

SICKLY GIRL, BUT A DRUG ADDICT

The academy is a greenhouse designed to nurture growing buds into excellent adults, protected by school rules and professors.

But no matter how vigilantly professors and administrative staff manage the campus, there are always gaps.

Does the principal know?

That students are holding secret parties in the basement of the old school building.

“Rukia. You’ve somehow managed to keep this chaos hidden from the old school building caretaker.”

I’m certain I was diligent about internal affairs, but why is this happening.

There’s a gambling den in the basement of the old school building.

And why are there so many outsiders.

Do the caretakers really know nothing?

“Kyaha! It’s all thanks to you, department head!”

Though called department head, I’m closer to a figurehead.

“I haven’t particularly done anything for this...”

“Hmm~? No way. This is all because you brought Nava to the old school building.”

Rukia mentioned the name of a Social Service Department member while giggling.

“Nava is now the queen of the old school building.”

Regin Academy was established by a kingdom that suffered bitter defeats in the past, for the sake of the future.

The site was the place where the kingdom experienced its greatest defeat.

Perhaps because of that, the old school building always had endless ghostly screams mixed with cat cries.

It was because the old school building happened to be where the most casualties occurred due to monsters released by the Demon King’s army.

The person who subdued all those ghosts at once was none other than Nava.

A member of the Social Service Department and one of my closely monitored targets.

Because she exists and acts as the actual department head, I wear the title but hardly manage the department.

“The caretakers and professors hate coming here. It’s fine with Nava, but as you know, Nava isn’t always around, right?”

“That’s right. She’s a free spirit.”

“So they’ve essentially left the management of the old school building to Nava. I’m constantly surprised too~. When I’m walking around and see brooms or mops cleaning the floor as if possessed, it’s terrifying! Kyahaha!”

I see.

Since the old school building wasn’t really highlighted in the original game except for a few events, I didn’t pay much attention to it either.

I knew that the reason students screamed when they saw me sliding along the wall was because they mistook me for a ghost.

But I didn’t expect Nava to completely take over the old school building.

In other words, is the old school building now a complete lawless zone?

‘This... might not be so bad?’

With the interference of professors and caretakers completely gone.

In a way, a gray area has been created where I can freely operate.

In dormitories and main buildings, there are too many watching eyes, making it difficult for me to actively handle things.

But the old school building is different.

I didn’t realize that what I unintentionally neglected, focusing only on the professors and main Athenas’ activity radius, would come back as such an advantage.

“So... Rukia, where is this uncle you mentioned?”

“There! The pot-bellied man occupying the center seat like a king! See him? Of course you can, he’s enormously huge~!”

I follow Rukia’s pointing finger with my gaze.

There was a hefty man who looked about 2m tall, wearing a bulldog mask and blowing a toy horn.

‘He got in here with that size without being discovered?’

“Rukia. I’m asking just in case.”

“Yes!”

“Did you happen to... create a secret passage... leading here?”

Rukia puffs her cheeks and chuckles.

“Of course~! How else would those uncles have gotten in? Nava created it right after taking over the old school building. I almost became a guinea pig for Pixie, but anyway, I received a lot of help?”

“Hmm....”

“Anyway, the old fogies don’t know anything~! Kihihi. Now I don’t even need to go outside the academy to play cards, it’s so convenient!”

To think they’d entrust Pixie with designing a secret passage just to gamble. She clearly made such a choice because she could bet her own life as a stake.

I would never do that.

“Oh right. This isn’t the time. Let’s go quickly!”

“Yes. We don’t have much time.”

“Don’t be so scared. He might look like a generous uncle who likes to play with women, but he’s similar to me in character!”

I was led by Rukia’s hand toward the pot-bellied man.

As if noticing our approach.

Men in black clothes who were hiding around the pot-bellied man blocked our way.

“Stop. State your business.”

He even brings private bodyguards around.

Is he quite an important person?

If he was planning to visit a private gambling den in the academy basement, it would have been better to come alone quietly rather than making such a show.

He’s accumulated wealth, but lacks the corresponding force and courage.

It seems he recently obtained his noble title with money as well.

“Daddy~. These black friends are scaring me with threats. I’m scared~~.”

Rukia exaggeratedly trembles her body.

The man, hearing her sharp voice, abruptly stood up from his seat.

“Enough. Bring them here.”

“Are you guests? I apologize for the disrespect.”

“It’s fine, just guide them.”

“Yes.”

Soon, we were escorted by the men in black and occupied two seats at the dealer’s table.

Rukia sat to the left of the man. I sat to his right.

Worried that my cat mask might fall off, I carefully adjusted the ear part and pulled it up again.

“Welcome, lovely Rukia. What brings you here today?”

As soon as Rukia sat on the round chair, she leaned over and rested her shoulders against the pot-bellied man.

She’s been acting like he’s her stepfather since earlier.

“Daddy, I have a favor...!”

...Was it real?

“About Scarlet Heart...”

Rukia, who had been maintaining a high tone all along, lowers her voice significantly for the first time.

She’s trying to have a secret conversation.

“Shh. Let’s talk about that after this game is over.”

“Heehee~ Okay, okay!”

Is Scarlet Heart a replica of Vermilion Heart?

If so, is this man a supplier, or a big shot who directly operates the manufacturing factory?

Since Rukia's words are always mixed with exaggeration, even when she specifically said "big shot," I can't help but doubt it once.

After all, the "real big shots" are already...

"So, who is this lady?"

His gaze alternates between the cards he's holding and my face.

I shot a vacant stare from behind my mask.

The pot-bellied man then slightly averts his gaze. Was it uncomfortable for him?

"Well... she's like my spiritual pillar, you could say. Hehe."

The man reacted sensitively to the words "spiritual pillar."

The passive attitude he showed just a moment ago was nowhere to be seen.

It seems he wants to claim ownership over Rukia.

Is he stupid?

To Rukia, the term "spiritual pillar" means someone who's fun to play with.

"Spiritual pillar... You said the same thing about me."

"Did I~?"

"What do you mean, 'Did I~?' Rukia. Didn't you say you think of me as a father?"

Probably a foolish father who plays along well and gets deceived easily.

Watching this farce makes me yawn.

...Ah, this is not the time to yawn.

I have 18 minutes left.

I stretched my arm behind the man's broad back and poked Rukia. It meant to hurry up and do something because we don't have much time.

Perhaps because he's so large, the inside of my arm touched the man's back.

I didn't touch it because I wanted to know, but I found out because the man was startled.

"I'm sorry, but I'm not interested in grown women."

Yeah, next, you pedophile.

"Oh. I see."

I covered my mouth and responded appropriately, then waited quietly. Rukia suddenly shouted and tapped the man's cards.

"Daddy! It's time for the showdown!"

The man glanced at me sharply, then promptly placed two cards from his hand on the table with vigor.

Then the dealer announces.

...No, a student dressed as a dealer said.

Where on earth did they get such clothes?

"Count Train, are you revealing your hand?"

[Notification: New character, 'Barak Train' has been registered in the character dictionary]

Along with the dealer's surprised voice. The character information of a man named Barak Train is newly registered.

Barak Train.

Even I, who played Day-R for thousands of hours, am hearing this name for the first time.

But it's not surprising.

Day-R, being an extremely reactive game, has AI creating characters in real-time on the server depending on the game progress and surviving characters.

Did they kidnap a novel-creating AI technician? The variability went crazy with characters that didn't exist popping up and stories that didn't exist emerging.

That was Day-R's advantage, disadvantage, and charm.

"No need to look further. Victory is mine! Haha!"

Train showed his hand to others with a hearty laugh. Since the outcome is already decided, he means to reveal the cards.

Is he a professional gambler? Or did he learn from Rukia?

If so, it makes sense that he gets along well with Rukia.

In such an unprofessional private gambling den, even if his skills are somewhat lacking, he won't get caught.

No. Come to think of it, isn't Rukia the operator of this place from the beginning?

"The victory goes to Count Train who completed a Spade Flush!"

It definitely wasn't a Spade until just now.

When it changed to a Spade...

Only Rukia would know.

"Yahahaha! I'm sorry about this. Taking money from students isn't my hobby."

A big defeat for the students.

But the expressions of the students who lost money didn't look particularly bitter.

Something had already been exchanged.

The luxurious jewel boxes placed at the feet of the students must be the culprits.

It wasn't a fraudulent gamble.

The gambling den itself is a transaction site.

They pretended to lose the bet, but actually paid the transaction amount.

'Scarlet Heart...'

While the academy faculty including Yggdrasil and the Athena Management Bureau think they have perfect control over Vermilion Heart.

It's continuously distributed through these dark routes.

And unlike the original, it's a counterfeit with obvious side effects.

After the previous students hid the jewel boxes in their bosoms and disappeared, I sat across from the now-empty Train with Rukia.

"Now then, shall we discuss important matters?"

I have 10 minutes of life left.

It was close, but I think this is manageable.

On the first day of my possession, I didn't even know how to view the status window until 30 seconds before death.

And even then, I barely consumed Vermilion Heart thanks to my father.

"Of course, this is what you want..."

Count Train brings one of the jewel boxes placed at his feet onto the game table and opens the lid to show me.

My body reacted immediately upon seeing the two vials placed on the soft cushioning material.

A bright red glow filling the transparent bottles.

A drink that is like the blood of life to me.

Although it's a counterfeit, it was clearly Vermilion Heart.

I could tell that my life would be extended as soon as I drink it.

“So, what do you plan to give? Our lady with the gray cat mask.”

I can't afford to buy medicine with money when I'm already tight on living expenses.

I'll work at the factory at night and receive medicine in return.

For the first time, it's better to get it on credit.

Like, I'll even do manual labor, so please give me the medicine.

“Since it's urgent... can I receive the items first? Afterward, with this frail body... somehow...”

I looked at him pleadingly with desperate eyes,

but what returned was rough coldness.

“As I said earlier, mature women are not my taste.”

I'll really kill him.