship.

The fact that family members can detect any slight difference isn't because they're smart or perceptive.

It's only that one notices these changes easier after spending a long time together with the person.

It's not a matter of reading the other person's thoughts, but of feeling each other's skin.

You can change a tense situation into a gentle one in an instant.

It's like Two sides of a coin.

This applies to many things other than what I just said.

The remaining pages of the textbook are decreasing moment by moment.

But the textbook becomes more difficult towards the end, and it takes more time than at the beginning.

Now, onto the next subject——

# Chapter 2

## The New Student Council Members

### Intro

While preparing for the second term's final special test, Horikita has a problem that she must solve.

The work to take over after Student Council President Nagumo resigns.

It looks like she decided to start working on it the very next day after being left with the role of the new Student Council President.

The person in question was discussing some things with her classmates.

The Student Council is also something she needs to handle, but she has to think about the countermeasures to the new special test too.

She'll make me repay it in double if I ignore her now.  
I'd like to avoid that.

After around 10 minutes of thinking about that, I approached her without bothering to apologize.

"Should we go somewhere else now, then?"

"Is the strategy meeting over already?"

"I discussed things thoroughly with Hirata-kun and the others yesterday. I only asked for a progress report today. Fortunately, most of our classmates are very motivated. They're being positive even though they hate studying. The rise of Sudou, who was at the bottom in grades, the psychological pressure of Sakura-san dropping out, and the point difference and confrontation with A

Class, who are now in the shooting range for us. It's all proof that things are headed in a better way."

Just for a moment, Horikita looked to be checking for my reaction when she said out loud the name of Sakura Airi.

"Do you still feel bad?"

"I'm not callous enough to not feel bad. Even if it's true."

"That's no good. There's nothing for you to be ashamed of."

Horikita should be getting a better understanding as time passes.  
As I started walking, Horikita followed me while looking slightly disconcerted.

"I felt very reassured when I heard from Nagumo-senpai that you would be cooperating with me."

"Of course he said that. I just want you to understand that I didn't want this in the least."

Things get hard later when there are disagreements because of the problem of a difference in motivation.

Well, I'm sure she already understands all this without me saying it.

"That's obvious. You didn't even tell me that he told you to help me out. You were just going to feign ignorance<sup>3</sup> if I never spoke out to you, right?"

[<sup>3</sup>TL Note 3 : 知らぬ存ぜぬ *Shiranu Zonzen* ; expression, "if I don't know about it, then it doesn't exist." ]

It seems that she already knew about it and was trying to incite me on purpose.

"Maybe you should have just let it go, considering that it's me."

"No way."

My attempts to find a way out of the situation were dashed by the immediate response.

Recently, the way she's been dealing with me has been getting more and more rough, in a good way, or even in a bad way too.

"Don't worry, though. I'm not going to bother gathering all the Student Council members together. I found some candidates throughout yesterday, so I'm going to make the decision today. The Student Council is important too, but I need to focus on the Special Test right now."

At least she wants to solve this quickly, so that's a relief.

"One person from year-two and one person from year-one, right?"

"Yes. I also received more concrete terms when I met with Student Council President Nagumoa again. They need to have at least a B in Academic Ability in the OAA."

"Academic Ability, huh? Well, it's an understandable condition to let someone into the Student Council."

Since social contributions do not seem to be more important, a wide range of selections should be possible.

"Now that you mention it, a certain someone had just gotten up to B in Academic Ability, right? I wonder who they were."

"I'm suddenly getting a stomach ache. Let's go back."

"I can't even make jokes?"

"I'm worried that you're being serious."

"I need to fill the vacancy of a year-two student after Ichinose-san left. With someone other than you."

"Of course. So, you have made your decision, right?"

“Yes. The essential condition to become a member of the Student Council is to not participate in club activities.”

“Academic Ability B or above, and the rest is up to me to decide with my own judgement.”

With an unmotivated group of randomly assembled members, the Student Council's activities would be in jeopardy.

“I intend to give this my all. If just being in the Student Council gives you a small advantage, I don't want to bring in anyone from a rival like A Class.”

It looks like she wants to protect any advantage she can get, no matter how small.

“So the ideal thing is to bring people in from your own class.”

“That's right. That's the way it is. It's not against the rules to have an ulterior motive apparent in appointing someone from your own class.”

I think I'm starting to see the reason we've been waiting here instead of walking ahead.

“What did you want to talk to me about, Horikita-san?”

The person who came out of the classroom and spoke to us was Kushida.

For a moment, Horikita glanced at me as if to say “how about that?”.

Certainly, Kushida is a student who has a very high external reputation, including for her visuals.

Her Academic Ability is definitely above B as well, and her specs are equal to those of the Student Council's members.

That's all for people looking in from the outside, though. Kushida and Horikita would be like water and oil.

“Actually, I needed your help with something, Kushida-san.”

The dangerous act of pouring a large amount of water into a pot filled with oil.

“This is still off-record, but Ichinose-san has decided to resign from the student council.”

“Huh? I see. Does that mean there was some kind of problem?”

“It was because of personal reasons.”

Kushida hasn’t come to grips with the situation yet, but the oil is starting to heat up.

It’s not at high temperature just yet, though.

“There was a vacancy left behind after a Student Council member resigned, so I’d like you to fill that place.”

That should be clear enough to convey the message.

The oil that’s heating up started crackling and bouncing the water off.

“Is Student Council President Nagumo still continuing as President?”

“No, I’m the only year-two remaining in the Student Council. I was automatically moved up.”

“In other words... You’re going to become the Student Council President, right?”

“That’s the plan, as long as nothing troubling happens after this.”

Kushida seems a bit surprised at the sudden mention of the matter of the Student Council President, but that’s probably not the most important point.

It was already a given that Ichinose or Horikita would become the Student Council President.

“So, I ended up having to directly elect the new members. There’s a certain amount of minimum ability that is required to join the Student Council, but you clear all of the requirements.”

There's now enough oil and water flying around the pot to create burn marks. If it continues like this, I can't avoid being burned as a bystander.

"So, if I enter the Student Council... Am I going to be your secretary or something?"

Kushida asked about the most important matter for her.

"I haven't decided on your post yet, but you're probably right."

"Ahahaha, what a hilarious joke."

She's smiling and laughing, but we know the truth.

I can feel the intent behind her demeanour : "Like I would ever work under you."

"Depending on your willingness, you could instantly be elected Vice President too."

"Umm, you know this isn't about that, right?"

Kushida is saying that it's a waste of time to talk about something she wouldn't accept.

It's quite the thing to convey this while smiling.

"I don't think I could work in the Student Council."

Since we're in a corridor where many students are passing through, she's claiming the reason for her refusal is her lack of ability.

"That's not true. You have a high evaluation in the OAA, and most of the same year students and our juniors adore you. The new year-one students coming in next year will quickly open their hearts to you as well. Your ability is precisely why I scouted you."

Horikita is insisting that she has no ill intentions of pushing Kushida around.

However, I'm sure this doesn't make much of a difference for Kushida.

There's no way she can accept working under Horikita.

"I appreciate your consideration, but it would be quite difficult after all. I have no experience in the Student Council, and..."

Horikita has been persistent up until now, but this isn't going to be easy for her.

The diagram of working under Horikita is a hard reality to accept for Kushida.

"The class will get an advantage just by entering you into the School Council, even if only a small one. You should consider working in the Student Council as a weapon to help you on your way to A Class."

"Right. I get what you're saying, but... I can't. I'm sorry."

Horikita must have aimed for this timing to make sure that Kushida would be in friendly mode<sup>4</sup>.

[<sup>4</sup>TL Note 4 : 猫を被る *Neko wo Kaburu*, *Putting on a cat, expression; to feign friendliness.*]

If this was a dorm room or somewhere else with no one around, Kushida would have declined instantly.

"Please, Kushida-san. I need your help."

Putting more force into her words, Horikita grabbed Kushida's hand and started pleading.

The students passing by also started to turn their gazes over to them.

"..."

Kushida is continuing to act surprised and troubled.

It must be hard for front Kushida to bluntly deny Horikita's request for aid, which is lucky for Horikita.

For a moment, I turned my gaze ahead of us.

“What is it?”

“Oh, it’s nothing.”

Horikita noticed this and asked me about it, but I don’t want to interrupt them with something unrelated.

There was a moment of awkward silence, but Horikita continued speaking as Kushida was silent.

“I’m not telling you to work for my sake. I want you to help us reach A Class.”

“But... I think it would be better for someone else to do it. I don’t have the confidence.”

“You’ll be the one who benefits the most if you take this on, Kushida-san.”

She doesn’t want to join a Horikita-run Student Council, but she’ll be the one who benefits the most if she joins.

“Hmm? What does that mean?”

It’s understandable that she has to ask that question.

“That’s obvious, isn’t it, Kushida-senpai?” If you join the Student Council, even if there’s someone that really hates you, they can’t so easily mess with you any more~”

The one who answered wasn’t Kushida or Horikita, but a third party: Amasawa Ichika. She’s been quietly approaching since a moment ago, but I didn’t think she’d suddenly bud in like this.

“...Why are you in a place meant for year-two students, Amasawa-san?”

Kushida is being pressed even further by the appearance of her great rival.

“Am I not allowed to visit my senpai?”

“We’re a bit busy right now. Did you need something from someone?”

“It’s not like I came to see someone specific. Well, if I had to say a name, I guess it would be yours, Kushida-senpai.”

“Me? I-I see. Just what do you need from me?”

It’s obvious she’s angry from the bulging veins in her head.

“Hmm… I wonder what it is? What business do you think I could have with you?”

“I wouldn’t know. I have no idea what you’re thinking, so.”

Kushida is clearly displeased, but I should be the only one who can see that. Maybe Horikita can see it too.

“I’m talking about something very important with Horikita-san right now, so could we do this later?”

“No way. It would be scary to be alone with you.”

Clearly not thinking about Kushida, Amasawa frankly spoke so.

Looking at the two, Horikita should also be able to understand that Amasawa knows about the other side.

She could have known for a while already, though.

However, why did she come all the way here to see Kushida? I looked at Amasawa, trying to restrain her.

“It’s, it’s a lie, senpai. I actually came here to meet you, Ayanokoji-senpai, but you were talking with Horikita-senpai and Kushida-senpai, right? So I listened in a little.”

She openly confessed to eavesdropping.

“How long have you been listening?”

“Well, only a little while. Since Horikita-senpai said “I’m not telling you to work for my sake~”. You believe me, right?”

Amasawa was speaking honestly, but Kushida and Horikita were still doubtful.

“It’s true. Nothing more, nothing less. I’ve been watching Amasawa approach us, so.”

I should make sure that they know Amasawa is telling the truth here.

“I see. So that’s why you’ve been glancing around.”

“That’s right. I only tell the truth, right?”

“What about lying that you came to see Kushida-san? No, there’s no knowing if it’s true that you came to see Ayanokoji-kun either.”

With one doubt, all other things come into question.

“C’mon now, don’t worry about the tiny details. Please continue with your recruitment.”

She stepped back, signalling that she won’t hinder them any longer.

“...Right. Leaving Amasawa-san aside for a moment, may I get an answer?”

Horikita moved on to trying to convince Kushida and turn this bad situation around.

“I think I’ve already given you the answer. I won’t accept it.”

“No matter what?”

“Sorry. I can’t meet your expectations. I can’t work in the-”

“Why don’t you just enter the Student Council instead of saying stuff like that?”

Breaking her promise of not bothering them, Amasawa spoke out after only 10 seconds.

Rather, knowing that Kushida cannot attack her, Amasawa is getting excited right behind Kushida, pestering and touching her all over.

On top of all that, she started playing with her cheeks using her index finger.



“You’re so beautiful, Kushida-senpai, and you have a nice physique too. Wouldn’t it be a wise decision?”

She’s repeatedly whispering in Kushida’s ears like a little devil persuading... no, agitating her. But none of her expressions are honest compliments.

“Umm. If we’re going to continue talking, maybe we should go somewhere else?”

Even if she continues to refuse, it seems stressful for Kushida to be in front of the public.

She must feel that it would be difficult to continue the conversation any further like this.

Normally, she could cut the conversation off and leave, but this version of Kushida cannot do that.

“Ayanokoji-kun, how about you chat with Amasawa-san for a while?”

“Eh~? Are you really pawning me off on him like that, senpai?”

“I’m trying to lend Ayanokoji-kun to you.”

Horikita crossed her arms, telling Amasawa to be grateful that she is not just turning her away.

“I want to be with you and Kushida-senpai, not just with Ayanokoji-senpai.”

I’m sure she’s just trying to have fun.

“Besides, if you turn me away, I may have to talk about a bunch of secrets that I know.”

With these threats that may or may not be true, it is no longer desirable to force her away.

“...Fine. Let’s just go somewhere else like Kushida-san wanted.”

Horikita tried to surround herself with a large crowd of people as a weapon, but the situation got only worse because of Amasawa, who was subjecting us to merciless chatter.

Judging that she cannot get a good reply like this, Horikita decided to change location.

## Part 1

Horikita led Kushida up the stairs and moved to the special building.

“There shouldn’t be anyone else here.”

Horikita asked for confirmation from Kushida that this was a good spot.

“Well, I guess.”

Kushida, who probably didn’t even want to follow Horikita here, breathed a deep, heavy sigh.

“This place seems safe, huh? We’ll know right away if anyone approaches, yep, yep.”

“How long are you going to follow us around, Amasawa-san?”

“I wanna know if Kushida-senpai will end up entering the Student Council.”

I guess she has no intentions of returning until she finds out the results.

“Ah~ So annoying. Horikita is annoying too, but you’re three times more annoying.”

It seems that Kushida is no longer in public mode, and her true face appeared without warning.

“She really doesn’t like you, huh?”

It’s quite the thing to be disliked three times more than Horikita, whom Kushida should hate the most here.

With cold eyes directed at her, Amasawa smiled the biggest smile of the day.

“Ahaha, I love seeing that face so much.”

Without hesitation, Amasawa clapped her hands together with delight as if it's finally time to have some fun.

"It's great that you can expose your true self to more people now. Are you not afraid of me now that you're allying with Ayanokoji-senpai and Horikita-senpai?"

"I don't know if you're trying to mess with me or something, but why don't you stop wasting your time?"

"I won't stop. I want to give you some more trouble, Kushida-senpai."

Amasawa decided to stay in the school, but does she intend on taking pleasure in making fun of Kushida? Was this the reason for her visit to Kushida, after all?

"Is it true that you're the type of person who thinks they'll never be expelled from the school?"

"Huh? Is there anyone here who can expel me? I'd like to see them, if there are any."

"Stop it already. Especially you, Amasawa-san. You're taking it too far."

It's true that Amasawa is pushing her unpleasant side forward to engage Kushida today. I don't want to be involved in the selection of Student Council members for too long either.

"It'll be a hindrance for Horikita too if you take this further. Stop it."

I lightly cautioned Amasawa, and...

"Fine. I'll be a good girl then, Ayanokoji-senpai."

She held her hands up to tell Kushida that she won't do any more teasing.

"Kushida-san. Just ignore her... So, can't I have you join the Student Council?"

"No."

“No matter what?”

“No matter what. Can I leave?”

I looked at Kushida, who was about to leave the scene, and decided to move a little.

“Horikita. Shouldn’t you give Kushida a clearer presentation?”

“...A clearer presentation?”

“It’s certain that Kushida can benefit from entering the Student Council, right? But at the same time, it’ll benefit you too. It’s reasonable that she would be a little displeased about that. Don’t you think so too, Kushida?”

“Well, I guess.”

Kushida glared at me for a moment, then averted her gaze.

“It’s naive of you to ask me to do this for free.”

Taking advantage of my guidance, Kushida threw such words at Horikita.

“I wonder if you would consider it under certain conditions, then? I’ll refuse if you want me to drop out like before, though.”

I’m sure that’s what Kushida would want, but of course, I can’t say that it’s realistic.

What kind of condition would make Kushida join the Student Council?

“If you really want me to lend you my aid, then I want you to get on your knees.”

“...Get on my knees?”

“That’s right. If you show me that you really need me, I’ll enter the Student Council for you.”

Promising to join the Student Council, Kushida of course knew that Horikita would never get on her knees for something like this.

Horikita is not as proud as Kushida, but She has a lot of pride too, even if not as much as Kushida.

Even if it was for the sake of her class, she would never get down on her knees in this situation.

“I see. Kneeling down before you, that’s your condition, huh? I understand.”

After muttering so, Horikita sat down on the cold floor on her knees.

“Huh? Is this a joke?”

“If I kneel before you, you’ll join the Student Council. You promised just now, right? Both Ayanokoji-kun and Amasawa-san saw it. If you want to take it back, it’s now or never.”

Horikita wanted to bring her in even if she had to kneel down to her.

Facing this, Kushida was unusually at a loss for words.

“You’re bluffing, right? You would never kneel down before me.”

“I get why you think that, but I don’t hate Kushida-san as much as you think I do. If kneeling down once will be a plus for my class, then it’s worth it.”

Looking up with serious eyes from below, Horikita earnestly replied so.

Amasawa looked like she was having a lot of fun watching the situation unfold.

“No, you won’t be able to kneel down. No way.”

The conclusion Kushida came to after some hesitation was that Horikita “can’t” do it.

“I see... I’m going to kneel down and have you enter the Student Council, then.”

After saying so, Horikita slowly reached out her arms to touch the floor, but she stopped just before her hands were down.

Then, she stopped moving for a few seconds.

"Oh, what's the matter, Horikita-san? Weren't you going to kneel down?"

Thinking that Horikita couldn't bear the humiliation and stopped moving, Kushida joyfully said so.

"I'd like to say one thing first. Will you really be satisfied with such a trivial thing?"

"Huh?"

"All I have to do is bow my head down, and you'll start working under me. No matter how you think about it, I'm the one with the better end of the deal."

Kushida will be able to burn the image of Horikita kneeling down into her eyes.

But at the same time, she will have to support Horikita as she works above her and manages the Student Council.

I can't say that it would be a cheap exchange.

"I know that you hate me. I understand that you want me to kneel down. But, I think you'd get more pleasure from forcing me to kneel down, rather than me doing it by my own volition. Right?"

So this is Horikita's tactic.

Horikita definitely doesn't want to kneel down before Kushida.

In other words, Kushida was right. However, Horikita strangely doesn't seem to be afraid of getting down on her knees here.

"I don't get it. If you don't mind kneeling before me, why don't you just do it? Why don't you leave aside things like joy and pleasure, and just bow your head to pull me in?"

Kushida, on the other hand, is not easily convinced. She wouldn't join the Student Council without a condition in the first place, so it's only natural that she would pursue that point.

"If I am hesitant to kneel down, it's only because I know that you will regret it. If I bow my head here, you're going to join the Student Council whether you like it or not. I don't want you to become a member with such low motivation."

If she's going to join the Student Council, Horikita wants to make full use of Kushida Kikyou's abilities.

In other words, Horikita needs Kushida to want to join the Student Council herself.

"It'll be hard for you to make me bow down to you if we are distanced from each other, but whether you like it or not, you'll have more chances to get in contact with me if you join the Student Council. If that happens, I'll have the opportunity to rely on you more. I'll have to bow down and ask you for help more than once or twice then."

Horikita is telling Kushida to create a situation where Horikita will bow down on her own accord instead of being forced to do so. This provocative remark seemed to have affected Kushida more than she had expected.

"It won't change the fact that I'll be working under you, though."

"You seem to think that the Student Council President is above the others, but you're wrong. It's up to each person to decide their real position. It's just a matter of building a relationship where the Vice President has more power than the Student Council President, right?"

Horikita is cornering Kushida from her low position by removing the obstacles in her way.

"You'll instantly become Vice President, and you'll hold enough authority to lead me around by the nose. That's plenty to fulfill your need for social approval and self-esteem, right?"

Since She has already dissected Kushida, Horikita knows what she needs and wants.

Once again, it's clear from that point of view that Kushida is a good fit for the Student Council.

"I don't like this."

"It doesn't matter if you like it or not for now, does it? That's a trivial matter."

Kushida's expression was grim, but she turned away from Horikita who was ready to bow down at any moment.

"My position will get stronger if I enter the Student Council. That doesn't sound so bad."

"Yes, that's right. It's not interesting to have it offered in exchange for something."

"You're trying to make me fall for your smooth talk, but I intend on using you just as much as you'll use me."

"Indeed."

Horikita tried to pull back her arms with a smile, but...

"But, you know, Horikita-san. I still want to see you bowing down here."

Kushida turned back and said so with a broad smile.

"You won't be able to make me bow down in the true sense then, though?"

"It's fine. I'm sure I'll have another chance to do that. Just bow down for today, okay?"

Things have been splendidly going at Horikita's pace up until now, but she made a miscalculation at the last moment.

Kushida cheered up and revealed more of her bad-natured personality, and turned the tables on Horikita.

"Well? Are you going to stop? I won't join the Student Council if you do."

Noticing that she has the upper hand, Kushida continued to put more pressure onto Horikita.

Horikita is at a disadvantage here, trying to get Kushida to join the Student Council even though she doesn't want to.

"...Ayanokoji-kun. Amasawa-san."

"What is it?"

"Sorry, but could you step away for a bit?"

Clearly in a foul mood, Horikita ordered us to get out of sight.

She was not going to let more than one person see the humiliation of her kneeling down.

I pulled Amasawa by the arm, and left the scene.

Horikita successfully completed her objective of having Kushida enter the Student Council of her own volition, She had to pay the price, however.

## Part 2

“Oh, I wish I could have seen you bowing down to Kushida-senpai too.”

“Don’t say it out loud. It was a fatal mistake.”

Horikita shook with anger as she held her head and recalled what had happened a few minutes ago.

“You’re the one who brought it up, but Kushida really took advantage of you, huh?”

“I underestimated her need for approval.”

Amasawa and I saw Kushida leave with a very happy expression on her face.

“You forced her to join by bowing down.”

“...Still, Kushida replied with a yes in the end, and that’s her own decision. She didn’t have to do that if she didn’t want to. You get that too, right?”

“It’s impressive how well you read her.”

Kushida’s public face smiles at everyone without distinction, but, just as Horikita says, Kushida has a strong sense of ego behind the scenes.

In that situation, Kushida could show her true colours without being shy about it. Kushida could have rejected the offer after seeing Horikita bow down, but the reason why she agreed in the end was that she actually saw the merit in joining the Student Council.

“I know she’s going to hate working under me, but that’s not the important thing. Her cohesive power will certainly be increased by entering the Student Council. She was chased into the corner of the class once, but this should be a big support for the sake of her revenge.”

“You intend on using her as much as you can, don’t you?”

“Of course. I’m the one who chose to let her remain here. I have to make sure she gives the results that will convince our classmates. She even made me bow down, so.”

It looks like she is bothered by that after all, but that was her own strategic mistake, so there’s no helping it.

If she hadn’t bowed down then, Kushida probably wouldn’t have gone along with her.

“You should have used another tactic to fight her.”

“Stop talking about that already. I’ll put that to good use for the next time...”

She’s received some damage, but it’s just the first step. Not just anyone can serve on the student council.

By appointing Kushida to that position, the students will be made to feel that she is needed in the class, and she will avoid being cut off.

However, Kushida’s childish feelings of not wanting to be led by Horikita were a hindrance.

“With that, your class has an exclusive hold in the Student Council among year-two. That’s certainly an advantage.”

“If Student Council President Nagumo accepts it.”

“He said it himself, didn’t he? That you’re free to invite anyone from your own class.”

“That’s right, but that had a nuance of telling me to “try it if You’re brave enough”.”

“Just show him how brave you are, then.”

“That’s easy to say for you.”

Horikita looks glum, but she’s contradicting herself.

She went as far as bowing down to Kushida just to enter her into the Student Council for a slight advantage to her class.

What do you call that, if not bravery?

"I think that was the best way to convince Kushida."

"I think so too. I see that our new Student Council President is handling things well."

Showing how interested she is by overreacting, Amasawa nodded from behind.

"...Are you going to keep following me around? The show's over already."

"Can't I? I'm curious who else you're going to invite. Aren't we close enough for that?"

"I don't think we have a relationship where we can relax and chat with each other."

"Really? We opposed each other a little, but wasn't that only in the Special Test? Shouldn't we be getting along now that it's over?"

Horikita wrinkled her brows a little, but she gave up, knowing that she can't force Amasawa to leave.

"How about you take Amasawa into the Student Council? Her OAA is certainly good enough."

"Even if there are no problems with her OAA, she's not suited to be in the Student Council."

"Huh~? Why can't you just invite me? I might accept, you know."

"I'll pass."

It seems that Amasawa isn't fitting for the Student Council that Horikita has in mind.

Well, it's true that she's unfitting for a serious Student Council.

"Do you have anyone else in mind?"

"There are a few candidates, but... I wonder if he's still in the school?"

The "he" mentioned must be the year-one student she's targeting. Horikita looked around the year-one building, but she didn't seem to find the person she was looking for. After looking around from A Class to D Class, she sighed.

"Maybe he's already left after all."

Horikita complained a little that she spent too much time dealing with Kushida and Amasawa.

She couldn't give up right away, however, and called out to us.

"I'll ask his classmates directly. Wait here."

Then, she entered the year-one A Class.

Amasawa and I looked at each other and waited for her to come back.

"So? Were you looking for me?"

"Hm? Oh, the reason I came to visit the year-two students? Curious?"

"You've been sticking with us instead of going back, so of course."

"To be honest, I just came to see how Kushida-senpai was doing. I mean, we had some forced contact back in the Culture Festival, so I wondered how things were going. Besides, Takuya also gave her a lot of trouble."

"You still seemed to be teasing Kushida a lot."

Amasa stuck her tongue out a little and smiled.

"That's just how I am, of course I'd mess with her. I also wanted to check how strong she's become psychologically."

I see. I thought she was just being aggressive, but there was a reasoning behind it.

“I think it was a miscalculation for Kushida that the White Room students got involved, but it also helped her break out of her shell as a result. I guess it all turned out alright in the end.”

Then, Amasawa smiled a little.

“I gotta be of some use too.”

“The reason you came to see Kushida makes sense, but that doesn’t explain why you’re still following us around.”

“Simple curiosity. You care about Horikita-senpai, don’t you? She’s even going to become the Student Council President, so I wanted to experience her charm first hand. She seems serious, but she’s also a little out of the ordinary and is quite interesting. I even actually thought of joining the Student Council.”

“If that’s the case, you should have acted a little more seriously. Horikita already senses that you’re a skilled person, so she could have accepted you.”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter. There’s no point in joining the Student Council now.”

There’s no point in joining now? Even if the second term is ending, Amasawa is still a year-one. She has plenty of time to join the Student Council in Yagami’s stead and serve out her time.

Then, I thought back to the conversation I had with her before the school trip.

“What are you going to do? Have you still not changed your mind?”

After my indirect remark, Amasawa’s eyes became sharper.

“Well done, Ayanokoji-senpai. You managed to notice it among my roundabout words.”

“You did say that you wouldn’t cause me any trouble, and that I would be the only one receiving special treatment.”

It's not that difficult to make the relation between Yagami's expulsion and the Student Council.

"It's not like the reason you signed was that you wanted to stop him. That's not in your character."

"That is correct. I guess it's that I wanted to know whether you have a positive or negative stance on this."

"It's up to you what you want to do. If I am to say more, you're free to withdraw your previous remarks and turn your desire for revenge towards me."

"That's a broad-minded statement, or rather one that gives a lot of leeway."

After talking with the year-one students for a while, Horikita came out with a satisfied expression.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Let's move."

Horikita's steps were a little quicker than usual as she started to walk.

"Who did you really want to meet here?"

"I don't think you know him. His name is Ishigami."

"Ishigami?"

He must be the Ishigami that's coming up in my mind.

There are no other students with the same name in year-one.

"Wow, that's pretty smart of you to have your eye on Ishigami-kun, Horikita-senpai."

Amasawa, who is also a year-one student and his classmate naturally knew and recognized him, which she showed with her reaction.

"Is he a good student? Like a class leader type person?"

I decided to ask Horikita and Amasawa about Ishigami, pretending to know nothing about him.

“He’s not really a leader, but he’s like an adviser for A Class.”

Unlike most students, Amasawa won’t let it be seen when she’s uncomfortable.

She’s never shown me whether she knew about Ishigami beforehand, who knows my true identity.

There’s nothing to hide now, so I can believe that she knows nothing about it, but it’s dangerous to make assumptions.

“What’s his connection with you?”

I didn’t expect to hear Ishigami’s name coming from Horikita, so I decided to ask why.

“He’s just a bit of an acquaintance. His Academic Ability on the OAA is good enough, and he seemed to be getting relied on a lot by his classmates. I think he’s the right person. He was apparently in the classroom just now, so we can still catch up to him.”

She’s walking pretty quickly, though.

I never thought about meeting Ishigami with Horikita like this, but there’s no use worrying about it.

We have an odd connection with each other, but it’s conceivable that one of us may unexpectedly try to contact the other, or that we may one day be assigned to the same group in some Special Exam.

Trying to avoid him by force would be an act contrary to the natural order of things.

As we approached the hallway leading to the entrance, we saw a small group of boys chatting in a circle.

Horikita quickly noticed Ishigami among them and approached.

“Ishigami-kun.”

Ishigami turned around when Horikita called his name, and quietly looked at us.



This is an unexpected first meeting, but Ishigami doesn't seem to be upset in the least.

On the contrary, he seemed to be ignoring my presence.

I can understand why he isn't surprised, as this is a small school and we were bound to meet at some point.

The other year-one students were familiar with Amasawa, but they seemed nervous about the presence of me and Horikita.

"Do you want something?"

"I came to ask you for a favour. Would you like to enter the Student Council?"

"..."

Ishigami threw a silent look at his friends.

"I'm sorry, go ahead. I'll catch up with you guys soon."

Was there a plan to hang out together after this?

"I'm sorry. I don't want to take up too much of your time."

"I don't mind. But, why me?"

Ishigami is speaking formally with her. He doesn't seem to be speaking casually like he did with me.

"I have very little interaction with year-one students. You're one of the few I've talked to, and you're in A Class. You also excel in Academic Ability in the OAA. What's so surprising about me inviting you?"

Certainly, there is nothing wrong with his abilities.

As Horikita said, there is no doubt that he is a person who would easily be approached by the Student Council.

“You don’t seem to be participating in club activities either right now, so how about it?”

“I’m sorry, but I’m not interested in joining the Student Council.”

Ishigami quickly declined without hesitation.

“I can’t even get you to consider it?”

“I don’t want to participate in club activities, and I don’t want to participate in the Student Council either. Please try someone else.”

After saying this, Ishigami turned around and started walking away. Horikita hesitated about calling out to him for a moment, but he clearly has no interest in the Student Council, so it seems she decided not to force things.

“He was pretty unapproachable, huh?”

“I thought he would be a good candidate, but I guess I have to give up on him.”

“There are a lot of other good students in A Class, so maybe there’s still a chance to get in touch with them?”

“I’d like to believe that, but… I don’t know. The ambitious students would want to enter the Student Council as quickly as they can, just like Ichinose-san from last year and Yagami-kun from this year, right? If they haven’t taken any action up until now, that means they don’t want anything to do with the Student Council.”

Indeed. If they were interested, they would have knocked on the door during the Nagumo administration.

“So, what’s next?”

“All I have left is year-one D Class.”

“D Class? That’s a surprising choice.”

The Student Council's approach is to elect students from A and B classes, as they have a high percentage of competent and earnest students.

So, why D Class?

"The difference between them and C Class is 200 points, so they still have a chance. The birth of a Student Council member should be a boost for the D Class. There might be students who see it that way. We just have to make them aware of the advantages."

"What about inviting Housen-kun or someone like that? It might be interesting."

Probably hoping to cause a stir, Amasawa recommended an unthinkable person.

"I don't think he would want to join. Even if he did, I wouldn't be able to accept him with his current violent behaviour. He would have to achieve a lot of good results in the next year."

Horikita rejected the playful proposal, judging that he would not be fitting.

Horikita returned to D Class and looked around at the remaining students in the classroom.

One of the students quickly noticed her and approached.

"Welcome, Horikita-senpai, Ayanokoji-senpai, and Amasawa-san too."

It's Nanase Tsubasa, a very polite student unlike the others in year-one D Class.

"Hey."

"I'm a bit surprised to see you here with them too, Amasawa-san."

I wouldn't go as far as calling it caution, but Nanase said so and threw a glance at me and Amasawa.

"It looks like most of the students have left already."

“I think there’s a lot fewer here than normal. There’s usually a few more students left here at this time.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes. One of our classmates has a birthday, and they’re celebrating it in Keyaki Mall. I was also invited… Actually, why are you here?”

It’s only natural that she would ask that.

“There is a vacancy in the Student Council because of Yagami Takuya being expelled. I’m here to fill the vacancy.”

“Are you recruiting members for the Student Council?”

“It’s been decided that I’m going to become the Student Council President, so this is my first task.”

Nanase nodded with admiration, and looked over her D Class.

“Can someone from D Class stand as a candidate too?”

“Of course. I’m from D Class too, after all, so there’s no reason to refuse any of you.”

“Then, would you let me help you out?”

“…You?”

“Yes. If you think even someone like me could be of assistance too, of course… I’d definitely want to help out with the Student Council.”

“I wouldn’t know what decision the soon to retire President Nagumo will make, however.”

She replied that it’s still not a sure thing.

Horikita may not remember the details of Nanase’s OAA, so I’ll supplement.

“It’s fine, isn’t it? Nanase has a good OAA and is very serious, I think she’s fitting for the Student Council.”

“Indeed. I don’t think there are any problems with her.”

This would be a quick solution after being refused by Ishigami.

“Alright, may I count on you then, Nanase-san?”

“Of course!!”

I have my doubts about Nanase, but that’s that, and this is this.

If she’s going to take a role in the Student Council’s formation, then there’s no reason to refuse her.

“I think Nanase-chan will do just great.”

“Yes. Unlike you.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“I think highly of your abilities. But, your candid attitude and way of thinking and personality just aren’t suited for the Student Council.”

Horikita nodded in satisfaction at this last minute addition to the Student Council.

“Umm, so what should I do after tomorrow!?”

“I don’t think there’ll be any problems, but I’ll talk to President Nagumo first tomorrow. I’ll contact you again after that when you’ve been accepted into the Student Council.”

Horikita exchanged contact information with Nanase.

After that was done, Nanase smiled with joy.

“I’m always glad to have more contacts, in any way I can.”

“See you tomorrow, then.”

“Yes, I will be waiting for your contact!”

Seeing Nanase off with a smile, we left the D Class.

“Looks like I gathered the members. All I have to do now is to wait for an answer from President Nagumo.”

“I’ll get going too, then. See you later, you two.”

We saw Amasawa off, who came and left like a storm.

“It’s always so hard to tell what that girl is thinking.”

“Indeed.”

“Thanks for your help today.”

“Well, I just followed you around and didn’t really do anything. I’m glad it was easy.”

“That’s not true. It’s clear that your words had an effect on the Kushida matter. I’ll make sure to report that you were helpful.”

She must be referring to the time when I dragged out the presentation from Kushida.

“I don’t think I’ll get any compliments from Nagumo, but I’m so happy that I could burst into tears.”

“What? Oh, I’m having a study session at a cafe in Keyaki Mall after this. Do you want to come? Your girlfriend is also going to participate.”

“A study session, huh? Well, I think I’ll drop by for a bit.”

“Huh?”

Even though she’s the one who invited me, Horikita showed a surprised expression.

“What is it?”

“No, I was just sure that you would refuse. Is it because of Karuizawa-san?”

That's not really true, but I guess that's how she has to see it.

“That's right. I'm worried if she's studying properly.”

Replying so, I decided to go to the cafe with Horikita.

## Part 3

The two of us arrived at the cafe where the study group was meeting after school.

“Hey everyone, sorry I kept you waiting.”

Saying so, Horikita joined her classmates in a natural manner.

Noticing her movements here, I’m impressed at how much she’s improved.

“Kiyotaka, you came too!?”

Facing a notebook with a frown, Kei noticed us and smiled.

“Sorry, but I’m just here for a quick visit.”

“But...”

Kei showed a clearly dissatisfied expression, but no further complaints followed.

I think it was largely due to the fact that I had told her in advance that I would not be helping her out with studying.

“Oh, sorry I’m late!”

Right after we arrived, Sudou hurriedly ran into the café.

“It’s really hard to balance studying with club activities, isn’t it?”

“It’s not that big of a deal. I’m used to it.”

Sudou’s gaze was caught by Horikita for a moment, but then he sat down on an empty seat nearby.

Then, he placed his bag on his lap and took out a set of study materials.

He then took out a rectangular case, and pulled out a pair of glasses from it.

“Huh? Sudou-kun, do you wear glasses?”

“Yeah, I just started to. I’ve been wearing them when I study. Ah, they don’t really have a degree or anything, though.”

If a person has good vision, they usually don’t use corrective devices such as glasses.

However, good eyesight does not mean that one cannot or should not wear glasses. Studying is a close-range battle, unlike basketball which requires a wide field of vision.

Adjusting your focus when looking at things is a big burden.

Just like most of the other students, Kei was surprised to see Sudou in studying mode like this in the study session.

“What’s with all the staring?”

“You just have a different image with your glasses on. You really are studying more now, huh?”

Shinohara nudged her boyfriend Ike while showing admiration for Sudou.

“Of course, I’m trying my best too now!”

“I know that. Sudou-kun has quite a lead on you, though.”

“That’s, well, yeah...”

Ike tried to argue back, but he nodded in response to her stinging words.

“Ah, sorry. I shouldn’t talk about other people like that. But, you know, do you have any tricks to keep going for a long time? I used to be at a similar level too, and I was wondering if you could give me any tips. It must be hard to balance basketball and studying at the same time, right?”

The other students nodded in agreement with Shionara.

To the students with lower academic ability, students like Yousuke, Mii-chan, and Horikita must seem to be in the realm of prodigies and geniuses.

They would not be able to put what they learn from such high-level students into practice.

They are smart from the start, so they must seem like they can do anything.

In this respect, Sudou started out with the lowest academic ability in his class. It is only natural that she would want to know the key to his growth.

“Tricks, huh?”

Sudou crossed his arms in a somewhat troubled manner.

Horikita was the main reason that Sudou originally started studying.

He wanted to be smarter and become a man worthy of Horikita, but Sudou would probably be very reluctant to talk about that here.

“Ah, umm... Right.”

Sudou was about to start speaking after a while, but he started sorting things in his head. He was still a bit awkward, but he began speaking:

“The weird thing is, studying has actually become fun for me. Then, basketball became more interesting too. ...Umm, I guess it's something like that?”

He began to explain why he is able to do both, and that there are other advantages as well.

“At first, I didn't like studying. I got sleepy right away, and I couldn't solve the problems. But you know, the more you learn, the more you realize how useful studying is for school.”

“But, you know, Ken. Studying is useless for the future, isn't it? Especially depending on your occupation.”

Ike asked Sudou about a doubt that everyone must have had at least once in their lives.

“I’m going to be a professional basketball player myself, so I thought studying was just a pain in the ass, but what if I don’t make it as a pro? What job can I do if I don’t even study? I could probably do a job that anyone could do, right?”

There is no need to name a specific profession, but his options would be more limited than those of an average person.

“Even if I don’t make it as a pro, my options will be broader if I keep studying, right? I could also go to university and study something more specialized. Well, I have no concrete plans yet.”

You can have more than one dream.

“Studying is an investment in your future. That’s how I think of it.”

Sudou’s path to becoming a professional basketball player, which he has been pursuing for many years, may fail.

If he finds another big dream and holds on to it however, he will never fail in life.

This is the short story of Sudou, whose thinking has grown through his studies.

What might have been sneered at in the past was listened to earnestly without making fun of by anyone around him.

That’s how much weight and truth was born by his words. Sudou sat back down with an embarrassed expression on his face, and hurriedly opened his notebook.

“That’s, that’s enough, right? Let’s get studying already.”

Sudou, who should be more tired than anyone else after working hard in his club, said this without showing any sign of exhaustion.

He isn't the type to make good speeches, but that's why his words and attitude full of truthfulness strike a chord with people.

The students in the lower positions such as Shinohara and Ike must also be moved by this.

## Part 4

The next day after the new Student Council members were gathered and the study sessions for the Special Test began.

Horikita was quickly called by Nagumo after school, and seemed to be heading to the Student Council room. I thought she wouldn't call on me again, but-

“He said that you should come with me too.”

She displayed a message from Nagumo and came over to tell me as she pointed the screen at me.

“My stomach feels as upset as it did yesterday, let me pass on that.”

“It can't be helped, then. He'll just call you again tomorrow if you can't come today, though?”

“Let's just meet him and get it over with.”

I don't want to be forced to do something troublesome again after some time passes.

I immediately got up and showed my intention to go to the Student Council room, but I was stopped.

“I'll bring Kushida-san here. Wait a bit.”

It seems that he means to meet all the new members at once. I looked around for Kushida in the classroom, but... She was already nowhere to be seen.

“It looks like she went ahead.”

I lined up shoulder to shoulder with an exasperated Horikita and left the classroom.

“So she didn't want to go with you?”

“We’re going to spend a lot more time when the Student Council work starts, whether she likes it or not.”

Well, that must be why she didn’t even want to spend one more second than she has to with Horikita in an unrelated area.

“It’s quite the nuisance to be randomly resented by someone while continuously being connected with them somehow.”

“I don’t know what would have happened if you were a little more gentle-mannered as a person.”

“It could have been worse, right? It’s dangerous to keep letting her take the lead.”

She needs to hold the reins and control her to some degree, that’s certainly true.

When I arrived at the Student Council room, Kushida and Nanase were waiting side by side in the distance.

Whether or not these two knew each other or not, they seemed to be chatting and getting along well.

“They’re having a good time.”

“They really are.”

Taking a look at the two, they don’t seem like they’ll ever stop talking.

They seem to be in a peaceful mood, constantly smiling.

They would keep chatting forever if kept alone.

“It looks like the Student Council can get along just fine without you, Horikita. I’m sure those two will be well received by the public too.”

“Shut up. Let’s just go in.”

Horikita quickly approached them to prevent them from getting even more excited.

“Hi there, Horikita-senpai.”

Kushida smiled without concealment as Nanase politely greeted Horikita.

“I was a bit relieved when I heard that Nanase-san was joining the Student Council too. I’ve been very nervous about all this.”

Kushida said something unexpected and made a gesture of patting her chest.

The three members of the Student Council entered the room first.

I feel very strange about following them in, but I’ve been called, so there’s no helping it.

“Student Council President Nagumo. I’ve invited Kushida Kikyou from year-two B Class, and Nanase Tsubasa from year-one D Class.”

“You actually picked someone from your own class? That’s quite bold of you, Suzune.”

Nagumo laughed, implying that he was half joking when he said Horikita could invite someone from her own class.

“I chose them from an impartial point of view. Are you dissatisfied with my selections?”

This is just her official stance, but Horikita lied without hesitation about this not being for the sake of her own class.

This isn’t believable after she brought in Kushida, but Nagumo showed a superficial agreement to this.

“There are no problems with your selections. I got no complaints.”

Looking at the new Student Council members, this is an unfamiliar structure with Nagumo, Kiriyama, and Ichinose leaving, and Yagami having gotten expelled.

“I think this is the first time there are more girls than boys in the Student Council.”

Former Vice President Kiriyma also took a look at the members and told us what he noticed.

“It should be alright. Women and men are equal these days. This just means that there are more women in the next generation of talented people. Isn’t that right, Ayanokoji?”

“I have nothing to say in return.”

It’s not a bad thing for girls to come into power, but if the ideal thing is a 1 to 1 ratio, one could say that this result reflects the timidity of the boys.

“Serve the Student Council from a fair point of view.”

“Understood.”

“Well then, I guess that means that I am being relieved of my duties as Student Council President.”

He patted his seat once as if having a hard time parting with it, and got up.

“It felt like both a long time and a short time. I don’t really have much to say.”

“Do you have any regrets?”

Seeing Nagumo’s sad expression, Horikita asked so.

“The most important thing is to create an environment where the students with the ability to surpass the limits of their class can graduate in A Class. I could not reach that ideal.”

Nagumo did emphasize that point quite strongly when he first took over as Student Council President.

As a result, the year-threes are in a similar situation to that, but that's more a result of the rules that Nagumo created personally rather than the results of his achievements as Student Council President.

"The Student Council here has more authority than normal high schools, but there was still no way to overturn the school's decisions. I thought I could have done more."

"You still definitely had an effect on things, Nagumo-senpai. There were no rules such as class transfer tickets or protection points up until now."

"I guess."

Whether or not this will produce good results will be discovered by future generations.

Horikita Manabu protected the Advanced Nurturing High School's traditions, and served well as the Student Council President.

Then, Nagumo Miyabi created the OAA, and brought about a new, more ability-oriented style.

How will Horikita Suzune's year as Student Council President go?

The most obvious, and difficult goal will be...

To start in D Class and graduate in A Class. If she succeeds in that, she'll definitely leave her name in history as a Student Council President.

"There are a few formalities that need to be completed, everyone except Ayanokoji should remain here."

With that directive from Kiriyama, I was informed that I was in the way.

"I'll take my leave now, then."

"See you later, Ayanokoji. Our duel's still not over yet."

It seems that he called me all the way here just to remind me of that.

“I know.”

I bowed slightly and left the Student Council room.

After leaving Horikita and the others behind, I took out my cell phone.

It's been vibrating inside my pocket, but it looks like I've got some messages.

I thought they were from my girlfriend Kei, but it doesn't look that way.

It was an invitation on a vacation day from a surprising person.

He said that he'd like to talk with me on the weekend if I have time.

By the time I was through the corridor, I received a message offering a specific time and place to meet at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday in Keyaki Mall.

There would be no problems with that, so I replied that would be fine.

No mention was made about the contents of the conversation, but it was not difficult to guess the direction from the name of my companion.

While leaving, I walked by a female student.

“Were you called to the Student Council room again?”

“It looks like you're headed for the Student Council too today, Kiryuuin-senpai. Is it about the matter from the other day?”

“That's correct. The conversation ended up going on a parallel track after that, and is still unresolved.”

“That's quite the calamity.”

By the looks of Nagumo back then, it probably ended without him replying with a yes or a no.

“I think I'm going to take a more aggressive approach today.”

“Feel free to do that, but it’s quite crowded right now. They’re in the middle of the procedures for Horikita to become the new Student Council President and for registering the new members.”

She might force her way in without caring about that, but I made sure to tell her anyway. It seemed to have more of an effect than I thought however, and Kiryuuin stopped in her tracks to think for a moment.

“I’ll take my leave, then.”

My intuition told me that I should leave right away, but it was already too late.

“Can I take up some of your time, Ayanokoji?”

“....Is it about that unsolved matter?”

“Even if I press Nagumo again, I don’t think he’ll spit it out so easily.”

“You wouldn’t want to traumatize the new Student Council President and the new members, would you?”

I don’t care about that in the least. Still, if she wants to avoid that, she can simply wait for Horikita and the others to leave.

“You figured that using me would be better than simply forcing your way through it, right?”

“Mhm. You’re quick as always, Ayanokoji.”

She snapped her fingers and complimented me, but anyone could have figured this out.

“You were just leaving anyway, right? Why don’t you come with me?”

“I have a date planned at my room with my girlfriend.”

“Just let her wait. It’s a girlfriend’s duty to quietly wait for the return of the house’s patriarch.”

It’s definitely not convincing when Kiryuuin is the one who says that.

“Can we talk while walking?”

“Mhm. That would be fine too.”

Kiryuuin turned around and matched my pace of walking.

“Did you try to set up an opportunity to talk with Yamanaka-senpai again?”

“Nagumo and Kiriyama strongly objected to it. I’ve accused Nagumo as the principal offender, so you shouldn’t expect a different result.”

“That’s strange, isn’t it? For the person who is suspected to be the culprit to stop your contact.”

Whether it was Nagumo who gave the order or not, as long as Kiryuuin claims that he did, he must have decided that it was unlikely that any other big names would come out after threatening Yamanaka.

“That’s certainly true, but even I agreed with him. You can’t expect any other names to come up after verbally threatening Yamanaka. When I first questioned her, I had already threatened her with as much as I could, excluding violence or torture.”

In other words, Kiryuuin already got what she could out of Yamanaka.

“Thinking about it logically, it has to be Student Council President Nagumo, doesn’t it?”

“Of course I suspect him. That’s why I tried to barge in like this. I can’t push this any further without proof though, right?”

So, as a result, she was planning to seriously threaten Nagumo.

“It’s still possible that Nagumo isn’t the criminal. Do you understand why that is?”

“It’s the possibility that Yamanaka-senpai could have held a grudge against you without you realizing it. That would also explain her trying to get revenge

by framing you as a shoplifter. I don't know a lot about the circumstances in year-three, but there could be some people that dislike you."

"That's painfully true."

She nodded without denying it, laughing rather than getting angry.

"Is it Nagumo, or is it Yamanaka? Or is there a completely different third party hiding in the background?"

"How about leaving it alone? If the criminal has learned their lesson from this incident, they'll probably pull back and pretend it never happened before their true identity is revealed."

"No. My pride won't allow me to ignore someone trying to make me out to be a criminal."

By the look of things, she doesn't look like she'll stop pursuing this until the criminal is caught.

"I won't stop, no matter what. So, I was wondering if you would do the searching for me."

"I don't feel like I have any obligation to help you. Besides, I don't have much contact with year-three students. It's pretty much just you or Student Council members like Nagumo-senpai."

It's not flattering to say that I'm the right person to secretly gather information.

"That's precisely why I'm asking you. You have a flat point of view, right?"

"It would make more sense if you asked someone with some good communication skills..."

"I certainly can't expect much from you on that front. However, I have nothing to criticize about your other abilities. You're especially above everyone in your fight sense. There is no other person who has convinced me of a complete defeat without a direct confrontation."

I think I'm being complimented, but it doesn't make me happy at all.

“There are some year-three students with a violent temperament. It’s not a bad thing to have a strong arm, you know.”

“Win or lose, I don’t want to fight with a year-three student.”

“Come on, just help me out. There’s no one that I could call a friend. I can’t act like a detective either.”

She’s so selfish. I sympathize with the fact that Kiryuuin-senpai was framed, but it would be better to refuse here.

“I think you owe me one for the incident on the uninhabited island. You could have handled it without me showing up too, of course, but I may have to bring it up to the Student Council to make sure. I think you wouldn’t like everyone to know the entire story of your battle with the former board chairman, would you?”

She blocked my escape route with an aggressive approach, not allowing me to refuse.

“If you were going to threaten me, things would have been easier if you had done that from the start.”

“Don’t misunderstand me. I want to build a friendly relationship with you, which is why I don’t want to use this tactic.”

Kiryuuin brazenly looked over at me while crossing her arms.

“...Fine. I’ll look around a bit, okay?”

“I thought you might say that.”

Kiryuuin-senpai nodded joyfully with a satisfied expression.

I really can’t cut corners with her.

She is really perceptive.

Depending on the results, I’m likely to keep getting entangled with her.

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I am reaching out to ask for your support in this project to translate Volumes of "Classroom of the Elite" into English. As fan of the series myself, I am passionate about bringing this volume to a wider audience and making it accessible to English-speaking readers.

To do this, I have hired professional translators to handle the translation work, but this is a costly endeavor.

If you are able to make a donation to help us cover these expenses, it would be greatly appreciated.

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Year 2 Volume 9 Chapter 2 ends here. Chapter 3 & 4 are done and they will be released soon. So, Look forward to the English translation of the Full Version [here](#).