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Chapter 5: Chapter 21-25

Chapter 21: "Clairvoyance"

Sneaking into the girls' dormitory.

Without a doubt, this was an incredibly reckless act.

The Seidoukan Academy girls' dormitory was one of the most heavily guarded locations on campus.

Why?

Because ordinary security measures were completely ineffective against Genestella.

If someone with sufficient ability wanted to break in, they could simply leap several stories into the air and slip in through a window, without making a sound.

Preventing such intrusions required exceptional security measures.

However—

If security was too strict, it would also inconvenience the students who lived there.

Thus, the Seidoukan girls' dormitory adopted a reinforced security protocol:

Any resident could alert the guards with just a button press—or even a shout.

The security system could be customized, for example, setting windows to automatically trigger an alarm if broken.

This system effectively deterred unwanted visitors.

Given such measures, to be honest, Kaiser had no interest in sneaking in at all.

"If I get caught, my entire life in this world is over."

He seriously didn't want his first life experience to end in disgrace like this.

But—

He had no choice.

"This is all on you, Ser-Veresta."

Standing in a dark corner beneath the dormitory, Kaiser murmured softly to the sword in his hand before activating it.

Under his deliberate suppression, Ser-Veresta's Urm-Manadyte core did not flare up in its usual brilliant crimson glow.

Instead, it merely gave off a faint shimmer—entering active mode without drawing attention.

The pure white blade extended from the activator.

Kaiser then compressed it.

Within seconds, the mighty sword had been reduced to the size of a dagger.

To an uninformed observer, it wouldn't even be recognizable as an Orga Lux.

If anyone knowledgeable saw this, they would undoubtedly be stunned.

The ability to freely control Ser-Veresta like this—adjusting its size and output at will—was something no previous wielder had ever accomplished.

Especially considering—

Kaiser had only possessed it for a week.

But what he was about to do next—

Was even harder.

"Hummm..."

The miniaturized Ser-Veresta vibrated softly, releasing heat energy.

Under Kaiser's careful control, it generated a thermal updraft—gently swirling around his body.

Then—

His feet left the ground.

"Good."

Confirming that the technique was working, Kaiser ascended.

His destination:

The top floor of the dormitory.

According to his intel, the person he sought lived there.

With aerial mobility, his approach was seamless.

Had he not been forced to avoid detection, he would have reached his target in mere seconds.

"She should be asleep by now."

Kaiser cautiously peeked through the window.

After confirming that no one was in sight, he raised his dagger-sized sword and gently slashed at the frame.

"Ssshhh..."

A faint, burning hiss filled the air.

The heat from Ser-Veresta had severed something invisible.

That something was the Mana flow in the surrounding area.

After the Inertia event, the technology in this world had evolved rapidly—

But all of it relied heavily on Mana.

In other words—

If Mana itself could be interfered with, then security systems could be temporarily disabled.

And Ser-Veresta had the ability to burn through anything.

For Kaiser, disrupting Mana-based security was almost too easy.

Thus, he slipped through the dormitory's top floor window—

Riding the thermal wind, he entered the room.

—

Inside the Room

It was a luxurious, expansive suite—far more extravagant than an ordinary dormitory.

The high-end decor and opulent furnishings resembled something from a five-star hotel.

This was no ordinary student's room.

"...This is an absurd level of luxury for a dorm."

Kaiser couldn't help but comment internally.

Of course—

Not all students at Seidoukan had access to such accommodations.

It had already been stated before—

The higher a student's rank, the greater their privileges.

And for the Page One, those privileges were so extreme that they often seemed unfair.

This suite-style dormitory was one such privilege—

Only the highest-ranked members of the Page One were allowed to live here.

Not just the owner of this room—

Every Page One student had access to far superior dorms than the average student.

Which made Kaiser realize something.

"Wait a minute... now that I'm Rank 13, I should be eligible for a dorm upgrade, right?"

At present, he was staying in a standard dorm—

Not even a private one, but a shared room.

While it wasn't too inconvenient, it often left him feeling restricted.

Especially considering—

His roommate was... problematic.

At first, his roommate had been cold and distant, barely acknowledging him.

But after Claudia visited his class, causing a stir, that same roommate had suddenly taken an interest in his affairs—frequently trying to pry information out of him.

And ever since he acquired Ser-Veresta, the guy had been staring at it with blazing intensity.

Now that Kaiser had defeated Rank 13, securing his own rank, his roommate had completely changed his attitude—becoming excessively friendly.

It was too suspicious.

Seidoukan Academy was a battlefield.

Every student was a potential rival.

Even those who didn't participate in the Festa had their own agendas.

In the original story, the protagonist had even been tricked by a so-called "fan"—who had asked for his autograph, only to sell it online for a huge profit.

In Asterisk, famous students were essentially celebrities.

Their names, their rankings, their personal belongings—everything had value.

And Kaiser's roommate...

Felt like the type to sell his secrets to the highest bidder.

"Yeah... I'm applying for a dorm transfer first thing tomorrow."

As Rank 13, he couldn't get a suite like this—

But at the very least, he was eligible for a private room.

"No more dealing with sketchy roommates."

Making up his mind, Kaiser turned his attention to the adjacent room.

That was most likely the bedroom.

Moving carefully, he approached the door.

Due to the Mana disruption from Ser-Veresta, the automatic locks were disabled—

Allowing him to slip through without issue.

—

Inside the Bedroom

Bathed in the glow of the moonlight, a large, elegant bed lay in the center of the room.

And upon it—

A golden-haired girl lay asleep, her figure delicate and beautiful, as if she were a fairy-tale princess.

Claudia Enfield.

But—

"Mnn..."

Even in sleep, she was not at peace.

Her brows were furrowed.

Her face pale.

Her body was curled in on itself, as if she were trapped in a nightmare.

She looked distressed. Tormented.

—

Kaiser remained silent.

He did not wake her.

Instead—

He moved closer to the bed.

His gaze swept across her form.

Then—

He reached beneath her blanket.

And pulled out two objects.

A pair of activators—

Each engraved with an eerie, eye-like pattern.

"Orga Lux—Pan-Dora."

He whispered its name.

Pan-Dora.

An Orga Lux as infamous as Ser-Veresta.

If not more feared.

For unlike Ser-Veresta—

Its power was not destruction.

It was Clairvoyance.

It granted its wielder—

A vision of the future.

Chapter 22: I Hope You Find Redemption

An Orga Lux that allows its wielder to see the future.

There was no need for excessive explanation—just hearing those words alone was enough to understand how powerful and unfair this ability was.

It was because of this Orga Lux that Claudia Enfield held the Rank #2 position at Seidoukan Academy.

It was also why she was known by the moniker—"Commander of a Thousand Visions."

Among all the students at Seidoukan Academy, she was the one opponent no one wanted to face.

How do you fight someone who can see the future?

Even Toudou Kirin, the Rank #1, would likely prefer not to fight her.

But—this power came with a cost.

—

"All Orga Lux have a price."

Holding Pan-Dora's activator, Kaiser spoke aloud—

As if conversing with the weapon itself.

"Some costs are tolerable—some are unbearable."

"My Ser-Veresta is the former."

Ser-Veresta's cost was simple: excessive Prana consumption.

A weak Genestella couldn't even activate it,

Kaiser was the only exception.

"But you... you are the latter."

Kaiser's eyes grew cold as he looked at Pan-Dora.

"The price of wielding you... is to constantly experience one's own death, isn't it?"

Unlike the moody and unpredictable Ser-Veresta,

Pan-Dora was cruel.

Its personality was nothing short of malicious.

It loved seeing its wielder suffer.

It loved forcing them to taste the horror of death.

Every night—

Whoever wielded Pan-Dora would experience their own death in their dreams.

And it would never be the same death twice.

Illness. Accidents. Starvation. Freezing. Suicide. Murder.

Pan-Dora would craft new deaths every night—

A never-ending nightmare.

But the worst part was—

When the wielder woke up, they would forget the dream.

Yet—

The terror, the pain, the sensation of dying would remain.

A fragment of horror would linger—slowly eroding their sanity.

This was why no one had been able to use Pan-Dora for long.

The last wielder before Claudia had lasted only three days before giving up.

That was how monstrous this price was.

Yet—

Claudia had endured this for years.

For years, she had used Pan-Dora.

For years, she had suffered its unending torment.

By now—

She must have experienced over a thousand different deaths.

And if nothing changed—

She would continue to suffer.

But—

"Too bad for you."

Kaiser's voice turned cold—colder than it had ever been.

"This girl has helped me—so I will return the favor."

He commanded the Orga Lux in his grip.

"From this moment on—you will never make her suffer again."

"Not only that—you will repay her for everything you have done."

"The dreams she experiences from now on... will be as joyful as the nightmares were cruel."

"Do you hear me?"

As he spoke—

The golden inscriptions upon his hand flared to life—

Releasing a pulse of divine authority.

—

For the first time—

Pan-Dora trembled.

It shook in his grasp—

As if it had been struck by terror itself.

It knew.

It understood.

Kaiser was not someone it could defy.

Like a lowly servant kneeling before a King,

Pan-Dora radiated an overwhelming sense of fear.

It dared not resist.

Even though Kaiser had not claimed ownership over it—

The moment he touched Pan-Dora—he had gained absolute control.

If he willed it, he could reduce Pan-Dora to dust in an instant—

Banish its consciousness into eternal oblivion.

That was the true tyranny of his Authority.

Even a weapon that glimpsed the future could not escape his dominion.

—

Seeing this, Kaiser smirked.

"Good."

He returned Pan-Dora to Claudia's side, tucking it back under her blanket.

Then, he turned his gaze toward her sleeping face.

And in that moment—he saw it.

For the first time—

Claudia's anguished expression had vanished.

Her brows had relaxed.

The pain on her face was gone.

And in its place—

A genuine smile.

It was unlike any smile she had shown before.

Because—

Claudia always smiled.

But her smiles were never real.

They were masks—

A polite facade—

A calculated deception.

Perhaps only Kaiser, who knew her original story, understood just how much sorrow this girl truly carried.

And how tragic her dream really was.

He stared at her for a long moment—

Then whispered:

"I hope you find redemption."

Leaving behind those words, Kaiser silently left the room.

Following the same path he came—he departed.

—

Time Moved Forward

Unknowingly—

More than a week had passed since Kaiser obtained Ser-Veresta and gained access to a stable growth method.

During this time—he successfully applied for a new dorm, upgrading to a spacious private room.

And with that—he settled into a regular routine.

Every morning—

He would wake before dawn, head outside, and train.

Be it running or sword practice—he needed to adapt to his growing strength.

Ever since he gained power, he felt more energetic than ever—

His old laziness had vanished.

He wanted to move.

He wanted to grow.

His training lasted until class began.

Then, he would attend lectures.

Normally—

Kaiser hated schoolwork.

But this world was different.

The Inertia had changed everything—

From technology to history to science—

And Kaiser found himself curious about it all.

Of course—

He wasn't worried about wasting time.

His growth required no effort.

His physical stats increased simply by absorbing Manadyte.

His combat skills required zero training, since his Authority automatically gave him mastery.

Even Ser-Veresta—he had fully mastered it from day one.

He had no need to train or refine his abilities.

Yet—his power continued to rise.

If anyone else saw this, they'd call it cheating.

—

A week later—

The waiting period ended.

Finally able to absorb more Manadyte, Kaiser wasted no time—

Rushing straight to the underground storage.

And when he emerged—

His Prana surged.

His aura intensified.

"Progress feels amazing."

Walking back to his dorm—his mood was exceptionally good.

But then—

"BOOM!"

A loud explosion echoed through the air.

Kaiser froze.

"An explosion...?"

He turned his gaze toward the source.

And then—he realized.

It was coming from—

The direction of the girls' dormitory.

—

"What the hell is happening over there?"

Chapter 23: [Blazing Star Swordsman]

"What's going on?"

"That explosion was massive—was it a duel?"

"Who the hell is fighting to cause such destruction?"

"No clue, but if it's this intense, it has to be a Page One battle."

"Let's check it out!"

"If a Page One is fighting, missing it would be a crime!"

Conversations like these rippled through Seidoukan Academy as students flocked toward the girls' dormitory, drawn by the deafening explosion.

Kaiser, too, watched the billowing flames in the distance, observing the ongoing destruction.

Then, as if realizing something, he chuckled.

"So, it's finally happening."

Muttering under his breath, Kaiser turned and followed the crowds heading toward the site of the battle.

—

As he walked, many students recognized him.

"Isn't that [Blazing Star Swordsman]?"

"The one who's been gaining all the hype lately?"

"Yeah, it's him..."

The whispers spread.

—[Blazing Star Swordsman].

This was the title that had been bestowed upon Kaiser after his rise to Rank #13.

In Asterisk, prominent duelists all had titles—it was commonplace.

Toudou Kirin was known as [Keen-Edged Tempest],

Claudia Enfield was called [Commander of a Thousand Visions].

Often, these titles became more famous than their real names.

Now, Kaiser had been granted the same honor.

The reason?

It was simple.

"A swordsman whose blade flickers like a star in the heatwave."

That was the most memorable image from his Official Ranking Battle.

Thus—[Blazing Star Swordsman] was born.

—

Ignoring the murmurs, Kaiser approached the scene.

—

The Duel

A large crowd had already gathered near the girls' dormitory.

Because—

A duel was underway.

And the two combatants were—

One: A girl with long, flowing rose-colored hair, radiating a powerful, noble aura.

Kaiser immediately recalled her profile.

"Julis-Alexia von Riessfeld."

High School Division, Year 1.

Member of the Page One—Rank #5.

Title: [Glühen Rose]—**Witch of Resplendent Flames**

At that moment, she stood in the battlefield, her expression flustered yet furious,

her entire body engulfed in swirling Prana,

forming countless embers that danced around her.

As she unleashed her power, the Mana in the air reacted violently,

igniting into flames that coalesced into spear-like projectiles.

Then—

With a flick of her wrist, she launched them toward her opponent.

Kaiser watched with genuine interest.

"This is my first time seeing a Strega in action, huh?"

In the world of Asterisk, some Genestella were born with the ability to directly manipulate Mana—producing phenomena that defied logic.

Males were called "Dante."

Females were called "Strega."

These individuals possessed abilities akin to Orga Lux users.

And Julis was one such Strega—

A blazing witch who commanded flames.

The explosions earlier had all been caused by her attacks.

But—who was her opponent?

Kaiser turned his gaze.

—

Two: A boy with messy black-purple hair and a relaxed, lazy demeanor.

He looked unremarkable.

The kind of person no one would remember at first glance.

However—

Right now, he was being relentlessly bombarded by Julis' flaming spears.

His usual loose expression was replaced with visible distress.

Scrambling across the battlefield, he desperately dodged, barely avoiding the blazing projectiles that detonated all around him.

Each explosion erupted like blossoming flames, scorching the air in a violent inferno.

The boy was forced to evade constantly, unable to counterattack, looking exceptionally helpless.

—

"Who is that guy?"

"No clue. Never seen him before."

"He's not in the Named Charts."

"So, he's unranked?"

"Damn, I thought the one fighting Julis would be a Page One member or at least a high-ranked student..."

"An unranked guy, fighting the Witch of Resplendent Flames? That takes guts."

"Still, even if he looks pathetic, he's dodging all her attacks."

"Could he be another [Blazing Star Swordsman]?"

"Doubt it..."

The spectators chattered excitedly, some even comparing the boy to Kaiser.

Kaiser merely shrugged.

"That guy and I are nothing alike."

"I was actually weak when I fought. He's just playing dumb."

Even though this was Kaiser's first time seeing him—

He immediately identified him.

This boy was not a Seidoukan student.

At least, not before today.

He was a transfer student—a special admission.

Someone destined to attract attention.

Because he was none other than—

"Amagiri Ayato."

Kaiser muttered his name softly.

Then, he smirked.

"The original protagonist has finally arrived."

—

The Reason for the Duel

If Kaiser remembered correctly—

This entire fight started because Ayato accidentally trespassed into the girls' dormitory.

More specifically—

He had somehow ended up in Julis' room.

Thus—

She immediately labeled him a pervert and attacked him on sight.

And that—

Was how the battle began.

As the battle escalated, Julis grew frustrated.

Ayato's constant dodging was irritating her.

Her attacks became stronger—faster—more destructive.

Kaiser considered intervening.

But—

"Hmm?"

Something caught his attention.

In the corner of the crowd, a familiar figure stood hidden in the shadows.

A girl with silver hair, attempting to blend in.

"Toudou Kirin?"

Kaiser blinked in surprise.

"What is she doing here?"

She was obviously trying to avoid attention.

Considering how Rank 13 had drawn so many eyes—

If Rank 1 was spotted, it would cause a riot.

Kaiser didn't expect to see her here.

But—

Before he could decide whether to approach her,

Kirin suddenly moved.

Her gaze sharpened—

She whipped her head toward a specific direction.

Following her line of sight, Kaiser turned—

And saw it.

A streak of light.

A projectile.

A Mana-infused arrow tore through the air, traveling at supersonic speed—targeting Julis.

"Danger!"

Ayato's eyes widened as he shouted.

At the same time—

Kirin moved.

With blinding speed, she rushed forward, her movement outpacing the incoming arrow.

In an instant, she arrived in front of Julis.

—

"Clang!"

She drew her sword—

And deflected the arrow.

"What?!"

Julis stood frozen, confused by what just happened.

Kirin turned toward her, about to speak—

But—

Another arrow came flying.

Faster.

More lethal.

Before Kirin could react—

A different figure stepped forward.

"Clang!"

A pure-white blade slashed through the air—

Severing the arrow mid-flight.

—

The one who stopped it—

Was Kaiser.

Chapter 24: Protagonist Behavior (LOL)

"Kaiser-senpai?"

Toudou Kirin froze in surprise as she saw Kaiser standing before her.

"It's you?"

Julis-Alexia von Riessfeld also noticed him, blinking in astonishment.

The gathered spectators exchanged glances before murmuring among themselves.

"It's [Keen-Edged Tempest] and [Blazing Star Swordsman]...!"

"They're here too?"

"Wait... was that just now—"

"An ambush?"

The discussions grew louder.

"Are you both alright?"

At that moment, Amagiri Ayato rushed over, his face full of concern—

As if those two arrows had anything to do with him.

Kaiser gave him a brief glance before turning to Kirin.

"You okay?"

"I-I'm fine." Kirin nodded quickly, bowing in gratitude. "Thank you, Senpai, for saving me just now."

However—

Kaiser didn't accept the thanks.

"Even if I hadn't stepped in, you would've reacted in time."

He retracted Ser-Veresta. "I probably just overreacted."

In retrospect—

An arrow wasn't enough to threaten the Rank #1 of Seidoukan Academy.

Yet, before he had time to think—his body had moved on its own.

Realizing this, Kaiser could only shrug in self-mockery.

"N-No, that's not true... Ah! Right!"

Kirin quickly waved her hands, then turned to Julis, her voice timid.

"Senpai, are you alright?"

Julis finally snapped back to reality.

"I'm fine."

She looked at Kirin—then at Kaiser.

After a brief pause, she sighed and spoke seriously.

"Looks like I owe you both a debt of gratitude."

With unexpected sincerity, Julis slightly bowed to them as thanks.

"N-No need!"

Kirin, clearly shy, quickly shook her head.

"You should be thanking Kirin. I didn't do much."

Kaiser also had no intention of taking credit.

He casually stepped aside, avoiding her bow.

In truth—Kaiser hadn't expected things to unfold this way.

In the original story, this never happened.

Kirin wasn't here.

Kaiser wasn't here.

The one who saved Julis was actually—Amagiri Ayato.

This was his scene.

Yet—now that Kirin had stepped in, the timeline had changed.

Kaiser found himself thinking—

"Looks like the butterfly effect is finally taking shape."

As Kaiser pondered, Kirin shuffled in place, clearly uneasy.

Julis, however, remained serious.

"Regardless, you both saved me. I won't forget this favor."

She then turned away—

And glared at Ayato.

"And as for you—the duel isn't over yet!"

Ayato's face twisted into a grimace.

"Uhh... Can't we just let this go?"

He pleaded.

He had no desire to fight Julis again.

After all—facing her was like dodging a walking flamethrower.

If this continued—he would have no choice but to unleash his sealed power.

"No chance!"

Julis was not letting him off the hook.

"You're lucky I'm not handing you over to the disciplinary committee. If you refuse to duel me—don't blame me for reporting you!"

The implication was clear—

If he didn't fight, she would report him as a pervert who broke into the girls' dormitory.

And once that label stuck—

Amagiri Ayato would forever be known as "The Transfer Student Pervert."

Even Kaiser wouldn't dare touch that title.

"I..."

Ayato opened his mouth, wanting to protest.

But—seeing Julis' merciless gaze, he knew he had no escape.

"U-Umm... Let's all calm down...?"

Kirin tried to mediate, looking flustered.

Of course—

She was not the best person to handle such situations.

As for Kaiser?

He was just enjoying the show.

"How about we stop crowding here, first?"

A playful voice cut in, breaking the tension.

"After all, you're all highly ranked students. If you keep standing around, more and more spectators will gather."

With graceful charm, Claudia Enfield arrived on the scene.

Instantly—

The focus shifted to her.

"Claudia!"

"P-President...!"

Both Julis and Kirin reacted.

One scowled, clearly annoyed.

The other panicked, hurriedly bowing in respect.

As for Kaiser—he subtly observed Claudia’s expression.

At first glance—

She looked no different from before.

Her face still bore her usual composed smile.

He saw no abnormalities.

This made him frown internally.

"It’s been a while since that night... I wonder if she’s noticed anything."

However—

Claudia’s expression was too perfect.

Kaiser couldn’t tell if Pan-Dora had truly obeyed him—or if it was merely pretending.

"You are...?"

Ayato, the only one who hadn’t met Claudia, asked hesitantly.

He had clearly been stunned by her beauty.

Claudia smiled elegantly.

"Hello, Amagiri Ayato-kun."

She spoke as if they were old acquaintances.

"I am Claudia Enfield—Seidoukan Academy's Student Council President, more or less."

"Claudia."

Julis cut in, her tone unfriendly.

"What are you doing here? Trying to stop my duel?"

"By the academy's rules, as long as both parties consent, no one can interfere with a duel."

Claudia remained smiling.

"But since things seem to have gotten out of hand—with both Kirin and Kaiser stepping in—perhaps it's best to call it off?"

Julis deeply frowned, but did not object.

Seeing this, Ayato breathed a sigh of relief.

"That said..."

Ayato's face turned serious.

"That was an ambush, wasn't it? Shouldn't we do something about it?"

The focus shifted to the previous attack.

Claudia nodded.

"Of course. I'll have the disciplinary committee investigate immediately."

She then turned to Kaiser and Kirin.

"You two were the first to notice. Did you see the attacker?"

Kaiser spoke first.

"I didn't see them. I only reacted because I noticed Kirin's unusual movement."

Immediately—all eyes turned to Kirin.

"U-Umm..."

Kirin froze.

Surrounded by high-ranking seniors, she shrank back, voice small and nervous.

"I-I just saw someone by that building's window, aiming a crossbow-style Lux. They were wearing a black robe, so I couldn't see their face..."

The window was far away—no one else had noticed anything.

Hearing this, Claudia blinked in surprise.

"Kirin, you have sharp eyes."

"I-I've always had good eyesight..." Kirin stammered.

"My family even says I see weird things sometimes."

Her flustered innocence made her look adorable.

The tension lightened—several people even smiled at her reaction.

At that moment—

Ayato twitched.

For a split second, he lifted his hand—

Then quickly lowered it.

Kaiser's face twitched.

"Wait. Wait. Wait."

"Did this guy just try to pull a 'headpat' on Kirin?!"

AYATO, STOP YOUR HAREM PROTAGONIST BEHAVIOR.

(´`□´)┌┐

Chapter 25: An Interesting Little Girl

In the end, the ambush incident faded into nothingness.

The culprit's identity remained unknown, and their methods were nothing special. Even with Claudia calling in the Disciplinary Committee to investigate, there was little hope of uncovering any evidence.

Besides, in Asterisk, such incidents weren't uncommon. Any Festa competitor with a reputation was bound to attract rivals or ill-intentioned schemers looking for an advantage. Even Julis herself wasn't particularly bothered—she simply acknowledged Kaiser and Kirin Toudou for their help before letting the matter drop.

As a result, Ayato Amagiri barging into her room was also temporarily brushed aside, leaving him with a sense of relief.

With the drama concluded and no further entertainment to witness, the gathering crowd began to disperse.

Of course, many had wanted to stay longer—after all, Kirin Toudou, the first-ranked "Keen-Edged Tempest", the second-ranked "Commander of a Thousand Visions", Julis, the fifth-ranked "Glühen Rose", and Kaiser, the thirteenth-ranked "Blazing Star Swordsman", who was rumored to possess the strength of a Page One, were all present. If they lingered a little longer, they might witness something truly interesting.

However, Kaiser and the others had no interest in entertaining spectators. Under Claudia's direction, they promptly disbanded.

"W-Well then, I'll take my leave!"

Kirin was the first to excuse herself, practically fleeing as if unable to stand another moment there.

Julis shot Ayato one last glare before storming back to the girls' dormitory, still fuming.

"Thanks for helping me out back there, Student Council President," Ayato said with a wry smile, offering his gratitude to Claudia.

"It was nothing, really. No need to thank me." Claudia chuckled, covering her mouth gracefully. "I've already contacted your roommate—he'll be here soon to take you back, so you won't accidentally wander into any... strange places again."

"...Thanks."

Ayato let out a dry laugh, clearly embarrassed.

Meanwhile, seeing that there was nothing left to watch, Kaiser prepared to leave.

"I'm heading off. See you around."

With a casual wave, Kaiser turned to go.

At that moment, however, he felt a strong gaze pressing against his back.

He immediately turned around.

"Is something wrong, Kaiser?"

The sight that greeted him was Claudia, looking as composed as ever, her expression filled with mild curiosity.

"...No, it's nothing."

Kaiser scratched his face, confirming that Claudia seemed the same as always—no hint of anything unusual. Yet, for some reason, a strange feeling lingered as he walked away.

Unbeknownst to him, the moment he left, Claudia's usual gentle smile faded into something far more complicated.

"Student Council President?"

Ayato noticed her shift in expression and hesitated before calling out.

"Ah, forgive me."

Claudia snapped out of her thoughts, returning to her usual self. With a calm smile, she looked at Ayato. "You had something you wanted to talk to me about, didn't you?"

"...Yes."

After a brief silence, Ayato nodded.

"It's about my sister."

"I see."

Claudia, unsurprised, simply nodded in understanding. "This isn't the best place to discuss such matters. Let's continue this at the Student Council Office."

Ayato agreed without hesitation.

Elsewhere...

After leaving the girls' dormitory, Kaiser walked along the path for a while before noticing someone waiting ahead.

"Kaiser-senpai!"

Standing in the middle of the road was Kirin Toudou. Seeing him approach, she let out a visible sigh of relief.

"Were you waiting for me?"

Kaiser found her expressions almost too transparent—her emotions were written all over her face. It was amusing in its own way.

"Y-Yes."

Kirin, completely unaware of his thoughts, suddenly looked a little fidgety. Lowering her voice, she said softly, "You helped me earlier... I wanted to thank you in person."

"I didn't expect you to be so serious about this sort of thing."

Kaiser chuckled.

"But didn't I already say it? That level of an attack was nothing to you. Even if I hadn't stepped in, you could've handled it yourself."

"...Even so, I still wanted to thank you, Kaiser-senpai."

Kirin lifted her gaze slightly to look at him—only to immediately avert her eyes again, as if embarrassed. In a hesitant tone, she murmured:

"Back then... choosing to ignore the situation would have been more beneficial for you, right?"

At first, Kaiser didn't quite understand what she meant.

Then, realization dawned.

"You mean, if I hadn't interfered, you might've been injured. And if you were injured, it would put you at a disadvantage the next time I challenged you?"

He saw right through Kirin's thoughts.

"I-I'm sorry!"

Kirin hurriedly apologized, lowering her head in shame. "I know it was a terrible thought to have..."

"It's not that bad."

Kaiser wasn't offended in the slightest. Shaking his head, he replied lightly:

"In the end, I am a challenger looking to take your spot. It's only natural for you to think things through carefully."

"In this city, isn't that just how things work? Almost everyone here is a competitor. There's no shortage of people willing to do whatever it takes to climb the ranks. The fact that someone just tried to ambush Julis proves that point."

"You're still young. Being cautious is the right mindset. If you were too naive, that would be the real danger."

As he spoke, his gaze naturally drifted downward.

Despite wearing a standard Seidoukan Academy uniform, Kirin's figure was... well, impressive. It almost seemed like the fabric was struggling to hold things in place.

...Seriously, how was that even possible?

Oblivious to the questionable thoughts that had flashed through Kaiser's mind, Kirin finally smiled for the first time.

"Kaiser-senpai, you're really a good person."

And just like that, she handed him a Good Guy Card.

Kaiser wanted to object.

Whether he was a "good person" or not was debatable, but one thing was certain—Kirin was a genuinely kind-hearted girl.

He wasn't just basing this on his knowledge of the original story.

It was her actions that proved it.

As he had said before—

In this city, almost everyone was a competitor.

The logic Kirin had applied to Kaiser also applied to herself.

Julis was the fifth-ranked student at Seidoukan Academy, meaning she was only a few ranks away from first place. She was a potential threat to Kirin's ranking at any moment.

Under such circumstances, the most advantageous move for Kirin would have been to do nothing.

Yet the moment she saw someone trying to ambush Julis, she stepped in without hesitation.

Despite being timid, despite disliking the spotlight, despite having no obligation to get involved.

Despite having an uncle who treated her as nothing more than a tool, someone who would certainly disapprove of unnecessary risks.

She still made the choice to help.

That alone proved just how kind-hearted she was.

Compared to Kirin, Kaiser certainly didn't consider himself a good person.

But—

Seeing Kirin's timid smile, Kaiser suddenly felt like it didn't matter.

"You have a really cute smile."

Kaiser spoke sincerely. "You should smile more often."

Kirin clearly wasn't expecting that.

For a moment, she froze.

Then—

Her face turned bright red.

"C-Cute? T-There's no such thing!"

Now completely flustered, she began stammering uncontrollably.

Moments later, unable to handle the embarrassment, she bowed deeply—so forcefully that even her uniform shifted slightly.

Before Kaiser could respond—

Kirin ran off in a panic.

Watching her retreating figure, Kaiser chuckled.

"She really is an interesting little girl."