

Cote 541

Chapter 541: The Final Ring

"Where should I put these things?"

"P-put them on the table!"

"Okay."

Tachibana Akane stole a glance at Kaoru.

Though it was a face she had grown accustomed to, she now felt an indescribable nervousness and shyness, as if it were the first time she had brought a boy into her room.

Damn it, she had impulsively called Kaoru up without any forethought, and it wasn't until they stepped into the room that she realized what she had done.

Inviting a boy to her room in the middle of the night—no matter how you looked at it, it seemed like the behavior of a desperate girl!

"W-would you like something to drink?"

Akane swallowed hard, her gaze drifting toward him involuntarily, yet she couldn't bring herself to meet his eyes.

Once she became aware that they were alone together, a boy and a girl in the same room, her cheeks began to burn uncontrollably.

"No need. Since you're hungry, I'll just make you a bowl of noodles."

Kaoru had already entered the kitchen. "Eating nothing but snacks isn't good for your stomach."

Somehow, seeing him tie on an apron made Akane's nervousness fade away.

"Your fridge is practically empty."

Kaoru opened her small refrigerator and couldn't help but sigh in disbelief.

Fortunately, he had asked beforehand and bought noodles and ingredients at the convenience store.

"I... I usually cook too!"

Akane raised her voice loudly to cover her embarrassment. "You just came at the wrong time. I finished all the ingredients, that's why it's like this."

Kaoru touched the kitchen utensils—they seemed dusty?

However, he didn't expose Akane's stubbornness and instead started preparing to cook the noodles.

"Since it's late, most of the ingredients at the convenience store were sold out, so I can only make you plain noodles. Don't expect too much."

"Who would have high expectations for a boy's cooking skills anyway?"

Perhaps having relaxed, Akane walked over to Kaoru's side, crossing her arms.

"Actually, don't judge me by my appearance. I did take home economics in middle school, and I'm somewhat confident in my feminine skills. So, dear junior, why don't you step aside and let your respected senpai take over?"

"Don't be like that. You dragged me here out of the blue, only to end up cooking noodles for me. If word got out, I'd be so embarrassed."

Akane felt as if she had been struck by a critical blow.

With a muffled "Auuu," she crouched down, covering her head defensively.

"Stop it, don't say things like that! I don't even know why I called you up here, and you could have refused! Why did you agree so decisively?"

Perhaps overwhelmed by shame, Akane covered her face with both hands, nearly rolling on the floor in agitation.

It seemed she was the same person whether in public or private—not very good at hiding her emotions.

As Kaoru thought this, he began preparing the noodles.

To be honest, he didn't know why he had followed her up either.

Maybe he was just used to entering a beautiful girl's room.

In fact, the moment he stepped inside, Akane's personality was reflected in the room.

The textbooks and extracurricular books on the shelves showed that she studied diligently in private.

He could even spot a few exam prep books, likely from when she worried about not being able to graduate from Class A and considered applying to university independently.

On the bed, a hugging pillow and a cute nightgown were tossed aside, with hints of pink clothing faintly visible.

Meanwhile, the desk was cluttered with bottles and jars typical of girls, clearly indicating she had been experimenting with makeup.

Of course, Kaoru had been deliberately ignoring the entire row of shoujo manga on her shelf.

In short, this was a room filled with a girlish atmosphere, and unmistakably a high school girl's room.

"You seem quite skilled at this."

Tachibana Akane had been watching his movements for some time without him noticing.

"When did you get the impression I couldn't handle basic tasks?"

Kaoru turned his head expressionlessly, causing her to shrink back slightly.

"Haven't you been constantly taken care of by Honami and the others?"

Tachibana Akane pursed her lips, "Last time I visited, you had such an enjoying expression. With two cute beauties cooking for you, if I weren't there, they'd probably be feeding you by hand, wouldn't they?"

She expected Kaoru to retort, but he silently averted his gaze instead.

Immediately, Tachibana Akane puffed up with anger - so they really had been feeding him!

"How nice, soon you'll be second-years. I suppose you'll have two whole years to flirt around. Underclassmen are so carefree, never considering their senpai's feelings."

"I recall inviting a certain senpai out on a date, wanting to create some nice memories, but she refused."

"W-who would go on a date! We're... we're not a couple..."

As she spoke, Tachibana Akane's voice grew progressively weaker until it became completely inaudible.

"So kissing doesn't make people lovers? Was that kiss just a joke then?"

Kaoru stared at her intently.

"K-kiss... What right do you have to care about kissing!"

Tachibana Akane complained discontentedly, "You've already kissed them! I asked Honami about it... you... you shameless people!"

She stammered, unable to voice the words clearly, resorting to cursing to vent her emotions.

"Are you referring to doing naughty things?"

A mischievous smile played on Kaoru's lips.

Tachibana Akane immediately turned away: "How should I know? Aren't you the one who knows best?"

"I see. So in senpai's eyes, only doing naughty things together makes people lovers?"

Kaoru suddenly leaned in, closing the distance between them, "Or is senpai inviting me to do naughty things with her tonight?"

Tachibana Akane's breath hitched.

She stared wide-eyed at the face so close to hers, feeling as if something had struck her.

An electric current passed through her heart, and a surge of blood rushed to her brain, making her cheeks burn bright red.

"N-no..."

Yet the girl could only whisper this.

Kaoru raised an eyebrow slightly - had he been too stimulating to the girl's heart?

"Doing naughty things with you... it's not possible... I'll graduate soon... Even if we could meet... Honami and the others are so cute, in two years maybe..."

Tachibana Akane lowered her head. Maybe in two years he would forget about her.

Compared to Ichinose Honami and the others who could see him anytime and were with him daily, she was just a senpai about to graduate.

Two years was really too long - she was terrified.

So she might not be able to hold on.

Perhaps it would be better to graduate and bid farewell to this high school life along with these complicated feelings.

For some reason, seeing Kaoru's silent expression, Tachibana Akane suddenly grew flustered.

"Ah, the atmosphere seems a bit strange. Did I say something..."

Just as she tried to lighten the mood, Kaoru took a ring from his pocket.

Her smile immediately froze, and she became even more shaken than before.

"I've actually been waiting for the right moment to give this to you, and now seems perfect."

Kaoru said, "Even if you graduate, I'll chase you to the ends of the earth. Don't think you can escape like this, Akane."

This was the final Wedding Ring.

The moment he decided to give it to Tachibana Akane, the Wedding Ring's effect activated, transforming into the most dazzling brilliance in her eyes.

Chapter 542: Jealousy

The sound of steam grew increasingly intense, yet Tachibana Akane could hear nothing but the pounding of her own heartbeat.

She stared blankly as Kaoru took her hand, aligning the ring with her ring finger before slowly sliding it on.

The dazzling brilliance seemed determined to bind her for a lifetime.

"It seems to fit perfectly."

At the sound of his voice, Tachibana Akane snapped back to reality in an instant.

The sounds of the world rushed back into her ears, clamoring like summer cicadas despite spring not having officially arrived yet.

But gazing at this face so close before her—compared to that distant, unreachable figure—it now felt overwhelmingly real.

His slightly prominent nose bridge wasn't attractive at all, the upward tilt of his eyes always gave off an aggressive sense of danger, and his slightly lowered gaze seemed to look down on others like he was bullying them.

So unwilling, so jealous, so furious—why could he casually produce a ring like magic, as if wearing this ring symbolized clearing some conquest route, as if everything would be perfectly resolved this way.

"T-two years, okay?"

Akane forced these words through gritted teeth.

She desperately wanted to maintain a nonchalant smile, but her entire body trembled uncontrollably, her expression even harder to restrain.

"I... I might forget you immediately, quickly find a boyfriend. Juniors like you are everywhere in this world, you know?"

"Hmm, I'll force away like an ox anyone who tries to take you from me," Kaoru said. "If Akane-chan resists, I think I'd actually get more excited. Turning Akane-chan into mine would make me happy for life."

"D-don't... don't use strange nicknames for me... at a time like this."

Akane spoke in broken phrases, like a helpless child carefully watching him.

"I... I don't like you as much as you like me..."

"One year was enough to reach this point. I'm looking forward to what feelings Akane-chan will develop for me next."

Kaoru paused. "But actually, you're not wrong. I don't like you as much as you imagine either."

She should have been happy, so why did her heart ache so sharply, as if being dully carved by a knife?

"Y-yeah, that makes sense. After all, you have..."

"This has nothing to do with Honami or the others."

Kaoru cut off her words. "My affection for any of you isn't pure at all. I'm just selfishly unwilling to let any of you go. In other words, there's no pure love here."

"I... I don't understand what you're saying."

Akane struggled to contain her emotions. "It's really hard to believe I'd accept someone like you. I used to only resent you for seducing Nagumo-kun."

"I don't recall seducing anyone. If anything, someone kept scolding and hitting me in the student council."

Kaoru's face darkened.

When had he ever seduced Nagumo Miyabi?

"I... I never did anything that extreme."

Akane whispered, "But... being with you is enjoyable. Things I can't say to classmates or friends, I can tell you. Sometimes I vent my daily frustrations on you too."

"So I was just your punching bag all along."

"I've already said I'm not that harsh... Mmm... but I am that harsh, utterly terrible. When I see your usual disrespectful attitude, I want to teach you a lesson. When I see you always being frivolous and not taking the student council seriously, I want to teach you a lesson. When I see you being impolite to me, I want to teach you a lesson even more."

"Do you have so many complaints about me?"

"Yes, that's the kind of woman I am. You must have complaints about me too, right?"

"I certainly do. For example, I haven't gotten to know more sides of you yet."

His nonchalance made Tachibana Akane both shy and angry, her eyes reddening.

"Why are you sweet-talking me again? Can't you just speak honestly with me for once!"

The girl grabbed his collar and demanded, "I admit I'm easily appeased, like when you comforted me before. I'm happy with how you are now too, but I don't know what you're thinking! Suddenly confessing, suddenly proposing, suddenly making me think about all these things. If you were more forceful, I would agree - I'm that kind of easily handled woman. But I can't see what you want from me!"

"Want from you?"

"I've asked around - you do lewd things with girls, but you've never done any with me. And I don't see that kind of desire in your eyes either."

"Just because I haven't done strange things with you, you think I want nothing from you?"

"Is... isn't that the case?"

Tachibana Akane said fiercely, "What is there about me that you could possibly like? In terms of personality, isn't Honami-san better? In terms of ability, isn't Honami-san better? In terms of figure, isn't Honami..."

"Don't compare like that, Akane."

Kaoru pressed down her hands, "I like you. I like her. But it's not a comparative kind of liking. Even if you can list a hundred reasons why I like Honami, I can list a hundred and one reasons why I like you."

"Ha, what kind of logic is that?"

Tachibana Akane couldn't accept this, her thoughts completely in disarray, "Then... then what exactly am I?"

"This is a scumbag's perspective. Although everyone thinks it's a Harem, and I'm thinking about how to make you all get along harmoniously, but before that, I believe we should be in a relationship of mutual affection."

"Mu... mutual affection?"

"This is the relationship we're trying to build now. Even if I don't understand you well enough, even if you think you'll leave me soon, even if life gets worse from here, I think I'll try to continue liking you."

"Are you planning to make me avoid Honami-san and the others?"

"Because senpai doesn't know how to interact with them. Let's treat the next two years as a vacation for yourself."

Kaoru returned to using his initial form of address, gently holding the girl before him, "When we meet again, I believe senpai will have grown into a mature and sensible upperclassman. I'm sure Honami and the others will be greatly surprised."

Tachibana Akane remained silent for a moment, then turned and tightly embraced Kaoru.

Just as Kaoru had said, making a girl abandon her reserve and share the person she likes with so many other girls was too painful.

It wasn't just painful - there was also a feeling of inferiority.

She had always thought of Ichinose Honami as the main wife, while she was just the mistress, subconsciously avoiding everything.

"I'm so jealous. Jealous that they still get to be with you for two more years, a full two years. That's one year longer than the single year I had with you. I only had one year with you, yet they get to spend three years with you - a complete high school experience. I feel so unwilling."

"I clearly said I wanted to test how you would pursue me, how you would make me like you. I thought about how to make things difficult for you, how to teach you a lesson, how to make you like me even more than you like them. But I'm so unwilling."

"Unwilling... If I had met you earlier, I would never have let go. I wouldn't allow anyone to touch you, absolutely no one! I'm completely confident I could do better than them!"

In his embrace, Tachibana Akane practically ground out these last words through clenched teeth, her knuckles turning white as she gripped him tightly.

Kaoru patted her back.

Wanting to care for one person would inevitably make another feel lonely and hurt - this was probably why she had asked him to come up.

Because the senior was feeling lonely.

Chapter 543: Getting Revenge

After feeling upset for a while, Tachibana Akane noticed the aroma of noodles.

Perhaps because she was already starving, she ate three bowls while Kaoru only had one.

After finishing the noodles, she looked at Kaoru's face and seemed to feel embarrassed, whispering.

"Giving me the ring... is it really okay?"

"It was originally prepared for you."

Kaoru thought for a moment, then added, "Honami and the others have them too, just different styles."

"I, I know that. They showed me theirs, and I also heard that the girls in your class have rings too."

Tachibana Akane fidgeted awkwardly, "Such a beautiful thing, are you really giving it to me?"

"Really." Kaoru replied.

"You're not lying? You're really giving it to me?" Tachibana Akane continued asking.

"It's yours now." Kaoru said patiently.

"Can I wear it all the time?" Tachibana Akane asked foolishly.

"Yes, I hope you can wear it always." Kaoru said softly.

Tachibana Akane kept looking at the ring on her finger, occasionally giggling "ehehe" with sparkling eyes.

It seemed the effect of the [Wedding Ring] satisfied her greatly, though it was somewhat troublesome.

Originally there were only nine, and now seven had been given away, with the remaining two [Wedding Rings] reserved for Kamuro and Asahina Nazuna.

So now he truly had none left.

Fortunately, it exactly covered all of them, neither more nor less.

Of course, this was only based on the current situation - the number of rings happened to be just right.

If including Sakura Airi and others, Kaoru could only hope to draw more [Wedding Rings] in the future.

"Um, I have a question." Tachibana Akane asked somewhat shyly, "Rings should come in pairs, right? Can I see your ring?"

As expected, after receiving the ring, this question was bound to appear.

Kaoru calmly said: "Because there are too many styles, my ring isn't the matching one. Otherwise it would be too troublesome."

Tachibana Akane felt slightly disappointed, but she could accept this reason, after all, there were too many girls around him.

"Why didn't you buy matching rings?"

Immediately afterwards, the second question naturally appeared.

"I've thought about it too, but everyone's preferences are different. The styles you like might not appeal to others, while designs you dislike could be someone else's favorite."

Kaoru patiently explained, "So considering this, I gave each of you rings that are completely unique."

Just as she had described herself, Tachibana Akane was indeed easy to comfort.

Hearing these words, she immediately brightened up, gazing delightedly at what Kaoru called the one-of-a-kind ring.

Of course it was unique - this was the effect of the [Wedding Ring], capable of adapting to the wearer's aesthetic preferences, appearing as the most beautiful ring in their eyes.

Kaoru checked his phone - nearly 10 PM.

Though somewhat reluctant, it was about time to head back.

However, Akane had been observing his movements all along.

"Hey, Mitoma-kun... how do you... feel about me now?"

The young girl tried her best to appear nonchalant as she met Kaoru's gaze, though her slightly flushed earlobes betrayed her hidden thoughts.

Kaoru glanced at her.

She subtly straightened her posture.

Since they were in the room, she naturally wasn't wearing her jacket anymore, so now her shirt tightly hugged her small, rounded chest, looking full and firm.

Her smooth neck was casually exposed before him, her pale collarbones seemingly inviting his gaze to wander lower, tempting him to unbutton her collar and reveal more alluring sights.

Though he couldn't see her legs now, the earlier impression remained vivid in his mind - defenseless shorts hugging her particularly perky and ample bottom, those fair, straight, slender legs wearing only short socks, the dazzling skin making it impossible to look away.

Actually, the senior wasn't small at all - it was only in comparison to Ichinose Honami that she appeared petite and delicate.

"Very cute." Kaoru spoke his honest thoughts.

Akane blushed - that wasn't what she wanted to hear!

"Besides... c-cute, don't you have any other feelings toward me?"

"Other feelings?"

"L-like... feelings toward the opposite sex... something like that..."

"I definitely see you as a cute girl. Should I be treating you like a boy instead?"

"N-no, that's not what I mean!"

Akane's face flushed completely red. As a girl, how could she possibly say it out loud?

"I-I mean... don't you feel like... violating me?"

She hung her head, completely unable to look at Kaoru, her exposed ears turning bright red.

"Is it the kind of violation I'm imagining?"

"I-I know... you do bad things with them."

Akane whispered, "But you never do bad things with me normally, and you don't look at me with lewd eyes either."

After a moment of silence, Kaoru said quietly: "Senpai, do you realize this sounds like you're inviting me to violate you?"

"Th-that's exactly what I'm doing..."

Akane knew what she was doing, so her shame was nearly overwhelming, "When even a pervert has no desire for me, are you trying to make me cry?"

Recalling their interactions, she realized she and Mitoma hadn't shared much intimacy.

Though Ichinose Honami said he had a foot fetish, she never noticed him staring at her feet.

Plus, with so many girls around him, Akane couldn't help but wonder - did she really have no charm at all?

He couldn't even manage to be lecherous toward her?

How disheartening. She was his senior, after all—shouldn't she have an easy advantage over a junior?

However, Tachibana Akane felt a flicker of delight recalling how Kaoru had sneakily glanced at her earlier in the convenience store.

It was proof he definitely had thoughts about her.

Now, she gazed at him uneasily, a mix of shyness and—more strongly—anticipation swirling within her.

"Let me touch your breasts?"

Kaoru did not disappoint her.

Tachibana Akane blinked in slight surprise, then happily hummed in agreement.

She rose from her seat and, smiling, settled beside him.

"W-well, I guess there's no helping it. You are a lecherous junior, after all. It's only natural you'd be curious about your senior's breasts. Fine, you can touch them for one minute."

As she spoke, she spread her arms open toward him like a mother, her joy evident.

Instead of leaning into her embrace, Kaoru pulled her into his own.

Before she could react, his other hand was already groping her.

"Mmgh..."

Tachibana Akane's face flushed crimson.

As his palm covered her chest and began to toy with her freely, the senior realized this was her first time being touched by a man.

"About what we discussed earlier, there's one point I need to correct, Senpai," Kaoru murmured softly. "I am very interested in you. Sometimes, I can't help but want to pin you down and take my revenge."

Perhaps imagining the scene he described, Tachibana Akane's pretty face reddened even more.

She couldn't bring herself to meet his eyes, burying her face against his chest like a resigned ostrich.

"R-right now... wouldn't be too late for revenge," she whispered into his embrace, causing Kaoru to pause before gritting his teeth.

This girl really had no fear now.

Chapter 544: I Am a Shameless Woman

She was indeed soft, just the right size to fit in his palm.

He kneaded slowly, savoring the unique tenderness of a young girl hidden beneath her clothes—a sensation hard to forget.

Kaoru lifted her horizontally into his arms, settling her on his lap.

He admired her blushing face while relishing the distinctive feel in his hand.

After a short while, Tachibana Akane began to pant, her body shifting unconsciously as if rubbing against him, seemingly craving more.

Kaoru wrapped an arm around her slender waist, his palm resting on her shorts, which tightly hugged her pert bottom.

From time to time, his hand strayed to her pale, plump thighs.

The smooth skin there also possessed the delicate texture unique to a young girl.

It seemed to stimulate her; even her small bottom tensed, pressing between his thighs, brushing against his body with subtle friction.

Her hands clutched the fabric of his shirt, and her slightly parted lips exhaled warm breaths.

A soft, sticky sound escaped her nose.

A young girl's body is always sensitive.

Even without experience, certain stimuli can trigger instinctive reactions, leaving her confused and tense, unable to think clearly.

Yet Kaoru didn't let up.

He lowered his head, nuzzling her neck as if inhaling her scent.

Unlike Sakayanagi Arisu's milky fragrance or Ichinose Honami's citrus notes, Tachibana Akane carried an alluring aroma mixed with the sweetness of shower gel—a hint of sugary temptation.

"W-wait... what are you licking...? Stop... don't do that..." Tachibana Akane's voice came in broken gasps as she pushed against Kaoru's chest with increasing force, trying to make him ease up.

"Ju-just as Honami said... you're too perverted."

"Just because I like your scent, that makes me a pervert?"

Seeing her reaction, Kaoru didn't force things but instead whispered by her ear, "Can I slip my hand under? Over the clothes just doesn't feel right."

At the mention of "feel," Tachibana's earlobes flushed crimson.

In all her years, this was the first time someone had used such a word about her.

And in this situation, it was far too stimulating for a young girl.

"I-I warned you... I don't have their figures..." Tachibana murmured softly, "If you dare show disappointment, I'll bite you to death."

The threat was fierce, but Mitoma paid it no mind.

After all, when someone was being this forward, only a fool would refuse.

So Kaoru slid his hand beneath her hem, gliding past her waist until he reached her soft little stomach.

"A-ah..."

Tachibana suddenly reacted intensely, her body trembling—not in resistance to his movements, but from flustered surprise.

The sensation of his fingertips playing lightly sent inexplicable shivers through her, like electric currents, drawing puppy-like whimpers from her throat.

Kaoru wasn't devoted to any particular preference—regardless of size, he never discriminated.

Though this senior wasn't as endowed as Ichinose Honami, the feel was wonderfully pleasant, smooth as milk yet springy like jelly without being sticky.

With the slightest touch, its resilience stubbornly resisted the pressure.

Interestingly, just like Karuizawa Kei, she fit perfectly in his palm—neither too much nor too little, allowing him to fully appreciate the pliable softness filling his hand, its shape shifting with his movements.

Perhaps youth's body harbored considerable desire.

Through her shorts, her perky bottom pressed against Kaoru's thigh while his hand reveled in her delicate smoothness, gradually stirring a rising impulse.

At first, Tachibana didn't notice anything amiss, but she wasn't completely naive either.

She soon sensed something bothering her.

"You're... reacting to me."

Tachibana lowered her blushing face, feeling embarrassed.

"Holding such a cute senior, of course I'd react—especially when she's being so generous."

Kaoru wrapped his arms around her slender waist.

For some reason, this felt even more intense than with Kamuro, which struck him as odd.

"Be-because everyone says you're lewd, and you hadn't done anything bad to me... I was really worried."

Tachibana seemed to sigh in relief. "If you weren't interested in me, I wouldn't know what to do."

"Did Honami tell you that too?"

Kaoru asked, "You two seem close. Why not play together?"

Tachibana reacted strongly: "No way! I'd never join your sound party!"

The corner of Kaoru's mouth twitched.

That wasn't what he meant—why did everyone assume he was always thinking about sound parties?

"A-anyway, I won't fulfill that request."

Realizing she'd overreacted, Tachibana stammered for a moment before adding, "But... if it's just like this now..."

After waiting for a long time without hearing her continue, Kaoru couldn't help but laugh.

"What's wrong with things as they are now?"

Tachibana Akane puffed out her cheeks and muttered "mean," though her eyes were already shimmering with moisture, the peach-colored blush spreading across her cheeks.

"You being like this will make me lose control of what I might do tonight."

Kaoru restrained the urges coursing through his body.

Tachibana Akane seemed to be angry as she suddenly bit his shoulder.

Though it didn't hurt, Kaoru was momentarily stunned.

"I've already accepted your proposal. Even if you do strange things to me, do you really think I would get angry?"

Tachibana Akane glared at him with puffed cheeks, yet the girl wrapped her arms around his neck and gently licked the spot she had just bitten.

"If you don't hurry, I'll graduate soon, you dummy."

Since there were classes the next day, Kaoru specifically set an alarm for 5 a.m., thinking he could sneak back to the first-year dormitory unnoticed.

However, he forgot about Tachibana Akane sleeping beside him.

Hearing the alarm, Tachibana Akane also groggily opened her eyes and nearly jumped in fright upon seeing a man next to her.

When she realized it was Kaoru, her expression stiffened, as if recalling the events of the previous night.

"I'm such a shameless woman, hiks..."

Tachibana Akane seemed utterly ashamed of her initiative last night, even beginning to wallow in self-pity.

"Ahem, thank you for your hospitality, Senpai."

Kaoru controlled his gaze—the girl was only covered by a blanket, her exposed skin pale and smooth.

"Does it still hurt?"

No matter what, he was at fault.

Knowing it was her first time, he had disregarded her physical condition and gone five rounds.

"Hurt? Besides being a little scared the first time, it didn't hurt afterward... Wait, what am I saying? I'm such a shameless woman, wuwuwu!"

It seemed her body wasn't the least bit uncomfortable; on the contrary, she was full of energy, crying loudly while clutching her head on the bed.

He had thought she might not be able to get out of bed, but now it looked like she could attend classes normally today.

Kaoru's expression gradually turned peculiar. His thoughts from last night seemed correct—this young senpai might be more suited to be the Chalice than Horikita Suzune.

"Senpai, want to exercise a bit?"

Soon, the girl covered her flushed face with her hands. Kaoru pried her fingers apart, forcing her to witness how she was being bullied.

"Ah... It'll... It'll break... I... I want it from behind..."

"No, I want to see Senpai's face."

"Don't... Don't look, it's so embarrassing! She said you'd let girls keep their clothes on!"

"Keeping clothes on would be even more perverted, dummy. I'll teach Kikyo a lesson later for feeding you all the wrong ideas."

Though Tachibana Akane tried to resist, it was only out of shame.

She offered no real opposition to his "exercise" and even cooperated quite willingly.

Thus, around 5 a.m., intermittent whimpers and strange, wet slapping sounds emanated from Tachibana Akane's room.

Since it was early morning, no one heard these odd noises.

Chapter 545: Teaching the Girlfriend a Lesson.

On the second day of the voting exam for the first-years, someone reported Nagumo Miyabi's negligence to the student council and the school, hoping to have him removed as student council president.

The reasons varied widely: some claimed Nagumo Miyabi misused student council funds, others accused him of unfair handling of disputes, and some said he abused his presidential authority.

Normally, Nagumo Miyabi wouldn't care about such complaints.

However, when Horikita Manabu advised him that, as president, he must lead by example and not frequently delegate his duties to others, it put him on high alert.

Though Horikita Manabu wasn't directly involved, Nagumo Miyabi sensed trouble brewing from his words.

Sure enough, over the next two days, public opinion among the students gradually turned against him.

Initially, criticism focused on his promotion of reforms that showed no tangible results, while he simultaneously exploited exam rules to target other classes within the second-year cohort.

Later, pent-up dissatisfaction toward Nagumo Miyabi erupted, with students questioning why someone like him had been elected as student council president.

Nagumo Miyabi dismissed these concerns outright, declaring that this was a school where strength spoke for itself—his position as president was earned through his own capabilities.

This response only intensified the conflict.

Those already discontent with his so-called "individual strength supremacy" continued attacking his actions through forums and the student council mailbox.

Unnoticed, the controversy grew increasingly fierce, eventually evolving into a major debate over whether reforms should even be pursued.

The second-year students were particularly vocal.

Having lived under Nagumo's rule for a considerable time, some had abandoned their classes to collaborate with him for advancement, plunging their classes into chaos and distrust.

Naturally, they could not tolerate this situation.

Some firmly supported Nagumo's stance, while others upheld the tradition of class-based advancement.

Soon, the entire grade split into two clearly defined factions.

Among Nagumo's supporters, dissenting voices emerged—some believed he was on the verge of failure and suggested switching allegiance to Kaoru to lead the reform efforts.

Unaware that the situation would spiral in this direction, Kaoru, who had instigated the public discourse, had merely intended to keep Nagumo occupied with handling the fallout.

Nonetheless, his initial objective was achieved: Nagumo was indeed troubled by the controversy targeting him, which even reached the school administration.

The newly appointed acting principal summoned Nagumo specifically to inquire whether he could maintain control over the student council.

Even the student council had requested a change in leadership, leaving the school administration bewildered.

Under normal procedures, such demands wouldn't warrant Nagumo's removal, as he hadn't committed any outrageous acts, and the school had no grounds to intervene in student affairs.

However, the sheer volume of discussion forced the school to view Nagumo with suspicion.

Even if the accusations were false, the school began to question his competence.

In the school's eyes, Nagumo's failure to manage student affairs and his creation of such a mess were clear indicators of incompetence.

Should the school really need to step in? Was this the kind of incompetent president they had?

Thus, on the first day the controversy erupted, Nagumo had already anticipated this.

He stormed into the student council office and found Kaoru, Ichinose Honami, Tonokawa, and others working.

"Oh? The president gracing us with his presence today? What brings you here?" Kaoru looked pleasantly surprised at Nagumo.

Since their relationship had soured, Nagumo rarely visited the student council.

The reason was simple: Nagumo feared he might lose his temper and argue with Kaoru.

At the same time, he didn't want to replace the student council executives arbitrarily, so he avoided the place altogether.

Nagumo thought to himself, once he found capable and loyal students, he would replace all the student council executives.

"I heard you're planning to replace me as president?" Nagumo stared expressionlessly at everyone in the office.

"Tonokawa, even you're involved? Heh."

Tonokawa steeled himself and whispered, "This semester, you've been constantly pushing your work onto others. As the president..."

"I've been recruiting new executives."

Nagumo said coldly, "For example, Ryota Iijima is more clever and capable than you."

Kaoru suppressed a laugh, while Tonokawa's expression visibly darkened.

"It's strange—I don't feel the slightest bit of anger now. I should have realized this earlier."

Nagumo turned his gaze to Kaoru. "Now, I should thank you. Once I calmed down, your weaknesses became glaringly obvious."

"Aren't you going to dismiss me from my position?" Kaoru said calmly.

The student council president had the authority to appoint and dismiss any executive, much like a cabinet.

In fact, this term's student council was essentially Nagumo's cabinet.

However, the cabinet had sidelined the president.

"If it were useful, I would have removed you long ago and appointed Ryuen or Sakayanagi in your place. Unfortunately, they weren't willing."

Simply replacing Kaoru wouldn't be enough.

Unless he could replace the entire student council, Nagumo would remain constrained.

That's why he had genuinely been scouting for executive candidates this semester.

Ryuen was unwilling, and Sakayanagi wasn't an option either.

The second-year students had already been filtered by him—there were no suitable candidates before, and even fewer now.

Moreover, Nagumo held the same stance as Manabu Horikita: only capable students could serve as student council executives.

On this point, he was unyielding.

"Heh, I've seen through your bluff anyway."

Nagumo had calmed down considerably, even managing to smile again. "I've prepared a gift for you. I hope you'll like it."

Kaoru furrowed his brows, watching Nagumo's retreating figure.

In truth, Kaoru had received a report from Ryota Iijima indicating that Nagumo had recently been gathering information on first-year students, especially those connected to him.

It seemed this turmoil hadn't affected Nagumo's resolve.

Kaoru was puzzled—was the president truly unafraid of the school stripping him of his position?

For instance, someone could spend tens of millions to buy the presidency.

Neither Kaoru nor Nagumo knew that the acting chairperson was preparing to protect Nagumo.

"Kaoru?" Ichinose called his name, pulling him back to reality.

Kaoru said he was fine and continued handling the documents in his hands.

With the president absent, the vice president, secretary, and treasurer had to manage the work.

After finishing these tasks, Kaoru asked Ichinose to stay behind alone.

Tonokawa tactfully closed the office door. In an instant, the spacious room held only Mitoma and Honami, gazing at each other.

"There's something I want to discuss with you."

Kaoru was the first to break the silence.

Honami sighed deeply, as if resigning herself. "If it's about the voting, Kaoru, you really don't need to worry so much about me. Even though our class can't compare to yours, I've been saving points."

"I know, but didn't your class give points to Ryuen at the start of the semester?"

Kaoru paused. "And later, you insisted on repaying the points you owed me."

"That's true, but Kaoru, you're underestimating me!" Ichinose Honami seemed to be angry, puffing her cheeks in dissatisfaction.

"We've already saved fifteen million!"

Kaoru was taken aback for a moment, then remembered that Class B's approach was similar to his own—they preserved half of their personal points every month.

Over the course of a year, accumulating fifteen million wasn't an impossible feat.

"But you're still short of five million, aren't you?"

"No, no, no. If we include everyone's personal savings, we should be able to scrape together another one or two million."

"Your class is truly united."

"Of course!"

Ichinose Honami beamed with pride.

These were the people she cherished the most—no one was willing to abandon any of their comrades.

"Even so, even if you scrape together one or two million, you still won't have twenty million."

Kaoru had no choice but to dampen her spirits.

Ichinose Honami fell silent for a moment. "Actually, I already have an idea. Sakayanagi-san contacted me—she can offer assistance."

Kaoru asked in confusion, "She gave you several million in aid?"

Ichinose Honami looked troubled, stealing a glance at Kaoru's expression with a glimmer in her eyes. "I have to keep it a secret from you for now. It's part of our deal."

"Alright, I understand it's your private matter, but since when did she have millions?"

Kaoru was puzzled.

Sakayanagi didn't seem like someone with that kind of money.

"I thought you already knew."

Ichinose Honami seemed surprised, then lowered her head in embarrassment. "She said Class A can make deals with Class B. For example, Class B borrows 3 million from Class A and has to repay 6 million within the next six months."

As she finished speaking, Kaoru's face darkened.

Aren't these conditions practically slavery?

Seeing his expression, Ichinose Honami subtly turned her head away.

"Wait, you agreed to this?"

Kaoru found it absurd, and her reaction didn't bode well.

"The only classes we can borrow from are yours in Class A or Class C. Unless absolutely necessary, we won't work with Class C. That's what everyone thinks."

Kaoru grew a bit irritated and gritted his teeth. "Couldn't you have asked your boyfriend for help?"

Unexpectedly, Ichinose Honami stubbornly refused. "This is a class matter, not a personal issue between me and Tetsu. If I could just casually rely on Tetsu to help my class, how would Tetsu's own class view him?"

Kaoru fell silent.

He knew Ichinose was right.

Since their classes were rivals, he had no reason to help his opponents.

Doing so would only make Ichinose Honami unhappy—as rivals, how could she accept his help?

"Alright, let me rephrase." Kaoru said, "I'll exchange 3 million for Class B's praise votes. Is that enough?"

"Eh? Praise votes?"

Ichinose Honami was clearly taken aback.

"Each class has the right to cast praise votes for students in other classes. I want to buy that right from Class B. You'll vote for whoever I tell you to."

"Is Kaoru aiming for protection points?"

"Not for me. Anyway, as the leader of Class B, is 3 million enough?"

Kaoru stared expressionlessly at Ichinose Honami, who began to fidget.

"Is it too little?"

"No, it's... it's too much, isn't it?"

"Fine, I'll add another condition."

Ichinose Honami nodded.

The praise vote condition was already sufficient, but Kaoru had always been helping her, making him seem overly generous, which left her slightly dissatisfied.

"I want to teach my girlfriend a lesson here. Is that acceptable, Ichinose-san?"

As if reminding her, Kaoru placed his hand on his belt.

The girl's face immediately flushed bright red.

Chapter 546: Only I Can Do It

He expected Ichinose Honami to refuse, especially since this was the sacred student council office.

However, Ichinose Honami simply blushed, silently walked over to him, crouched under the desk, and let him press her head down.

After a while, Kaoru watched as she choked, enduring the discomfort, opening her mouth to show him what was inside before swallowing it all.

"Why didn't you refuse me?"

Kaoru actually wanted to say it wasn't necessary—that these lewd things were all taught to them by Kushida, who now had quite a strong penchant for mischief.

Ichinose Honami's cheeks were still flushed, and she placed her small hand on his thigh.

"If this can satisfy you, I'll be happy too."

After saying that, she carefully cleaned up the remnants—something else Kushida had taught her.

Kaoru suspected he might grow accustomed to their tender care.

"Honami, do you think it's good that I'm so driven by desire?"

"Like right now?"

"Including but not limited to."

"Did someone say something to you?"

Ichinose Honami frowned, her expression turning serious. "I don't think there's anything wrong with you doing these things. Even though it was excessive at first, and even if it happened again, I wouldn't be content. But now it's different. As your girlfriend, I'll do my best to satisfy you, and it makes me happy too."

Perhaps it was precisely this aspect that made her tender care so captivating.

Kaoru shook his head, stroking her hair as he spoke. "I gave the ring to Akane."

"So that's it. Just that."

Ichinose Honami smiled faintly. "Tachibana-senpai is cute. We're fine with it here too. She's welcome anytime."

She didn't seem to mind, but her tone was oddly strange, as if welcoming a guest.

Still, their private relationship seemed good, which allowed Kaoru to breathe a sigh of relief.

"To be honest, without Honami's help, today probably wouldn't have gone so smoothly."

Kaoru caressed her cheek.

As his official girlfriend, if she were unhappy, it could lead to chaos. "Every time I come to my senses, I feel like I've changed a bit more than before. Honami is amazing."

"Looks like my victory."

Ichinose Honami made a peace sign, showing a triumphant smile that made the white at the corner of her mouth more noticeable.

Kaoru chuckled, took a tissue, and wiped it for her.

Doing such things in the office felt like being back at the agency, where idols would crouch under his desk under the pretext of relieving his stress from overwork.

When he came back to his senses, Ichinose Honami was staring at him expressionlessly.

"Is there something on my face?"

Kaoru found it strange.

"Of course not. It's just that Kaoru is too gentle. If you want, after work every day, I can help you relieve stress like this."

Ichinose Honami smiled again, looking like an angel. "If Kaoru can be happy, I'll be happy too."

"You're really going to make me lose control and mess you up."

Kaoru's expression was complex.

His girlfriends all seemed like succubi.

"After all, I'm your girlfriend, not some random woman."

Ichinose Honami helped him put on his pants, smiling. "Only I can meet Kaoru's demands and give you the happiness you want. Only me."

It sounded a bit off, but Kaoru frowned slightly without dwelling on it.

"Ahem, the deal is settled then. We can ignore Arisu's conditions. I'll transfer 3 million to you."

Ichinose Honami looked at Kaoru, then suddenly wrapped her arms around his head, pulling him into her embrace gently.

"Thank you."

Not just for his help, but also for understanding her stubbornness, even if it seemed foolish.

Kaoru breathed in her citrus scent, leaning against her softness, inexplicably not wanting to move. This was probably the allure of tender care.

Because of this, Kaoru didn't notice the girl's gaze at that moment—both resentful and tender.

She would fulfill his wishes.

Only she could do it.

...

[Mermaid's Music Box]: Records a mermaid's song. Any living being who hears it will forget all sad memories and remain forever happy.

[Trauma Clearing Patch]: Can clear all external wounds in a short time, including scars and other traumatic marks, but not fatal injuries.

[Purification]: Can purify any unclean liquid into clean drinking water, including toxins, germs, chemical and heavy metal liquids, etc.

[Precision Scalpel], [Beauty Mask], [Eyesight Restoration Potion], [Medical License], [Holy Water], [Fruit of Wisdom]...

These were the new rewards.

Aside from the [Trauma Clearing Patch], Kaoru felt little joy.

It seemed the wish-granting machine had lost its meaning.

Next time, he'd see if he could draw a reward that could cure Sakayanami Arisu.

[Wait, wait! There are actually better rewards. Don't give up so quickly! What do you mean it's lost its meaning? I don't get it at all!]

If he were to stay by their side, his contract with the wish-granting machine would indeed be meaningless.

[Even though I said you could quit anytime, these perverted wishes... only you can fulfill them!]

Kaoru felt like he was being mocked.

Wasn't the one who pushed these perverted wishes onto him the very same wish-granting machine that only knew how to spy?

Why not find a protagonist from an eroge?

[Be- because they all stole my job... I can only get these kinds of wishes... I really have no choice, you know? You should cut me some slack, you perverted foot fetishist!]

Forget it.

Maybe it's better to just end it here.

[Wait, don't go! It's not over yet! I'm sorry! I really value working with you! Please, no! Without you, I... sob...]

Hearing her sobbing, Kaoru was at a loss for words.

So, she had deliberately kept things from him, trying to trick him into continuing to fulfill wishes.

This girl...

[What do I have to do to get you back? You've been slacking off lately, and I haven't had any wishes to feed on! I'm so hungry... sob... If there's anything I can do, I'll do it!]

She was too heavy.

Really troublesome.

[What you want... I really can't give it to you. It's the game's mechanics. I've been trying my best to give you the rewards you want. Think about it—I've already given them to you!]

Kaoru checked the previous rewards and frowned.

None of these could cure Sakayanami Arisu.

The items that could had side effects.

[There are side effects, sure, but look—there's one reward without any, right?]

Following the wish-granting machine's reminder, Kaoru saw the [Bloodstained Holy Grail], a reward he'd drawn earlier.

To perform one miracle before the Holy Grail, he needed to demonstrate seven miracles.

If it's a god, then surely it could cure Sakayanami Arisu. But what counts as a miracle?

[Idiot! You've already experienced miracles! Coming back from the dead is one of the greatest miracles of all!]

Kaoru was stunned for a moment.

Did that mean he had to die and come back to life seven more times?

Chapter 547: No Heavy Stuff

Before returning to the dorm, Kaoru kept pondering the miracles the wish-granting machine mentioned. It said miracles were things that couldn't be done.

Because they couldn't be done, accomplishing them was a miracle.

Coming back from the dead was exactly that kind of miracle.

Kaoru's expression was complicated.

Was it encouraging him to keep ending his life to reach the next wish location?

But, for the sake of the [Trauma Clearing Patch], he'd let it slide for now.

Kaoru reached the dorm door.

As soon as he pushed it open, he saw shoes in the entryway, and voices came from inside the room.

"So gross. That guy's fetishes... I thought he was just a simple foot fetishist."

"Gross or not, when Kaoru does it, there must be a reason. Besides, Kikyo-chan is the one having the most fun."

"Who's having fun?! He forced me to crawl on the floor like a dog! You don't understand how I feel at all, Kei!"

"But, Kikyo-chan, you and he did it... Ah!?"

As Kei Karuizawa was speaking, she suddenly noticed an extra figure in the living room.

She jumped in fright, and when she saw it was Kaoru, her face flushed bright red.

Kushida was equally startled and complained, "You scared me to death! At least say 'I'm home' or something!"

Kaoru walked up to her and reached for the notebook in her hands.

She reacted quickly, hugging it to her chest to prevent him from taking it.

"What are you doing? This is something Horikita gave us!"

Kushida slapped his hand away, looking displeased. "We're not doing anything bad. Why are you in such a hurry?"

Of course he was in a hurry.

The two of them were eagerly reading through his wish list for Horikita Suzune, occasionally commenting on how disgusting it was.

Who wouldn't be?

Kaoru looked helplessly toward Horikita Suzune in the kitchen. "Weren't you unhappy about it before? Why suddenly give this to them?"

Ever since their relationship had improved, Kaoru's dorm had basically become their gathering spot.

Horikita Suzune had recently started coming over to make dinner for him.

Although Kushida teased her about being a newlywed wife, Horikita Suzune considered it part of the cost of reclaiming their contract—a perk for Kaoru, so it didn't count as being a newlywed wife.

"If you're unhappy, just discipline me instead. Looking back now, you were just trying to scare me at the time."

Horikita Suzune tasted the miso soup. He'd probably like this flavor.

Kaoru raised an eyebrow.

That wasn't quite right.

Back then, he might have actually done something to Horikita Suzune—after all, he wasn't afraid to end his own life.

"Um, actually, we just wanted to know Kaoru's secrets. Don't be mad. Even though we think it's perverted, Kaoru is different."

Kei Karuizawa suddenly hugged Kaoru's arm, her eyes sparkling. "Besides, writing these things for Suzune means Kaoru really wants to do them, right?"

Unable to refute, Kaoru seemed to give up struggling. "I'm really not that perverted. There are some bad things I've never done to any of you."

To this, Kushida actually nodded in agreement. "True, some of the gameplay is a bit perverse, but you don't have any heavy fetishes." That's really reassuring."

"This doesn't count as heavy?!"

Kei Karuizawa was shocked.

She'd seen quite a bit by now and had basically concluded that Kaoru was the world's most incredible pervert.

Yet, Kushida thought Kaoru was just an ordinary pervert.

"Of course not. Real heavy stuff is disgusting—the kind that makes you vomit just from looking."

Kushida flipped through the notebook and pointed at one entry.

"Look, the most bizarre part in the whole thing is just this one line. It doesn't even come close to heavy territory."

Kei Karuizawa glanced at it and blushed deeply.

Kaoru silently looked at Horikita Suzune. They're studying my fetishes using your notebook, and you don't even react?

"Don't look at me like that. Both of them are in a bad mood right now."

Horikita Suzune spoke leisurely, not even looking at him.

Before Kaoru could say anything, a smile appeared on Kushida's face.

She forcibly pulled Kaoru to sit beside her, her full body pressing against him.

"Horikita's right. Kei and I aren't in a good mood."

She smiled as Kei Karuizawa took the opportunity to sit on Kaoru's other side, surrounding him on both sides.

"We agreed before, right? Treat everyone fairly. Whatever Horikita gets, we should get too, okay?"

"Exactly! No one gets to sneak ahead!" Kei Karuizawa naturally held tightly onto Kaoru's arm, the softness of the girl completely pressing against him.

Kei Karuizawa naturally tightened her grip on Kaoru's arm, her softness pressing against him fully.

"You mean this wish list?" Kaoru asked uncertainly.

"What else? Why only expose your fetishes to Horikita? Can't we have them too?"

As she spoke, Kushida seemed to get angry. "You never show any desire toward us normally, but you're so proactive with Horikita! Even though you forced me to play the dog back then!"

"Do you think I'm some kind of orgy master?"

Kaoru was even more speechless.

If I don't discipline you, you're still not satisfied?

In this situation, if he made a move, it would definitely turn into an orgy.

"Isn't an orgy even better?"

Kushida grew excited. "Hurry up and call the senpais over too! I haven't seen them make peace signs yet!"

It's over. This little angel has completely twisted, turning into a fully fallen little devil.

Kei Karuizawa leaned against him, sniffed, and said with a hint of jealousy, "Did you do something with Honami?"

Kaoru was taken aback.

Could she really smell it?

"Tch. Ignoring us, but secretly disciplining your girlfriend in the student council office. Is it more exciting for you outside?"

For some reason, Kushida started sounding sour. "Such favoritism. Some people get to discipline girls outside, and even... inside."

Horikita Suzune's movements stiffened, and the tips of her ears turned slightly red.

"Even though... only my goal is to be a wife..."

Kei Karuizawa also sounded sour, muttering something about a baby under her breath.

Kaoru said expressionlessly, "If you keep this up, I'm going to make a move."

Kushida suddenly lifted his arm, her full softness rubbing against his skin.

Smiling, she gently leaned close to his ear and blew into it.

"Teach your little angel a lesson tonight. Let the cute one carry your stuff inside and go to class tomorrow. When she greets everyone, it might even drip down her thigh."

Full of demonic whispers, an irresistible temptation. Her murmurs made Kaoru's heart race for a moment, his reason nearly evaporating.

Immediately after, Kei Karuizawa glared at Kushida, her face flushed with embarrassment, and hugged Kaoru even tighter.

"No! You're too lewd, Kikyo!"

Chapter 548: They've Figured Out His Fetishes

How surprising.

It was the first time he'd heard the word "lewd" not directed at him.

Although Kushida's words were tempting, Kaoru felt something was off.

"Kei doesn't get it at all. The lewder, the better. Don't they think we're always hanging out with a perverted foot fetishist?"

The little angel who had just been seducing the man instantly changed.

Kushida gritted her teeth and tightened her grip on Kaoru's arm.

"Heh, I totally understand how they feel. Their cute little angel was taken away. The object of their fantasies doesn't exist anymore, so they might as well destroy her. Boys are so troublesome and disgusting."

As if venting her dissatisfaction, Kushida's voice sounded frightening.

"I-I know that too, but Kaoru is here."

Kei Karuizawa's expression was also unpleasant, but she felt that holding onto Kaoru would give her confidence.

"Besides, doing that just proves they're right, doesn't it?"

"What does it matter? That pig Yamauchi already showed the photos. He thinks I'm Kaoru's girl. Heh, too bad. I'm master's little dog."

Far from reluctant, Kushida smiled instead.

Her pretty face rubbed against Kaoru as if a little dog was infatuated with its master's scent.

"Might as well fulfill their fantasies. Let master fill me up and shatter their little angel completely."

Kei Karuizawa stared at her blankly, then stole a glance at Kaoru, pretending she had also lost her mind, and quickly rubbed against him.

"M-me too! I want to carry Kaoru's stuff inside during class tomorrow!"

Kaoru finally understood why Horikita Suzune had said they were in a bad mood.

"Could you two stop deciding things on your own? Is this about the class voting?"

The two girls looked at each other, then continued clinging to him, still shaken.

"They say I'm master's little dog, that I seduce him every day, and even betray the class during exams... sob..."

Kushida pretended to cry. "Since they're saying that, I have no choice but to get back at them. Let them see with their own eyes how master fills me up."

Kaoru looked down at Kei Karuizawa.

The latter wasn't as thick-skinned, hesitating for a moment before whispering, "S-someone took pictures of us on a date with you. And it seems a lot of people know we often come to your dorm. Yamauchi says we've already become part of Class A."

After saying that, Kei Karuizawa buried her face in his chest, as if half of it was her responsibility.

Ever since that happened, Kei would frequently drop by my room.

At first she knew to be discreet, but as our relationship deepened and we even started dating, she stopped pretending altogether.

Several times she openly walked into Kaoru's room right in front of others.

Even now, she keeps the most personal belongings in Kaoru's room - overnight clothes and pajamas, cosmetics and jewelry.

Thanks to her and Kushida's efforts, the room has accumulated numerous JK elements.

At first glance, it might make one doubt whether they've entered the wrong room.

"Originally Kei and Horikita planned to avoid suspicion, but since we've been seen, what's the point of avoiding it now!"

Kushida complained discontentedly, "That pig actually incited everyone right in front of me, calling me and Kei traitors. I really underestimated him before - just a stupid pig who only fantasizes about girls behind their backs."

The little angel had completely disappeared, leaving only a gloomy-faced Kushida Kikyo who could do nothing but complain.

However, this was to be expected.

The reason Kaoru hadn't actively exposed their relationship with him was also due to this consideration - it would easily attract malicious speculation and attacks.

"It's fine, doesn't Kikyo have dirt on him frequently lying?"

Karuizawa Kei said with a light laugh, "Let's expose his true nature all at once. We definitely need to clean up this trash properly so he doesn't affect my relationship with Kaoru."

"I can't say it. Once I speak up, my persona will collapse."

Kushida Kikyo made a bitter face.

She knew this could solve the problem - Yamauchi Haruki often habitually lied, providing many points to attack.

However, her persona destined her not to take the lead, but to let others charge ahead while she hypocritically shed tears behind them, saying this shouldn't be done.

"There's still me! Horikita and I will get revenge for you!"

Karuizawa Kei was eager to try.

And so, the two girls looked expectantly at Kaoru.

Even if they could defeat Yamauchi Haruki, the suspicion of colluding with Class A would still remain.

In other words, people might still cast Criticism Votes against the two of them.

Kaoru finally caught on and laughed, "So you two are actually thinking about Class A's Praise Votes, right?"

Kushida Kikyo giggled, "Because you definitely wouldn't want us to get expelled. You don't need to give all your votes to me and Kei - 10 each would be enough."

"If it's too many, people will definitely notice something's wrong."

Karuizawa Kei felt somewhat embarrassed, "Since it's anonymous voting, even if people find it strange, they have no evidence."

"Actually, even if I don't give you Praise Votes, you probably wouldn't end up getting expelled."

Kaoru said, "One is a little angel, the other is a Brahmin. I don't believe your social circles don't have people voting for you two."

Kushida Kikyo immediately pulled a long face, stating firmly, "Besides ourselves, no one can be trusted."

"I agree. They only gather around me because I don't look easy to bully."

Karuizawa Kei similarly harbored extremely serious distrust of others.

The former had once taken time off school due to collapsed interpersonal relationships, while the latter had a history of being bullied. No wonder they maintained guardedness toward people deep in their hearts.

"So you trust me instead?" Kaoru spoke while reaching for Kei Karuizawa, sliding his hand beneath the hem of her clothes.

Kei Karuizawa stiffened slightly, a faint blush appearing on her cheeks, but she silently moved closer to him, making it easier for him, thinking he intended to bully her.

However, Kaoru's hand simply rested on her soft belly.

"Perverved foot fetishists like you can be satisfied with just a little reward."

Kushida Kikyo snorted a few times, then couldn't hold back her laughter, "Hehehe, Kei and I can satisfy you tonight. How about trading some Praise Votes with us?"

Kaoru's expression turned peculiar.

He suddenly understood Kamuro's feelings—no matter what he did to them, it could be considered a reward for them.

"There's no need to flatter me like this. None of you will be expelled."

Kaoru lightly chopped Kushida Kikyo's forehead with a hand blade. "If possible, I'd like you all to drive Yamauchi out of the school."

Kushida Kikyo glared at him reproachfully, unsure who he said that for.

"If you're done playing, it's time to eat now."

At some point, Horikita Suzune had already prepared a table full of dishes.

"W-Wait, I forgot again today!"

Kei Karuizawa widened her eyes. "Your domestic skills are way too intimidating! At least give me a chance!"

Seizing the opportunity, Kaoru freed himself from the two girls' grasp. Just as he stood up, Horikita Suzune appeared before him.

"Take off your uniform when you get back before you start playing around. Don't let it get wrinkled—it won't look good."

The girl was also wearing her school uniform, but she had tied a gray apron around her waist.

Due to their height difference, she frowned slightly, stood on her tiptoes, and silently helped Kaoru untie his tie.

Then she helped him remove his blazer, gathered it in her hands, and turned to leave.

As she moved, her skirt swayed slightly, revealing the curve of her full, rounded hips.

Below, she wore a pair of extremely sheer black tights that concealed her skin tone but accentuated her straight, slender calves, making one want to reach out and touch them.

"Ahem, staring again, are we?"

Kushida Kikyo quietly covered his eyes from behind. "This is Horikita's way of seducing you. So, isn't she adorable?"

"Kikyo!"

Horikita Suzune overheard her, and the tips of her ears turned red again.

She couldn't control where that guy was looking—how could anyone say she was seducing him?

"Hehe, newlywed wives tend to be shy. I get it."

Kushida Kikyo put on a cheerful grin, then leaned close to Kaoru's ear as if whispering.

"Though it's a bit annoying, I've completely figured out your fetishes. Look forward to it from now on, my master~"

As she spoke, she licked his earlobe.

Kaoru remained expressionless.

It seemed they planned to use the wish list to do something to him.

Considering it could fulfill wishes, there didn't seem to be any point in resisting.

Chapter 549: Long Hair and Short Hair.

After finishing the meal Horikita Suzune had prepared, Kaoru initially wanted to help with the dishes, but the more enthusiastic Kei Karuizawa beat him to it, using the excuse of showcasing her domestic skills.

With nothing to do, Kaoru watched them busily working, and an increasingly peculiar feeling arose in his heart.

"Life might just be like this from now on."

Kushida Kikyo sat beside him, lazily stretching her back.

For a moment, her perfect waistline was exposed, and her full chest arched even higher.

"Given Horikita's personality, she really might end up turning you into a useless person."

Kaoru couldn't refute this.

Although Horikita Suzune was aware of her own issues, her inherently dominant nature was too strong.

She would undoubtedly take charge of their married life, whether in work or daily matters—she absolutely had to achieve perfection.

In more extreme terms, Horikita Suzune might very well cultivate a worthless husband.

"As for me," Kushida giggled, leaning close to him, "I might not be able to match Horikita's level, but I'd have no problem taking care of you."

Her fingers hooked onto her collar, revealing a generous expanse of snow-white skin.

"Besides, there are things Horikita can't bring herself to say that I can. So, how about a taste of dessert?"

The round, plump "ice cream" faintly revealed a hint of crimson "grapes," emitting a subtle, sweet, and enticing fragrance.

As a post-meal treat, it was certainly alluring enough.

Kaoru reached out his hand, and her smile brightened even more, her eyes curving like crescents as she attempted to embrace him like a mother would, pressing him against her bosom.

"Someone is pulling the strings behind Yamauchi's actions. Don't let your guard down," Kaoru said, rejecting her embrace.

"I haven't figured out who his target is yet. If possible, do your best to take Yamauchi down."

For the timid Yamauchi Haruki to attack Kushida Kikyo and Kei Karuizawa, it was likely Nagumo Miyabi's doing.

Factoring in the Praise Votes from Class 1-C, the other side indeed had a chance to manipulate the exam results among the first-year students.

Kaoru not only had to consider the safety of Kushida Kikyo and the others but also look out for Manabe Shiho, whose surroundings were even more dangerous than those of Class D.

"Like with Sakura, are we getting dragged into your troubles again?" Kushida Kikyo raised an eyebrow, then slowly relaxed.

"Well, never mind. You'll handle it, right?"

Unconsciously, she had developed immense trust and dependence on Kaoru, much like Kei Karuizawa had.

"How sneaky, you two! Can you not flirt while others are working?" Kei Karuizawa had returned to the living room and, seeing Kushida pressed close to Kaoru, grew visibly flustered.

Kaoru had no choice but to extend his arms toward her, and the girl immediately bounded over happily into his embrace.

"If you want to keep him company, go ahead. I'm heading back," Horikita Suzune said, removing her apron and resuming her usual aloof demeanor.

To be honest, Horikita Suzune was the one without any rumors involving him—perhaps because they'd never been on a date.

Compared to Kei Karuizawa and Kushida Kikyo, she didn't visit frequently.

"Hey, didn't you have something to say to him?" Kushida frowned, calling out to stop Horikita Suzune.

Horikita paused as if remembering something, slightly turning her body.

Her fingers unconsciously brushed through her hair, her voice calm.

"I almost forgot, thanks for reminding me. Though it's just a small matter."

"What small matter?" Kaoru couldn't gauge her attitude.

Could it be that she was...?

"Her hair," Kushida chuckled. "Someone was thinking of cutting her hair short, but she's been agonizing all day over whether he'd like it, pretending to be composed."

Horikita Suzune froze mid-action, gritting her teeth. "Do you have to deliberately speculate about my feelings like that?"

"Isn't it because someone deliberately tried to disgust me first?" Kushida Kikyo gave a lazy smile.

"Is calling your name also disgusting you?"

Horikita Suzune said coldly, "On the contrary, you've never had any intention of building a good relationship with me."

"Not really, I'm just not used to calling you by your first name yet."

Kushida Kikyo flatly denied her words, "Actually, you were fine as you were, why did you cut your hair short?"

Although she knew Kikyo was changing the subject, Horikita Suzune hesitated for a moment before finally explaining the reason.

"I used to have short hair before. The reason I grew it long was because my brother liked it."

Horikita Suzune said quietly, "If you don't like it, I'll keep it like this."

Kushida Kikyo grinned slyly, saying "you" but actually meaning him, right?

"It's not that I don't like it. Both long and short hair look fine to me."

Kaoru patted the nearby Kushida Kikyo, "I quite like short hair like Kikyo's too."

For some reason, both Kushida Kikyo and Horikita Suzune had dark expressions.

"This guy is hopeless, Horikita. Don't count on him. Whether to cut it short or not is your decision."

Kushida Kikyo paused, "But I think cutting it short would be fine too. Changing hairstyles gives you a fresh feeling."

Horikita Suzune couldn't help but glance at Kaoru, who was actually somewhat conflicted.

Although Kei Karuizawa, Ichinose Honami, and Asako Amikura all had long hair, it seemed only Horikita Suzune had straight black long hair.

Kaoru fell into decision paralysis.

"Stop thinking, idiot."

Kushida Kikyo suddenly whispered to him, "Don't you want to experience Horikita with short hair?"

In that instant, Kaoru's balance was shaken.

Horikita Suzune's face slightly reddened, pretending not to hear: "I'll cut it a bit shorter. It should grow back eventually."

After she left, Kaoru inexplicably began to look forward to it.

"Your reaction is so obvious. Whatever, do you want to do it in my hair tonight?"

Kushida Kikyo poked him playfully.

If he didn't give her and Kei Karuizawa an exclusive wish list tonight, this guy wouldn't get any sleep.

"You're a pervert too."

Kaoru couldn't help but shift.

From earlier until now, Kei Karuizawa had been sitting silently in his lap, her small hands mischievously playing with something naughty, thoroughly enjoying herself.

Just as Kushida Kikyo was about to continue teasing him, she suddenly heard a phone ring and her gaze fell on his pocket.

Kaoru silently took out his phone from his pocket.

The two girls immediately leaned in, seeing Tachibana Akane's name displayed on the screen.

Instantly, their expressions became extremely vivid.

"Hey, are you free tonight? I bought a lot of things. You have another chance to show off your feminine side!"

As soon as the call connected, Tachibana Akane's cheerful voice came through.

She was humming a tune, sounding very happy.

"Hehe, I figured out what you meant by 'Chalice' last night."

Tachibana Akane was in high spirits, "You really are a lewd kouhai, having such thoughts about your senpai. Aya, what can I do? I'm just too cute. Being able to fulfill my kouhai's fantasies - if you say you like me now, I might continue being your 'chalice' and satisfy your desires in the future?"

It was clear that, like Horikita Suzune, she completely misunderstood the meaning of Chalice.

However, Kaoru felt she was now thoroughly disgraced.

Because the two listeners beside her had already heard her words—Kushida Kikyo was brimming with excitement, while Karuizawa Kei looked utterly devastated.

"Hey, hey, hey, aren't you listening to me?"

This elementary school senior clearly had no idea what was happening and was even somewhat dissatisfied with Kaoru's silence.

Chapter 550: Refreshing an NPC

A few minutes later, a trial targeting Kaoru and Tachibana Akane was convened.

Presiding as judges were Kushida Kikyo and Karuizawa Kei, who jointly launched a righteous trial against the two sinners, accusing them of secretly leveling up behind everyone's backs.

Kushida Kikyo demanded that Tachibana Akane disclose the details of last night's events, claiming that everyone's first experiences should be shared.

Her own first time had even been witnessed by Horikita Suzune, so Tachibana Akane must bring her along next time.

Tachibana Akane was deeply embarrassed and kept whimpering.

Additionally, Karuizawa Kei subjected Kaoru to even harsher interrogation.

If Kaoru couldn't provide a reasonable explanation, then everything he had done to Horikita Suzune and Tachibana Akane would have to be done to her as well!

Hearing the judges' sour tone, Tachibana Akane's shame exploded, and she fled from the crime, hanging up the call without hesitation, leaving Kaoru alone to endure their torment.

That night, Kaoru spent a great deal of effort to finally placate them.

...

Thanks to ample funds, Class A of the first year remained peaceful, occasionally discussing the voting exam only in relation to other classes.

Kaoru originally intended to discuss Class B matters with Sakayanagi Arisu, but she seemed somewhat impatient, stating that she didn't care about this voting exam—the key was the special exam on March 8th.

For her, this exam truly held no points of interest.

"Although I'd love to take this opportunity to deal with Ayanokouji-kun, I can't use all my pieces on him just yet."

Sakayanagi Arisu frowned slightly, "You are my priority. Please don't forget that."

This was a warning for Kaoru not to let his thoughts wander and to focus his energy on her instead.

"I don't really understand why you're so fixated on him," Kaoru said. "If it weren't for me, you'd probably go after him first, right?"

"The genuine and the fake are destined to clash—that is my mission."

Sakayanagi Arisu was about to continue but grew irritated as she recalled her father's departure.

"Father must have told you about the White Room, right? I think this additional exam is the acting chairman's way of testing Ayanokouji-kun."

He'd heard the other party had been at the school for half a month, though Kaoru hadn't met him yet.

"D you know about outside matters?"

"If you're referring to Father and those people, I'm sorry, but I don't know everything. However, I am aware of the Producer's affairs."

"..."

Soon, it was lunch break, and Kaoru leisurely made his way to the library.

At this hour, the library was nearly empty.

Thus, a certain girl's figure stood out prominently.

Kaoru naturally walked over to the bookshelves.

Shiina Hiyori was selecting her reading material for the day and hadn't noticed his presence yet.

"Good afternoon, Shiina-san."

His greeting seemed to startle Shiina Hiyori, making her shoulders tremble and nearly eliciting a strange sound.

Recognizing him, her expression softened as a lovely smile bloomed on her face.

"It's been a while, Mitoma-kun."

Shiina Hiyori said, "What book are you looking for today?"

"Thus Spoke Zarathustra." Kaoru replied.

"That's a bit unexpected."

Shiina Hiyori seemed to let out a sigh of relief, "I thought you'd continue discussing novels by Mishima Yukio and Watanabe Jun'ichi with me."

After speaking, she realized the implications in her words, and a blush gradually spread across her cheeks.

She quickly pulled a book from the shelf to block Kaoru's line of sight.

"It's just discussing a few novels, Shiina-san. Your reaction is too exaggerated."

Kaoru shrugged indifferently.

He had merely been pointing out the deeper meanings in the novels while discussing them with Shiina Hiyori.

Instead, it was Shiina Hiyori who paid too much attention to certain details, becoming shy as she read, which made Kaoru want to tease her even more.

"You're mean." Shiina Hiyori murmured softly.

Seeing her take the book to the desk, Kaoru went to the other side of the bookshelf to find Thus Spoke Zarathustra and promptly sat down beside her.

However, Kaoru didn't disturb her reading.

If he continued to press further, Shiina Hiyori would genuinely get angry.

The two read quietly for about half an hour before Shiina Hiyori lifted her pretty face, checked the time, and realized that lunch break was nearly over.

"Let's head back together." Kaoru suggested.

Shiina Hiyori had no reason to refuse.

She packed her bag and walked alongside him.

"Mitoma-kun, is there something you want to ask me?"

The girl had long sensed his intentions.

"Regarding the voting exam, how is the situation in your class?"

In truth, Kaoru already knew quite a bit, as Manabe Shiho and others had provided him with information about Class C.

Shiina Hiyori shook her head: "I don't pay much attention, but everyone probably listens to Ryuen-kun."

"However, his behavior isn't exactly commendable. I imagine someone must be planning to cast a Criticism Vote against him?" Kaoru pressed further.

"That might be the case, but even if you ask me, I don't know much about who specifically plans to vote for whom."

Shiina Hiyori hesitated for a moment, "From what I understand, several small groups have formed in the class. Some oppose Ryuen-kun, while others support him."

As she spoke, she turned to look at Kaoru.

"Mitoma-kun, are you trying to gather information about Ryuen-kun?"

Her expression seemed to say, "I'll tell you, but I won't be happy about it."

Kaoru withdrew his gaze from Shiina Hiyori's face and sighed, "A little, but I just want to know who might be expelled from Class C. It would be troublesome if it's someone I know."

Shiina Hiyori was slightly taken aback.

Someone he knows in Class C?

Aside from Ryuen Kakeru, she had never seen him interact with anyone else in their class.

Soon, the girl turned her slightly flushed face away.

"No matter how difficult it is, expulsion is something our class can't avoid. We don't have enough points, unlike your Class A. So, no matter who disappears, I can accept it."

Including herself, Shiina Hiyori had never dwelled on the privileges that most people coveted in Class A.

"If Ryuen-kun hadn't enforced the voting, your class would probably vote for the person they dislike the most, right?" Kaoru said, "Like Manabe-san, Ibuki-san, and Nishino-san, for example."

Shiina Hiyori was somewhat surprised. He seemed to know their class quite well.

"I think so too. After all, it's an anonymous voting, and the classmates with the worst reputations in class are now trying hard to shake off their past influences."

Shiina Hiyori pondered for a moment. "If I had to say, Nanase-san was the first to change. It seems she started trying to build good relationships with classmates around summer vacation."

"Isn't she a delinquent?"

Kaoru asked in confusion, "I thought aside from Ryuen-kun, Class C would cast all their votes for Nanase-san or Ibuki-san."

Shiina Hiyori shook her head. "Ibuki-san isn't a delinquent. Nanase-san might have been one before, but now she's just an ordinary student, similar to Karuizawa-san or Shinohara-san in Class D."

This time it was Kaoru's turn to be surprised.

How could this bookworm remember things outside of books?

Noticing his expression, Shiina Hiyori pouted slightly. "I've been here for a year after all. Is it really that strange that I'd recognize students from other classes?"

"Not strange. What's strange is that you still haven't found any book friends to chat with."

Kaoru felt puzzled.

He didn't think the first year was a literary desert, so why hadn't anyone discussed novels with Shiina Hiyori?

This question seemed to stump Shiina Hiyori, who lowered her head dejectedly.

"Be-because if I suddenly try to greet them, I get shy."

Kaoru was taken aback, a strange emotion welling up in his heart. Weren't you shy back then?

"Don't look at me like that. It's embarrassing. If I greet someone and get rejected, I'll feel bad for a long time."

Shiina Hiyori whispered, "I was really happy when you accepted my recommendations back then."

Kaoru felt guilty, remembering how he had thoroughly toyed with Kamuro in front of Shiina Hiyori at that time.

"But you don't need to worry about me, Mitoma-kun."

Shiina Hiyori smiled gently. "I probably won't be among those expelled, since I'm ranked quite low in everyone's candidate list."

Kaoru told her seriously, "Shiina-san, you should avoid saying things like that in the future. They might just come true."

"Eh?"

Shiina Hiyori blinked, not quite understanding his meaning.

He must be worried about me, right?