

Cote 661

Chapter 661: The Invisible Girl and NPC.

On Saturday morning, there were few people in the library.

Since he had messaged Shiina Hiyori in advance, Kaoru quickly found the girl at their usual spot.

However, there was an unexpected figure there this time.

"Miki, what are you doing here?"

Yamamura Miki was sitting beside Shiina Hiyori.

Hearing Kaoru's voice, she looked up, equally surprised by his appearance.

"I, I originally wanted to find some books to read, and then Shiina noticed me."

Kaoru was even more surprised.

He remembered Yamamura Miki always had her phone in hand all day.

If not for Hasebe Haruka and Sakura Airi, he suspected Yamamura Miki would immerse herself in the online world every day, never imagining she would read books.

"Yamamura sometimes comes to the library too. I often recommend novels to her."

Shiina Hiyori seemed somewhat embarrassed, feeling like she might have been too enthusiastic with her recommendations. Kaoru then remembered—it was he who had introduced Yamamura Miki to Shiina Hiyori.

At that time, Shiina Hiyori had lent her novel to Yamamura Miki, likely because of this connection that the two had an opportunity to get to know each other.

Without his knowledge, their relationship might have been gradually improving.

"At first, it was hard to calm down and focus, but the more I read, the more interesting it became."
Yamamura Miki spoke softly.

To a large extent, it was because Shiina Hiyori didn't dislike her, which made her feel favorably toward this literary girl and willing to accept Shiina Hiyori's recommendations.

Just like Sakura Airi, Yamamura Miki was also slowly opening up to the kindness of others under Kaoru's deliberate guidance.

Although Kaoru still didn't know about her past, and she hadn't told him, if things continued this way, it was likely to change.

Or perhaps she had already changed—otherwise, she wouldn't have come to the library.

Kaoru thought for a moment and wanted to sit next to Yamamura Miki, but at that moment, Shiina Hiyori gestured for him to sit beside her instead.

"About what you mentioned before, I've written a short story. Would you like to take a look?"

As soon as he sat down, Shiina Hiyori handed over a notebook from beside her, her cheeks flushed red, clearly a little shy.

Yet, her eyes sparkled with anticipation.

"You finished it so quickly?" Kaoru was surprised.

In less than two weeks, Shiina Hiyori had already completed a short story.

What was even more surprising was that she seemed to have written it by hand.

"Is it really that fast?"

Shiina Hiyori felt even more embarrassed. "I kept thinking about what you said and couldn't help myself, so I started writing. I thought a short story would be easier, but I ended up revising it many times."

Kaoru opened her notebook.

The pages were filled with elegant handwriting, with traces of corrections here and there, showing just how seriously the girl had taken the task.

"Before you came, I asked Yamamura-san to take a look."

Shiina Hiyori gazed at Kaoru expectantly. "It might not be very good, but I'd like to hear your opinion."

"I think it's really well-written. Even I could follow the reasoning process, and the ending was very touching."

Yamamura Miki chimed in from the side. "Shiina-san, you should be more confident. Someone like me could never write something like this in a lifetime."

"Please don't say that. I'm too embarrassed."

Shiina Hiyori felt her cheeks burning. "I didn't write it that well."

Listening to their conversation, Kaoru quietly flipped through the notebook.

The story was simple: the protagonist's boyfriend had passed away, and while sorting through his belongings, she unexpectedly discovered a puzzle game he had left behind.

The protagonist knew nothing about reasoning at first, but since her boyfriend had loved it, she had picked up a little knowledge.

Driven by curiosity about the answer, she began searching for clues.

Along the way, she recalled things her boyfriend had said and pieced together the clues of the game. In the end, she discovered a line of code.

After decoding it, she found a digital scrapbook on his computer, filled with memories of their life together—her boyfriend's most treasured possession.

Kaoru closed the notebook. This short story, just over ten thousand words, must have taken Shiina Hiyori a long time to write.

"What do you think?" Shiina Hiyori watched Kaoru with unease, his calm expression giving her an inexplicable sense of tension.

"I thought you would write something like a murder mystery. Why did you write this?"

Kaoru found it rather strange—it didn't seem like the kind of story Shiina Hiyori usually read.

"I did try, but I wasn't confident I could write it well. It felt awkward, and when I finished, Yamamura-kun couldn't understand it."

Shiina Hiyori said, "So I was thinking if I could keep it as simple as possible, that would make it easier to write."

It seemed the relationship between the two was much better than he had imagined.

"Murder cases and such sound really scary."

Yamamura Miki shook her ponytail as she spoke.

She had read the mystery novels Shiina Hiyori recommended, but for her, it was like watching a horror movie.

Especially the more hardcore novels that described the victim's physical condition in detail and what they had endured before death.

Yamamura Miki couldn't help but imagine the scenes, which left her face pale with fear.

"Have you had any writing experience before?" Kaoru thought for a moment. "It feels very smooth, with no obstacles to reading."

"I've written a little before... I have some slight experience..."

Shiina Hiyori became hesitant. "But compared to others, I'm just a beginner."

Actually, she was too embarrassed to say that her father was a writer.

Although not famous, he had at least taught her a few things.

Kaoru could tell she was hiding something, but he didn't mind.

Every literary girl had her own desire to express herself.

After reading so many books, they were always receiving the author's confessions, and they would accumulate their own full belly of desire to confess.

Many thoughts were hidden in their minds, wanting to be shared with others, wanting to pour them out—this was the instinctive desire to express.

"Is Shiina's writing very good?"

Yamamura Miki was curious about Kaoru's opinion.

"For a beginner, it's certainly good, but it's too rigid. The story has no ups and downs; you can guess the ending from the beginning."

Kaoru said calmly, "Simply put, it's boring. The expectation in Shiina Hiyori's eyes gradually dimmed. She bit her lip lightly, and when she heard his final words, her face turned pale.

"It's not that exaggerated, is it? Is Kaoru being too strict?"

Perhaps noticing Shiina Hiyori's reaction, Yamamura Miki mustered the courage to glare at Kaoru.

Kaoru shook his head. "As a beginner, Shiina's writing and content are simple and easy to understand. There's nothing awkward about it, so it's good."

"Isn't that enough?"

Yamamura Miki was puzzled; she felt she couldn't write that well herself.

"It's not enough, because the story and characters have no memorable points."

Kaoru patiently explained, "The reasoning is too simple—readers who like reasoning won't enjoy it."

"And the story is too bland—other readers will find it boring. Although everyone's subjective feelings are different, the public aesthetic is fairly similar. Why do people enjoy watching Hamlet? Because it's engaging and has many memorable aspects."

Halfway through listening, Yamamura Miki felt completely lost.

It seemed like Kaoru had said something, yet it also felt like he hadn't said anything at all.

Seeing this, Kaoru simply reopened the notebook, pointing out each of its shortcomings one by one, and then offered his suggestions on how to make the story more compelling.

"You're amazing."

Yamamura Miki began to admire Kaoru, her youthful gaze making him feel somewhat lightheaded.

Kaoru was about to modestly decline the praise.

He had previously received rewards related to writing—while not a master, he was at least a top student.

At this moment, he finally remembered Shiina Hiyori beside him. Seeing the girl biting her lips, his heart sank.

Although he had considered her feelings and avoided saying anything too harsh, it still inevitably hurt her somewhat.

After a moment of thought, Kaoru spoke up.

"Actually, Shiina-san has written quite well. Even Miki could..."

"Thank you, Kaoru-kun."

Shiina Hiyori suddenly interrupted him, offering him a smile.

"I originally thought of writing something simple, but overlooked that the essence of a story lies in whether it's engaging. Perhaps because it's my own writing, I couldn't see it clearly."

After saying this, Shiina Hiyori gently pressed a hand to her chest.

"It's indeed not as simple as I imagined."

She seemed to be murmuring to herself, then noticing Kaoru's gaze, she grew somewhat embarrassed.

"I'll carefully consider all of Kaoru-kun's suggestions. Thank you for reading my novel so seriously."

"Though that may be, don't underestimate yourself. Initially, I thought Shiina-san would enthusiastically write a bunch of cryptic reasoning content, nothing but reasoning after reasoning."

Kaoru's expression turned peculiar. "Unexpectedly, Shiina-san is actually writing a novel."

Shiina Hiyori was momentarily stunned, then flushed bright red with embarrassment, glaring at him angrily.

"Kaoru-kun, your impression of me is terrible. I'm not that obsessive."

"My apologies, my mistake."

Kaoru couldn't help but chuckle.

Though it was rare to see her angry, she still looked utterly adorable, not appearing truly upset at all.

"I won't hold it against you."

Shiina Hiyori wasn't really that angry to begin with, ultimately letting out a soft sigh.

Chapter 662: Do you like Bondages?

After thinking for a moment, Kaoru said: "I've already communicated with the literature club. They're very interested, and I plan to set up several sections on the forum where you can publish your work in the future."

"Publish on the forum?"

Shiina Hiyori appeared quite surprised.

"Yes, the school has granted forum management rights to the Student Council, who will oversee it."

Kaoru explained, "The stated purpose of these sections is to enhance communication among students. Currently, we plan to establish sections like [Story Corner], [Study Group], and [Casual Chat]."

Shiina Hiyori didn't fully understand the significance of this approach, as she was unaware of what reforms the school was implementing.

"Each month, the Student Council will evaluate the content in [Story Corner]. The top three will receive corresponding Personal points."

Kaoru's tone remained unchanged.

Some might be shocked by the Personal points, but there was no helping it - the Student Council simply had that authority.

Just like how the school provides corresponding rewards for outstanding performance in club activities.

As expected, both Yamamura Miki and Shiina Hiyori showed surprised expressions.

"So the Student Council can distribute Personal points?"

"With legitimate justification to apply to the school, the school has no reason to refuse the Student Council."

"Approximately how much?"

"First place is 5,000, second is 3,000, and third is 2,000."

"Eh, that doesn't seem like much."

"Any more would negatively impact students. This amount is sufficient to attract attention."

"How will the selection be conducted?"

"My idea is voting plus judges. Reader votes account for 50%, and judges' opinions account for the other 50%. Currently, I'm the only judge since everyone else has things to do."

Saying this, Kaoru discreetly glanced at Shiina Hiyori.

The other party hadn't even applied to join the literature club, so how exactly was he supposed to get her to join the Student Council?

This NPC usually only spawned in the library and bookstore, places Kaoru rarely visited.

Their relationship had always been lukewarm, neither progressing nor regressing.

To take it further, Kaoru needed to intervene in her life.

Shiina Hiyori seemed somewhat tempted but didn't speak up immediately.

"If there are more people later, I might become overwhelmed too."

Kaoru said this without batting an eye. "Lately, no one has been joining the Student Council. We have too few executives. If we ask the literature club for help, it might make people look down on the Student Council."

"Do you have to join the Student Council to be a judge?"

Yamamura Miki didn't realize she was playing wingman.

"If they're not Student Council members, it feels like we're just exploiting their labor for free."

Kaoru sighed. "It would be best if they could join the Student Council."

At this point, Shiina Hiyori finally spoke.

"Kaoru-kun, come here for a moment."

Kaoru watched her stand up, somewhat confused, but had no choice but to follow.

When he reached the corner of the bookshelves, Shiina Hiyori in front of him suddenly stopped and turned to look at him.

"Who does Kaoru-kun want to join the Student Council?"

Facing the girl's seemingly casual gaze, Kaoru felt it would be difficult to lie.

"I hope Shiina-san can help me."

Without hiding anything, Kaoru honestly expressed his thoughts. "Shiina-san is the most skilled person I can find in this area."

"But I still don't understand why the Student Council needs to do something like this."

Shiina Hiyori stared intently at Kaoru, her voice very soft. "What is Kaoru-kun's purpose?"

Shiina Hiyori was a very clever girl.

She had already noticed that Kaoru was being proactive with her, clearly with ulterior motives.

Suddenly bringing up writing, then suddenly suggesting joining the Student Council - naturally, this would make the girl wary.

Shiina Hiyori felt troubled.

She didn't know what Kaoru wanted.

Could it be that he had some intentions toward her?

Or perhaps Kaoru wanted to pry some information from her?

"According to the former president's vision, competition and cooperation between grade levels will gradually strengthen, and joint exams will become common."

Kaoru said. "This way, communication between students will become very important. Currently, students from different grades only interact through club activities."

Most people who come into contact with students outside their own grade level usually do so through their clubs; otherwise, there are few opportunities for interaction.

I think the Student Council can make up for this shortcoming. The interest section of the forum is one attempt."

"I see..."

Hearing this, Shiina Hiyori's expression changed slightly.

She muttered something quietly, then realizing Kaoru was watching her, said, "Sorry, I was overthinking. I thought..."

"Thought what?" Kaoru asked.

"Nothing, if that's all it is."

Shiina Hiyori seemed to relax, showing a smile. "In that case, I agree."

However, Kaoru didn't look happy. "Will it be troublesome for Shiina-san?"

"If it's just reviewing manuscripts, it should be fine."

"May I ask the reason?"

Shiina Hiyori hesitated for a moment, then under Kaoru's gaze, she raised her index finger and made a shushing gesture.

"Sorry, I can't tell you for now."

Because her father was an author, she felt somewhat ashamed of her interest in this area.

"That was abrupt of me."

Kaoru didn't press further.

With those words, they fell into silence.

Seeing this, Shiina Hiyori suddenly realized she had been too hasty, making the atmosphere awkward now.

What should I do? Should I take a book back?

"What are you planning to read today?"

Shiina Hiyori wanted to recommend him a book. "Would you like me to recommend something?"

Kaoru nodded, then watched as the girl walked over to a nearby bookshelf.

"You might want to check out Imamura Masahiro's novels. You seem interested in peculiar human aesthetics. Have you read 'The Story of Shunkin'?"

Perhaps the bookshelf was too high, Shiina Hiyori stood on her tiptoes, almost bouncing, trying to reach the novel above, but unfortunately couldn't succeed.

Just then, a hand reached out beside her and took down the novel she wanted.

"Eh?"

Shiina Hiyori looked at Kaoru beside her, perhaps for the first time so directly feeling the difference in their heights.

"So you can reach the books up there."

Kaoru glanced at the cover - exactly the 'Murder at the Villain's Mansion' she had recommended, another mystery novel.

"Sorry, I went ahead and recommended based on my own preferences again."

Noticing Kaoru's reaction, Shiina Hiyori's pretty face flushed slightly.

"It's fine. Shiina-san is very cute."

Kaoru's response was unexpected. "I'll read any novel you recommend."

Shiina Hiyori stood frozen in place, unsure whether it was because he called her cute or because of his following words, but the girl's face grew increasingly red.

"You're, you're teasing me again."

"Teasing you about what?"

"..."

Watching Shiina Hiyori's completely flushed face, Kaoru found it increasingly amusing.

"The one who's teasing should be you, Shiina-san. Recommending 'The Story of Shunkin' to me - you're adorably mischievous."

"I was just recommending novels based on your taste."

Shiina Hiyori refused to accept his malicious speculation, puffing her cheeks in slight anger.

"There's nothing strange about the book itself - it's the reader who's problematic. Who was it that read 'Paradise Lost' beside me before? Who deliberately used certain content to tease me?"

"Because there were strange things in the book, that's why I discussed it with you."

Kaoru countered, "It was perfectly normal discussion. Wasn't it you, Shiina-san, who started thinking weird thoughts about it later?"

Shiina Hiyori grew even angrier.

Normal people wouldn't ask the girl beside them about strange content, would they?

Besides, what kind of normal discussion was he talking about? Who discusses the protagonist's lewd techniques!

"Alright, alright, I'm already reflecting on it."

Kaoru found her angry expression quite entertaining. "Next time we read 'The Story of Shunkin' together, I won't say anything extra."

Who wants to read it with you? Shiina Hiyori didn't voice this thought.

"By the way, speaking of 'Paradise Lost,' why do you dislike bondage and blindfolds, Shiina-san?"

"Kaoru-kun!"

"..."

Chapter 663: I'm not rejecting you

Returning to their original spots, Yamamura Miki seemed quite curious about the interaction between the two.

Just as Kaoru opened his novel, his phone quickly received a message.

[Were you trying to lure Shiina into joining the Student Council?]

He had originally thought Yamamura was somewhat naive, so he was surprised she could detect such subtleties.

He glanced at her and found her deliberately turning away with an expressionless face.

Soon after, he received another message from her.

[Seems like I guessed right (´ 3 `)]

[Was I that obvious?]

[Very obvious. To girls, your gaze is particularly telling -_-]

[My gaze?]

[It's so calm that it actually makes your emotions easier to read (X_X;)]

[What about how I look at you?]

[...]

Yamamura Miki raised her pretty face and met Kaoru's gaze.

The two remained silent.

Kaoru didn't receive her answer - such mysterious eye contact was probably entirely subjective to personal interpretation.

However, after a while, she sent another message.

[Did something happen between you and Airi?]

As part of their small group, Yamamura Miki had also noticed subtle changes in Sakura Airi recently.

For instance, she no longer seemed constantly worried and had gained some inexplicable confidence.

Even when Hasebe Haruka teased her, she didn't respond as timidly as before.

Yamamura had begun suspecting that something might have happened between the two without her knowledge.

[During Spring Break, Airi and I got together. Sorry, I haven't had the chance to tell you all yet.]

Right after sending this message, Kaoru heard a loud thud.

Turning around, he saw Yamamura Miki frantically picking up her phone, then accidentally bumping her head against the table with a loud "thump."

"Oww!"

Yamamura covered her head with tears welling in her eyes, leaving Kaoru momentarily stunned.

"Yamamura-san, are you okay?"

Shiina Hiyori reacted quickly, immediately helping Yamamura up.

"Did you hit your head?"

"N-no, I'm fine! It was just an accident!"

Clutching her phone, Yamamura stammered, "I have something to attend to, I-I need to go!"

Without waiting for Kaoru to speak, she had already hurried away, not daring to look at his expression throughout her escape.

"What's wrong with her?"

Shiina Hiyori watched the fleeing girl with confusion.

"I don't know."

Kaoru shook his head.

He genuinely didn't understand what Yamamura Miki was thinking - he had merely told her the truth, never expecting such a strong reaction from her.

Shiina Hiyori thought for a moment and decided she would message Yamamura later, hoping nothing unfortunate had happened.

...

"Hey, are you seniors looking for partners?"

At the sound of a cheerful voice, Horikita Suzune, who had been deep in thought, looked up to see a girl standing gracefully nearby, apparently having overheard their previous conversation.

"Who are you?"

Sudo Ken expressed surprise at the girl's sudden appearance.

Beside him, Ayanokoji Kiyotaka was also seeing this girl for the first time.

"My name is Amasawa Ichika. Unlike those others from before, I'm from Class 1-A."

Amasawa Ichika wore a smile as her gaze swept over Sudo Ken and Ayanokoji Kiyotaka, finally settling on Horikita Suzune.

"My current academic rating is A. What about you senpais?"

The sudden appearance of a top student surprised Horikita Suzune, but she still introduced herself.

"I'm Horikita from Class 2-C, with an academic rating of A-. These are Ayanokoji and Sudo from my class."

Actually, Ayanokoji Kiyotaka had learned about Horikita Suzune's plans for the day and had taken the initiative to follow her more actively than usual.

Since he had come along, Sudo Ken naturally followed as well.

Horikita Suzune didn't overthink it and simply brought along her two "bodyguards," intending to try contacting some first-year students.

Earlier, she had approached several students from Class 1-D. She had expected Hosen Kazuo to be troublesome, but the trouble turned out to be even more problematic than she imagined.

When she tested the waters, the first-years immediately demanded 500,000 Personal Points, specifically emphasizing that this was Hosen's condition—they wouldn't cooperate with anyone for less than that amount.

Not only that, they mentioned that both Class 2-A and Class 2-D were also approaching them, with both classes attempting to bribe the top first-year students using Personal Points.

It seemed this would evolve into a war over the new students, though Horikita Suzune had no intention of getting involved.

While she didn't know what gave Ryuen the confidence to act this way, Class 2-A undoubtedly possessed vast amounts of Personal Points.

Even if Class 2-C emptied all their class funds, Horikita Suzune didn't believe they could win against them.

Moreover, Class 2-C currently didn't have many Personal Points to begin with.

Despite understanding this, Horikita Suzune still frowned deeply. Class 2-C was clearly in a difficult position, and she hadn't yet found a solution.

"Oh? Another smart one," Amasawa Ichika looked Horikita Suzune up and down. "With such excellent academic ability, hasn't Horikita-senpai found a partner yet?"

Sudo Ken felt somewhat awkward—it was actually him who hadn't found a partner.

"No, I'm helping Sudo find a partner," Horikita Suzune paused. "Besides him, there are several other problematic students in our class."

Amasawa Ichika asked curiously, "Is Sudo-senpai's academic ability very low?"

"The school's evaluation is E+," Horikita Suzune replied.

"Eh, that's really bad then. No wonder Horikita-senpai is worried," Amasawa Ichika appeared thoughtful.

"If he can't find a partner rated B or above, Sudo-senpai would be at risk of expulsion."

As she spoke, she turned her gaze to Ayanokoji Kiyotaka beside them.

"My academic rating is C, so I'm fine for now," Ayanokoji said, as if anticipating her question. "If you haven't formed a team yet, could we ask you to partner with Sudo?"

Horikita Suzune looked at him in surprise.

Though she felt somewhat strange about his abrupt request, since she had the same idea herself, she remained silent and waited for Amasawa Ichika's response.

"Aha, has Ayanokoji-senpai taken a liking to me?" Amasawa Ichika showed a faint smile. "But if I partner with Sudo-senpai, our ranking would probably be quite low, wouldn't it?"

Horikita Suzune's heart sank. It seemed miracles didn't happen for free.

Given Amasawa Ichika's level, it was natural she would look down on Sudo Ken, and Horikita couldn't blame her for that.

"My apologies, that was presumptuous of me." Ayanokoji Kiyotaka apologized to this junior.

At that moment, Amasawa Ichika suddenly blinked.

"I'm not rejecting you though senpai?"

Horikita Suzune was slightly taken aback, and even Ayanokoji Kiyotaka and Sudo Ken were caught off guard.

"Wait, are you saying you can team up with Sudo-kun?"

Chapter 664: I've been claim

It was obvious that Horikita Suzune was having trouble containing her emotions.

If they could resolve the trouble that was Sudo Ken, it would undoubtedly be good for the class.

Sudo Ken possessed excellent athletic abilities, ranking among the top in his grade.

Losing him would be a severe blow to Class 2-C.

Horikita Suzune's objective for this exam was clear.

Under the condition that no dropouts were allowed, she aimed to minimize point deductions. While first place wasn't necessary, she couldn't afford to be last.

Thus, if Amasawa Ichika were willing to team up with Sudo Ken, it would virtually guarantee he wouldn't be expelled.

Considering this, it was no surprise Horikita Suzune's emotions were stirred.

"Are you going to team up with me?"

Sudo Ken wore an incredulous expression.

Yet, facing his hopeful gaze, Amasawa Ichika flashed a sly, mischievous grin.

"No, actually, that wasn't my intention either."

Instantly, Horikita Suzune's mood plummeted.

She felt played by Amasawa Ichika.

"Not teaming up with me?" Sudo Ken's eyes widened. "Wait, what do you mean?"

"Well, I was recently reserved by a senpai. Though he hasn't made a final decision yet, defying him might lead to... unpleasant consequences."

As she spoke, Amasawa Ichika blushed as if embarrassed, her expression conjuring questionable imagery.

"Who is this person?"

Horikita Suzune ignored her feigned shyness and cut straight to the point.

"Eh? Is Horikita-senpai curious?"

Amasawa Ichika feigned surprise. "I could tell you, but he strikes me as a dangerous character."

Horikita Suzune first thought of Ryuen, then Nagumo, but neither seemed quite right.

"Is it Ryuen?"

Sudo Ken voiced the question for her.

"Congratulations, Sudo-senpai!"

Amasawa Ichika clapped mockingly. "Wrong guess!"

Sudo Ken looked utterly bewildered. If he was wrong, why the applause?

"Forget it. If you don't want to say, we're not interested in gossip."

Horikita Suzune turned to leave.

This teasing little devil gave her an inexplicable sense of déjà vu.

"How mean! Can't we chat a bit longer?"

Amasawa Ichika sighed dramatically. "Though I can't team up with you myself, I know someone who can."

Horikita Suzune halted and turned back, her expression calm rather than excited.

"What are your conditions?"

Having witnessed Amasawa Ichika's twisted sense of humor, Horikita Suzune wouldn't easily trust her words.

Amasawa Ichika smiled without immediately answering. "Horikita-senpai must have heard plenty from Class D by now? With Classes 2-A and 2-D buying people off, everyone's waiting and watching. Top students are holding out for the right price, while average students seem to be gathering around Class 2-B."

Thanks to Ichinose Honami hosting exchange meetings, many less confident students had gathered there, successfully earning their trust.

In contrast, Class 2-C was in an awkward position—ignored by everyone, receiving only dismissive responses even when they tried to reach out.

"Even if Horikita-senpai were willing to offer 500,000 Personal points, how many students could you actually win over?"

The answer was obvious.

Horikita Suzune stared impassively at Amasawa Ichika.

"What are you trying to say?"

"Hmm, what was I going to say?"

Amasawa Ichika also seemed troubled, but she quickly had an epiphany. "Ah, right! The earlier condition—the condition was that you answer my question, and then I'll help solve your problem. How about that?"

Horikita Suzune remained expressionless. "What question?"

"Of course, we continue guessing."

Amasawa Ichika smiled faintly. "You already have an answer about who my senior is, don't you, Horikita-senpai?"

Sudo Ken glanced back and forth between her and Horikita Suzune, completely lost about what kind of riddle they were discussing.

"If you guess wrong, I'll take back what I said earlier. Let's pretend we never met today."

Amasawa Ichika narrowed her eyes. "It's just a name—surely you can say it, Horikita-senpai?"

Horikita Suzune fell silent for a moment. "Is it Mitoma-kun?"

"Oh ho! As expected of Horikita-senpai. You really do know who the most dangerous person is!"

Amasawa Ichika immediately clapped her hands. "Correct! It was Mitoma-senpai who threatened me not to team up with anyone else!"

She seemed unaware that she'd said something shocking. If anyone overheard, it would undoubtedly spawn a flood of new rumors about Kaoru.

Even Sudo Ken couldn't help but waver at this point, his mind filled with thoughts of the Hypnosis App.

"What did he threaten you with?" Horikita Suzune asked coldly.

"I can't say. That's my weak point."

Amasawa Ichika raised her index finger, making a shushing gesture. "However, if possible, I'd like Horikita-senpai to tell me information about Mitoma-senpai. In return, I'll tell you how to get along well with Nanase-san."

"Nanase-san?"

Horikita Suzune frowned. "Didn't you say if I answered your question, you'd help solve Sudo-kun's partner problem?"

"I already solved it! No one in Nanase-san's Class D has formed a team yet. Even though they're Class D, they do have students ranked B or higher."

Amasawa Ichika said leisurely. "If Horikita-senpai can build good relations with them, Sudo-senpai's problem will be easily resolved."

That's completely useless information!

Horikita Suzune felt irritated. She'd just been extorted by a Class D first-year student, and now this girl was toying with her.

Even with her good temper, she was reaching her limit.

"From how you're talking, do you think you can help me deal with Nanase-san?"

If Amasawa Ichika kept trying to provoke her, Horikita Suzune swore she would turn and leave immediately.

"Don't be fooled just because all Class D students listen to Hosen-kun. Actually, the only person in Class D who can stop Hosen-kun right now is Nanase-san."

Amasawa Ichika maintained her smiling expression. "Hosen-kun visited your classroom yesterday, right? When he caused that scene, it was Nanase-san who stopped him, wasn't it?"

Horikita Suzune recalled the scene.

Because Tsubasa Nanase had been standing silently beside Hosen Kazuo, she had overlooked the girl at the time.

Now, with Amasawa Ichika's reminder, Horikita Suzune did sense something unusual about Tsubasa Nanase.

"If Horikita-senpai tells me, I'll correspondingly teach you how to deal with Nanase-san."

Amasawa Ichika lowered her voice. "What do you think of this trade, Horikita-senpai?"

Horikita Suzune fell into deep thought, feeling as if she'd returned to when Nagumo tried to recruit her to deal with Kaoru.

However, Amasawa Ichika was just a freshman who had recently enrolled.

What did she want with information about Kaoru and what had Kaoru done to her?

More importantly, why was she asking her about it?

Horikita Suzune was filled with doubts when she saw Amasawa Ichika across from her break into a smile.

"Ah, that's right. Whether Horikita-senpai agrees or not, you can't tell Kaoru-senpai about today's matter, okay?"

The little devil junior stared intently at Horikita Suzune. "You won't tell him, will you, Horikita-senpai?"

Could she have already seen through her relationship with Kaoru?

Horikita Suzune couldn't help but think this.

On the other side, Ayanokoji Kiyotaka silently watched this scene.

Was this meant to dispel his suspicions of her?

Unfortunately, he already knew.

Chapter 665: Just Cooking

"You're back."

With the sound of the door unlocking, Kaoru saw Horikita Suzune standing in the entryway.

She was wearing an apron, the hem of her skirt stopping just around her knees, revealing her fair and smooth calves.

On her feet were black ankle socks, both soles planted firmly on the floor.

A faint, elusive aroma wafted from the kitchen, making Kaoru pause for a moment.

"What are you standing here for?"

"Waiting for you to come back."

Kaoru fell silent for a moment, then stretched out both hands toward Horikita Suzune, like a husband asking for his wife's embrace.

"I'm home, dear."

"Didn't she follow you today?"

Horikita Suzune remained unmoved, though she knew the role of wearing an apron and waiting for a man to return was typically that of a wife.

"Kaho only comes over occasionally. She doesn't cling to me every day."

In truth, Kaoru had just returned from the first-year dormitory, where he had been helping Komiya Kaho with her studies in her room.

However, the specifics of that process weren't something he could easily share.

Horikita Suzune had never met Komiya Kaho.

She had hardly visited Kaoru's dormitory this week, but Karuizawa Kei and Kushida Kikyo had told her about this person.

Another junior, and a childhood friend from the past—Horikita Suzune instinctively felt a bit irritated, as if something were stuck in her throat.

If she paid attention to it, it stung, if she ignored it, a vague discomfort lingered.

Perhaps because her mindset was different, Kushida Kikyo and Karuizawa Kei had already accepted the reality of the harem.

Even if another person appeared, they would only feel slightly uncomfortable at most.

However, Horikita Suzune's subconscious was warning her—Komiya Kaho's presence was dangerous!

But for now, she couldn't pinpoint where this sense of danger was coming from.

"Kei is with her friends and won't be back until evening."

Horikita Suzune turned and walked toward the kitchen.

"Sit for a while. I'll be done soon."

As she turned, the hem of her skirt lifted slightly, fully revealing her rounded and full hip line.

Her long, straight legs were even more captivating—smooth and glossy, like tender bamboo shoots, inviting endless imagination.

Moreover, she was wearing an apron, giving her a more domestic feel than usual.

Though she was still the same person, there was a seductive and alluring charm about her.

Kaoru looked at her hair. It was no longer the long, flowing hair he remembered but short, like Kushida Kikyo's.

This hairstyle seemed to bother Kushida Kikyo quite a bit—she had once asked Kaoru to touch her hair.

"This approach seems a bit perverted," Kaoru quickly interrupted his own recollection.

Kaoru walked to the kitchen and embraced Horikita Suzune from behind, wrapping his arms around her waist.

He found the Horikita Suzune in his arms exceptionally soft and comfortable to hold.

"If you come here too often, everyone will eventually notice you."

Currently, most people hadn't suspected their relationship.

After all, Horikita Suzune rarely interacted with Kaoru in public—without any contact, how could there be a special relationship?

However, if she were to visit as frequently as Karuizawa Kei, who practically lived here, their relationship would quickly become known throughout the entire school.

"Why bring this up suddenly?"

Horikita Suzune didn't seem to mind. "Everyone knows you're a lecher. What difference would one more make? Even if you were to 'devour' a few underclassmen now, I don't think anyone would be surprised."

Kaoru's expression turned peculiar, he felt there was an underlying meaning in her words, subtly criticizing him.

"But right now, I only want to 'devour' Suzune. What should I do?"

The warmth of the man's breath brushed against the girl's ear, spreading to her fair neck.

Her porcelain-like skin gradually flushed red, and her perky, youthful chest fluttered with a naive excitement, pounding like a startled deer.

Horikita Suzune braced her hands against the countertop, her gaze still fixed on the pressure cooker in front of her.

The intense steam seemed ready to explode at any moment, making her breathing somewhat erratic.

"W-wait, I'm busy right now."

Since she was facing away from Kaoru, Horikita Suzune couldn't even push him away and could only try to calm him down with words.

However, Kaoru turned her delicate face toward him and kissed her lips.

"Remember next time, this is how you should welcome me back."

Kaoru lifted his hand, cupping the girl's blushing face, feeling her embarrassment.

"Since you're wearing an apron, let me kiss you a little longer."

Horikita Suzune felt her ears burning hot.

Every place he touched made her shy and flushed. Seeing him about to kiss her again, she couldn't help but close her eyes, her long eyelashes trembling slightly.

She pressed her lips together tightly, her breathing somewhat hurried, and her full chest rising and falling.

Their lips gently met, a moist sensation carrying a tingling, electric current.

"Suzune, do you know what the most classic line is at a time like this?"

At first, Horikita Suzune didn't understand what he meant, but when she saw the look in his eyes, some embarrassing scenes suddenly flashed through her mind, making her feel even more ashamed.

What line could a wife in an apron possibly say?

Of course, it would be to ask affectionately, "Darling, what do you plan to eat tonight? Do you plan to eat me, or will you eat me later?"

"I-I don't know. How long are you going to keep messing around?"

Horikita Suzune lowered her voice, as if afraid she might make strange sounds otherwise.

"I'm not messing around. I'm just simply accompanying Suzune while she cooks."

Kaoru stroked the girl's thigh, the smooth and delicate skin making it impossible to resist.

"Who told you to be so adorable? I even want to marry you and make you my wife."

This guy was getting more and more outrageous.

Horikita Suzune bit her lip, feeling helpless, and she could already sense his presence intensely.

Though it was just cooking, with Kaoru's cooperation, Horikita Suzune gradually lost strength and could barely stand, supporting herself with both hands on the countertop.

"I... I'm safe today... it just passed..."

Horikita Suzune spoke intermittently, her cheeks burning crimson as if each word caused her immense shame.

Kaoru froze for a moment—her meaning was clearly implied.

However, this kind of intimacy seemed to be the first time.

"So that's why you haven't come over these past few days."

Kaoru held the girl in his arms, though he wouldn't just think of himself. "I'm actually really happy that Suzune can help me cook."

Horikita Suzune remained silent, her neck flushing red as well.

Then, Kaoru took her small hand to prevent her from accidentally hurting herself, since cooking could be dangerous.

The pressure cooker began to hiss with steam, releasing a rich soup aroma.

The flames under the frying pan burned vigorously, flickering against the girl's lovely face, illuminating it until it glowed crimson.

Her eyes looked dazed, and if not for Kaoru's assistance, they probably wouldn't have had dinner that night.

Even so, Horikita Suzune's cooking skills remained excellent—both in taste and in her presence. Kaoru found the flavor simply wonderful.

"Don't do this again next time."

After the meal, Horikita Suzune sat in Kaoru's lap, weakly glaring at this pervert.

"Your cooking is so good, I want to eat it for a lifetime."

Kaoru shamelessly declared that feasting on beauty was the highest form of enjoyment—once experienced, it was hard to forget.

Chapter 666: Are you a Puppy?

"Do you say things like that to everyone?"

Horikita Suzune hadn't intended to say such words—they sounded almost jealous—but today's experience left her unsettled.

"No, at least not to people I don't like."

Kaoru booped her nose. "Did something happen today?"

He actually already knew, but wasn't sure what Horikita Suzune was thinking.

Sure enough, Horikita Suzune's expression changed as she whispered, "I met a girl today—Amasawa Ichika from Class 1-A. What's going on between you two?"

"What did she tell you?" Kaoru didn't rush to answer.

If it were Karuizawa Kei, she would have grown jealous long ago and been angered by Kaoru's counter-question.

But the person before him was Horikita Suzune.

"She's very concerned about your affairs—including how you started dating Honami and how you got together with Kei and the others. Amasawa-san kept asking about these things."

Horikita Suzune recounted her day's experiences to Kaoru.

After finishing, she naturally felt puzzled—specifically why Amasawa Ichika would claim to have been threatened by Kaoru.

"Because she tried to plant a listening device on me and I accidentally caught her."

Kaoru briefly explained before changing the subject. "That underclassman isn't honest—she must have ulterior motives for approaching you all."

Hearing about the listening device, Horikita Suzune was shocked, then deeply frowned.

She certainly felt something was off about Amasawa Ichika—the timing of her appearance was too convenient.

"The people from Class 1-D are strange. Their leader, Hōsen, came to our grade saying he wanted to find collaborators, but ended up causing a scene before leaving."

"If he looks down on Class 2-C and Class 2-D, why hasn't he actively approached our Class A or Honami's exchange meeting? You said Hosen wants Personal points - our Class A could offer 100,000 Personal points, but he didn't agree from the start."

"Taking a step back, if he wants to jack up the price, that's understandable. But isn't 500,000 too exaggerated? Who could possibly afford that price?"

Horikita Suzune fell into deep thought.

After Kaoru's analysis, she felt she had discovered something, yet everything seemed to become more unclear.

"Do you think Class 1-D doesn't want to interact with us?"

Horikita Suzune thought of a business strategy - if merchants don't want someone to buy a particular item, they often set the price at the highest level.

"The price is too high. 500,000 per person, 1 million for two people - even I can't afford that price."

Kaoru paused, "Such pricing is actually quite unreasonable. Although second-years face the risk of expulsion, when the exam day arrives, everyone will be forcibly paired. The later it gets, the less valuable first-years become."

To be precise, the later it gets, the less valuable Class 1-D becomes.

Because aside from Class 1-D, other classes also have honor students.

If the goal is simply to avoid expulsion, everyone could cooperate with honor students from classes other than 1-D.

Assuming other classes aren't idiots, the prices they offer would definitely be lower than Class 1-D's.

Simply jacking up prices against second-year students for some Personal points, without leaving any room for retreat, is too easy to generate resentment.

"Actually, I don't want to get involved in the points competition between your Class A and Class D."

Horikita Suzune suddenly said, "On one hand, our Class C really doesn't have many points. On the other hand, I believe the first-years also have their own anxieties."

Kaoru was somewhat surprised, then heard her continue.

"Although first-years don't face the risk of expulsion, they've learned the truth about this school and know that Class A is the target they need to catch up with. This means Class Points are equally important to them."

The rewards for this exam are minimal - the first-place class only gets 50 points.

But however few Class Points they may be, they're still Class Points.

"If they have ambition, they'll definitely gather information about our grade and the third-years. Then they'll realize that the early stage is the easiest time to surpass Class A."

Kaoru smiled, "I remember in our first semester, the gap between Class A and Class B was about 200 points - a difference that could be overturned by a single Special Exam."

Horikita Suzune's lips twitched slightly.

After a long while, she said, "I think not only do we need honor students, but the first-years will also need honor students. Being able to exchange honor students with each other would be the best outcome."

Simply selling their own honor students would at most earn them some Personal points, while their class standing wouldn't change at all.

In Horikita Suzune's eyes, such transactions were meaningless.

"Your idea is good, but it depends on whether the first-years can realize this."

Kaoru said quietly, "From what I know, some classes don't even have leaders yet. They can't move in unison, and many people are forming teams privately."

Horikita Suzune fell silent.

The reason she was attracted to Class 1-D was precisely because Hosen Kazuo could control the entire class and maintain unified action.

"However, Amasawa said she could help you solve the problem, right?"

Kaoru thought for a moment, "I think you should engage with her. She definitely has some purpose, and perhaps the person Class 1-D truly wants to target is you."

Horikita Suzune didn't react immediately, only startling when Kaoru began rubbing her shoulders.

"You know their intentions?"

"I know a little, but not how they plan to execute it. Did you agree to her conditions?"

"I was planning to discuss it with you after returning."

"Go ahead and agree. Just mention that I might have the Hypnosis App and warn her to be careful."

"..."

Horikita Suzune understood—even if she were to betray this guy, he wouldn't particularly care.

"However, for safety's sake, I suggest you don't get too involved with Class 1-D."

Kaoru said, "Isn't Hirata in your class? Let him help. Both he and Kushida can handle most of the freshmen for you."

Horikita Suzune hesitated, wanting to say that Hirata Yosuke had been depressed for a long time and she wasn't sure if he could recover.

"Honor students have friends too. Win over their friends, then use your earlier idea to persuade many people. It's best to act quickly, or they'll all be recruited by others."

Horikita Suzune immediately grew serious.

Besides Sudo Ken, the struggling student, many in Class 2-C were at risk of expulsion.

Every day of delay now could increase the danger.

Just as she tried to get up from Kaoru's lap, he lifted her into his arms, forcing her to wrap her arms around his neck.

"What are you doing!"

Horikita Suzune began blushing fiercely because the two had been maintaining a certain intimate posture without separating at all.

"Since we've finished eating, it's time for a bath now."

Kaoru smiled faintly and carried her toward the bathroom.

Horikita Suzune felt both embarrassed and angry, but mostly helpless.

She could only cling tightly to his neck, trembling slightly with every step he took, her heart pounding in fear.

However, shortly after they entered the bathroom, they soon heard Karuizawa Kei's voice.

"I'm back!"

Horikita Suzune's expression changed drastically.

Without thinking, she began struggling—she couldn't let Karuizawa Kei see her like this!

"Strange, there's a familiar scent..."

Karuizawa Kei's footsteps echoed from outside. "You're back, Kaoru!"

As soon as she finished speaking, the bathroom door was suddenly thrown open.

Kaoru clearly felt Horikita Suzune in his arms jolt and freeze completely. He sighed and turned around, indeed seeing Karuizawa Kei.

"You two! Always doing naughty things when I'm not around!"

Karuizawa Kei puffed her cheeks. "No wonder I smelled something strange!"

"Are you a puppy?"

Kaoru had long wanted to tease her about this skill.

"I'm not a puppy!"

Karuizawa Kei was somewhat angry, feeling Kaoru was too proactive with Horikita Suzune.

"How long have you been like this? The scent is too strong! Damn it, I'll wear an apron next time too!"

Horikita Suzune already wanted to cover her face. She felt Kushida Kikyo and Karuizawa Kei would have new material to tease her about.

Chapter 667: Mitoma-senpai, over here!

Even with the addition of Kei Karuizawa, Kaoru handled it with ease, while the two of them lay exhausted on the bed.

Sitting by the bedside, Kaoru received a call from Kushida Kikyo—this had become a daily routine.

Whenever she wasn't around, she would call him.

"Yagami wants to ask me out tomorrow."

Kushida Kikyo gritted her teeth, "That guy definitely has ill intentions. I'm getting goosebumps all over!"

Listening to the sound of her urinating, Kaoru felt somewhat speechless.

Playing too many embarrassing little games had indeed turned into a form of intimate play between couples.

Now, while doing such things, Kushida Kikyo didn't feel the slightest bit of shame

. Instead, she could discuss serious matters with him, which showed just how high her threshold for embarrassment had become.

"You calling me like this makes me feel like I'm being cuckolded."

Kaoru noticed Kei Karuizawa snuggling closer and reached out to stroke her head.

She narrowed her eyes, seemingly content as she rested her head on his lap, much like a little puppy.

"Ha, I'm the one who should be feeling that way, right?"

Kushida Kikyo seemed to see through the phone what Kaoru was doing. "You're either just finished or in the middle of it while taking my call, you foot fetishist pervert!"

Her voice carried a hint of menace. Kaoru placed the phone in front of Kei Karuizawa, who immediately understood.

"Kikyo, it's bad! Suzune is sneaking around again!"

At Kei Karuizawa's shout, Horikita Suzune, who had been pretending to be asleep, took a few deep breaths, pulled the covers over her head, and decided to just sleep.

"Ahaha, I knew that woman couldn't hold back. Once her period is over, she'd definitely come running."

Kushida Kikyo laughed for a while before suddenly freezing. "Kei, don't tell me you two didn't... tonight?"

Before Kei Karuizawa could respond, Kaoru had already taken back the phone and said calmly, "You can have Suzune accompany you tomorrow. She went to the same middle school as you, so there's no way the other party wouldn't know who she is."

"Guh... after all my hard work..."

Kushida Kikyo's voice was filled with frustration, inexplicably giving off the vibe of a defeated underdog.

"It's really nothing. It's not like I'm only thinking about myself."

Kaoru felt helpless.

He should have been the one in control, but instead, they were the ones eyeing him eagerly, taking the initiative one after another, forcing him to exercise some restraint.

"I think we could go a little further."

Kei Karuizawa blushed and muttered under her breath.

Kaoru pretended not to hear. If they went any further, he might as well just host a sound party at school.

"So that's how it is... if I just push a little harder..."

Kushida Kikyo seemed to be pondering something as well. "Honami can be in the Student Council, and even Horikita can put on airs... Next time, I'll..."

"What are you thinking about?"

"Wondering what good bringing Horikita along would do. Does she want to know about my past too?"

"Should I let you go alone?"

"Can't you come with me?"

"Because before you called, someone else asked me out."

"Who!"

"I'll tell you later. I need to discuss something with Suzune now."

"Can't I listen in?"

Kaoru glanced to the side.

Horikita Suzune had the covers pulled over her but hadn't closed her eyes, staring motionlessly at him.

"Are you asking me to deal with Yagami?"

"If we can find leverage against him, handling Class D in the first year will become easier for you."

"Easier..."

Horikita Suzune slowly chewed on the word, a flicker of emotion showing in her eyes.

'In your view, have I already reached that level of composure?'

"It feels like you're always helping me."

The girl's voice suddenly softened. "Even when I have no confidence in myself, you still believe in me so much."

Not just now, but in the past too - this made Horikita Suzune's feelings incredibly complicated.

Kaoru would shatter her confidence one moment, then tell her the next that her future would be no less brilliant than anyone else's.

Kaoru found this somewhat amusing. "Think carefully - besides losing to me, who else have you lost to?"

Horikita Suzune froze.

Many names flashed through her mind in that instant, but ultimately she couldn't name a single person. Her lips moved slightly before pressing together.

"Actually, I feel the same way. Horikita's tongue technique is too strong, even I can't keep up."

Kushida Kikyo said with deep agreement.

Horikita Suzune immediately flushed bright red: "Kikyo!"

The perfectly good atmosphere was completely ruined by that shameless Kushida Kikyo with just one sentence!

"Homewrecker!"

Kushida Kikyo said righteously.

Kaoru's expression turned strange - as if she wasn't one herself, when they had just parted ways this morning.

Karuizawa Kei was already used to their arguments.

She got up from Kaoru's lap, knelt halfway on the bed, reached out to wrap her arms around his neck, and pressed her lips against his.

The argument between Kushida Kikyo and the others abruptly stopped as she heard strange sounds.

"Kei?"

Kaoru held her slender waist.

The girl's breath was sweet, her soft body radiating warm heat. He could smell a faint fragrance from her, causing his fading desire to slowly surge back.

"Hehe, I just suddenly wanted to kiss you."

Karuizawa Kei sat in his lap, her legs wrapped around his waist.

Though her eyes showed some embarrassment, she wore a triumphant smile, as if she'd successfully pulled off a prank.

However, only she knew the real reason.

Even though she had accepted Horikita Suzune and Kushida Kikyo, she still couldn't help wanting him to focus all his attention on her.

Whenever she realized he wasn't looking at her, her heart would ache with a sour feeling, accompanied by vague stomach pain.

"Kei, you're so cute it makes me want to hold you and sleep through the night."

Kaoru held the girl in his arms tightly, kissing her slightly trembling eyelashes, kissing her adorable face, slowly pressing her down onto the bed, and finally kissing her lips.

"I want to sleep with you too."

Karuizawa Kei murmured as if talking to herself, trying hard to match Kaoru's rhythm, her feet unconsciously rubbing against the sheets.

Horikita Suzune silently turned away - not because she was shy, but simply because she thought Kaoru wasn't normal.

Taking advantage of his complete focus on Karuizawa Kei, she decided to sleep early to avoid being dragged out again.

"Wait, wait, I'm still listening here, you two!"

Kushida Kikyo was particularly shocked, feeling an inexplicable sense of being cuckolded.

"Horikita, what are you doing? Stop her quickly! Why are you just standing by and watching!"

Horikita Suzune hung up on her - she was just too noisy.

Chapter 668: Let me see what's down there!

Amidst the bustling Keyaki Mall, Kaoru spotted Amasawa Ichika beaming with a radiant smile, continuously waving her hand to catch his attention.

Today marked the first time Kaoru had seen her in casual attire.

She wore a thin camisole top that revealed her naturally smooth and delicate shoulders, giving off a slender and fragile impression.

A small section of her collarbone peeked out, and her fair neck was adorned with a shimmering silver necklace that enhanced her vibrant energy.

A black bubble skirt cinched her slender waist, accentuating a youthful yet dramatic curve that made her well-developed bust more prominent.

A glimpse of pale, supple thigh skin beneath the hem exuded a tempting glow, while black thigh-high socks tightly hugged her graceful legs—just one glance was enough to imagine their exceptional texture.

Simply standing there, Amasawa Ichika's outfit had already drawn frequent glances from passersby.

Upon realizing she was waiting for Kaoru, some wore expressions of deep jealousy and anguish, followed by helpless envy.

"Knowing full well about my notorious reputation, you still asked me out today. Shouldn't you be aware of how this scene will be twisted, Amasawa-san?"

Kaoru deliberately tested her reaction.

As a known playboy, why would any sensible girl actively seek him out instead of avoiding him?

"Hoya, is that really your first line upon seeing a girl?"

Amasawa Ichika sighed deeply. "Shouldn't you be apologizing for being late first, then seize the chance to compliment my cuteness?"

Though she was praising herself, it was hard to argue against it.

Even the well-experienced Kaoru had to admit she looked stunning—especially with her light makeup enhancing her delicate cheeks and a glossy, crimson lips curved into a faint, elusive smile.

Facing Kaoru's gaze, Amasawa showed no shyness, openly accepting his appraisal.

"Aren't I cute? I put in so much effort—doesn't senpai have anything to say?"

"Did you dress up just for me?"

"Senpai, you're so confident."

"Even if I didn't think that way, everyone around would assume we're on a date."

"No problem. I'll clear up the misunderstanding—Mitoma-senpai didn't use the Hypnosis App on me. I was just being threatened by him."

Kaoru remained silent, but Amasawa chuckled lightly and offered, "Shall we walk around for a bit?"

"Holding hands would be even better."

Kaoru stated shamelessly.

"Senpai, you're really something else. You come off as so frivolous."

Amasawa placed her index finger on her lips, her eyes carrying a hint of allure. "But if you agree to my condition, holding hands is fine~"

"You give off a frivolous vibe too. Have you had a boyfriend before?"

Kaoru remained unmoved by her teasing—only an inexperienced boy would get flustered.

"Eh, is now really the time to ask that?"

Amasawa puffed her cheeks in dissatisfaction. "Senpai, aren't you even a little curious about my condition?"

"Should I be?"

Kaoru retorted.

"Shouldn't you?"

Immediately, Amasawa Ichika's face lit up with sudden understanding. "I get it now. When senpai asked if I had a boyfriend, you were actually concerned about my past, weren't you?"

As she spoke, a mischievous smile spread across Amasawa Ichika's face.

"If senpai is really that concerned, I might be willing to tell you~"

Watching Kaoru's expression, Amasawa Ichika's lips curled into a faint smile.

It seemed the initiative in this conversation was falling into her hands.

However, as her words faded, she saw Kaoru suddenly lean in close.

Her body instinctively retreated half a step, but before she could react, her wrist was already caught in Kaoru's grasp.

At this close distance, Amasawa Ichika could clearly see Kaoru's eyes.

He was quietly staring at her face, making her momentarily stunned.

Soon, she quickly regained her composure and looked at Kaoru with a playful smile.

"Senpai suddenly became so forceful. You really do care about my..."

Amasawa Ichika struggled lightly a few times, originally intending to put on a show of resistance.

But her smile immediately froze.

What's with this strength?

Though it was just her wrist being held, Amasawa Ichika felt like all the alarms in her body were going off.

Her blood ran cold as if falling into an ice cellar - she was all too familiar with this feeling!

"Isn't it me who's setting the terms now?"

At this moment, Kaoru whispered, "I was originally planning to let you off. Just a listening device, nothing unusual. But Amasawa-san, you don't seem afraid of me."

"I really like strong men. Someone like senpai is just perfect~"

Amasawa Ichika also lowered her voice, speaking softly as if sharing a secret.

Her pretty face slightly flushed, and her warm breath even reached Kaoru, making him feel somewhat ticklish.

Kaoru looked into her eyes, which shimmered like rippling water.

All he could see were her long eyelashes trembling slightly, with a faint wine-red hue gradually coloring her cheeks.

"If that's the case, then what are your feet doing?"

At Kaoru's calm question, Amasawa Ichika's intended tripping motion involuntarily paused. The two silently exchanged glances.

"Senpai, you're hurting me."

Girls truly are acting creatures.

Amasawa Ichika now looked like she was about to cry at any moment.

Kaoru released her wrist. She rubbed her wrist, tears seemingly already glistening in her eyes.

"How cruel! Being so rough with a girl. Look, it's all red here!"

Amasawa Ichika angrily raised her wrist. Where there was originally fair, smooth skin, several faint red marks now appeared.

Under Kaoru's gaze, they slowly faded, returning to her fair, tender skin.

Seeing this, Amasawa Ichika nonchalantly withdrew her wrist and hid it behind her back.

"Anyway, senpai is really too much!"

"Is that considered too much?"

Kaoru chuckled, "If I remember correctly, the condition I gave you was to team up with my people, right?"

"That's correct. Has senpai already made up his mind?"

Amasawa Ichika remained composed, seemingly having steered the conversation away from the previous topic.

Kaoru's earlier actions had genuinely frightened her.

Her instincts told her she was no match for him. "Keeping me waiting until now has been quite troubling. Senpai must give me an answer today."

"Would you accept anyone, no matter who it is?" Kaoru wore a faint, ambiguous smile.

Amasawa Ichika thought to herself that agreeing wouldn't hurt—it might even help her get closer to his network.

But who exactly needed help?

"Since it's a threat from my senpai, I can't really refuse, can I?"

"Are you sure you can't refuse?"

"Huh? Do I even have the option to refuse?"

For some reason, Kaoru fell silent, which made Amasawa Ichika feel something was off.

"Come to think of it, Amasawa-san, you're really cute. I almost feel bad wasting all the effort you put into your outfit today."

Kaoru smiled. "I've decided—let's change the condition."

Amasawa Ichika slowly withdrew her smile.

Though Kaoru hadn't said anything yet, she could already sense it—she seemed to have fallen into a trap.

Just as she was about to speak, Kaoru hooked a finger under her chin.

"Amasawa-san, let me see what's underneath."

Chapter 669: Senpai is Disgusting!

At that moment, Amasawa Ichika couldn't hold back any longer.

This guy really is a pervert—completely unpredictable.

Who says something like that to a girl they've only met a few times?

Her fists clenched.

If it weren't for maintaining her image, she probably would have punched him already!

He may look decent, but the vibe he gives off is just too disgusting!

These thoughts kept swirling in Amasawa Ichika's mind, but when she met Kaoru's gaze, she quickly suppressed the turmoil inside.

"Senpai, do you know how to spell 'pervert'?"

The girl expressionlessly pushed Kaoru away.

"If you want to insult me, Amasawa-san, you can be more direct."

Kaoru chuckled. "It's an honor to be cursed at by such a cute junior."

"Are you the type of pervert who gets more excited the more you're insulted, Senior?"

Amasawa Ichika's face darkened.

She felt she couldn't handle this guy—he was shameless to this extent. How was she supposed to keep up?

Kaoru said leisurely, "I don't have that kind of interest. I'm just curious whether you'll agree to my condition."

"Senpai, if you think I'm the kind of girl who'll agree to anything, you're underestimating me."

Amasawa Ichika took a few steps back, adopting a stance of unwavering defiance.

"This condition is too disgusting. I refuse."

"Not even a hint of the color?"

Kaoru provocatively glanced at her skirt hem, where black knee-high socks slightly pressed into her fair thigh flesh.

That "absolute territory" was tantalizing, as if lifting it just a little higher would reveal everything.

"You've lost a hundred points in my book, Senpai."

Amasawa Ichika sighed deeply. "I can't believe the Student Council President is a pervert."

"I'm tired of hearing the word 'pervert'."

Kaoru confirmed once more, "Really not going to let me see?"

To be honest, if anyone else had dared speak to her like that, Amasawa Ichika would have slapped them long ago.

But with this guy, she couldn't tell if he was serious.

Could someone really make such a request in public?

"It seems Senpai doesn't need my academic help after all."

From his reaction, Amasawa Ichika found what she was looking for.

"No—wait, you never intended to cooperate with me from the start, did you? Were you just toying with me?"

"When someone plants a listening device in my pocket, it's only reasonable for me to be a little cautious, isn't it?" Kaoru extended his hand to her, "Since you don't want me to look, would you accompany me for a stroll instead?"

Amasawa Ichika stared at his palm.

How could this person so naturally skip past the previous sexual harassment and shamelessly invite a girl out?

"If we hold hands here, won't your girlfriend get angry?"

"Which one are you referring to?"

"..."

Amasawa Ichika nearly cursed aloud.

She had intended to be sarcastic, but forgot this guy was a Harem fanatic who wouldn't be affected by her snide remarks.

"Not even this condition is acceptable?"

Kaoru thought for a moment, "It was indeed presumptuous of me. Let's just call it off for today. I can pretend the wiretapping incident never happened."

Having said that, Kaoru prepared to leave.

Amasawa Ichika bit her lip.

Though she knew he was playing hard to get, she felt helpless against it.

"Stop right there, Senpai!"

The girl grabbed his wrist, "What era is this anyway? Holding hands won't kill anyone! Who cares about such trivial things!"

Kaoru struggled slightly before comfortably taking advantage of the situation to hold the girl's small, soft hand.

"It might be trivial to you, but for me, being able to hold Amasawa-san's hand is a big deal."

Amasawa Ichika's face darkened.

She hadn't expected her first time holding hands with a boy to be under such circumstances, but she adjusted quickly, immediately putting on a smile.

"Senpai, you're disgusting."

Though she was smiling, there wasn't a trace of warmth in it - an expression that was somewhat frightening.

Moreover, her sweet voice saying such words created a stark contrast.

"I feel the same way." Kaoru smiled.

If she could tolerate such a disgusting senpai, she was actually more impressive than him.

The two stared at each other, then Amasawa Ichika playfully winked.

"Senpai, do you know why I chose to meet here?"

"There are too many people here - I can't do anything bad to you."

"Ahaha, Senpai, that's not it at all! It's because I can fleece a rich patron."

"..."

Soon, Kaoru understood what she meant by "fleecing a rich patron."

Amasawa Ichika took him to numerous shops, eating various delicious snacks, thoroughly milking him as her cash cow.

When they finally took a break at a café, Amasawa Ichika ordered another parfait.

"Having someone pay feels really nice - it even boosts my appetite."

Kaoru watched her take a spoonful of parfait.

The strawberry sauce made her lips appear even more crimson, with a bit of cream sticking to the corner of her mouth, looking quite delectable.

"Though Senpai's gaze is disgusting, is this really enough?"

Amasawa Ichika suddenly said, "I don't mind you accompanying a beautiful girl like me, but do you really not need my academic abilities anymore?"

"Compared to your academic skills, I prefer your face."

Kaoru said without blushing or his heart racing.

"S-Senpai!"

Amasawa Ichika seemed embarrassed, "You didn't call me cute when we met earlier, but now you finally realize how adorable I am?"

Kaoru knew she was just pretending - when he held her hand earlier, she hadn't even blushed.

"But I'm really curious."

Amasawa Ichika tilted her head, "If Senpai wants me to form a team, who would you pair me with?"

"With Koenji-san."

Kaoru said, "Since you intentionally scored zero, I want to see if he would panic."

The corner of Amasawa Ichika's mouth twitched.

This guy was spouting nonsense again.

However, if she deliberately scored zero, her partner would definitely be expelled.

Even if the other person miraculously scored full marks, they would still face expulsion.

Since the exam rule states that the combined score must exceed 500 points, any second-year student with a total score equal to or below this threshold will be expelled.

The maximum possible score for the exam is 500 points, meaning no matter how hard one tries, the highest score they can achieve is 500.

If one partner slacks off, resulting in their combined score not surpassing 500 points, there is only one outcome.

No matter how capable Koenji Rokusuke is, if he doesn't have a reliable partner, he will likely be expelled in this exam.

Chapter 670: At most, Hold hands

"Senpai, do you dislike this Koenji guy?"

Amasawa Ichika frowned. "No matter how unreliable I am, I would never intentionally harm someone."

"So, Amasawa-san wouldn't do something like that, right?"

Kaoru sounded almost disappointed. "I thought it would be quite amusing—if you encountered a senior you didn't like, you could make them drop out directly."

Amasawa Ichika was about to retort but suddenly paused, a flicker of suspicion in her eyes as she wondered if Kaoru was hinting at something.

"That's your idea, Senpai! I would never do such a thing!"

As if trying to hide something, Amasawa Ichika took a bite of her parfait, her cheeks puffing out.

"Do you have someone you dislike, Senpai?"

"The only person I want to expel right now is Nagumo."

Kaoru said, "But he's been lying low lately. I suspect he's waiting for an opportunity."

"I heard you stole his girlfriend?"

Amasawa Ichika's curiosity was piqued. "Everyone says you two fought over Asahina-senpai. Is that true?"

"Didn't he approach you all?"

Kaoru smiled faintly. "Didn't you ask him directly at the time?"

"Ahaha, the atmosphere was too tense back then. I felt too awkward to ask."

Amasawa Ichika stuck out her tongue—a gesture that would seem contrived on anyone else but suited her perfectly, appearing both natural and adorable.

Perhaps this was the advantage of good looks.

"Nazuna-senpai is my girlfriend now." Kaoru replied.

Amasawa Ichika blinked, waiting for him to continue, but no further explanation came.

"That's it?"

"You'll have to pay for the rest."

"That's such a scam! You didn't even give me the beginning—how am I supposed to pay for it?"

"This is exclusive information. If it weren't for you, Amasawa-san, I wouldn't bother explaining."

Amasawa Ichika gritted her teeth.

This guy really had a way of exuding an aura that made people want to punch him.

During the entrance ceremony, he had been insufferable, and now he was even more so.

"By the way, can I ask you something?" Kaoru suddenly said, "Everyone has their own reason for applying to this school. What's yours, Amasawa-san?"

Amasawa Ichika was taken aback.

Her reason for applying to this school?

"Many people come here for further education and employment opportunities, even though it's all a lie—only Class A graduates get to enjoy those privileges. But I'm curious about your perspective, Amasawa-san."

Kaoru watched as Amasawa Ichika fell into deep thought, genuinely intrigued.

Like Ayanokoji Kiyotaka, she came from the White Room.

Despite undergoing its harsh training system, she could express emotions like a normal person.

Her earlier actions had only reinforced Kaoru's belief: this girl before him had not erased her human emotions—she was just exceptionally good at pretending. In contrast, Ayanokoji Kiyotaka was more like a robot.

Kaoru had used [Emotion Perception] on him, but the emotional fluctuations were minimal, with curiosity being the most prominent.

"My thoughts are simple, but you can't laugh when I say them."

For some reason, Amasawa Ichika's expression was serious.

"Unless I can't help it, I won't laugh."

Kaoru was even more solemn and earnest than her.

Amasawa Ichika stared straight at Kaoru with a stern face, but soon she couldn't hold back and burst into laughter.

"Senpai! You're so mean!"

Even though she was the one laughing, she inexplicably blamed Kaoru, "You did that on purpose!"

"I was prepared not to laugh, so what are you doing?"

"You look so ridiculous—let me catch my breath, hahaha!"

"..."

After a short while, Amasawa Ichika finally stopped laughing, though her pretty face flushed red, and her full chest rose and fell with her breath, exuding a somewhat captivating allure.

"Senpai, have you ever stayed in one place for a long time without ever going outside?"

"No."

"Such a straightforward answer—don't you have even a hint of sympathy in your eyes?"

"I'm just a pervert."

Amasawa Ichika felt inexplicably choked up.

Did this guy not feel ashamed but rather proud of it?

"It seems a perverted senpai like you can't understand how I feel."

Amasawa Ichika murmured gloomily, "Since I was little, it's been the same room every day. Everyone demanded that I become stronger, and if I wasn't good enough, I'd be punished. Because my parents are geniuses, as their child, I had to be a genius too."

Kaoru remained silent, but his eyes revealed a trace of sorrow.

"Your childhood must have been happy, Senpai. No one forced you to study, no one coldly ignored your acting cute."

Amasawa Ichika seemed to be talking to herself, "I'm a little envious of your lives. The outside world seems more interesting than I imagined."

"Is that why you came here—to escape that place?" Kaoru said softly.

The girl thought he didn't know about the White Room, so she spoke freely, portraying herself as a child subjected to strict parental discipline.

"This reason... must be boring, right? Like I'm just going through a rebellious phase."

Amasawa Ichika forced a smile, her eyes holding an indescribable emotion—perhaps envy, perhaps sorrow for herself.

Perhaps influenced by her, Kaoru felt the atmosphere between them grow heavy, and a faint sadness emerged in his heart.

His gaze toward her carried a hint of sympathy.

Amasawa Ichika lowered her head, her shoulders trembling, stirring a slight emotional response in him.

However, upon closer listening, a strange sound could be heard.

"Hahaha, Senpai, what's with that look? Do you really think I had such a miserable life!?"

Amasawa Ichika finally couldn't hold back and laughed uncontrollably.

Watching her laugh so heartily, Kaoru silently sipped his coffee.

"Senpai, did you think I was crying just now and were about to comfort me?"

Amasawa Ichika grinned mischievously, "How sly, you perverted senpai, trying to win my favor like that!"

Kaoru paused briefly: "So, you were lying earlier?"

"Eh, no, I was telling the truth. It's just that Senpai's imagination is too vivid!"

Amasawa Ichika didn't feel that her previous acting was deceptive at all, instead, she looked at Kaoru with a cheerful grin.

"Although I'm a pervert, right now I really hope you were lying to me."

Kaoru paused briefly, "Otherwise, I would genuinely pity you."

Amasawa Ichika's smile froze, perhaps not expecting to hear such a response.

"I truly can't understand your feelings, but if it were me, I wouldn't willingly endure that kind of life."

Kaoru said, "No matter how difficult it is, I would definitely escape. My life can't be controlled by others, and my time can't be wasted in such a place."

As he spoke, he glanced at Amasawa Ichika.

Her acting skills were excellent—she could deceive others, but he hoped she wouldn't end up deceiving herself.

In truth, Kaoru was willing to let her deceive him once, just hoping she wouldn't shed tears afterward.

Amasawa Ichika stood frozen in place, and Kaoru could even sense her flustered state.