

おまえを
オタクに
してやるから、
俺をリア充に
してくれ！

Omae wo Ota
shiteyaru kara
Ore wo Riaru
chome ni ku

村上凛

Rin Murakami

4



ファンタジア文庫

Omae o Otaku ni Shiteyaru kara, Ore o Riajuu
ni Shitekure!

vol.4

by Murakami Rin

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Chapter 1

The summer vacation is over, and the second semester started. After the lessons, I'm going to return a book I took on vacations. I noticed Hasegawa is taking some book at the counter.

"A, Hasegawa!"

"Kashiwada-kun."

I met Hasegawa on the first day of the semester. I guess, is started from a good day.

"Are you taking a book, too?"

"No, I'm returning..."

"Eh... What is it?" – Hasegawa surprised seeing the book I bring to return. It was a light novel that I took during the summer vacation. At first, I thought I'm in trouble, Hasegawa understood I'm an otaku, but then I showed the book to Hasegawa.

"I didn't tell about this, but I like these things."

It was a big stake. That light novel has an otaku-ish cover, so you can immediately understand that I'm an otaku looking at the cover. Before the first semester, I tried to evade the fact I'm an otaku from revealing. However, right now I have a doubt regarding Hasegawa, – could it be that she is an otaku, like me?

On the day of the Fireworks Festival, Hasegawa uttered a character's name looking at the pizza box with the picture of it on. That anime was a deep-night anime for the otaku, and Hasegawa knew it. I thought about this, but in the end, I reached the conclusion that Hasegawa is not an otaku. Therefore, I decided to make a coming-out, and now it a good time for this.

I'm trying to look at her face. Even if I decided to do this, my fear won't vanish. What if she is not an otaku, and she would understand who I am... But my heart was reassured in the moment I saw her face. She kindly smiled looking at me.

“Kashiwada-kun, so we are comrades! I hid it too, but I like manga, light novels, and anime. I’m an otaku, too.”

I was happy hearing that! I don’t have to hide it anymore! I can show myself as is because the person I’m in love shares my interests.

“Kashiwada-kun, you’ve surprised me, I would never think you are an otaku. You had been concealing it well.” I become happier hearing these words. Yet, she had been hiding it even skilfully.

“I can say it to you too, I never noticed you’re an otaku.”

“I’m happy we are sharing the same interest, Kashiwada-kun.”

“Eh? Really? Me too! I wanted to befriend with you ever since!” – I said too much because I was emotional. Hasegawa looks at me with a strange look.

“Because... I... I love you, Hasegawa!” – my voice trembled, and my fingers made a fist. I looked down because I was afraid to look at her. But the moment later, my fist relaxed, as if it was covered with something soft and warm.

“Thank you, I like you too, Kashiwada-kun.” – Hasegawa kindly grasped my hand and looks at my face with a kind smile.

“Thank you, thank you! I’m sure we will be a nice couple! We already have a common interest!”

“Yes, I agree. Let’s talk about it from now on!”

Hasegawa smiled hearing my excited phrase. I can’t believe we are a couple of otakus... Ah, I’m the happiest man in the world...

“Naoki?! You can’t just sleep so much, even it’s a vacation now! It’s afternoon already!”

I heard that familiar voice, and noticed that I’m in my bed. A thin bed sheet that covered me, was instantly removed.

“Eh?”

I got up in the bed and saw my little sister Akari pulling the bed sheet and stares at me.

“Just a... dream...”

That is why I saw such a convenience progression from the middle. It was a great dream, but now I'm depressed.

“What?! Did you saw a wet dream?!” – Akari leaned towards me.

“Eh? No!”

“The vacation ends soon, so you should get used to waking up earlier!” – Akari left my room with resent in her voice. Why would she enter my room such easily, to begin with?

Only four days of the summer vacation left after the Fireworks Festival. I had been immersed in my thoughts at home and at work all the time. Of course, I had been thinking about strange things happened on the festival. First, drunk Koigasaki told me that Sakurai-san likes me. Second, on the way to the station we saw Suzuki with a girl in yukata. And the third, and the most important, Hasegawa reacted to the character on the pizza box.

Why did she know the character from a deep-night anime? Was it a coincidence that she knew her name? Or she is a hidden otaku? Those two possibilities are the most realistic. I hope the second is true, because Hasegawa would be the same type of a human in that case. There is no happier to me to be able to speak about the same interests. I had been thinking about that so such I had that dream.

I should find out as quick as possible, is she an otaku or not. If I would get to know she is, I will make a coming-out, like I did in my dream in order to get closer to her. I bet things won't go that easy as they were in the dream, but my chances would increase for sure.

I spent the rest of the vacations with uneasy feelings before entering the second semester.

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September has come, and the long-awaited second semester started. I decided to motivate myself and woke up earlier, and then I went to fix up my hair.

“Oh, the school again... I'm feeling heavy...” – Akari is taking breakfast with a bed hair.

“Akari, you should take an example from your brother.”

“Naoki, you’re earlier than usual, aren’t you?” – I heard her lazy voice from behind while standing in front of the washstand mirror.

“The new semester begins today! You have to encourage yourself!” – I completed working on my hair and smiled to Akari.

“Your morning mood make me feel sick. You would always say you don’t want to go to school again when a vacation is over. Did you eat something strange?” – Akari looked at me with suspicious.

“Aren’t you anticipating meeting with a girlfriend in the school?” – she said like provoking me.

“A girlfriend?!” – I asked Akari’s words.

“Didn’t you go to a date with a girl on the vacation?”

“Well, I did, but she’s not my girlfriend...”

It’s the time to leave from home, so I took my bag.

“Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.”

“I wish you the jovial boy trapped into a ditch.”

I heard a refreshing phrase from Akari but decided not to bother myself and closed the door, heading to the entrance. Why she is so unhappy when I’m in good mood? Why she wishes a bad luck to her brother?..

It has been a month since I had used this overflowing train, but I don’t feel stuffy now. I went to the school in high spirit.

I want to meet Hasegawa already.

I want to check whether she is an otaku. On the road to the school, I noticed a familiar figure. I hesitated for a moment, but today I feel different.

“Hi, Koigasaki!”

I would think about surrounding eyes and don’t speak to her, but I managed to do it today.

“...?!”

The second later, my good mood vanished.

“What is happened to your face?”

Koigasaki has her makeup and hairstyle as always, but the shadows under her eyes she couldn't hide completely, and her face color is terrible. Is she going to die?..

“Don't scream in the morning. It buzzes in my head.”

“Did you have no sleep?”

This is rare to see Koigasaki so depressed. She has deadly face from the beginning of the semester!

“How could I sleep?..” – mumbled Koigasaki.

I finally grasped the reason why Koigasaki is depressed.

“Could it be this is because of Suzuki?”

“...”

Until now, I completely forgot about one simple fact.

“Ah, that girl... I see...”

Koigasaki and I surely saw the Koigasaki's bellowed person Suzuki along with a girl in yukata, and they were friendly. I was surprised back then, but more important for me thing (Hasegawa may be an otaku) made me forget that.

“Could it be that you didn't sleep because of that?”

“Of course...” – Koigasaki is walking unsteadily. Well, I guess, if I saw Hasegawa with her boyfriend, I would hang myself that very day.

However, one thought has been wandering in my head since the festival.

“I think she is Suzuki's older sister.”

“Eh?” – Koigasaki looks at me with round eyes.

“Sister?..”

We reached to the school, and continued our conversation at the shoe rack.

“Yes, Suzuki has the older sister. I don’t know her age or anything, but it’s hard to imagine Suzuki has a girlfriend, so that girl must be his sister.”

“But why would somebody go to a festival with a sister?” – she stares at me. She must be thinking I just said it for no reason. Of course, one can go to a festival with his brother or sister only if they are on good terms.

“Okay, then, what about this one?”

“Eh?”

Koigasaki put her phone in front of me. There was a “photo club” photograph fullscreen. In the photo I can recognize Suzuki, and... a cute girl. The fact Suzuki is taking a picture with a girl is strange itself, but there was another more suspicious thing in the photo.

“This is... The girl we saw at the festival... was a different girl?..”

I saw her for a moment, but she had a bright brown hair with two bulbs, and nice accessories, also her yukata and hairstyle were in a good match. I was surprised Suzuki was with a 3D-girl, but also I was surprised that she was very beautiful. However, this girl on the photo is not the girl we saw at the festival. She has a short bob cut and black hair, she wears glasses with black frame and sailor suit. A smart beauty style. If my assumption is right, Suzuki visited the Firework Festival with his sister. Who is this girl, then?

We came to the class, and talked at the door.

“Where did you get it?”

“I looked for girls among Suzuki’s friends, and found this picture there...”

I couldn’t believe my eyes, so I took her phone to see closer. They are doing “peace” sign, and I found “buddies” below. This handsome man on the left... is he really Suzuki? Well, it must be some photo club effect making his eyes look bigger, but this is Suzuki for sure. I remember these clothes, and there is his given name “Sou-chan” below.

“Suzuki-kun is popular, however, it’s not strange if he has a few female friends.” – mumbled Koigasaki and took her phone back. Two female-buddies for that women-hater Suzuki? That’s strange enough!

“But I don’t think he would go to a festival or take a photo with a friend. Things are different with a girlfriend, though. I don’t understand it!”

Which means, Suzuki has two girlfriends? No, that’s impossible even more. Suzuki is a sort of that guys.

“That’s enough! I don’t get a thing!” – Koigasaki snapped.

“Calm down, to start with...”

I’m confused too, but Koigasaki is nothing near with me. I can understand that, but...

“Hey, you. We agreed to help each other, so go confirm it from Suzuki-kun!”

“Eh?” – Koigasaki threw these words in me.

“It’s unfair I’m the only one who makes advice for you recently!”

“Huh?”

Well, that’s true she was helping me with Hasegawa, and I want to help her too, but... She glares at me severely. I understand she is in bad mood, but I think it’s not an attitude of the asking person.

“Oh, okay.”

I don’t like her attitude, but I want to make it clear for me too. How on the earth could he have two girlfriends? Where is the truth?

“But don’t tell him that because I’m worried or something, okay?”

“If I would!”

Koigasaki left me and entered the class in a bad mood.

I honestly thought Suzuki has no girlfriend.

I left my bag in the class and went to Suzuki’s class, B class. I thought to ask somebody about Suzuki, and my eyes met with some plain boy beside the front desk.

“Oh, Suzuki is here?”

“Suzuki, it’s for you!” – the boy called Suzuki. Suzuki noticed me and came to me.

“Long time to see, Kasshi! How are you?”

“Okay, I guess...”

Suzuki smiles as usual, with his carefree smile. I think, it would be difficult to ask...

“Say, did you get a girlfriend during the summer vacation?” – I asked directly.

“Eh?” – he hesitated for a while, but then...

“Oh, yes! I got one!” – he answered with a smile.

“Eh?” – I was going to panic. So he really visited the festival with his girlfriend?..

“I spend most of the vacation playing “photograph girlfriend” on my PSP!”

“Huh?” – he told me the name of the new game sold on this vacation.

“No, I’m not about that...”

“No? Ah, you meant the anime? Yeah, this season was full of cuties!”

“Hey, Suzuki... That’s a miss again. I meant a real 3D girlfriend.”

“3D? There is no way I could.” – he replied with a face, like, why am I asking something natural?

“Okay, but...”

I took out my phone and opened Mixi, clicked “friends overview” from his page, and found the photo that Koigasaki showed me recently – it was a somebody’s avatar. I went to that person’s page and opened the photo full-size.

“What is it, then?” – I demonstrated the photo of the black-haired bob cut cute girl with Suzuki.

“Euw... Where did you get from?.. Oh, Mixi?”

Suzuki wasn’t surprised, I would say he was rather disgusted.

“I found this photo in your friendslist.”

“Really? The sister set this as her avatar? Is she crazy?” – said Suzuki with displeased face.

The sister. He called her the sister.

“So this girl is your sister?”

“Yeah... The worst sister, I’ve been telling you about her all the time.”

“But she is a pretty girl! Besides, you guys are very close, you’re taking photos together!”

“Oh, please stop it! She used intimidation to force me to do this! She has received strange messages from men trying to pick up her, so I think she set this photo to stop that. It’s annoying me.”

I relaxed a little upon hearing that she is his sister. Okay, the next question.

“By the way, did you visited the fireworks festival?”

There is another one girlfriend-seeker girl, from the festival.

“What festival?”

“Oh, how was that...” – I forgot where it been.

“Edogawa! Did you visit that festival?”

“No, I didn’t.” – said Suzuki, and I completely relaxed.

“I see... Well, I figured that much...” – I clapped his shoulder.

I had to return because the next lesson is the opening ceremony in the gym.

“Thank you!” – I said and parted with Suzuki, and then returned to my class. He stood dazed, but I was relaxed. That man was somebody else, not Suzuki. Suzuki can’t have a girlfriend.

“Huh? Are you stupid? There is no way I could mistake Suzuki-kun for somebody else!”

After the opening ceremony, I called Koigasaki to stairs and told her everything I heard: the girl on the photo is the Suzuki’s sister, Suzuki said he can’t make a girlfriend, hence Koigasaki mistook Suzuki for somebody else. And this is what she replied to me.

I don’t like I did so much for her, but she called me stupid.

“Don’t call me stupid. Suzuki told he didn’t visit the festival!”

“That’s lie! It can’t be true. It was definitely Suzuki-kun, I’m sure!” – she said with a gloomy face and refuses to accept the reality.

“How could I, who loves Suzuki-kun more than anybody else, mistake him for another man?”

Koigasaki, I’m begging you, don’t say that words about love so loud, somebody might hear you.

“You can be self-confident or whatever, but you were drunk!”

“Even drunk, I couldn’t mistake Suzuki-kun! Also, you saw him too, right?”

“I saw... I could think I saw Suzuki only because you told me that, and I didn’t see him clearly.”

Even hearing that, Koigasaki still don’t believe it. Why is she so stubborn?

“Anyway, I have checked things with Suzuki, so please convince yourself. More important, I have a talk...”

I remembered other things for which I asked Koigasaki to talk with her alone. This is about Hasegawa might be an otaku, and that Koigasaki had told me Sakurai-san likes me. Koigasaki doesn’t know yet that Hasegawa might be an otaku, and I wanted to talk about a way to check it. Also, I wanted Koigasaki to clarify she said that Sakurai-san likes me.

“More important, you say?!”

However, seeing this reaction I understood that it’s wrong time for such questions. Koigasaki frowns at me again.

“Didn’t you deceive me about Suzuki just because you want my help?”

“Eh?”

Koigasaki hit me with these words.

“Do you doubt I fairly checked the things with Suzuki for your sake?”

“But I did see Suzuki-kun! It’s not my mistake! Good for you, you met Hasegawa twice during the vacation, you had the date with her, and you met her at the festival! Compare that with me, I saw Suzuki-kun only once, for a few seconds, and on the top of that I saw him with another woman!” – said

Koigasaki with anger.

“I’m helping you with your relationship so much! Why your relationship is progressing, and mine is struggling? It’s unfair!”

“Wha..? I believe I’m helping you too!”

I tagged with her to the cosplay party and to the summer Comiket, aiming to Koigasaki and Suzuki befriended. I believe I did what I could, so why is she unhappy?

“Why I’m not getting closer to Suzuki? Also, we got to know he has a girlfriend...” – she said with aggrieved voice and glaring at me again. She is blaming a wrong guy! I have something to reply to you, Koigasaki, I’m angry too!

However, at that moment...

“Oh, Momo-chan! And Ka...Kashiwada-kun!” – Sakurai-san passed by us.

“S-Sakurai-san?!” – I remembered what Koigasaki had told me about Sakurai-san’s feeling and I couldn’t hold myself. I have been trying to convince myself that it’s not a fact by any means, but I just can’t stop anticipating.

“Hello...” – I tried to greet her naturally, but what I did is the contrary. I’m concerning too much...

“Why are you talking here?”

“Oh, we... well...”

She must be feeling strange seeing us here. It seems she didn’t hear our conversation, so I can relax. However, it’s the worst time for her to come. If Koigasaki is annoyed this much...

“Long time no see, Azuki-chan~!”

“...?”

However, Koigasaki changed her attitude instantly and hugged Sakurai-san. I couldn’t believe own eyes. Is she the same Koigasaki who scorned me a moment earlier?

“Yes, we met at the pool last time.~”

They are hugging as if they didn't meet for ages. But hey, the pool was only two weeks ago, okay?

"Azuki-chan, let's talk inside the class, okay?"

"Eh? But Kashiwada-kun..."

Koigasaki took Sakurai-san's hand and they disappeared in a classroom. I left standing there. What is with this sudden change from me to Sakurai-san? Does she think I'm okay with this attitude? Sakurai-san noticed me, but Koigasaki just doesn't matter at all. Can I take it as an insult?

I did nothing she could possibly blame me for, so this is entirely she snapped her anger on me. Why is she so childish even here? Ah, I don't care anymore. I have no intent to help her anymore.

I returned to the class and sit on my seat, when Kiritani spoke to me.

"Oh, Kashiwada, you're tanned!"

"Oh? Ah..."

Probably, I got tanned at the Summer Comiket, but I can't say it.

"Kiritani, you're tanned badly!" – I changed the topic to evade answering where I tanned. Kiritani has dark skin since I met him, but I feel his skin is darker now.

"Well, yeah~! I went to a pool with my girlfriend, to the sea with my girlfriend, to a trip with my girlfriend."

"Oh, you must be tired. The reals annoy me."

So he wanted to boast when he started talking about his tan.

"Well, okay, I spent the summer vacation like one of the reals, but there is a guy who is far more to the reals than me."

Ew, he just said he is of the reals...

"Well, I guess there are plenty of boys who are closer than you."

"Hosokawa, there."

Kiritani looked at a close to the front seat at the wall, on the guy called

Hosokawa. Our seats are rear seats at the window, so we are quite far from him. All I know about that Hosokawa is that he's a member of the soccer club, has a good appearance, and he is our enemy.

"They say he did a lot of girls from our school and from other schools during the vacation.

"Eh?"

I looked at his face again. He looks like a sports club member, and he is nice to the girls from our class.

"He doesn't look that way, though."

"He must be popular, so girls are going closer to him."

"Oh, I get it. But it's not what you would call the reals, I think."

Our trivial talk was ended by chimes, and our teacher came in.

The homeroom is over, and the lessons successfully completed today. I noticed that I spoke with different guys, but I never spoke to Hasegawa. How about to invite her to come from the school together? And check whether she is an otaku then.

Hasegawa has been writing something in a class diary. I moved to her.

"Ah, Kashiwada-kun." – Hasegawa noticed me and spoke to me first. I don't think she would react this way when I was nearby in the first semester. I'm happy now. I can see her since the day of the festival a week ago. Even after the summer, she doesn't seem to be tanned, her skin is light as usual in contrast with her black hair.

"You're dug into the representative duties from the very start of the semester."

I didn't know how properly talk with her, so I started with her duties.

"Not at all, it's not that hard." – said Hasegawa with the same face, but she looks at me now.

"Do you have another work after this?"

"No, I'll take it to the teacher's office and that's all."

I wanted to help her if there some work left, though...

“I see... Well, then... If...”

“...?”

“If you don’t mind, can we return from the school together?” – I could say that because the classroom was almost empty.

“Eh?” – Hasegawa surprised.

“I don’t mind, of course.”

I don’t know what she thinks about, but she agreed, and that’s good. We then gathered all things, took the diary to the teacher’s room and we left the school. I asked her about a homework intending to lead the conversation to an otaku topic but failed due panic. I thought I have to do this until we reach the station.

“Say, did you watch TV during the summer vacation?” – I changed the topic to TV. I intended to hear about whether she watched anime.

“A TV? I wouldn’t say I watched it too much. Morning news and other shows a couple times a week. In the deep night.”

“In a deep night?!” – I asked too loud, and Hasegawa surprised.

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

You know, if somebody tells he watches TV in deep night, it’s a deep night anime, right?

“Yeah, I had been going to sleep later than I would during the school, and I sometimes watch TV...”

“I see! Could it be you watched a...” – I was going to say “anime”, but...

“Yes, Ame Talk! Kashiwada-kun, so you watched it too?”

...

“Ah, yes, I’m watching it from time to time!”

Crap, it was dangerous! So she meant that one!

“Ah, but you said you watched TV few times a week, had you been watching something else?”

Ame Talk goes only one time in a week. The other shows are ani...

“Yes, the other are...” – and Hasegawa told me three comedy shows. Well, I know that she likes comedies since when I visited video rental service, but it’s more serious than I expected.

“I see... Anything else?”

“Else... Well, a variety show I liked is ended recently, so that’s all I watching regularly.”

“I meant, do you watch something apart from comedy shows?”

“Let me think... Only morning news, I guess. I have the mother and the little sister, so I may watch something with them.”

“Oh, I see.”

In other words, she doesn’t watch anime at all. It’s bad, but I think I can’t show her I’m sad.

“You’re loving comedies so much.” – I replied with a smile.

“It was unexpected, that you love them.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Why did you start watching it, was there any special reason?”

“I often heard other girls speaking about comedies...”

“Eh? Really?”

I was so happy I couldn’t ignore that.

“Was that the girls in our class?”

“No, in my junior high. Girls nearby were very joyful talking about comedy shows, so it happened I took an interest in the shows.”

“I see...~”

“Today I think I just wanted to speak with them.”

“Oh, I got it.”

After that I wanted to ask could Hasegawa talk to that girls or not, but I her

sad face led me to the certain conclusion, and I stopped.

“The girls in our class talk about comedy shows from time to time, so I watch them for studying purpose. Of course, one of the reasons is that I like those shows.”

...Study?! So Hasegawa watched comedy shows to enter a class group! What a lovely reason! I won't cry, I won't cry...

“Kashiwada-kun? Aren't your eyes wet?”

“No, it only looks like that, it only dust in my eye...”

Her revelation about the true reasons made me gloomy, I'm sorry for her... But I did not expect I would actually cry!

“By the way, Hasegawa, did you come home well after the festival?” – I suddenly remembered the fireworks day and asked this.

The problem was Hasegawa, Koigasaki, and Sasagawa reached the station together, but the ticket blinked red, – one of the girls had an insufficient balance on her Suica fare card. The station was crowded, so they parted at that point. I thought it's late and I should see Hasegawa off, but I was so stupid I parted with her too. That night, I thought to write Hasegawa a gratitude email for her coming, but I was too tired by the crowd I felt asleep while writing the message. Next morning, I regretted. I thought it would be strange to send an email on the next day so I gave up after some struggling.

“Yes, there was no problems.”

“I see! Thank you for coming to the festival.”

“Eh?” – she looks surprised hearing it from me.

“That's me who has to thank you.”

“Eh?”

“Thank you for inviting me. I enjoyed being there.” – she said with joy in her voice. She might be thanking me out of consideration, but I don't think Hasegawa would lie here. Also, she seemed happy back then. She had been smiling when she spoke with Koigasaki and Sasagawa. Moreover, she had completely merged with the classmates Koigasaki and Hasegawa. I was

immersed in own deeps, so I didn't pay her enough attention, yet she merged with them without my help. I think, she would enter a class group eventually.

"I'm that way."

"Sure, take care!"

We came to the station, so Hasegawa has to walk down in the subway. Just now, I understood that I didn't satisfy the objective of determining whether Hasegawa is an otaku or not. Well, it's not good to extort it, and I thought I could ask her tomorrow, for example.

I had a shift on the work this evening, so I took a meal at my home and head to work. When I reached the workplace and opened the staff room...

"Good evening! Oh..." – I saw Yamamoto-san, who was changing his clothes.

"Oh, Kashiwada-kun, hi."

"Are you just finished your shift?"

Yamamoto-san finished buttoning his suit and put his arm into his jacket's sleeve. He wore a suit today, not usual clothes. Why? – I wondered.

"Yes, I'm going to an interview from here."

"An interview?"

Could it be he will quit this job and start working somewhere else? In this case, my only relief will be gone... I worried for a moment.

"Yes, I'm in search of work now."

"Oh, I see."

I see... He is just searching a work... I relaxed for a second, but if he would find a work in a company, he will have to quit this work. That's sad.

He is in search of work means Yamamoto-san is a college student... I thought he is past his 25, at least. I didn't even know what Yamamoto-san is doing for a living. All we talked about was smack talks, about me, about his sister...

"Except this slump, I would be fine, though... Oh, that's bad! I'm going to late! I'm sorry, we'll talk the next time!"

“Not at all, good luck at the interview!”

Yamamoto-san promptly packed his things and ran out of the room. I started preparing for going to the shift.

“Yamamoto-san has been wearing a suit today!~ Kato-san, have you seen it? His suit is not becoming at all! It tasteless, isn't it?”

Our workplace idol (smile) Watanabe-san and the flashy Kato-sempai are talking in the kitchen. Why am I so frequently getting shifts at the same time with them? It annoys me. Watanabe-san is clapping Kato's arm saying it's outrageous. It seems she bothers Kato.

“However, Yamamoto-san is not a college student, he is a part-timer. I wonder why he didn't find a job during his college...”

“Eh?” – Watanabe-san surprised hearing this.

“Oh, really? I was sure he's a student.” – Watanabe-san thought the same as me.

“He told me that he's not going to a college anymore. By the way, it seems he is 23 already, it's not a student's age, don't you think? But you know, usually students are looking for a job before graduation, I mean serious students. He must be playing around too much.”

“Would you please stop it, Kato-san! Yamamoto-san is a type of a man who could do that!”

I completely agreed with Watanabe-san. Cut your crap, Kato. Yamamoto-san is a diligent person! There must be some circumstances. The next time I meet him, I should ask about his sister, and about himself as far as I can.

At 6:00 PM my shift was over, and I returned home.

After the dinner, I returned to my room and turned on PC. I turned on my iTunes music to abstract away from the reality, put on earphones, and started checking my usual image boards, NicoNico top videos, favorite artists at Pixiv, but there were no interesting updates. Then, I remembered something and logged into my Mixi.

I'm not logging to the Mixi too much, but I remembered Koigasaki's attitude

today, and I thought she might have posted new thoughts. She has been writing a lot of thoughts after the Summer Comiket. Her messages were something like [Going to Shibuya with Miki!], [I just bought a bracelet because it was cheap! *star* Cute~ (and the photo of the bracelet below)] [My family grows! Here is it, Kokoa-chan!~ (a dog in the photo below) (it seems she got a dog. What a stupid name)].

Well, there was nothing important, just fun happenings. However, she did write that much since the Festival. And the thoughts were like [Ah... I was shocked... I'm not sure yet, but I feel bad...], or [Why things just don't go like I want? It's hot every day and I hate everything!], [Ah, the school is soon. I feel exhausted I don't wanna go anywhere]. She didn't write why she's depressing, but it's obvious that she's in bad mood.

It seems she is still worried about that event when she saw somebody like Suzuki at the festival. I logged in to see some new her depressing messages, but there was a new message for me. I almost don't receive messages, so I was surprised, but decided to check new thoughts first. There was one, from Koigasaki, posted about 30 minutes before.

[Why my sight is 1.5? I wish I rather was shortsighted... also, I was irritated today, and blamed another person... Awful feeling.]

Hey, could it she is referring to me, and she actually understands what she did and reflecting? No, it must be my self-consciousness and she writes about another case. Okay, let's open the new message.

The sender's name is [Murasaki]. Wait, Murasaki is that doujinshi author from the Comiket?!

[Hello! Thank you for your help at the festival. I'm the doujinshi author, Murasaki. Do you remember me?]

Of course, I do! Also, it was me who was helped then.

[Momo-san told me that it's your page, Kashiwada-san, so I wrote this message to you. Would you mind to send me a friend request?]

In the moment I finished reading the message, I had already moved to her page and clicked "add to friends". Thank you, goddess! Thank you, your majesty

Koigasaki! I would never think I meet Murasaki-san again, and it's like a dream to have connected again. Thank you, Mixi!

[Thank you for your message. Thank you for your indispensable care at the Comiket. I was happy receiving the message from you. Thank you for it!]

I was too excited, and wrote her the message that might seem strange. After that, I went to her page to find news about her activity, her home page, or blog links. I found many of them and added to my bookmarks, and I noticed that I have another new message. Quickly checking it, I found her reply. It seems she's logged in right now, so she could give a quick reply.

[Thank you for prompt application! I want to talk with you about Momo-san. May I have your phone email address or Skype name? If that would be difficult for you, we can do it in Mixi messages.]

My phone email or skype?! What is with this rapid and fishy progress? Isn't it a trap? Well, relax, me, it could not be that. I was too excited because it's from Murasaki-san I lost connection with reality. In the end of the message, I found her email and skype id, so I added her email address to my phone, – I think I'll write her later.

I entered the ID in the Skype search and found her quickly, and pressed "Add" button. After a while, Murasaki-san confirmed and I can see her contacts. She is online, so I guess I'll write her something.

[This is Kashiwada, thank you for adding me!]

Hey, why am I trying to type so fast like I'm going to late?

[This is Murasaki. Thank you for the quick response! Are you busy right now?] – her reply came instantly. This excites me even more.

[Not at all! I'm totally free now!]

[Thank you very much! Okay, I wanted to talk about Momo-san's mood recently. How is she?]

It seems Murasaki-san is worrying about Koigasaki. Well, that's natural after those thoughts. Also, she probably has a conversation with Koigasaki directly.

[Oh, she is depressed. And she was in terrible mood in the school, I have a

hard time with her (bitter smile)]

[As I thought...]

I wasn't sure how to reply to this, when Murasaki-san send another message.

[By the way, are you all senior high students? I was surprised by hearing that from Momo-san just now ^^.]

[Eh? Are we look like adults? What did you think then?]

[I was sure you're college students. Momo-san looks young, but she is dyeing her hair, so I thought she is a college student too. The high school students in my school were not allowed to dye hair...]

I remember Murasaki-san saying she had been studying in all-girls school, so it's possible dyeing hairs is prohibited there.

[I did a bad thing as an adult, selling that book to a senior high student.]

That book? Ah, the doujinshi that Koigasaki bought. Yes, that one was for adults.

[No, we are sorry we didn't think about that. (sweat)]

[Why are you apologizing, Kashiwada-san?]

[Ah, well, that was me who had introduced that book to Koigasaki...]

[Eh, really? I feel embarrassed (sweat)]

Well, I should be feeling embarrassed here...

[Oh, we've digressed from the topic, I'm sorry. I wanted to talk with you.]

[Sure! What is it?]

[Thing is, Momo-san emailed me that she has a love problem...]

Koigasaki spoke to Murasaki-san about her relationship problem?.. Well, I have no idea how much she had told.

[Yes, and I told her that if I am feeling bad, my creative activity would make me feel better. And, it seems she got some idea...]

An idea? What is that? I have a bad premonition.

[She said she bought a doujinshi based on her favorite shojo manga, and she liked it. Probably, she thought she could draw similar manga too.]

Oh, she meant the doujinshi Koigasaki bought before leaving the Comiket. True, she did say she likes those cute pictures. The day when Koigasaki liked doujinshi came.

[Then I suggested her, what if Momo-san tried to draw doujinshi, and she liked that idea.]

[Eh?]

Koigasaki... draw a doujinshi?. I didn't expect they would talk about such things behind the scene. Koigasaki and doujinshi... No, it feels out of place.

[I have to ask you, Kashiwada-san. Could you please help Momo-san with creating a doujinshi?]

Help?.. So this is what Murasaki-san wanted to talk about.

[I will help her however I can, but I think she is depending on you, Kashiwada-san. Could you please talk with her if she would need it?]

I didn't understand Murasaki-san's motive until now. Honestly, I think there is nothing I can help with creating a doujinshi. I had never done one, and I doubt I could. Isn't it better to an experienced person like Murasaki-san do it for her?

[Of course, if I'd be fine for this, I'm happy to do this much!]

I wanted Murasaki-san to like me, so I had no choice but reply this way.

[That's great! I knew Kashiwada-san would say it! I'm looking forward to you!]

"That is great I knew Kashiwada-san would say it..."

"Eh?!"

I turned back and saw Akari reading Murasaki-san's message the screen from behind. She wears a wet pajama, looks like she is fresh from the bath.

"Uooh! Why did you sneak into my room?"

"I have knocked!"

I have been listening to music from the earphones, so I didn't notice that. I

stopped the music and pulled out the earphones.

“Are you chatting with a woman by Skype? Who is she?!”

“Oh, shut up, doesn’t it matter? What did you want?”

“Mama said it’s your turn to go to the bath.”

“Eh? I’m on Skype right now...”

“I can continue conversation instead of you!” – Akari said it with a cunning face, so I scared.

“You don’t! Okay, I’ll go to the bath right now, so leave my room already!”

I pushed out Akari from my room. That little... she would definitely say something lewd instead of me.

After that, I sent [I’m sorry, I got to go to the bath now.], ended the conversation, and started preparing for the bath.

Honestly, I was surprised Murasaki-san is so concerned about Koigasaki. They first met at the Comiket, and they got closer so much in no time. By the way, Murasaki-san often left comments at Koigasaki’s thoughts. As for me, I don’t write thoughts, and I don’t comment else’s thoughts. (Well, if I wrote a post and nobody commented it, I would feel miserable and delete the post; and if I left a comment under else’s post and got no reply, I would be shocked the same way).

For the sake of worried Murasaki-san, I’ll tell Koigasaki that she is mistaken about Suzuki. After all, it’s natural to assume that she only thinks she saw Suzuki at the festival, because Suzuki said he had not visited that festival. He is not a type of a boy who would lie, and I can’t find a reason for him to lie here.

And again, Koigasaki wants to draw a doujinshi... I don’t know how far she is serious, but her actions are always sudden. I have to ask her about that too. If she can’t draw pictures, it would be better to write a novel, I guess. Anyway, I received Murasaki-san’s request, and I have to help.

Chapter 2

On the following day, I went right to the Koigasaki's desk.

“Can I have you for a moment?”

She looked at me. Well, her face is little better than yesterday. I took her out to the stairs.

“What?”

“It's about Suzuki.”

Her face fade at the very moment I said his name.

“What is it?”

“I thought yesterday all day about this, but it couldn't be him.”

“You annoying me! I said it was him for sure!” – said Koigasaki and sighed out.

“He said me he never visited that festival!”

“He must have some reason to hide it, then! It was not my mistake! That was Suzuki-kun!”

“Why are you so stubborn?..”

“You tell it to me? Okay, fine! It was not Suzuki-kun! Are you happy now?”

“Hey, you...”

She is not convinced at all, yet she left me and returned to the class. I am helpless here.

After the school, I returned home, took a dinner, and was sitting by the PC, when I have a message on Skype.

[Good evening! Can we talk now?]

It's Murasaki-san, I thought, but actually I was invited to a chat between Murasaki-san and somebody with the nickname [Peach]. I understood just now that my conversation with Murasaki-san is not showing, I guess it's how Skype works. “Peach” is a “momo” on Japanese, I have a bad premonition...

[I'm speaking with Momo-san right now.]

I was right.

[KASHIWAMOCHI... it's Kashiwada?]

The Peach talked. By the way, KASHIWAMOCHI is my Skype name.

[Yes, you're right~!]

[Yes!]

[What is a Kashiwa mochi at all? Lol]

Koigasaki is provoking me.

[Oh, shut up, doesn't it matter?]

I calmed seeing her fooling around like usual. She was in bad mood at school, but now it seems she's feeling better. Probably, she's just pretending in front of Murasaki-san, but I hope she her irritation towards me calmed down for a bit. I didn't do anything wrong to begin with, though, so it's rather her attitude was strange.

[We have been chatting about Momo-san making a dojinshi.~]

I see. Could it be that Koigasaki is feeling better because she has switched to urge of becoming a dojinshi author? I remembered about that case and started typing.

[By the way, Koigasaki, it seems you want to draw a dojinshi, but can you draw a picture, in the first place?]

After the long ten seconds, Koigasaki replied.

[I Can Not! Ah, I could draw in the first grade!]

It's the same as she never drew a thing.

[I think it'd be hard to draw a manga, then.]

[Really? Even if I would start training from now?]

[I think it would take you a lot of time to your pictures start looking as you imagined.]

I had been training to paint pictures, but failing to complete a good picture

made me end it, so I know what I speaking about.

[Really? Yes, now I think you're right, I can't do that... What should I do...]

[I think, you should try to write a light novel.]

[A novel?]

[That would be good.~] – Murasaki-san agreed.

[There are many dojinshi light novels~]

[Oh, I think I can write some...]

I felt relief when Koigasaki showed a positive attitude.

[If you don't mind, I'd like to put my illustrations for your book.]

I was surprised a bit by Murasaki-san's offer. Won't it be a waste to use her illustrations for a no-name author's work?

[Really? Can I?!?!?]

Well, Koigasaki must be surprised much more than me, I can get it from her message.

[Yes, I would be happy to provide my illustrations.~ I never did it before! I'm reading the manga you like, too.]

[TTTTThank you very much! I will be happy to have your illustrations! M(_ _)M
bow]

[Me too.~ By the way, could you please come to my home, I would like to show you examples and explain you details? Also, we have to decide the events where we would participate, – that is what I proposed earlier, and Momo-san agreed to come to my place.]

Come to a Murasaki-san's home... That's a good reason to be jealous...

[Kashiwada-kun, could you please come to me too?]

[EEEEH? Are you sure?]

[Yes, I would be happy.]

I would never think she invite me to her home.

[Thank you very much! I'll come!]

[Also, I have been asking Momo-san to invite Azuki-san as well.]

Sakurai-san will come too... Koigasaki told me that Sakurai-san likes me at the festival. I'm smiling whenever I remember that phrase. If those words were true... I can't help but imagine what if things would go in the way I like.

[Okay, I think you two have not much of free time, could you please tell me a day when you could come to me?]

I opened the schedule on my phone, and checked my shifts.

[I have my work shifts afternoon on this weekend, but the next week shift are not decided now, so I can preserve next weekend for you.]

[As for me, I'm busy this Sunday, but the next weekend is free!star]

[Understood. Thank you very much~! I'm free on the next weekend, so we will set the next weekend for now.]

[Okay, then! Koigasaki, are you on work this Sunday?] – I remembered she didn't talk about the work recently.

[Work? Ah, I quit.]

[Eh?..]

She had quit?.. She quit it so fast?.. Well, she told me it's hard, but she only started this July, I think it's way too fast.

[What kind of job you had, Momo-san?]

[Ah, a maid...]

[In a maid café? I wish I could see you wearing a maid outfit!]

[Isn't it too fast? Did something happen?]

I could understand if she said she was tough, but I don't think Koigasaki is so weak. I want to quit that karaoke too, but...

[My parents had found out... My papa said to stop that.]

[Oh, so...]

[Really...]

I get it. I never met her father, but judging from her words, the father is pestering Koigasaki too much, I could even say he is being overprotective. And I understand if such father had got to know that his cute daughter working in front of otakus wearing a short skirt he would prohibit that.

[Papa said if I won't quit myself, he would go to my workplace and said it instead of me...]

[Oh, that must be difficult.]

Hearing Koigasaki's story, I thought I would have to quit too, if my parents had prohibited that to me. I'm so pitiful... I want to quit that job too, but that job was something I decided to myself. What would surrounding people think about me if I quit the job without working there at least a half of a year? Unfortunately, my parents think I can work until it doesn't disturb my studying; moreover, they think I should work in order to gain society experience.

After that, Koigasaki took responsibility to ask Sakurai-san about her plans, and then Murasaki-san should send us emails. Koigasaki said she have to go to the bath and we ended the Skype conversation.

*

Next Monday. After the lessons, I went to the library to return a book, returned and noticed a familiar figure inside an empty class while walking by the corridor. I stopped and looked inside the class. Yes, it's Hasegawa. My eyes met with her eyes. Oh, crap, I thought, but opened the door.

"Oh, sorry, I accidentally noticed you while walking by the corridor."

I said "accidentally" to impose that it happened by chance.

"What are you doing?"

"Well, a teacher asked me to staple these papers..."

I noticed a bunch of papers on the desk. It seems she is stapling them one by one. I don't know whether it's a duty of a class representative, or she was asked by a teacher personally, but...

"If you don't mind, I can help you!"

"Eh? Ah, thank you."

Hasegawa hesitated a while, but agreed. Could it be a bother? I asked myself for own satisfaction, but what Hasegawa thinks about it?

She instructed me to take pages from the right pile and staple them in succession, so I started doing what she said. It seems those printouts are intended for use in the lessons but is it really a Hasegawa's job?

The classroom is silent, and outside sounds can be heard clearly from here. I felt awkward to sit in the silence, so I was thinking about the topic to speak. Preferably something to distinguish an otaku.

"Hasegawa, did you play somewhere during the summer vacation?"

"Eh?"

As for an otaku, the summer Comiket is the inevitable topic. I thought, it would be enough to ask whether she visited Odaiba again, after she was there with me.

"Except I was at Odaiba with you, I had visited various places with my mother and sister."

"Oh, I see. Where had you been?"

"A zoo park, a national park, and to a theme park that my sister likes... Also, I visited my grandmother's house with the sister, and I have been at a live show of a comic."

"Oh, you had a good vacation! Your sister is little, I guess?"

"Yes, she had celebrated six years just recently."

"I see... It's great to have a cute little sister. Mine is a junior high student, she's cocky and not cute at all."

"Really?"

"Yeah. She can suddenly walk into my room, wake me up in a weekday, made me play games just because she has nothing to do."

"Oh, really? But you seem to be friendly."

I found one strange thing in Hasegawa's stories.

She had never spoken about her father. Even when she went somewhere with

her mother, that was grandmother's home. That's weird. However, I can't just ask her, why she didn't go somewhere with the father. It would be rude if her father is deceased or her parents are divorced. My father employed far from our home, what if Hasegawa's father too? I could ask her in this case, but...

"By the way, I had met the friend from your junior high few times."

"Eh, really?"

She must be referring to that girl she mentioned when we were at Odaiba, the girl who stopped going to school. It's good to hear they are good friends now. It's impressive they had passed the hard times, and still together.

"And you, Kashiwada-kun, where have you been?"

"Eh?" – I was not prepared for this question.

"I... was at Odaiba, and at Ikebukuro, and such."

"I see. Odaiba? You were at Odaiba another time?"

Hasegawa rose to the bait "Odaiba"! This is a chance. I meant I participated in the Summer Comiket, but I can't possibly say it clearly.

"Yeah, on the 30 of August."

I especially pointed the date, and if she is an otaku, she will definitely understand that I was at the Comiket. I'm waiting for her reaction.

"August 30... I see." – she fell silent after hearing this. Did I say something wrong unintentionally?

"So have you been at Odaiba without me later?"

I thought this is a strange question, but I already said it. To rephrase it, I asked had she been at the Comiket.

"No, I went there with you the last time."

"Ah, I see, well, it's not a place to visit few times during summer. Why did I ask it?.."

And I laughed to get rid of this atmosphere.

After that, I felt awkward, and we talked only about summer and her sister,

when the paper pile exhausted, we finished the work and returned to our classroom.

Unfortunately, I could not confirm whether Hasegawa is an otaku. In either way, she wasn't at the Comiket. However, I feel a little possibility that she might be an otaku. Or, it's nothing but my misconception.

On the way home, I received an email from Murasaki-san. To put it simply, we will gather at her house on the September 10, the next Saturday.

Chapter 3

A week has passed, and I noticed it just now. In other words, we have to go to a Murasaki-san's place tomorrow. I have been worrying that day. Well, the fact I'm going to meet with Murasaki-san was one of the reasons, but I worried about another thing. I will meet with Sakurai-san since the week from the first day of the second semester.

But we had met for a second, and I began to act suspiciously. Could I act as usual when I meet with Sakurai-san tomorrow at Murasaki-san's place? I have been thinking whether drunk Koigasaki told me true about Sakurai-san on the festival. I tried to ask Koigasaki again, but the timing was the worst, and I could not ask her in the end. To say honestly, I don't think that Sakurai-san who had obviously hated me when we first met, can have some positive feelings for me. However, there is no reason for Koigasaki to lie. Also, I can understand why she invited me to the film. In other words, she might have invited me to a date, and that was not my mistake that she has been positive towards me since the end of the cosplay event in the end of July.

In other words, she likes me... maybe.

I have no idea where I got her flag, but since when she likes me? What on the earth attracted her in me? Anyway, there is no more joy for me, if she really likes me. This is how I started thinking in more favorable for me way, and my thoughts running inside infinite loop since the festival. I couldn't sleep enough that day because of them.

Somehow, I managed to get up in the proper time, but I clearly didn't sleep enough. I wish I could talk with Koigasaki before I meet with Sakurai-san. I want to hear from you about those words at the festival. Oh, I should have to speak to Koigasaki at school!

I remembered where are Koigasaki's house, Sakurai-san's house, and Murasaki-san's house located. I'm passing Koigasaki's station on my way to the Murasaki-san's home. I can join her there, and head to Murasaki-san's home together! Then, I would have a chance to talk about Sakurai-san! I instantly

called to Koigasaki.

She had answered on the fourth tone.

“Hello.”

She is not in a good mood.

“Oh, hello, that’s me. Did you sleep?!”

“Huh? There is no way I could sleep. I’ve just taken the bath and drying my hair. I have to comb it and put on makeup, so I’m very busy now! What do you want?”

She had the bath in the morning... She has to comb her hair and put on a makeup, then. It’s a bother for me to set my hair every day, but... Girls are having a rough time.

“Oh, well... I want to talk with you about Sakurai-san.”

“Eh?! I said I’m busy now, can we have a talk another time?”

“No, I’ve no intent talking by phone! Eh... It’s eleven hours now... When do you go to a train?”

We agreed that I wait for Koigasaki on a platform of the station that Koigasaki will go down to, and we will go to the Murasaki-san’s place together.

“Okay, I’ll wait for you at that time, make sure you’ll come! Thanks!”

“Okay, okay, I got it. Every minute is important for me now, so I’m off!”

Koigasaki hung up, and I started preparing to leave too. I have only single clothes that I bought in Hanjiro, so I wore that, finished preparations, and left the house.

I went to the agreed platform at the station where Koigasaki lives. It’s about five minutes before the time when Koigasaki said she come here. I was looking for her wandering around the platform. And I noticed her going to me.

“Hi.” – she said looking on my face like I am a fly. Koigasaki, as usual, wears the make-up and hairstyle. Also, she wears a black hat, brown one-piece dress, black tights, and brown boots. It’s a bit unexpected to see her wearing mild-tone clothes.

“Are you still wearing this thing we bought long ago at Hanjiro?”

“Well, I have no decent clothes apart from this one. But this is all-seasons skirt, right?”

“No, this is a summer skirt.”

“?!”

Yes, this is a summer clothes, if you think about it. We bought it in July, and it has short sleeves.

“But well, it’s warm yet, isn’t it fine?”

“Well, it is fine, but... Clothes are season thing, you know?”

Oh, it’s September now, and I should be wearing autumn clothes... And Koigasaki’s clothes are somehow different, so she has changed clothes to fit autumn? Well, she looks like autumn. Dressing needs a lot of money, indeed. I’ll have to buy autumn clothes when I get my salary.

Our train has come, and we entered.

“So what is the problem bothering you so much you even came to my station?”

“It’s about Sakurai-san.”

“What about Azuki-chan? You’re going to say she hates you, like you used to?”

“No, I won’t. Do you remember what you’ve said at the festival? I have been thinking about that.”

“What I said?”

“Oh, well...”

“Can you talk clearly?”

“...That Sakurai-san like me or something...”

I felt ashamed even voicing this.

“Huh?”

“What? You did say that, you know?”

She frowned hearing this.

“Huh?! What are you talking about?”

The moment later, she made a wry smile.

“Don’t say you forget it. You was drunk, but I doubt that it was enough for amnesia. You’re a sad person.”

“W-what do you mean?!”

“You said to me: “Azuki-chan likes you, you know!” clear and loud, yet you was drunk.”

“Eh? N-no way! I said that?!” – screamed Koigasaki and got pale. She’s panicking.

“You did it for sure! Why you was so drunk?..”

She pushed one hand against her forehead and made a deep breath. I couldn’t hear what she mumbling to herself.

“Well... I could say that, but... You know, she meant... It’s not like she likes you!”

“Oh?”

“She likes to talk with otaku boys, it’s easier to talk with them!”

“Oh...”

She is nervous and I have no choice but nodding to her.

“I ho...hope you didn’t imagine things to yourself! I didn’t mean love or such, so don’t dare misunderstand things and run wild!”

“Run wild?..”

She was very serious, and she asked me few times whether I got it.

Oh, so she thinks I’m easy to talk with, and that’s all... I don’t feel awkward going there anymore, but I’m feeling upset. Why am I always imagine strange things on my own? Even if it is me who will be depressed later.

We had been jolted for about 45 minutes before arriving at Kichijoji station, where Murasaki-san lives. We didn’t speak at all. I wasn’t excited by Sakurai-

san's feelings anymore, and didn't feel I want to talk. Koigasaki probably is still depressing because she thinks she saw Suzuki, so she was silent too. I tried to convince her a few times already, but if she doesn't believe me, I have no other way to convince her.

"By the way, why are you so gloomy from the morning? Did something happen?"

Koigasaki noticed this, and asked me on the way to the wickets.

"I'm not gloomy, don't worry."

I'm not gloomy, I'm just sad a little.

"Why are you acting like this? Murasaki-san invited you out of concern, are not you mean?"

"Huh? I told you I'm not gloomy!"

I starting to think that it's rather Koigasaki is gloomy badgering me like this. I didn't do anything bad, I'm just being sad for a bit.

"What is it? Could it be you had some expectations? And now you're sad because your expectations were broken?"

"Eh?! Not at all."

She hit the bull's eye and I was surprised.

"Oh, you're such a god of misunderstandings!"

"I told you I'm not!" – I said it too loud.

"Oh, you two..."

... We talked while going to the exit, and right at the exit Murasaki-san and Sakurai-san were waiting for us. Sakurai-san noticed us and spoke.

They had saw us arguing from the moment we left a cab, apparently. Sakurai-san shows a wry smile. Ah... I feel awkward, because somebody saw the scene I wish nobody saw. I don't know what to say to get out of this, so I fell silent.

"You're so friendly."

"Eh?" – said simultaneously both Koigasaki and me. Murasaki-san was smiling.

“It’s called you’re friendly enough to wrangle.”

We couldn’t understand what Murasaki-san tries to say. It’s a strange logic to conclude we are friendly seeing us arguing.

“We are not at all.” – Koigasaki rejected her word with a wry smile.

“Oh, you don’t have to hide it from me.”

“But that’s true! Why do you say strange things?”

Koigasaki and Murasaki-san started talking while we left the station. This Murasaki-san’s phrase is strange, but there is something more fundamental I cannot understand. Why did she call me here? To begin with, why she asked me to help Koigasaki with her dojinshi? Why would she need me if she has Murasaki-san already? I never created a dojinshi, and I feel it’s pointless to have me at her house today.

When I received her contacts, I was so excited I didn’t think so deep, but why Murasaki-san called such a useless person? Could it be wanted to meet with me?.. Hey, why am I so incorrigible? That’s stupid. However, this is a natural conclusion. Murasaki-san could ask me to help Koigasaki with her dojinshi, and invite to her home, and those emails, to meet with me. However, possibility is hundredth of a percent, but...

“Kashiwada-kun, why are you grinning?”

“Eh?” – I noticed Sakurai-san beside me. She looked at my face.

“Oh, I wasn’t grinning!”

“Really?”

That’s was dangerous. So I was grinning... I bet Sakurai-san got creeps. Yet, I did it unintentionally. Koigasaki and Murasaki-san are walking in front of me, so naturally Sakurai-san and me are leftovers.

“It has been a long time since we met the last time.”

“Ah, sure. It was at the pool, I guess.”

My nervousness of talking with Sakurai-san disappeared completely, and I glad I can talk to her freely.

“Eh? No, we have met on the first day of the second semester, for a moment... Well, you probably don’t remember that...”

“Ah, you’re right! My bad, I remember, of course.”

“Really! I’m happy!” – Sakurai-san reacted on my words.

I saw her happy smile. What a nice girl, smile to such a trivial thing...

“Ah, by the way, one week left before the opening of the film!”

“Eh? I see!”

I just remembered about the film when Sakurai-san had told me about it, but the fact is it starts on the next week.

“Yes! What would we do? Will we go on the opening day? Or wait until there will be not that crowded?” – asked Sakurai-san with a smile.

“Yes, I guess, it could be crowded at the opening day.”

“But if we would reserve a ticket on the net beforehand, there will be no problem! I’ll check it!”

“Eh, really? I feel uneasy having you doing so much...”

“Don’t think about that! I have invited you, after all!”

Why is Sakurai-san so careful for me?

“Ah, guys, we reached my home!” – Murasaki-san, who walked in front of us, turned back and notified. It took about ten minutes on foot from the station. It seems, this is a recently built mansion. Murasaki-san unlocks the entrance, and a door opened automatically. We promptly entered inside.

“Is this mansion a new one? It’s beautiful!” – Koigasaki is excited and looking around. We reached the third floor by elevator, following Murasaki-san. She took out a key in front of 306 room, and opened the door.

“Welcome to my small apartment.”

“I’m sorry for intrusion...”

I entered the apartment after Koigasaki and Sakurai-san. I was nervous, because it’s the first time I’m entering to a living alone girl’s home, – if it’s

about a girl's home, I had already visited Koigasaki. I can feel a nice aroma right from the entrance, and I'm worried even more that it was with Koigasaki.

"Kashiwada-kun, are you okay?" – I was taking my shoes too long, and Sakurai-san said it with worrying voice.

"It's okay, I'm just nervous a bit." – I replied honestly with a smile.

"Oh, really? You don't have to worry." – said Murasaki-san and tilted her head.

"Well, it's the first time I'm visiting a girl who is living alone."

"Oh, I see. But we are equal, then."

"Eh?"

"You're the first man in my home, besides my family." – said Murasaki-san and winked to me.

Oh, what a power! My heart won't endure!

In other words, she has no boyfriend of a good make friend. What a sinful person, saying such words to a virgin!

"Kashiwada, don't linger, come in already." – Koigasaki said with annoyed tone. I don't like it, but I took off my shoes.

Right in front of the entrance, I can see a dining kitchen. It was a pretty girlish place with a lot of various things. So this is where Murasaki-san lives, I thought, and it excited me even more.

"It's so pretty I wouldn't this here lives an otaku." – I said without thinking.

"Ag, there is one more room behind that door, I'm using it to create manuscripts. It's a something!" – she said and smiled for me. Here we are, a devilish smile. I couldn't ask what the something is, I guess it's a typical otaku room, yet I would be happy to see it.

"There are some friends in my university who knows that I'm an otaku, and I keep it a secret from the other friends. Hence, I made my room this way for I could invite here anybody."

That what a hardcore hidden otaku would do. I have to memo this.

“Please, take a seat here.” – said Murasaki-san and we sat on the chairs around the table.

A plate full of good-looking cookies stood on the table.

“I’m not sure is it tasty or not, but feel free to take it.”

“Eh, could it be you have made the cookies?”

“Yes.” – answered Murasaki-san to Koigasaki while preparing a tea. Whoa, what a woman! I am so happy a cute girl let me in her home and treat with hand-made cookies!

“Thank you very much! Ah, please, here. I’m not whether you like it.” – Koigasaki gave a paper bag to Murasaki-san. It’s a... visitor’s gift, I guess. Oh, by the way, it’s a custom to give a gift when you come to somebody’s home! Of course, I didn’t bring anything. I did not even think about this!

“Me too, here... It’s a trivial thing, though.” – Sakurai-san quickly gave a bag to Murasaki-san.

“Oh, thank you for your concern.”

Really? Which means, I’m the only hard-hearted man here?.. Well, I have no doubt if my mother had known I’m going to visit a women’s home, she would insist I have to bring something with me. Yet I was embarrassed to say it because she could make fun of me, and she doesn’t know.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t bring anything...” – I confessed. Oh, I’m so miserable. Murasaki-san, Koigasaki, Sakurai-san must be displeased with me.

“Oh, don’t mind it, really.” – said Murasaki-san and waved be her left hand in front of her face. I promised to myself that I bring something if she would invite me ever again.

We had a talk while eating Murasaki-san’s hand-made cookies (very tasty), Koigasaki’s and Sakurai-san’s presents – madeleine and chocolate. Murasaki-san told us about her college, and we – about our school. Murasaki told us about the Big Sight summer and winter events and her activities as a dojinshi author. Koigasaki told about the shojo manga she is planning to use as an original of her dojinshi. On the flow of our conversations, Koigasaki was supposed to look for

invents where she could participate, and Murasaki-san decided to lend her PC for this. We took out cups and moved to the room with her PC.

“I felt a bit embarrassed if you would see my room...”

The room with the PC is the mentioned before “Workplace for creating manuscripts”, and she has called it “a something”. I was excited to see what is inside. When she opened the door and we walked inside, we found a tidy room just like the previous, but...

“What do you think? It’s a something, right?”

Yes, that was a typical otaku’s room. There was a lot of various figures and nendoroids on shelves, and game posters on the walls. Also, there was a bookshelf with comics, manga journals, and dojinshi. My room is not “a something” this way, but similar, and mine is not a tidy room.

“If you want to watch something closer, you can take it freely, but...” – said Murasaki-san and looked at me.

“..?”

I’m a little nervous because she looks inside my eyes.

“Kashiwada-san, don’t open this drawer.” – she said and pointed to the lowest drawer.

“Eh? Why?”

Why only me?

“Because I would be embarrassed if you see those things...”

What kind of things are there? I’m very interested now! But, I oppressed this feeling.

“You have so many figures.” – Sakurai-san is impressed by the shelf with the figures.

I thought Koigasaki might be disgusted, and I looked on her, but she seemed surprised and looking around. I relaxed she wasn’t in bad mood.

Murasaki-san turned on her PC and opened an exhibition sale site from the bookmarks.

“You are a first-runner, so it might be hard for you to participate in the Winter Comiket.

“Oh, really? Are there other dojinshi events apart from winter and summer Comiket at Big Sight?”

“Yes, of course. There are many small-scale events, the only events, and the like.”

“Oh, by the way, I visited an only event!”

I noticed Sakurai-san is looking at a certain place while Koigasaki and Murasaki-san are talking.

“Sakurai-san, something happened?”

“Oh, well... I thought I saw something like cosplay clothes in that closet...”

“Eh?”

Sakurai-san was looking at a half-opened closet with Murasaki-san’s casuals as well, but one dress among them had a striking coloring.

“Ah, yes, that’s a cosplay outfit.” – said Murasaki-san with a smile.

“I had been selling circle’s books wearing a cosplay few times, so I have few cosplay costumes left. If you like it, I can show it to you later.”

“Eh, are you sure?” – Sakurai-san swallowed the bait. Oh, she is the cosplayer. She even noticed a cosplay suit inside tons of casuals.

After that, Koigasaki checked events from the end of autumn to winter and claimed she wants to participate in the selling event “Sunshine Create” on the October 23.

“October? Isn’t it too fast? Can you make a book so fast?”

“But I can’t wait until December! And it’s over a month before October 23, it’s a piece of cake!”

“Momo-san, do you plan to make a copy-book or an off-book?”

“Copy? Off?” – Koigasaki tilted her head, she obviously had no idea what Murasaki-san is talking about.

Murasaki-san took one dojinshi book out from the bookshelf and gave it Koigasaki. I noticed that it was an all-ages edition.

“This one is a copy-book. They are printed either in own home or in a supermarket, so-called self-publishing book. The copying itself is cheap, but binding is difficult, and in some cases it looks worse than expected. Well, sometimes there are fine copies...”

“Oh, so I can print and bind it home!” – said Koigasaki turning over pages of the book.

“Yes. And next one...”

Murasaki-san took out another dojinshi book and gave to Koigasaki.

“This one is an off-book. It means you have to go to a press and have them make your dojinshi. It’s more expensive, but the book would look better instead.”

“By the way, which one is that book I bought from you?”

“It was a copy-book. Except this, all my books are off-books. I was short of time when I was making it...”

“Really? But it was very nice!”

“Thank you. It’s possible to achieve that quality if you would bind them carefully.”

I remembered the book Koigasaki showed me. Yes, it might be a copy-book, but it was so good that nobody would mind it’s a copy-book.

“I will do a copy-book, then! Also, I’m short of money since I quit my job...”

“Yes, I wanted to suggest you this way. Offset printing is comparatively long, and you probably won’t have enough time if you want to participate in October.”

I understand. I have a friend in my junior high who wrote dojinshi. He had been often saying before his event that the press is so slow they won’t have it in time.

“Oh, I see! I’ll do a copy-book, then!”

“I’ll help you if I can. I’m interested in creating a dojinshi, too.” – said Sakurai-san with shining eyes.

“Really? Thank you, Azuki-chan!”

The girls got excited and they are noisy.

“By the way, it seems we have run out of drinks.” – said Murasaki-san peeling into our cups, and leaving the room.

“Oh, you don’t have to!” – Koigasaki tried to stop her.

“It’s okay, please wait.” – Murasaki-san didn’t stop, and went to the kitchen, but returned after a while.

“I’m sorry, I have no tea left... Could you please wait while I’ll buy some?”

“Eh?! There is no need for this at all!”

“Yes, it’s fine now.” – Koigasaki and Sakurai-san tried to stop her.

“No, it’s hot today, so you probably getting thirsty quicker. Also, I don’t like to eat cookies dry.” – Murasaki-san took her wallet out of her bag, which means she is ready.

“Let me buy it, then!” – I thought I can return my honor now or never since I brought no gift.

“Oh, okay! Go ahead, Kashiwada!” – Koigasaki backslapped me looking at Murasaki-san.

Hey, I don’t think you have rights for this.

“Really? Let’s go the convenience store nearby together, then.”

“Eh?”

Koigasaki, me, and for some reason Sakurai-san, were surprised by her proposition.

Woohoo!!! I can’t expect anything more! Well, actually I understand everything, but a virgin like me can’t help but enjoy her attractive smile.

“O-of course! If you’re fine with me!”

I noticed Koigasaki’s despising glare from the corner of my eye, but let’s

pretend I never saw it.

“Thank you! Let’s go, then!” – smiled Murasaki-san and grabbed my hand.

“S-sure!”

“Goodbye...” – said Sakurai-san with a wry smile. What is happening with her?

“Kashiwada-san, I’m sorry for that request to help her.” – said Murasaki-san with a sore smile when we left the mansion and were on the way to the store. Could it be she invited me only to say it?

“Eh?! It’s nothing! I’m ready to help you!”

“Really? Thank you!”

“Well, I don’t think I would be useful, though.”

I have a will to help, however I have no knowledge about dojinshi, so I am not sure I can help somehow, – that’s what I think.

“You will be! I saw your Mixi page. You have read many light novels, haven’t you?”

“Yes, I guess.”

By the way, I typed a lot of books I liked in the “Your favorite books” in Mixi. However, I didn’t expect Murasaki-san would read it.

“Therefore, I would like to ask you to read Momo-san’s dojinshi.”

“Eh?”

Me? Koigasaki’s dojinshi?

“Momo-san has written me earlier that she is not a good reader of dojinshi works, so she is unsure of her writing style. I am sure she would be more confident having a strong reader like you, Kashiwada-san.”

“Well, okay, I’ll as much as it will be required!”

So what she mean by help... However, I have red light novels for men and a decent number of mystery works, so I doubt I could give advice for shojo manga dojinshi.

“Thank you! I believe Momo-san will be encouraged with your help!”

“Eh?.. No-no, I don’t think she would.” – I completely rejected Murasaki-san’s certainty.

“E-eh? But she is relying on you so much, Kashiwada-san!”

“Not at all. It seems you’re misunderstanding things, Murasaki-san, but all I did is teach her a little of otaku’s knowledge, it’s nowhere near deep mutual confidence or close relationship.”

“Are you sure of it?” – it seems Murasaki-san was not convinced, she put her finger to her chin and tilted her head.

“But I think you would be a good match.” – said Murasaki-san with a happy smile and put her hands together in front of her face. It seems she is totally misunderstanding my relationship with Koigasaki.

“Well, she loves another boy, actually.” – I said to Murasaki-san with a serious face. I have to clear this misunderstanding now.

“Eh?” – she stood on the spot. Yes, she is surprised, obviously.

“Are you sure? Is this information reliable?”

“Yes, she told me this. And I kind of helping her to get closer to him.”

“Oh... I see...” – Murasaki-san put her finger to her chin again and thinking about something.

“Um... However...” – she said after a while, yet I couldn’t hear the entire phrase.

“But she is relying on you for sure, so I’m counting on you!” – said Murasaki-san smiled, and then added that she can feel it judging from Koigasaki’s messages. It seems Murasaki-san didn’t give up yet.

“Huh... Well, I glad Koigasaki feels better now, in comparison with her earlier condition.”

Especially today in the morning she was in bad mood, but since we joined with Murasaki-san and Sakurai-san she wasn’t sad or depressed, so I felt a relief. I should be thankful to Murasaki-san who invited her to her home and encouraged to write a dojinshi novel.

“Ah, as I thought... So she was depressed earlier?”

“Yes, it was a hard time for me. She was in a terrible mood, and dumped on me.”

I sighed out remembering the first day of the second semester. She was really bad towards me.

“Oh, I see. Momo-san dumped on you...”

“Yes, she is so bad for me. Oh, today in the morning her mood wasn’t that bad. Just why she would dump on me and so nice to other people? What I did to deserve such attitude?..”

I wish she would fix this problem with her character.

“But if you say it in other words...” – Murasaki-san thought up with a new idea.

“Momo-san is showing her true self to you, Kashiwada-san.”

“Eh?..”

I couldn’t comprehend her idea quickly.

“Oh, well... When I saw you two arguing this morning, I thought, so that girl with graceful manners, Momo-san, can actually behave like that... She must be opened for you, Kashiwada-san, I thought. Hence, you are the only person she trusts in earnest, the only human she can act freely with. So I thought you’re in such relationship.”

“Eh... It can’t be true, she has many friends apart from me, and their relationship is far better.”

Unlike me, Koigasaki has many friends. (most of them are girls, though). And of course, she is closer to them, rather with me. It’s hard to believe she trusts me or that she is opened for me more than for them.

I remembered I have been thinking about this once. Koigasaki told me when we had been returning from a cosplay shop with Sakurai-san, that she is the contrary of a tsundere, a deretsun, she is nice to everybody except... Right after that she took her words back, but it’s true that she voiced that. She is nice to everybody (dere), but she shows her nature to friends (tsun). Right? Is it

something similar to a grade school boy who plays pranks on a girl he likes?

Wah, stop-stop-stop. It is impossible for Koigasaki! Moreover, that this “girl he likes” matches with me.

“Kashiwada-san, your face is pale, are you okay?”

“Oh, it’s all right...”

I’ve immersed in my thoughts so much Murasaki-san worried about me. However, in mere case of Koigasaki is really considering me as a person she can trust, and she told me her true thoughts... I was an idiot sincerely accepting her blame, getting angry and paying back with her own coin. Now I regret I have not made a step towards maturity by understanding Koigasaki’s feelings.

We bought a pack of a tea, milk, and eggs (it seems they were out too), and returned to Murasaki-san’s home. I said I can pay at least a half for the tea pack, but Murasaki-san kindly rejected this.

“Let me carry this, at least. I don’t understand why I have walked with you otherwise.” – I spoke to Murasaki-san’s back, when she went out of the store.

“Really? It’s pretty heavy.”

“I’ll carry that!”

“So, let’s do this way.”

Murasaki-san took one of the bag handles and has me to take the other one, for we can carry one bag together. And we were walking this way at the one-step length.

Is it so embarrassing, or it’s just me imagining thing?

“He-he.” – Murasaki-san looked at me and exposed a meaningful smile.

“Eh? What is it?” – I felt she is laughing at me, and got nervous.

“Oh, not at all.” – she said and looked at another way.

“I just thought surrounding people might see us as a cohabiting couple.” – she said with a good mood.

“What?!” – I could not give a good answer, so I fell silent and blushed.

I think she should be more aware of what her words do with people's hearts.

"Welcome back!"

"Aren't you too late? Did you bother Murasaki-san?" – Koigasaki and Sakurai-san welcomed us.

"If I could!"

How can I possibly bother her within a few minutes of time?

"I glad he carried the bag."

Murasaki-san went to put purchases into a fridge. Well, I carried only a half, though.

"Thank you for everything, Murasaki-san. For dojinshi, your advice, and for illustration promise..." – Koigasaki thanked again, staying behind Murasaki-san.

"I will do that, if you're fine with my drawing. I'll have to train to draw shojo manga illustrations before that." – said Murasaki-san preparing a tea for us.

"You don't have to! Your style is cute from girl's point of view, and I am completely okay with it!"

That's true, I remember her pictures were cute for both males and females.

"Can I do something for you in return? Please, tell me if I can!"

"Oh, no, it's enough for you came from afar to my place. I'm happy to be with you today."

"I can help you if you need something. I want to properly thank you." – Koigasaki was serious. She is always serious in a strange way.

"Oh, okay, then. Could you please wait for a little?" – said Murasaki-san with a face like she remembered something interesting, and closed herself in the working room we had visited recently. Yet she quickly returned with few cosplay suits in her hands.

"Eh? Isn't these..."

"The cosplay suits I promised to show to Azuki-san."

Murasaki-san had a nurse suit, a cheer girl suit, and a china dress. Why would

she have something like these?

“Actually, I was in a drama club during my senior high. We had a little of members, so the club was closed during our age. The club’s property was distributed among those who were willing to take them.”

“I see.”

“It was a club full of otaku people, and we used club’s allowance for cosplay clothes.”

So Murasaki-san played on stage wearing these clothes, I wondered, but I thought she would be displeased if I ask, so I stopped.

“When I was calling you here, I thought to myself I would like to see you wearing these outfits.”

“Eh?!” – Koigasaki and Sakurai-san surprised hearing her words.

“I think those clothes would perfectly fit young ladies like you.” – said Murasaki-san with burning eyes. Young? Murasaki-san, you’re not that old.

“What a beauty! I think I never wear such clothes!” – Koigasaki picked a suit.

“Momo-san, please wear any suit you like! Azuki-san, you too!”

“Are you sure? Then, would you wear some too? We will have a cosplay party!” – said excited Sakurai-san. The three of the girls are enjoying this, and I am beyond the glass. Well, it’s completely fine if I’d see them wearing those.

“Ah...” – Murasaki-san noticed that I’m alone and come to me.

“Kashiwada-san, if there is a suit you like, please don’t hesitate to wear it!”

“Eh?! What are you saying?”

That was completely unforeseen.

“Kashiwada-kun... wearing a girl’s cosplay...”

“Hey, Sakurai-san, don’t imagine that!”

After some time passed. They decided who takes which suit, and went to the room with PC.

“Don’t peek into the room, Kashiwada-san.” – said Murasaki-san with a fun

smile on her face.

“I won’t do that!”

They closed the door, but I still can hear them.

“Azuki-san, you have an excellent figure!”

“Eh?! But your figure is very nice too!”

“...”

“Ah, I admire the slim figure and light skin like Momo-chan has, I would say I envy her.”

“Thank you for the support, Azuki-chan...”

“I was sincere, it’s not just a support!”

“Momo-san, your underwear with cherries is so cute.”

“And your underwear, Murasaki-san, are adult-ish and sexy...”

I have no idea did they know I’m hearing them, but they are definitely enjoyed chatting. But I feel aroused by my own imagination, so please wind it up already...

After a while, they left that room.

Koigasaki is a cheer girl, Sakurai-san wears the china dress, and Murasaki-san – the pick nurse suit. It’s splendid! It’s truly splendid!

“Momo-chan is terribly cute, and Murasaki-san in perfect match with the suit, I feel I’m healed!”

However, Sakurai-san was more excited than me. She took her phone out of her bag and started to make photos. By the way, Sakurai-san is a beauty-loving beauty...

Then I noticed Koigasaki is sadly looking on her chest. There was a free space in the cheer girl suit which was made for a puffy-breast owner, and Koigasaki... No, I can’t say that.

“It’s baggy...” – mumbled Koigasaki, yet her face was happy. I guess, she is happy wearing a cosplay.

“As I thought...” – I accidentally voiced my thoughts.

“Huh?! Oi, Kashiwada, did you say something?!” – Koigasaki is staring at me.

“I didn’t! You must be hearing things!” – I rejected. Crap, she has heard it!
Why she has such a keen ear?

“Oh, really? Okay, then...”

It seems she didn’t actually catch my words, yet she got angry. Anyways, it’s good she feels better than she was this morning. What a relief she is so simple.

“Murasaki-san, do you like yuri more than BL?” – I heard Sakurai-san started an otaku conversation with Murasaki-san.

“Well, you have been drawing dojinshi based on works where girls are main heroes, so I thought you prefer girls...”

“You are right. I do not actually dislike BL, but I’m drawing girls manga characters and I prefer it.”

“I see. I am a fujoshi, but I like yuri too!”

“What do you like from the fresh works?”

“I guess, Madoka Makika!”

“I see, I like it too!”

“Really? And who is your favorite character?”

“I like all of them, but Kyoko is my favorite.”

“I like her too!”

Sakurai-san and Murasaki-san plunged into their talk. I know this topic very well, but I have no room to enter the conversation. Moreover, Koigasaki is somewhere far away, and she would be completely outside if I enter this conversation. So I decided to stay away.

After that, they started to make photos like crazy. I tried to oppress myself and to not shoot them, however Murasaki-san told she would send me photos later, so I was happy inside.

Then, Koigasaki said she has the curfew and she had to go, so she quickly

changes clothes and left Murasaki-san's house.

"Let's talk later by Skype, goodbye."

"Sure, I'll send you an email once I complete my novel!"

"Thank you for everything, and goodbye!"

"Goodbye..."

I feel they have been playing during the second half of the meeting... But I think it's a good step forward for Koigasaki to decide the date of the event she will participate in. Also, I think it's great she is no more depressed like earlier.

Chapter 4

The next week, the Tuesday was between two holidays. I was dreaming on my desk in the classroom, when my shoulder was shaken.

“Kashiwada, wake up!” – it was Koigasaki’s voice.

“What is it?”

“Look what I’ve written during the one day yesterday!”

Koigasaki put on my desk few pages A4 with Japanese horizontal writing text, printed on PC. I looked inside, and it appears to be her novel. So she had already started her dojinshi... Well, that’s impressive for a work done within a single day.

“Murasaki-san said you’re a strong reader so I can have your opinion, so... I couldn’t stop since I have started writing! Probably, I’m a genius!”

She must be overreacting, she has just written a couple of pages... And I look through those pages.

“...”

“What is it?”

Koigasaki is excited, but I couldn’t read it at all after I saw the first page. The reason is that Koigasaki used the mobile-stylized text which I can’t stand. I’ve read many novels, so a lot of non-Japanese crude things scattered through the text glares so much I can’t read it.

“You... Can you write at least a good text, you are going to have Murasaki-san’s illustration after all.”

“Huh? What do you mean by that?!”

“Did you read nothing but mobile novels? Where did you see a book with stars and other marks in the text?”

“Ah... Indeed...”

The chime rang.

“Well, I’ll change that later, but be sure to read the text and check for strange things!”

Koigasaki left her novel on my table and left. I have to read this crazy text, the only good thing of which is its size... I have no interest at all, but I’ve promised to Murasaki-san and Koigasaki would be angry if I won’t read it.

I had no shift this day, so I returned home and read Koigasaki’s novel. I thought it’s long, but I finished reading within fifteen minutes. The next strange thing is despite text is awful, there is a decent story. I don’t know the original manga of this (“Clumsy honey”), but the main heroine seems to be a usual senior high school student “Takase Yui”, and “Ouba Ryo” from the same first grade is her bellowed. The handsome and popular Ouba turns out to be an otaku, and the heroine is trying to become an otaku too... It’s similar to Koigasaki and Suzuki, and I didn’t know there is a manga with the same plot. In Koigasaki’s story, Yui managed to become a decent otaku, started to date, and become an otaku couple in the end. It appears Koigasaki write this from her own life.

Especially this climax scene, where Yui gave up becoming an otaku and goes to a date with another flashy guy from her class “Araki”, and Ouba comes to rescue her. Isn’t it the very desire of Koigasaki “I wish Suzuki-kun would do this for me”? At the height of the date, Ouba, who knew that Araki is dating with many girls, puts an effort to return Yui back. Stubborn Yui refuses to come back and arguing with him, but then Ouba just carried her away from Araki on his arms... I smiled thinking there is no way for somebody to act so brassy. I wrote everything I found strange on a paper. Tomorrow, I’ll give it to Koigasaki.

Now I’m going to look for the original manga on the net. I found its wiki page at once and reading the description and main characters.

“ ... ”

I read again her novel few times, because there was a point that caught my eye. However, I couldn’t get rid of this feeling even after reading it. There is no place, where the main hero is called an otaku, he is just popular and handsome. But he seems to be not an otaku. It’s a popular manga, and Wikipedia has a big page about it, but he was never called an otaku. However, there is a slight

chance of this fact wasn't noted on the Wikipedia. I want to check it, but I would not want to buy all manga volumes for this, and going to a manga café is a bit boredom. Akari reads a lot of shojo manga, so she might have it.

"I'm coming."

It was quiet, so I thought she is not there, and I opened the door without knocking.

"..!!"

Yet, she was there. More important, she was changing clothes: pajama pants on the bottom and sports brassiere she wears under her sailor suit on the top.

"Don't enter whenever you want!!!"

Akari threw her bag in me, striking right in my face.

"It hurts!"

Hey! Well, I didn't knock, but you were wandering inside the house like this until the previous year, why would you get angry now? I don't feel anything from your underwear, like from the mother's one!

"Naoki, you're unbelievable! Why didn't you knock?" – said Akari and put the pajama top.

"I'm sorry, I thought you're not home. Do you have "Clumsy honey"?" – I asked quickly.

"Eh? Well, my friend lent me it..." – answered Akari in bad mood.

"Really? Can you give it to me? I'll return it quickly."

"Huh? Why would a boy read a shojo manga? Ew..."

"Actually, I have a deep reason for that."

"Okay, well... But don't stain it!"

I took out all volumes from Akari's bookshelf, and carried them to my room. It's eight volumes out for now, so I guess I can finish them until evening. I'm not used for reading shojo manga, so it's difficult to read small frames and heroine's monologues, but dialogues are simple and plain, I have read them readily. The plot was mostly exactly as stated on Wikipedia, yet, as I expected, there is no

place where Ouba was called an otaku, and there was no picture, which you can get even as a gentle hint to that.

In other words, this is Koigasaki's original point. Yes, she changed the pair of the main heroes from the manga, overreaching the original setting. This is bad. Fans of the original work wouldn't take it, and some of them might be displeased. Dojinshi authors often disrupt original settings, but I don't like this kind of dojinshi. Every time I'm reading such dojinshi, I'm thinking, what prevents you from using a different character, as far as it goes? In most cases, they would do that, when you can find hints in the original manga, however there was none in this manga. It's Koigasaki's fantasy.

Ah, why didn't she think about this? Would she print this insult of the original if I hadn't said anything? This is nothing but Koigasaki's fantasy about her with Suzuki. She prefers Suzuki to the original, I guess. What is she going to get by having me and other readers to read this? If fine if she pleases herself, but it's a bother for other people.

*

"Hey, did you finish reading my novel?" – she spoke to me at a shoe locker when I just entered the school.

"Yeah, I did..." – I answered shortly.

"Really? It was so long, and you finished it so fast?"

"It's quick if you start reading. I'm used to reading books, light novels mostly."

I have written the memo with the points to be corrected and my impressions, but I left it home. When I was writing it, I didn't know that it was an insult of the original work, so it's not necessary now. I have to tell Koigasaki something more important now. I changed my boots and we went to a place where we wouldn't bother other students.

"So what you say?" – she said with her eyes shining.

"It's a fail."

"...Eh?" – Koigasaki is looking at me with frozen eyes.

"Well, I know that style was bad, but I guess I fixed most of that yesterday..."

“I meant its contents.”

“What with the contents? I have been thinking long about that, so I have some confidence in it.”

“Is Ouba an otaku in the original manga?”

“Eh?..” – Koigasaki couldn’t say a word more.

“N-no, but dojinshi is supposed to have some original things, right? I have read about it, and the dojinshi I bought had differences with its original.”

“The setting is often changed in dojinshi when the fans could think about Ouba as an otaku, even if the original doesn’t maintain it directly. Did you see such kind of pictures in the manga?”

“I didn’t...”

“How do you think, could the fans think this way?”

“I don’t think so...”

“So this is nothing but your fantasy.”

I made a deep sigh for Koigasaki.

“I’ll say bluntly, but isn’t that your fantasy about Suzuki?”

Koigasaki’s ears blushed upon hearing that.

“W-w-what?! No...”

“I can see it on your face. I was embarrassed reading it.”

I was right, after all. It’s hard to miss it, actually. She looks like she was sure I’d overlook that.

“It is not wrong to put your desires into a paper, but this only pleases you. Who would want such ending? Apart from you? Isn’t that just your projection?”

“Wha...”

“Also, this Ouba from your novel act way too convenient for the girl. Such boys don’t exist.”

In fact, the author made Ouba too convenient character, but Koigasaki went further in her dojinshi. From a boy’s perspective, he is so convenient it’s

annoying.

“S...”

Koigasaki seemed angry at first, but now her face is dark. I thought I said too much, but unexplainable irritation made me continue.

“You can write such things for yourself to please your desires, without selling it without dragging me, Sakurai-san, and Murasaki-san into this. Try to...”

“Shut up, you...” – said Koigasaki with a low voice.

“I understand! My novel is nothing but a self-satisfaction anyway! But you didn’t have to say so much!”

Koigasaki raised her head. She was almost crying. Then, she ran away from me.

I said too much.

I definitely said too much. I just stood still regretting, being incapable of following her. Why was I so irritated? I was supposed to tell her calmly what I think, however from the middle of the conversation I lost my temper and yielded to anger. Why on the earth was I so angry? I can’t understand myself.

I must apologize to Koigasaki.

I was looking for a chance to apologize until the lessons ended. After that, of course, I didn’t talk with Koigasaki. Koigasaki is now surrounded by other girls, so take aside to speak to her, I can’t even get closer. I decided to give up calling her now and write a message home.

“Ah, Kashiwada-kun!” – I was surprised to hear Sakurai-san’s voice when I left the classroom.

“Good thing I met you, it’s about the time I have to speak with you.”

“Eh?” – I couldn’t remember what she is speaking about.

“Did you forget?! The film’s day is on this week!” – said Sakurai-san with a bit unhappy face.

“Ah, you’re right! Yes. I didn’t forget at all!” – I told the suspicious answer to sad Sakurai-san.

“I found that we can reserve seats in Ikebukuro cinema even for the opening day!”

“Eh, really?!” – I was surprised hearing that.

“That was unexpected, I thought they were sold-out long ago!”

“It’s what I saw yesterday night, though. So what we do? Kashiwada-kun, if you don’t mind, we can reserve seats for this Saturday, the opening day! I okay with it!”

“Ah, I’m free that day too!”

“Really?! So I can reserve tickets for Saturday?”

“Sure! But I feel bad for you doing all the work...”

“Don’t think about it! Okay, I’ll reserve them!” – joyfully said Sakurai-san with a happy face.

“What about the time?”

“I can go at any time. Sakurai-san, what time would you like?”

“Eh? Well... At 8, I think...”

“At 8?!” – I was surprised. She meant 8 AM, right? In the morning? I have a shift in Friday until night, so 8 AM would be difficult. Why would I come so early, if it’s not an otaku event? And she is reserving tickets by the net, so there is no need to worry about it...

“Ah, it’s too early, right? I’m sorry! It was a joke! Then, what about 1 PM? We could walk around in Ikebukuro before the film...”

“Okay, I guess it’s fine.”

“Okay! So we meet at 1 PM in front of the Ikebukuro station, okay?”

“Yes!”

Meeting at 1 PM in Ikebukuro and going to a cinema... It looks like a date.

“Kashiwada-kun, what is it?”

“Oh, no, nothing!”

My guilty thought might have expressed on my face, so I rejected that shaking

my head.

“By the way, are you going from the school now, Kashiwada-kun?”

“Yes, I am.”

“What about we...”

“...?”

Sakurai-san tried to say something, but she was thinking too much, when...

“Ah, Azuki-cha-an!” – two other girls called her from behind. Apparently, Sakurai-san’s friends.

“Are you going home now? Let’s go together!~”

“Eh?! ... Ah, okay...” – Sakurai-san replied after some hesitation.]

“Okay... Goodbye, Kashiwada-kun...”

“Sure, take care.”

And we parted our ways.

The date on Saturday...

I want to see the film, but I’m a simple man and I have some lewd expectations. Oh, stop. It’s not a date by any means. After all, I like Hasegawa, not Sakurai-san, so I can’t possibly call it a date. Two otaku friends are going to play together.

“Heh... Good for you, right.”

“...?!”

“You have a girl you like, and yet you’re going to go to a date with another girl. You’re ugly, yet you want to play a popular guy.”

When I turned back to the voice, Koigasaki already passed by me and went into the corridor.

“Koigasaki...”

It seems she was inside the classroom and heard our talk with Sakurai-san. Why is she so ill-natured? Why wouldn’t she go out to Sakurai-san?

“You complained that she might hate you until recently, and now you got so cocky.”

“I’m not, though.”

It seems she is still angry about what I said this morning, and trying to hurt me. She passed by me and going to go home alone.

“K-Koigasaki!” – I stopped her quickly. I would lose time to apologize.

“What?” – she said with a sore face.

“Nothing. Let’s go together.” – I invited her, thinking how to apologize. I thought she would reject me, but she thought about something.

“Well, okay. I have to talk with you.” – she agreed.

“You know, I’ve bought the Murasaki-san’s book at the Comiket.”

“Eh? Sure.”

I thought I could apologize while we were going to the station, but I thought I have to listen to her story first.

“I didn’t want to give it to Suzuki-kun after I understood he has a girlfriend, but I want to give it to him, after all.”

“Eh? You wanted to keep it?! You would flush all down to drain.”

It was a little shock for me. She did so much to get the book, and now she just gives up?..

“But if Suzuki-kun has a girlfriend, there is no meaning doing it. It just makes me depressed.”

“I think the fact Suzuki has a girlfriend is your delusion.”

“You’re saying this even now...”- Koigasaki looked at me with disdain. I guess it’s impossible to reach out to her brain.

“I had thought to give up Suzuki-kun, I can’t fight with a girl who won already... But even if I can’t be his girlfriend now, sometime he might fall in love with me even more that he loves her, and the possibility of we become a couple is not a zero. I don’t think he would drop his girlfriend right away, but if there would be a problem between them, he can fall in love with me. So I think it’s a

good thing to work for the future.”

She believes Suzuki has a girlfriend, but now she is more positive than earlier. And she is not giving up on him anymore. Anyway, she is in good mood. Bad mood doesn't suit her.

“Plus, I have increased a couple of likeness points!”

“Eh?”

“Well, he praised my cosplay at that event!:

“Eh...”

I didn't expect the cosplay would pop up right now...

“If he had told you about the cosplay, I guess he liked it, right?”

“...”

Yes, Suzuki praises a beauty wearing Hibine Ruru's cosplay, he said she was cute. However, he didn't notice that she is Koigasaki. And Koigasaki still doesn't know that. I'm the only person who knows that, so I thought to tell it to Koigasaki, but imagining Koigasaki's reaction... I couldn't say that.

“Why are you silent?”

I thought how to say it to Koigasaki, and she suspected something.

“Well...”

It's hard to say, but I decided to reveal the truth now.

“Thing is Suzuki didn't notice that Hibine Ruru and you are the same person.”

“...Huh?” – Koigasaki seems like she can't comprehend my words, she is looking at with big eyes.

“What do you mean? How...”

“In other words, he praised about Hibine Ruru, but he doesn't know that it was you.”

“Why?! We had a talk! And I was close, and he didn't recognize me?”

“Well, you have a wig and that make-up like another person, and...”

I wanted to say he hadn't contacted with Koigasaki so he doesn't remember her voice and face, but it would be too cruel, so I stopped.

"I can't believe it..."

She frowned and fell pale. I barely heard her mumbling "I was so stupid being happy then..."

I didn't expect her to be shocked so much, so I am feeling terrible for I said it so easily. Probably, it was a bad timing for this. She was depressed Suzuki has a girlfriend, and now she lost her last hope. I shouldn't have told it now, yet, I feel I'd never said it otherwise. Koigasaki stood for a while, then she rose her head and looked at me. I thought she recovered a bit, but...

"And why did you hide that from me?" – she said glaring at me.

"You had watched me and thought it's fun?"

"What?!" – she suddenly got angry at me, and I got angry too. She blames me again for own fail.

"You thought that on your own, giving me no time to explain!"

I couldn't say it, really. I couldn't say that to happy Koigasaki.

"Huh..." – she made a deep sigh.

"You have to tell such things to me. Why do you think we have this mutual help treaty?!" – she said with anger and disappointment and glares at me.

...Why do we have this mutual help treaty?

This phrase hooked me. She is saying why did she concluded the treaty with somebody like me. There is a chance of she doesn't think so, or it's nothing but words thrown in rage, but I was reaching my limits. She thinks of me as a spacer between her and Suzuki, and this fact was engraved by this phrase. I knew from the very beginning that she only thinks how to get close to Suzuki, but for some reason, it irritates me now.

"Okay. I am sorry I didn't tell you. I'm so useless..." – I said in a provocative tone.

"What is that tone? You don't think you're bad, and you provoking me on top

of that!”

“I apologized to you, so why you dissatisfied? I think it’s a good time to say you one thing.”

“W-what...”

“I did conclude a treaty with you, but I’m not your personal handyman, not your slave, or your dog. Do you think that is my duty to support you, to work on you?”

“Huh? Why would you angry on me? It’s ugly!”

Her words heat me up even more.

“If you’re so unhappy with me...”

Step by step, I’m losing self-control.

“...we could break this treaty.”

I couldn’t understand what I’ve said in that moment. Those words spilled out of my mouth, it was not my thoughtful decision. Koigasaki’s face was distorted by the anger moment ago, but now it became indifferent.

What I’m saying?.. Why did I say that? I don’t think this way at all. It would be difficult for me without Koigasaki, and there is one more reason – it would be sad for me, if my relations with Koigasaki would break.

An awkward silence fell. I have to say something while I can deny it, but I’m still angry at Koigasaki, so there is no way I can deny it now, and Koigasaki must feel this too. After a few seconds, Koigasaki said.

“I understand.”

Eh?

“Okay. From today, our treaty is void!”

What did Koigasaki say right now? Somewhere deep inside I had a hope she would stop me. Like, why you said that, Kashiwada, you’re useless without me. what am I thinking about, if it was me who asked for this?

“Bye.”

“Eh...”

Koigasaki said a cold goodbye and went to the station alone at a fast pace, as if saying me to not follow her.

Wait, did she take that seriously? Didn't she understand it was a phrase said out of rage? So you're fine to break this treaty so easily?.. And I was the only side who depended on you... And this is the end, really?

I was telling this in my mind to Koigasaki's back. I just stood there watching her figure disappearing.

Chapter 5

That evening, I didn't feel the dinner's taste, and I couldn't fall asleep easily. I know the reason, of course, but I don't know how to solve it. I thought I could solve it by emailing apologizes to Koigasaki. However, if the treaty is dissolved, she could block my email address, and my phone number. If Koigasaki got angry, this is possible enough. If she actually did it, I would never recover from this, so I didn't email her.

The next day, I went to school in bad mood. I wonder what face she would make seeing me. I have a pale hope that she would act as usual, however she passed by me in the corridor, and I understood this is the reality.

This is really bad.

Probably, Koigasaki wanted to nullify that treaty long before I said it, if she has agreed so easily. She has a strong sense of duty, so she couldn't just evade from the obligations she once assumed, even it was a bother for her recently. To begin with, she is on the top of class's hierarchy, unlike me, the lower rank. The treaty was the only reason for her to have something to do with the likes of me.

I guess, it would be natural if she thought she wouldn't have to listen to this ugly guy if only there was no treaty, and she agreed to break it off. Also, I'm emotionally unstable, so even if I apologized, I can say something bad again. I not only said harsh things about her novel that morning, I never apologized for that, and I made things even worse. I have no idea what to do next. I couldn't talk to her, and, of course, she didn't speak to me.

"I begging you, Momo-chan~!"

The same day, a break between lessons. I didn't want to speak to anybody, so I just slept on my desk, when I heard Sasagawa's voice from behind. It seems she speaks with Koigasaki.

"You have no boyfriend, right? Then, it's okay! I'll bring some handsome boy!"

"I have none, but I don't like such things."

“Momo, you’re sad recently, I’m sure if we go to the matchmaking party, you’ll get better!”

What are they speaking about? Sasagawa is asking something from Koigasaki, but Koigasaki is hesitating. I can’t hear all because of surrounding noise.

“Honestly speaking, I’ve shown your photo to the organizer, and he liked you! So you can’t just say you’re not coming, okay?”

“Don’t do this without asking!”

“Ple-ase, consider this helping me~!”

“Huh... Okay, I understood. I’m coming.”

I couldn’t hear their conversation until the end, so I didn’t know what they were talking about, but it seems they agreed. Koigasaki yielded. I couldn’t hear the most important – what was she agreed on. I was curious, so I slowly raised my head, and turned to where she should sit. I thought she too busy with the conversation she wouldn’t notice me. But...

On the moment I turned back Koigasaki talked with Sasagawa, but our eyes met. In other words, Koigasaki was watching me before that. I felt uncomfortable and averted my eyes, and lay down again. Why would she look at me when she was speaking with Hasegawa? Does she have something to say? Or she just wondered why am I lying on the desk? Or she wants to reconcile... Such thoughts passed through my mind and dissolved. Well, I understand that none of that, though.

The day ended, we didn’t talk at all. The next day we hadn’t spoken too.

I remember something like this had happened before, but this time things are far more serious. I can’t even make a flag for Hasegawa in this unstable situation. Moreover, I have no will at all, I feel like I was dead already.

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Saturday.

The day when I planned to go to the anime film with Sakurai-san came.

I couldn’t sleep properly those days, so I opened my eyes around the time when I usually wake up for school. I took a meal and prepared while watching

TV.

I wanted to put on my contact lenses, however I noticed they are gone. I'm using one-week contacts, but I surely thought in the last week that it's the last one and I have to buy new, and I forgot to buy some. Before I had the work my parents would give me money for them, but now they stopped because I should have own money. I started to work because I wanted to have some money for my otaku things, clothes, and to play, but contacts are expensive. I don't want to be short of money, but the glasses don't suit me at all, I have to buy them quickly. Well, I have no choice but to wear my glasses that I'm usually using at home.

"Eh, Naoki?! You're so early! Rare!" – Akari, my little sister, wore up after me, and she is surprised.

"What is it? Work? Or some otaku event?"

Does she think I have no other reason to go outside? What a rude. It's true, though.

"Neither."

"So why are you so early?"

"I'm going to a cinema."

I told her the title of the film.

"Eh? I wanted to watch it too!" – she said loudly.

"W-where do you go?"

"Uh? Ikebukuro."

"Ikebukuro?!" – she got loud again.

"Oh, great! I wanted to go to Ikebukuro at least once!"

"Oh, I bet you just want to go through the "maiden road"."

She is the same level of fujoshi as Sakurai-san. I guess, Ikebukuro is a special place for the fujoshi.

"I want to see the Animate, K-Books, or butlers café..."

“You’re a fujoshi, and yet never been on the maiden road?”

“Uh... I was in Animate at Akihabara!”

Akihabara is closer to our home than Ikebukuro. Ikebukuro is not that far, but Akari is in junior high, so it could be a great distance for her.

“Well, I’ll go in Akihabara, however I don’t know whether I’d be there. Also, I don’t know what to reply if you say you want to go the maiden road...”

I remembered that we agreed to walk in Ikebukuro before the film.

“The maiden road? You boys will go the maiden road?.. Naoki, are you going to become a fudanshi (tl.note – a male version of fujoshi) to be popular?!”

“As if I would! Well, there will be no “us boys”.”

“Eh?! You say you’re going to a date?!” – Akari’s face distorted for some reason.

“I don’t think it’s a date. I guess, she doesn’t think this way.”

“...In other words, you’re going to walk with a fujoshi?”

“Well, I guess.”

I thought she would make fun of me, or abuse again, but she is looking on the floor.

“I am... a fujoshi too... Why would you go with another fujoshi...” – she said with a low unusual voice. But then...

“Well, I guess she is not cute at all, and you only buy her a BL novel!”

She actually abused me, but I think I saw tears in her eyes... Or I’m imagining things. Why doesn’t Akari like the fact I’m going to play with a girl, despite a fujoshi?

“What makes you think she is not cute?”

“How can a girl who would walk with you, a fujoshi, to be cute?!”

Hey, that means you’re not cute too, because you’re a fujoshi. Don’t blame your species.

“Oh, I have to go. Bye-bye.”

I left screaming Akari home and ran away. I thought I woke up early, but I spent too long to speak with Akari, so I couldn't set my hair properly. Also, my contacts ran out, and I'm ugly owing to glasses. I put the only decent cloth I have, the one I bought in Hanjiro. Koigasaki made fun of it, because it's summer clothes, so I have to buy new one quicker. Oh, let me forget about her at least today...

I get inside the subway, and arrived at the agreed place, the east exit of Ikebukuro station, at 1 PM sharp. Wandering around the station, I found Sakurai-san.

"Oh, Kashiwada-kun!"

"Sakurai-san, I'm sorry for the waiting!"

"Kashiwada-kun, you're wearing glasses today?!" – asked Sakurai-san with a strange excitement.

"Ah, yeah, my contacts are ended... I'm sorry..." – I decided to apologize.

"Why are you apologizing? I like it!" – replied Sakurai-san with the same excitement.

I was surprised seeing Sakurai-san. She would always have two bulbs of hair, and wear a modest casual outfit, however today she was different. She unbounded her bulbs, and tied her long black hair it with a half-apple. A slightly free at her chest light-purple one-piece dress was mini-skirt length. Also she wears a fur beige waistcoat, black tights, and a necklace. I thought she is not using a makeup except cosplay events, but she has put one now. She looks like a real mature woman, unlike usual Sakurai-san.

"...? Kashiwada-kun?" – Sakurai-san felt strange that I was silent, and spoke to me.

"Oh... I'm sorry. Let's go!" – I quickly started to walk first, to pretend nothing happened.

Then I remembered when we did the date simulation with Koigasaki in Harajuku. She went out from the changing room, and I was so impressed by her cuteness I couldn't say a word. Koigasaki said I must say praise her, at least some typical, and decreased my points.

“...”

I turned back and looked at Sakurai-san again. Yep, she is cute, regardless how you would look at her.

“Kashiwada-kun?” – she tilt her head. She seems to be wondering why I’m looking at her.

“Oh, well... You look different today. You’re cute...”

I remembered Koigasaki’s advice and did as she told me. I starting to hate myself for remembering her even now. I thought I decided to forget about her at least today.

Also, I got embarrassed for what I have said. She might think it’s too deliberate, and she would be displeased by this. Looks different... it may seem like I’m saying she is not cute usually. She won’t be happy hearing such thing from the likes of me, to begin with. With these feelings I turned back to Sakurai-san again...

“Ah, thank you! I’m happy!” – said Sakurai-san looking downwards. Her ears are red.

...Could it be that she is blushing? She is cute still...

“Okay, let’s go, then.”

Probably, Sakurai-san is trying to hide her blush, she gave a lively reply and left me behind. I’m running behind her.

It’s interesting that Sakurai-san on weekend can wear a fine dress, like today, or she can wear her usual clothes. How does she decide it? A girl’s whim?

“Well, it’s about the film... The best time was 1:50 PM, let’s go there! What do you think?”

After I remembered Koigasaki my mood is not its best, but Sakurai-san, unlike me, looks more lively than usual. I guess, she is anticipating the film. Or she could be thinking about the maiden road.

“Oh, that would be best! Thank...” – I wanted to thank her for the tickets, but she was one step behind me.

“Oh, I’m sorry.” I stopped, and Sakurai-san quickly came up with me.

“No, it’s my fault being slow...”

Yes, it’s true, she would walk faster usually.

“You’re walking too fast! Match your speed with the girl’s.” – Koigasaki’s voice sounded in my head again. It’s difficult to get her out of the head for some reason. She said is on the date simulation in Harajuku.

“I’m sorry, I’ve put on unused shoes...”

I looked at her feet. Sakurai-san was wearing light-brown knee-high boots. I get it now. I remember her wearing sneakers. You can’t walk as usual in unusual footwear. I have to watch my own speed.

“Eh, what shall we do before the film?”

The film is starting at 1:50 PM, and my wristwatch tells that it’s around an hour left.

“Kashiwada-kun, do you want to go somewhere?”

“Hm... I have none...”

I would like to go to Animate, but there is nothing for me now.

“Oh, I see...”

“And you, Sakurai-san? What about the maiden road?” – I asked easily.

“Eh...Eh?! No, we are on da... I’m with you today, so I can hold myself!” – Sakurai-san shook her head.

“Eh? You don’t have to hold yourself, I’ll go with you wherever you want.”

“We shouldn’t, really! Thank you for concern, but there is no point going with you through the places I’m visiting with girls every time! It’s a rare case I’m with you... Eh, well... I think I wanted to go to another place!”

“What kind of place?”

“Well... If you don’t mind, let’s go to a game center?”

I was surprised by what Sakurai-san said.

“Of course.”

So Sakurai-san is a gamer... Or she just wants to play UFO catcher?.. It seems she wants to visit the game center in the Sunshine Street, so we head to there.

“You know, today is so long-awaited day for me I couldn’t sleep enough yesterday!”

“Really? I didn’t sleep well yesterday too...”

But I was depressed because of the quarrel with Koigasaki, not because of the today’s film.

“R-really? Kashiwada-kun, you wanted to see the film so much, too?”

“Eh? Ah...”

I thought to say not, but I stopped. I felt it would be rude.

“O-of course!”

“I see!” – Sakurai-san happily smiled, and I feel a little guilty for the lie.

We didn’t speak for a while.

[Why are you silent? You have to speak something fun!] – I remembered that “date” again. Oh, Koigasaki, let me forget you at least today! What kind of fun topic I can bring up about now?...

“Sakurai-san, are you going to a game center regularly?”

“Um, yes! I’m going there with friends! And you, Kashiwada-kun?”

“Yes, I often played music games with my friends in junior high. Like I-Pro, or MagiSchool.”

I-Pro is an acronym of “The Idol Producer”, as you can get from the name, it’s a game where you have to play a producer. I liked it in junior high, I would make some cards and spent all my pocket money in a game center. MagiSchool is an acronym of “Quiz Magic School”, a quiz game, I made cards there too.

“Eh, really? I was playing I-Pro too!”

“Really?!”

I thought I-Pro is a game for male fans, so I was surprised that a girl like Sakurai-san played it.

“Kashiwada-kun, who was your character?”

“I played Azumi-san.”

Azumi-san is the oldest character in I-Pro, a girl with decent breast older-sister type girl of my favorite type.

“And you, Sakurai-san?”

“I played Haruna, but I loved all characters, they all are so cute! I even have DS console.”

“Really? I wanted it too, but it was too expensive for me.”

“Oh, I can lend it to you!”

“Are you sure?!”

Before coming to the game center, we talked about I-Pro. I never thought I could talk about it with a girl. I thought if Sakurai-san is a fujoshi she wouldn't be interested in such thing... But well, she had told that she likes cute girls. I was impressed, how it is great to share the same interest with a girl. Then, we came to the game center in Sunshine Street.

“What game did you want to play today?”

“Eh, well... Actually... Well, I came not to play a game...”

“Eh, really?”

“Uh, yes...”

She came to a game center, and she doesn't want to play? What would that mean? Sakurai-san blushed and looking on the floor. I understand she wants to say something, but it's apparently difficult to say.

“Eh... Eeeeh... K-Kashiwada-kun, if you don't mind... Can we make a purikura together?!”

“A purikura?!” – I was surprised and replied loudly. A purikura... I would never think about it. I'm not proud of it, but I never took a purikura in my life. Why would she want to take a purikura with me? What would she have shot with the likes of me?

“You don't want?” – Sakurai-san looks into my face in panic.

“O-of course I want!” – I replied quickly.

How can I possibly do not want?

“Really? Let’s go, then?”

“Okay, but are you sure you want it with me. I don’t think it would be an interesting one with somebody like me...”

Could it be she wants a purikura with me? I can’t help but imagine things so far.

“It’s not like that! W-well, I’m... I’m in cosplay purikura recently, and... I’m taking a purikura every time I’m out with somebody who doesn’t mind taking it with me.”

I understand now, she is taking a purikura each time, with anybody. I see. I’m imagining things to myself again. Well, just I thought.

“Well, it’s too late to say this, but... A cosplay?!”

“Yes, a cosplay purikura. Many game centers lend cosplay outfits. Here, in GiGO, too.””

Which means, Sakurai-san will make a cosplay purikura now? I’d like to have some with me.

“But is it okay if a boy will take it?”

“Yes, it’s okay if you’re accompanying a girl. A male cannot have a cosplay, though...”

Of course, I didn’t want to do a cosplay, so I glad for that.

Cosplay purikura shop is on the sixth floor, so we used an elevator to come up. Many young girls came up with us in the same elevator, and I was the only male. I got nervous. The fact I’d take a purikura with a girl is exciting itself, but Sakurai-san would wear a cosplay! I’m happy, but I’m getting a strange feeling. We reached the sixth floor, and I’m following Sakurai-san.

“There is a cosplay studio at the seventh floor, where we can take photos with our cosplay. I want to visit that place so much...”

“Oh...” – I replied with ease, but I feel strange already. All visitors except me

are women. I started to worry whether I really can be here, but then I saw a paper saying “man should be with a woman”, and I relaxed. Right from the start, Sakurai-san turned left, and I came up to her quickly. Sakurai-san took one basket from a basket pile, and rolled it along the showcase. Above the basket pile, I saw a paper explaining the cosplay procedure. It seems here is a self-service system, she would put clothes she like in her basket, and return it after the photo session complete. However...

“Huh? Only one suit left?!” – Sakurai-san is surprised by what she saw there. Yes, today is a Sunday, too much of customers. Most of the suits are in use, and only one suit is in the showcase.

“And why this suit of all things?!” – cried Sakurai-san looking at it. There are too much of women customers, so I can’t approach there easily, and I can’t see that suit because it’s hidden by Sakurai-san’s body. I wonder why Sakurai-san would cry? I’m very interested. But I have no courage to ask, after all. Sakurai-san waited for a while for somebody return another suit, but nobody did, and she gave up.

“I’m sorry to have you wait... I decided what I’ll wear, and I’ll change clothes now...” – she told me, with an awkward feeling.

“Not at all... So you decided, right?”

The suit in her basket was black, and it was all I could figure. I thought I should look forward to Sakurai-san in this suit.

“I’ll go, then...” – said Sakurai-san and went to the dressing room.

Few minutes passed.

“Eehh?!” – I could restrain myself seeing Sakurai-san.

It was a bunny girl suit.

“T-today is Saturday, nothing else left...” – said Sakurai-san with a red face, looking on the floor. She is trying to hide something around her chest, however at least a half of her light and soft breast is visible. Her lower part is very sexy, net tights covering her white legs... Oh crap, something happens if I continue looking at her, so I averted my eyes.

“I’m sorry, you must can’t watch on this vile thing... We’ll finish quickly!”

You’re wrong, in fact, I’m thankful you showing me this, I wanted to say, but it would sound vulgar, so I couldn’t say anything.

“Where we take a purikura? It is crowded... what about here?”

I was running around in the shop trying to hide my ecstasy. But almost all of the cabins were crowded, and only one was free, so I wanted to go there.

“Oh, we can’t go there! These devices are shabby right after use.” – Sakurai-san took my arm to stop me. I’d be extremely excited if you do this wearing this suit, so please stop, I’d like to say, but I’d be bumped.

“Eh. So purikura devices can be shabby?”

“Sure! Purikura depends on a device. Oh, there is a bit crowded, but let’s go there! It can take a cute photo, and we can write something!”

Sakurai-san lined up to the device with a name “LADY BY TOKYO”. I thought purikura devices are doing the same, but it was wrong. That device is popular and its queue is longer. I can see only girls in cosplay around me, and I’m the only man around here. I felt embarrassed by I’m the only boy, and at the same time, I was afraid they think why is this ugly boy is taking a purikura? I started worrying.

“I’m sorry, Kashiwada-kun, for following my egoism, I brought you to this place full of women. Are you embarrassed, after all?”

I am embarrassed, looking and a short girl with a guilty face wearing the sexy bunny girl suit.

“I’m okay, don’t worry about that!” – I answered.

Our turn came, and we came inside the device. It’s a small room, and if I’d enter with Sakurai-san in this suit... While I started worrying about this, Sakurai-san is entering money.

“Oh, I’m sorry! How much is it?”

“It’s okay, because it’s my egoism!”

I wanted to argue, but Sakurai-san looked at the device with a serious face

and started to select by a touch pen, I couldn't disturb her. I'll do that later. Looking at her unprotected back, I couldn't control my eyes. So this was so exposed suit... I used the fact Sakurai-san doesn't know she is being watched, so I looked at her on my utmost. I have to engrave this scenery into my memory forever.

“Okay, let's start! Hey, Kashiwada-kun, why are you smiling?!”

Suddenly Sakurai-san turned back, and I thought my heart would stop. Smiling... could it be I was grinning? Crap. I bet she was displeased.

“Come closer, or it would not fit into the photo!”

“O-oh, I'm sorry.”

Sakurai-san grabbed my arm and draw me closer. We two were displayed on the screen in front of us.

... I felt.

I felt her soft breast for a moment. Probably, Sakurai-san didn't notice this.

“Kashiwada-kun, take a pose, too!”

“O-okay!” – said Sakurai-san while making a “peace” sign and smiling. I made a smile and a peace sign too.

[3, 2, 1—]

An artificial voice started to countdown aloud. I thought, I never forget this feeling.

“Okay, let's go to the next one!”

“Eeh?!” – I thought the session is over, but it will be repeated again. Sakurai-san walked first, and instructed me to follow her behind.

Sakurai-san stood in front of me, and she had to take a half-crouching position and bent forward for I was reflected too. I almost can see her breast, but she quickly hid it.

Thank you, gods! Thank you for giving me this life!

[chop]

The photo was taken while I thanked gods. I couldn't see the screen, but probably I had a stupid face.

“Okay, next!”

“Eh? How many are them?”

After that, we visited four devices until the session ended.

“Taking purikura is a long story.” – I said, going out.

“It's too early! We have to select a size of eyes. Kashiwada-kun, which one you prefer?”

“Eh?”

I turned back and saw [please choose the size of eyes] and our recent pictures. Sakurai-san checked [big eyes] from the list, and our eyes became bigger.

“Uwah I'm so ugly! Isn't it way too unnatural?”

It was strange when only one part is big. Sakurai-san is one thing, but my big eyes gave me the creeps.

“Yes, it's too big, seems strange... What about this one?”

“Well, that's fine, I guess...”

Sakurai-san chose [a bit bigger], and pressed [apply].

“Wrong way, Kashiwada-kun! The next is writings!” – Sakurai-san grabbed my arm when I was going to go to the exit.

“Writings?”

We walked around the devices and saw there “writings”. There were two big touchscreens, and Sakurai-san entrusted me one of them. I took a pen tablet and looked on the screen. There was our purikura in the center, and buttons for writing around it.

“What should I do here?..”

“Kashiwada-kun, write whatever you like!”

What I like?.. I have to think. I selected a blue pen. But what should I write?

[Bunny girls are the best!] would disgust Sakurai-san, so it's out of the question, [the first purikura] is true for me, but not for Sakurai-san, so this would be off too. While I was thinking, the time expired.

"I'm sorry, I didn't write anything..."

"Oh, it's okay, I have written on every, except you was trying to write, don't worry!"

This is an experienced girl for you.

I selected "two persons" on the next screen, and the next I saw the field for entering an email address, I guess they send that purikura by email. It looks like Sakurai-san remember her email unlike me. I took out my phone I started entering it from there, but I before I completed entering the time expired again.

It seems printing will took some time, so Sakurai-san went to the dressing room. I waited near to the device, and after a while two separated purikura ejected from it. There was a cute bunny girl in a certain pose and a boy with a stupid face.

"I'm sorry for waiting!" – Sakurai-san changed her clothes and came back.

"Oh, printing is done already."

I handed the photos to her, and she watched them for a while.

"Oh, thank you very much for taking it with me!" – she bowed to me and thanked.

"Eh? Not at all!"

I guess it's me who has to thank you for showing that.

"Okay, let's go." –said Sakurai-san and put purikura into her wallet.

"Eh..." – I wasn't ready for that throwaway move.

"Eh?" – Sakurai-san surprised.

"Oh, well..."

I was anticipating I'll have a half, but Sakurai-san took all of them.

"Eh... Could it be you wanted this purikura, Kashiwada-kun?!" – Sakurai-san is

surely surprised.

“I’d want one if I can have one, but it’s completely fine if not! I’ll give the money for them, of course!”

“I’m sorry, I was convinced you don’t want it.”

Sakurai-san quickly took her wallet and give me one purikura.

“Please.”

Was is displeasing to see me wanting the purikura?..

“Thank you. I’m sorry for demanding it...”

“Eh?! No, I am actually happy that you want it.”

After that I took out my wallet saying I’ll pay for that, but she rejected again, repeating that she had insisted, so she pays all the price.

Then we left the game center and entered the big cinema across the street.

“It’s 40 minutes now, we came just in time.”

Taking purikura in the game center, we spent just the accurate amount of time. It seems, we can watch a film on the eighth floor of that building with pinball and billiard saloon. I was going to line up to for tickets, but Sakurai-san told me we don’t have to line up. She explained to me there is a device for printing of online-reserved tickets on the eighth floor, so we used the elevator to get to the eighth floor. It was right on the left side from the elevator, so Sakurai-san printed them.

“Here.”

“Thank you!” – I received the ticket, quickly took out my wallet from my bag and gave Sakurai-san money for it. It seems reserved tickets are cheaper than usual, only 1,300 yen. Only for my ticket? Yes, I guess. It’s not a date, after all, but I started thinking about it. But then I remembered Koigasaki’s words again, “You have to treat a girl at least during a date!”. Well, I can’t help but think about Koigasaki...

“Don’t you want to buy something?” – Sakurai-san asked me once we left the sell zone.

“I guess, something to drink.”

I took a cola, and Sakurai-san took an orange juice, we paid for that, and entered the cinema. Our seats were rear seats closer to the center.

“You got the great seats!” – I told Sakurai-san that it’s easy to watch the film from here.

“Oh, n-not at all!”

However, I wasn’t ready we would be so close to each other. It’s dark, and we so close... I got nervous again. Probably, it’s because I’m first time in a cinema with a girl. Also, I remembered Sakurai-san in that attractive bunny girl suit and my heartbeat is accelerated furthermore. Let’s put arms on the armrests and calm down.

“U...!” – I touched Sakurai-san’s hand which was on the armrest already.

“I’m sorry!”

“N-no, that’s my fault...”

I feel so embarrassed our previous casual talk seems to be a nothing vision. I feel uncomfortable to sit silently before the film, so I’m looking for a topic.

“Ah, Sakurai-san, are you going to a cinema frequently?”

“Eh? Aa, well, not usually... Recently, we watched “We Were There” with Momo-chan, do you know than manga?”

Oh, crap, Koigasaki popped up again.

“I see...”

“By the way, about Momo-chan...”

So you’re going to continue?..

“She is going to go to a matchmaking party today, you know?”

“?!” *choked*

I choked with my cola hearing that. Koigasaki? To a matchmaking party? That Koigasaki who is hardly speaking with boys except me?

“Eh, Kashiwada-kun, didn’t you know?!”

“I didn’t, uh.” – I was surprised, and I couldn’t calm myself completely.

“Are you sure about that?”

“Yes, she told me this.”

By the way, could this be the topic, which Hasegawa brought to her in the classroom?

“Where?..”

“She said it would be a karaoke in Shinjuku...”

What is she thinking about? She is not fit for such parties.

“Kashiwada-kun, are you alright?”

“Ah, I’m sorry. I’m okay, I’ve just disappointed in her.” – I said and made a smile, but it wasn’t fun for me. In that moment, the film has begun.

So she really gave up on Suzuki?.. And she told me she would try despite he might have a girlfriend, so what is this?

If I would know she plans to go to that party, I would stop her, because the only thing I can foresee as the outcome, is regret, – I thought for a moment, but then I remembered our treaty is done. She is an unrelated person, I don’t have to help her. I don’t have to worry about her.

*

The film ended.

“It was awesome!” – Sakurai-san turned to me and said it with excitement, once the lights were on.

“Ah, yeah.” – I agreed, but honestly speaking, I don’t really remember what the film was about.

“I’m so impressed!”

I looked on her quickly when we went to the exit. Her eyes are red... Well, I feel I heard somebody’s nose, could it be cried? I tried to remember the scenes where you should cry... Oh, I don’t remember the film. It seems Sakurai-san is too susceptible, or just she has a pure heart...

I feel bad for that I only thought about Koigasaki's matchmaking party, and I was immersed in those thoughts. Crap, why is she disturbs me even now?! Return me my 1,300 yen for the film!

I looked at my wristwatch, it's a bit later of 4:30 PM. The party could be over now, and they might go to the second phase... Is she all right? When we were at the karaoke during the first semester, and some guys would sit close to her, her face was clouded. Probably, nobody there knows she is on bad terms with boys, and nobody care... Is she really all right?..

"Kashiwada-kun?"

"Eh?"

Sakurai-san spoke to me.

"Are you alright?"

"Ah, yes, I'm sorry."

When we left the building, Sakurai-san told me something, but I didn't notice her. Crap! I try to not think about her again and again, but I can't help but thinking about her.

After that, I talked about the film with Sakurai-san (actually, I was listening to her).

"So what we will do next?"

It's almost 5 PM now, and it's too early for returning home. However our goal was to watch the film, probably, Sakurai-san has no ulterior motive inviting me. She must be wanting to return after the film. Honestly confessing, I'm unable to concentrate for now, even she is nearby. I feel bad for Sakurai-san to think about something else.

"What? Break up?" – said with a light smile. Sakurai-san looked at me with a surprised face. I guess, to break up now would be off. We are no grade schoolers anymore.

"Well..." – Sakurai-san wanted to say something.

"Oh, it's too early for break up. What about to call at some café to eat something?" – I added.

Oh, it's too fast for dinner. I wonder what Sakurai-san thinks.

"W-well... If you don't mind, we could have some tea and break up then." – suggested Sakurai-san seeing I'm thinking.

"Uh, sure."

It's perfect, I'm thirsty now.

"If you don't mind, there is a café I wanted to visit..."

"Sure! Let's go there!"

"Really? Thank you very much!"

And Sakurai-san started guiding me there.

"I wanted to visit that café for some time, at least one... Oh, this road."

"This road, I feel..."

I was following Sakurai-san behind. She made her way to the maiden road. The street that called the maiden road. I walked it a few times before. Actually, there is the main department of Animate, and I was there. There were many young women on the maiden road. They are going in and out from Animate and other otaku shops.

"I only visited Animate in this street."

"Really? Oh, I guess you are. The most of other places are for women."

We passed by Animate, then LASHINBANG, then K-BOOKS, and other otaku shops. Sakurai-san looked at them while walking.

"We can visit there is you want."

"No, I forced you to visit so many places, and I don't want to force you anymore!" – she strictly refused. I think restraining yourself hurts your body.

We passed Mandarake, K-BOOKS comic store, and saw K-BOOKS dojinshi store. Yet, this store is for women, so I had never been here.

"It's below there!" – suddenly said Sakurai-san.

"Eh? In this building?"

K-BOOKS building has underground floors, and if you look closely, you would

notice something resembling a list.

“Could it be a butler’s café?”

“Yes, how did you know?”

I have never been here, of course, but I often saw it on TV, and Akari told me about it today.

“I never was here, but I wanted to visit this place once.” – said Sakurai-san with shining eyes. The next thing I noticed was a plate titled “Reservation Information”.

“What is this?”

“Eh?!”

We looked it through. The left column is a timetable, and the right one “reservation status”.

... All of them were “reserved”.

“Eh?! Does it mean this café work by reservation only?!”

“It seems to.”

Sakurai-san was in despair. Well, I feel I heard that they are working on the reservation basis.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t research it beforehand...”

“It’s okay!”

“Oh, by the way, I have a café I was interested in before, what about going there?”

“I’m okay, of course!”

“I’m sorry. That café should be somewhere nearby...”

Sakurai-san started looking for it on her phone, and we went there following the map.

I looked at my wrist watch again. It’s 4:55 PM.

“Ah, Kashiwada-kun, are have to go?”

“Eh?!”

“I thought you’re worried about time, and I don’t want to detain you, if you have some plans.”

Sakurai-san is worried I have been seeing the time too frequently.

“No, it’s all right! Don’t worry!”

“Oh... Really? Okay, then...”

I have no plans. I’m just thinking about Koigasaki at the matchmaking party, like, what she is doing now. To have Sakurai-san worry about me... I’m the worst. I have nothing with Koigasaki, and I’m telling myself to forget her, don’t think about her, many times over and over, and nonetheless...

When I part with Sakurai-san, I sent Koigasaki an email, to confirm she is all right, despite the fact I’m sure she would ignore it.

“Ah, here it is!”

It took about five minutes to reach this café going from the butler’s café. The signboard said that the café was called [DOLCE VITA].

“They are girls dressed as men, right?”

“Yes! I saw them only on the net, and I hadn’t visited this café.”

There was a stairway to the underground, so we went there.

“Welcome home, Lady, Master!” – a waiter spoke to us once we opened the door. I felt something strange, so I looked at the waiter more carefully. By the way, it was written there that here are women dressed as men... Yes, she is too lean for man, clothes style is the visual key, and yes, she is a woman. She is not very shorter than me, so she is rather tall for a woman. I see no breast, probably, it’s bound.

“Would you like a table for two?”

“Yes!”

“Please, follow me.” –she guided us to a table.

Her voice is lower than a usual woman would have, I guess, she lowered it by purpose. It’s the first time I see a woman dressed as a man, so it’s new for me.

The main color in the café is black, so there is a nice soothing atmosphere. There are two types of tables, – counter seats and table seats, and we took a table seat. At a counter seat, a woman customer is speaking about something fun with the woman dressed café attendant. Maybe, she a regular customer. It's strange to see a customer speaking so much with an attendant. It's obviously a café for women, two-thirds of the hall was occupied by them. As for men, they are no more than three, including me, in all hall. I ordered a melon soda, and Sakurai-san took a black tea.

“They wearing men suits are cool!”

“I think so.”

The order is done after a while, and we started to drink.

“Kashiwada-kun, thank for today!”

“Eh?!” – I was surprised Sakurai-san told me that again.

“I really enjoyed today!”

When I just met Sakurai-san, she looked as a timid girl, and I can't imagine this is the same person. Sakurai-san is so simple and good girl... I was very confused during the date with Hasegawa, and now I feel calm. However, this is not a date, we are just walking together, so probably I'm just thinking another way.

“Kashiwada-kun, you were so caring towards me... When I have walked slow, you matched your pace, you have said you're ready to go wherever I want... I was really happy.”

“O, not at all...”

Somebody so indifferent like me could show that care for the only one reason – the date simulation in Harajuku with Koigasaki... I doubt I could do it on otherwise. I just performed the advice she gave me, such as match own speed, or search for the topic. Our treaty is over, and I'm reaping its fruits even now.

“One more thing. I'm sorry, if it's my wrong belief, but aren't you today somehow sad, or feeling unwell?”

“Eh?”

“I thought, you're not so lively today, for a bit.”

Oh, that's terrible. I made Sakurai-san worry about me. That's true, I'm sad until today because of the quarrel with Koigasaki. I thought I would forget her and enjoy the film with Sakurai-san, but I could get rid of her in the end.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I probably not so lively because I didn't sleep properly, but that's okay! I enjoyed being with you today!"

Yes, that's true this day was full of joy for me. However, it could be even better if I could forget Koigasaki.

"R-really? I'm sorry for saying this. It's good, then." – Sakurai-san smiled, and I relaxed again.

"Oh, and... Can I ask you one thing?"

"Eh? Sure, if I can answer."

"Kashiwada-kun, do you... Well... do you have a person you like?!"

"Eh?!" – it was a shocking question for me.

"Oh, there is no deep meaning! It's just remembered... On the Summer Comiket, Momo-chan asked you do you have a person you like, and you couldn't answer..."

"Eh? Koigasaki have asked it?.."

Koigasaki knows that I have one, so I have no idea why she would ask it. I don't remember it, in the first place.

"Yes, before the opening, she played a GREE test, and then..."

"Ah!" – I remembered. Yes, it was a test for deciding whether you're on of the reals.

"I had thought you have, so you couldn't answer...."

"Well, I guess you were right, more or less." – I answered because I have no reason to lie her.

"Eh? So you really have one?! A person you like?.." – Sakurai-san was surprised, and asked again.

"Yeah..."

It's strange that Sakurai-san is interested in it. She might have looked for a topic, I guess.

"I see..." – Sakurai-san answered after a while.

"A person from your class, A class?"

"Well, yes..."

"As I thought, it's Momo-chan..."

"Eh?!" – I surprised aloud hearing her name.

"Of course no, there is no way!"

I remember Sakurai-san asked once in the past, do I like Koigasaki, and I said I don't. And yet she has doubts about I like Koigasaki.

"I guess. You said you don't like her before. I'm sorry for bothering you."

"Not at all..."

After that, she probably guessed by my look that she should ask further, and she didn't ask about the person I like anymore.

"But I was surprised that you like somebody!" – Sakurai-san was confused, but then she made a smile and said it. For a moment, I thought she would blame for I'm playing with another girl while I have the girl I like, but she didn't. I think I thought this way because I felt guilty for myself. Even we don't call it a date, we are playing together, and it's very similar things at the bottom. That is why I relaxed when she made a smile.

"And you, Sakurai-san, do you have a person you like?" – asked her the thing I've been interested a bit.

"Eh?!" – Sakurai-san dropped the spoon she used to stir of her tea on the table.

"Oh, I'm sorry." – she was nervous. It seems she has one, too.

"As for me, well... I'm..."

Sakurai-san picked up her spoon and continued making a stir. I believe sugar and milk were already dissolved, but she is nervous.

“Well...” –she looks on the table, so I can’t see her face. I didn’t expect she would have troubles answering this question.

“I do... I have a person I like.” – she told, avoiding showing her face.

“Eh? Really?” – I was surprised and asked again.

“Yes...”

“Eh? A classmate?” – I got curious and took a step more.

“Eh...” – Sakurai-san was surprised for some reason, and looks at me blankly.

“Well... He is from another class...” – she continued by facing downwards. She must be embarrassed talking about a person she likes. Another class, which means not from D class? Who could it be? I have no idea about her surrounding, hence I don’t know who is she referring to. I want to hear about him, but I didn’t talk about the girl I like, and I’d prefer to not speak about Hasegawa, so I won’t ask Sakurai-san anymore. I’m very interested, but I’ll restrain myself.

“By the way, Momo-chan has a boy she likes, too, right?” – Sakurai-san changed the topic out of concern after a silence.

“Eh? Ah, yes, she has.”

But she is talking about that girl again.

“I don’t know who is he, but I heard he is from her class.”

“Huh...”

Probably, if Koigasaki had a reason to hide Suzuki’s name, I shouldn’t tell too.

“But despite she has a boy she likes, she’s trying to forget him. Like, going to a matchmaking party like today. I wonder what happened...”

Koigasaki wants to forget Suzuki? I don’t think it’s possible, for such passionate Koigasaki to give up so easily. She did so much for him already. And now she went to that party... Which means Sakurai-san is right, and she is trying to give up?..

“...kun... Kashiwada-kun?”

“Eh?”

I returned back owing to Sakurai-san. It seems I have been immersed in own thoughts again.

“So you’re worried about Momo-chan?”

“No, that’s not...”

“B-but she went with a people from the same school, so she should be okay... It’s better than with guys from another school or college.”

“Really?”

“Yes, one of the guys is from your class.”

“Huh. I wonder who.”

“Well... If I recall correctly, she called him Hosokawa-kun...”

I stared blankly hearing that name. Right after the summer vacation ended, Kiritani said Hosokawa from the soccer club did many girls and envied him.

“Kashiwada-kun, what happened? Your face is pale.”

“No, it’s nothing.”

What if Hosokawa shows an interest in Koigasaki, who is trying to give up on Suzuki? Koigasaki is not used for men, so she would believe him, she is an easy target, and then he can take her to some lone place... I should have stopped her. However, Sasagawa is there, and other girls too... I believe they wouldn’t allow that... In the top of that, I severed the treaty, I have nothing with her. She is a bystander. Also, I’m enjoying with Sakurai-san. How can I possibly leave her and go to Koigasaki?

“Kashiwada-kun, so you’re worried about Momo-chan, after all...”

I think, it would be easier if I told Sakurai-san about Koigasaki’s androphobia and about Hosokawa, but Koigasaki didn’t tell about her androphobia anybody but me, so I can’t just reveal it, and I can’t make Sakurai-san worry even more.

“Eh... Not at all! I don’t care about her!” – I tried to pretend her I don’t care, and took my melon soda.

Bushan

“Ah...”

The melon soda slipped out of my hand and overturned on the table.

“Oh, crap...”

“Master, are you okay?” – an attendant wearing man suit ran to me with a towel and wiped it out. It was a good luck that there was not much of it left. I remember I overturned something on the date with Hasegawa... When will this end? However, in the moment I overturned the glass...

[Oh, what on the earth are you doing?!]

The Koigasaki inside my head scolded me. This must be a serious illness.

“Sakurai-san.”

“What?”

I made a slight breath and made a decision. I can't abandon her, after all. Even if that treaty is over, we concluded that treaty. She helped me many times. If I won't help her now, who will? I'm only who know she has androphobia.

“... I'm sorry, honestly.”

“Eh?”

“Today, I have another business I have to do.”

“...”

Sakurai-san kept silence for a while.

“I understood. Let's end out meeting.”

And she smiled at me. I thought, what a good girl is Sakurai-san, and I was full of gratitude to her. I envy to the person Sakurai-san likes.

“Thank you. Forgive me!”

I left 1,000 yen on the table and left the café.

That's bad.

Koigasaki might be in trouble right now. Naïve girls are easy to deceive.

I dialed her, but she didn't answer. I tried three more times, but she never answered. My anxiety rose. I was walking to the Ikebukuro station at first, but I

couldn't help myself and noticed that I was running. I made a transfer to Shinjuku way at Yamanote line, and moved to Shinjuku station.

To sum it up, all I did today is worrying about her.

Right before ceasing of the treaty she made complaints that she was helping me, and yet she doesn't get closer with Suzuki, that it's unfair. Now I understood she was right. I could help her more to make her closer to Suzuki. That was the reason for the treaty.

I want to do that all, if it's not too late. I want to give back that debt. I want to help her to become an otaku and start dating with Suzuki. I want to teach her to be an otaku.

She must be in trouble now. Being unaccustomed to matchmaking parties and such, she went there out of despair. She must be feeling helpless. I must have stopped her, so I have to save her now.

However, I noticed a serious problem. I don't know where the party is held. Sakurai-san said they are in a karaoke in Shinjuku, but there are plenty of karaoke in Shinjuku.

I looked on the phone one more time. Why is she not replying? Because we broke the treaty? Or she is still angry?

I arrived at Shinjuku station. I have no other choice except going at random. I passed through the Southern exit and started to look for karaoke. I'm not going to Shinjuku, so I don't know where karaoke are located. Right from the exit I saw a row of karaoke shops, so I went there. Once I entered the shop, I understood that there is something I should have thought about long ago. How should I look for them in a karaoke? It's impossible to comb all of karaoke rooms one by one.

"Good evening, are you alone?" – a shop worker spoke to me.

"No... I have agreed to meet someone here..." – I answered after a while. I had no other choice.

"I understood. Do you know the number of a cabin with your friends?"

"No, I'm..."

I looked on the phone again. Still no reply from Koigasaki. What should I do? I don't know Sasagawa's contacts, furthermore.

"Koigasaki, or Sasagawa, of Hosokawa... Is here somebody of them? I'm not sure how many are them, but I guess quite a few." – I told names of those who must be at the party for sure, but there is no meaning of this if the party registered by somebody else.

"Please, wait." – the worker looked on a table at the counter. He looked then at another page, and...

"Unfortunately, I cannot find those names." – he replied.

"I see. Thank you..."

I gave up and left that karaoke. I have to dial Koigasaki, after all. She might ignore it, be displeased, lose her temper, but I'd dial until she replies. There is no other way to find her. I walked towards the station, while dialing her.

"!.."

I noticed. Koigasaki and Hosokawa went out from a small alley at a MacD across the street. I stopped dialing, watched for cars and crossed the street.

"Koigasaki!" – I caught up near them, and called her.

"Eh?" – Koigasaki turned back and surprised seeing me.

"W...why?.."

"Y-you..." – I lost my breath because I run, so I can't utter a word. I wanted to say that's because you don't pick up your phone.

"Who are you? I feel I say you somewhere. Kashiwagi... I guess?"

It's Kashiwada. He irritates me. Doesn't he remember names of his classmates? Am I so plain?

"What are you doing here?!" – asked Koigasaki. What should I answer to this?.. That good she is fine, (for now?) but I didn't think up what to do next.

"Well... I have to talk with you."

"Huh?"

“Sorry, I’ll see Koigasaki-san to her house. She feels bad today.”

“Eh?” – I wasn’t ready for that. Is he really going to her? I doubt so. He would drag her somewhere using a good reason.

“I’ll see her, then!” – I gathered my courage and offered it.

“Eh? You don’t have to.” – Hosokawa said with a pinching smile.

“What the hell?! I don’t have anything to talk with you!” – coldly said Koigasaki. I looked on her face in doubts, but she averted her eyes.

What are you saying? I ran here at full tilt to help you, I broke off tea with Sakurai-san, and see what I have.

“Well, that is what Koigasaki-san is telling. Bye.” – said Hosokawa, and they went to the station, showing me their backs.

Do you understand what I felt coming after you despite the treaty is over? Go to hell, Koigasaki. If that flashy guy would rape you, so be it, feel free to regret or whatever you want, I thought looking at their figures moving away. I have no courage to move from here, because Koigasaki rejected me. Also, it’s only rumored that Hosokawa is laying hands on all girls, he might be a good guy, and he will see Koigasaki to her house...

Oh, no way!!!

He had put so much effort to see her to “her home”! I bet he would drag her into a love hotel. And Koigasaki with her phobia will be unable to resist.

“Uo-o!”

I gathered all power that I have left and run to them.

“Eh?!” – they noticed me and surprised.

“W... What is it? What you want?” – asked Hosokawa with a truly annoyed face.

“Koigasaki! Hosokawa...”

I ignored him and said to Koigasaki. I want to say that he is a womanizer, but of course, I can’t say it directly. Think something...

“What you want? I told you I don’t want to see your face!”

“Hosokawa... Hosokawa is an Araki!” – I said loudly.

“Huh?”

“What?”

Hosokawa and Koigasaki are looking at me in amazement.

“What does that mean?” – it seems Hosokawa have no clue.

“What do you... mean...”

“I’m saying he is an Araki, from the Clumsy Honey!” – Koigasaki seemed she didn’t understand it from the first time.

“Araki, that’s... What?!” – she finally realized what I was trying to say. Araki is a womanizer from the shojo manga “Clumsy Honey”. The main heroine Yui is a dumb girl, so she doesn’t realize this, but Ouba warned her many times. I told Koigasaki that this Hosokawa is the same type of person.

“Eh? It shouldn’t be...” – Koigasaki doesn’t believe me, because Hosokawa has a nice-looking face.

“Would you cut it off already? Koigasaki-san is troubling... Eh!?”

“Kya-a!?”

The next thing I did surprise even me. I took Koigasaki in my arms. Isn’t it called “to hold like a princess”? For some reason, I copied the manner of Ouba from Koigasaki’s dojinshi novel, where he took away Yui. I’m not sure why I did it, but I thought Koigasaki and Hosokawa would be astonished and won’t budge. Also, I can see no other way to take stubborn Koigasaki out of here. And well... I did it.

“Sorry, man!” – I shouted to Hosokawa and quickly walked away with Koigasaki. It would be cool if I could run, but holding her is difficult, and running is out of the question. Hosokawa is definitely astonished, it seems he won’t stop me or chase me.

“H-hey! What are you doing?! L-let me down!”

I ignored her whine and walked until Hosokawa would disappear from my sight and put her down, – my power was running out.

puffed

“What are you doing all of sudden?!”

“You’re heavier than I expected... Ouch.”

She bumped me with her shoulder bag.

I thought she would scoff at me, however her face is totally red, and she is glaring at me. I can clearly see a wrinkle between her eyebrows.

“What kind of talk?! The treaty is severed! And it was you who broke it! What do you want to tell me now?!”

What is it?.. She is surely angry, but her eyes are wet, and face is painful.

“I dialed you all the time, and you never answered.”

“Eh? Ah, really...” – Koigasaki took out her phone from her bag, and it seems she is just noticed.

“I was talking with Hosokawa-kun, and didn’t notice at all.”

“Oh, you was speaking with him, I see.” – I was irritated.

“Yes! We were together at the karaoke when he noticed that I’m feeling bad, and said he will see me to my home.”

“Are you feeling bad?”

By the way, Hosokawa did say something like this.

“No, but I was not in a good mood, and I was comparatively sad, so he paid attention to me. Then he offered to drink something cold and we went to Mac.”

So she was worried about Suzuki and still went to a matchmaking party. If so, she should not go there in the first place.

“So can you explain why did you compare Hosokawa-kun with Araki from the Clumsy Honey?!”

“Oh, well... They say he did a lot of girls during the summer vacation.”

“Eh?!” – Koigasaki couldn’t believe me.

“Isn’t it a false rumor? He was so nice to me all the day!”

“Of course, I don’t know whether that rumor is true, but he was way too persistent seeing you home. I doubt he has another decent reason for that. He must be wanted to drag you somewhere.”

“Eh?!” – Koigasaki got pale.

“Why... He was very kind to me! I can’t keep up the conversation with boys, and he reassured me that it’s all right, that’s because I’m feeling bad....”

“I think he just wanted to win your trust doing that. Why are you so easy to deceive? Only God knows what would happen to you now if I hadn’t come!”

“But... but...”

Koigasaki’s voice decreased with each my phrase, and she stopped talking now. However, after awhile, she started speaking again.

“By the way, don’t you have a date with Azuki-chan today?”

“Well, I wouldn’t call it a date, we just played together...”

“What are you doing here? What happened with the date?”

“We watched the film, it’s okay. But Sakurai-san said about you, that you’re going to go to a matchmaking party, and that rumored Hosokawa will come too, so I...”

“Eh?” – Koigasaki very surprised hearing that.

“Are you saying you abandoned Azuki-chan and came here?! To save... me?..”

“Saving is a bit too much. And I didn’t abandon Sakurai-san, she allowed me to leave.”

I thought she would scold me again, but she didn’t say anything, she just looked at my face with a painful expression.

“You’re a dumb...”

“Eh?!”

I didn’t believe my ears at first.

“You’re really a dumb...”

“Why am I a dumb?!”

This is what are you saying to somebody who tracked you down, – I wanted to be angered on her, but I couldn't when I saw her face. She looked down to hide her face, but she was crying.

“Hey, are you...”

Why is she crying? I wanted to say something like, don't cry or stop it, but I could say a word.

“You're a dumb, honestly... But, thank you.” – Koigasaki raised her face, with tears. My right hand lifted when I saw her face....

“?!”

I noticed this and lowered my hand slowly, as if nothing happened. What I was going to do?! One second of delay – and I would have done something fatal. I was going to... stoke Koigasaki's face. She would me again, saying something like, don't touch me, creep... Oh, I'm such a full.

“What? I even thanked you...” – Koigasaki pointed that I'm standing still, showing no reaction to her words. She rounded her cheek. Great, she didn't notice what I was going to do!

“Oh, well...” – I started to find the words I have to tell her.

“I'm sorry...”

“Eh?”

“I said you harsh things, and... I was angry when I said we should break the treaty. I didn't want that, actually.”

“...” – Koigasaki looks at me silently.

“Can we conclude it once again?” – I said and, just like I did it the first time, I outstretched my right hand to Koigasaki. I was unsure whether she accept my offer, but...

“Of course! That's what I want, too!” – Koigasaki shook my hand with force, just like the first time. I've relaxed now. After few seconds, we stopped the handshake. Koigasaki averted eyes from me, it seems she felt embarrassed.

I'm really happy we managed to restore the treaty. Of course, I'm happy

having her assistance, but now she is not only that for me. I glad I have somebody to help me with love relationship, but believe it's not everything. I noticed she is a far more important person for me.

“By the way, I can't believe you stopped the date with Azuki-chan and came here...” – said Koigasaki when she calmed down and stopped crying. Now she is holding her head.

“Oh... what should we do now...” – she seems to be worrying, but I don't understand her “what should we do”.

“Eh? Well, it's not a date.”

“Huh? Why? It was a date!”

“No! We were just walking together, and it not a date by any means! Saying furthermore, Sakurai-san has a person she likes.”

“Huh?”

“She told me it today, directly, so you can't call it a date!”

“What?..” – she had a disappointed look.

“What are you... Huh...” – Koigasaki made a deep sigh. I have no idea why.

“I can ask you the same. Why did you go to the matchmaking party if you like Suzuki?” – I asked her with reproof. I wondered what she would say, but she started playing with her phone. So she would ignore me, I thought, but then...

“Here.” – she gave me her phone.

“What is it?” – it was a photo from a fireworks festival. There was a photo with a big firework in the night sky.

“I was looking his photo overview. Most of them were otaku-ish things, but I found this single photo amidst. And it was uploaded recently.”

“What is it?” – I didn't understand what Koigasaki was trying to say.

“Why don't you understand it? There is “Sumida Fireworks Festival!” in comments! It is the festival we visited! This means Suzuki was at the festival!”

“Eh...”

“Also, look here!” Koigasaki pointed at a small piece of a back of a girl in pink yukata.

“It’s the girlfriend of Suzuki, which we saw!”

“But it’s only a part of a yukata?”

“She was wearing a pink yukata! Did you forget?”

What could it mean? Suzuki answered me that he didn’t go to the firework festival, but this picture is on his album.

“Honestly speaking, I tried to believe you at least for a bit, that I was mistaken, and Suzuki has no girlfriend. But I understood I was right in the moment when I saw this photo.”

“Koigasaki...”

I couldn’t believe even after Koigasaki showed me this photo. I can’t be true that Suzuki has a girlfriend. I have no doubts he told me he doesn’t have a girlfriend and he wasn’t at the festival. I can’t believe he lied to me. I wanted to check things by myself, and logged on Mixi to watch Suzuki’s albums. However, I noticed something before I went to his albums.

[Friend’s words: So-tan@Kugumiya-ism 18:09 Let’s meet! We have some time, let’s meet at HitoKara in Shinjuku]

My phone time was 18:20, or ten minutes after he posted the message.

“Koigasaki.”

“Eh?”

“Let’s ask him directly.”

“Eh? E-eh?! What do you mean?!”

“Suzuki is at a karaoke in Shinjuku. Let’s pay him a visit!”

“Huh?!” – Koigasaki hesitated, but I ignored that and called to Suzuki.

“Oh, hello!” – Suzuki’s calm voice greeted me after only two tones.

“Ah, Suzuki! You said you’re at a karaoke in Shinjuku, but what is the karaoke exactly?”

“Eh? Well, it’s the Karaoke Kan at the east exit of the station. Did you see it in Mixi?”

“Yeah, it happened I’m in Shinjuku too. Can I go to you now?”

“Of course! But I’ve agreed to meet with other people in about thirty minutes...”

“Oh, that’s fine! I only have something to ask you, and we’ll go then.”

“Really? Okay, I’ll be waiting for you, in the room 502.”

“Okay, I’m going to you!” – I said and hung up.

“Wa... W-wait... Are you serious? Are you going to go there right now?!”

“Of course.”

“You should have told him you’re with me! Or you decided to go alone?!”

“What are you saying? You are going too, and you’ll hear his words directly. I hope you would believe him.”

“I’m too worried to see him now!.. And it’s so important I have to prepare my mind... Also, I want to re-do my make-up properly if I’d meet with Suzuki-kun...”

“Oh, just forget it. I told him I’m going now, and Suzuki has a meeting after this, we don’t have time for this.”

Koigasaki was still complaining, but I ignored that and started walking to the east exit. Koigasaki followed me.

“Hey, you, you have no idea how to get to the east exit, so why are you going ahead?!”

Koigasaki found out that I have no idea where we are, and left me behind. It seems she often visited the Karaoke Kan with friends.

“He said the room number is 502.”

“You’ll go first when we enter the Karaoke! If I would go first, Suzuki will be surprised! I’m not so close with Suzuki-kun yet...”

We reached to the Karaoke Kan at the east exit, told our destination at the counter, and went to the room 502. I was worried a little, but Koigasaki was

under much greater stress.

I opened the door of the room 502.

“Ah, Kasshi! ...” – he called my name, but then he noticed Koigasaki sneaking behind me and made a strange face.

“Oh, my bad, I didn’t tell you, but we were playing now, so I came with her.” – I was unsure what to say, so I told the first thing I came up with.

“Oh, I see. Let’s sing, then.”

And then Suzuki started a vocaloid song he had selected earlier, so I sat on a sofa until he finished. But then I noticed Koigasaki. She was so nervous her face was deadly pale. I thought to ask Suzuki the question when this song ended, but...

“Ah, what about you two to select some song?~ We have less than thirty minutes left...” – Suzuki gave me a DAM. I was going to go adrift, but...

“Oh, no! I came here not for singing! I have to ask you something!”

“What is it?” – he looks at me surprised.

“Look into my eyes and speak the truth.”

“Eh! Okay...”

“Suzuki, do you have a girlfriend?”

“...” – Suzuki look indifferently at me. What is this reaction? Could it be he lied to me back then?..

“You already asked me this.” – he made a rare sad face.

“Eh?”

“As I told you earlier, I have no 3D girlfriend. Why are you doubting this, Kasshi~?”

Suzuki took the DAM and began to look for a song.

“Eh? Are you sure you don’t have one?”

“Why is this disbelief? Do you want me to have a girlfriend?” – Suzuki made an annoyed face and stepped away from me. it’s rare for him. I guess I was

really annoying. Yes, I see no lie in his words, after all. I looked at Koigasaki, and she has a blank look. Probably, she can't think he's lying too. Suddenly, a loud vocaloid song rang in the room. It's not my ringtone... Suzuki surprised.

"Oh, I'm sorry, it's mine." – he said and picked up his iPhone.

"Eh, you're here already?! Why so quick? You said it should take a half of hour? Ah, I see... I'm with my friends, though. Well... the closest to the east exit, Karaoke Kan, room 502."

He told me earlier that he agreed to meet somebody, and, apparently, those people came. Who could they be? Suzuki hanged up.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Suzuki, they came already. I guess we would hamper you."

Suzuki said he has no girlfriend for the second time, I guess, that's enough for Koigasaki. I wonder about his visit to the festival and about his mate, and some other things, but I can't bother Suzuki anymore. I gathered my belongings and was ready to move out, planning to ask that later by email.

"Eh? Are you leaving already?"

"Well, sure, we can't hamper you."

I guess, I could left if those guys are mutual acquaintances, but I guess it's not the case, which means I with Koigasaki would be nothing but bother. I feel bad for Suzuki's friends.

"That's okay, I've planned to introduce you when I would have a chance."

Introduce?.. Why would he introduce us to own his friends? I don't get him for now. I could understand if he would introduce his girlfriend, however he clearly stated he has none just now.

chunk

The door was open while I was immersed in own thoughts. They are already here...

"Sou-chan, I'm sorry for making you wait~"

"..."

Both me and Koigasaki were frozen upon seeing the person who came inside.

It was the same girl that we saw at the fireworks festival. In other words... his girlfriend. Close to golden, bright brown hair tied into two pigtails, with big flowers put into her hairs. A frill blouse with a wide ribbon on the chest, dark pink cardigan on her shoulders, and a necklace in form of a big heart. As for the bottom, she wore a free lace-like mini skirt with a wide belt, and violet tights with a large pattern. Also, she has a free nubby rucksack, she has a short forelock, and her eyelashes and overall makeup seem to be heavier than even Koigasaki's. It's a type of women you can often see at Harajuku. The image of novel Kyary Pamyu Pamyu style, I guess. And she is Suzuki's...

"Sister, you're too early!"

"...!?" – both me and Koigasaki turned at him.

"Your sister?!" – I asked loudly.

"Suzuki-kun's older sister..." – Koigasaki mumbled it.

"Ah, are you Sawa-chan's friends? Nice to meet you!" – the person that appears to be a Suzuki's elder sister showed a friendly smile to us.

"Hi, nice to meet you too."

"Nice to meet you..."

I and Koigasaki greeted her. We thought she is his girlfriend.

"Hey, wait a minute, Suzuki..."

I knew he has a sister long ago. That is why I first thought that girl with him at the festival is the sister. But Suzuki himself declined that possibility when he called the sister another girl from that purikura, with a short bob cut, black hair, glasses, and sailor suit.

"But who was that girl from the purikura I saw in your friends list? That girl with black hair, bob cut and in a sailor suit... You called her the sister."

"She is my sister." – Suzuki answered with no hesitation. I confused.

"Oh... Do you have two sisters?.."

"Eh? Do you mean my avatar from Mixi?" – Suzuki's sister (?) inclined into the conversation.

“Eh?”

“Well, I’m completely different from that photo, I mean. I had a wig there and different makeup, and I forced myself to wear that sailor suit.”

“Eh?!”

A wig? Makeup? Sailor suit? In other words, this girl in front of us named Suzuki’s sister, that girl from the purikura, and Suzuki’s mate we saw with Koigasaki at the festival, it the same person?!

“It’s was a purikura done in the GiGO at Ikebukuro, but men are not allowed there without a woman. My sister wore a suit for somebody way younger, the sailor suit.” – added Suzuki. It’s the same place where I have been with Sakurai-san...

“Really?..” – I felt drained and sat on the sofa. This means, we with Koigasaki were worried for no reason thinking his sister is his girlfriend, and all that fuss was in vain. Oh, that was so stupid.

“Sister...” – Koigasaki repeated, but she is smiling, yet she looks surprised. I guess, she is happy that girl is Suzuki’s sister.

“Here is my sister.” – Suzuki again pointed on her and introduced her again.

“Suzuki Mitsuki! That you for care about my brother.”

“Thank you.”

His sister has the same bright atmosphere around her, like Suzuki himself. Well, now I understand that this dressy girl might have forced her younger brother to be dressy too, saying something like “I can’t allow by brother to be uncomely!” despite his complaints.

“This is my friend, Kasshi, and his... Koigasaki-san.”

After that, Suzuki introduced me and Koigasaki. Suzuki... did you forget her name for a moment?.. Also, you could just say “This is my friend Kasshi and Koigasaki-san”. Why would you highlight the fact she is not your friend? It’s a truth, though. I thought Koigasaki would be disappointed, but...

“Nice to meet you!” – she bowed to Suzuki sister, and her face shined when she rose it. That good she doesn’t care of it. Probably, she is happy enough

knowing just that Suzuki has no girlfriend.

“So you are Kasshi? Sou-chan always talking about you! Thank you for playing with the brother!” – said Suzuki’s sister and shook my hand.

“No, not at all!”

I wonder what Suzuki told her about me...

“And... Koigasaki-san. You’re so cute and dressy!”

“No, I’m not! You’re far cuter and well-dressed than me!”

The sister started talking with Koigasaki, so I decided to make clear one more thing with Suzuki.

“Suzuki, your sister is a good person, why did you tell me that about her?” – I whispered so she couldn’t hear me. In the past, he told me he is not interested in a girl of greater age than his because of his sister, so I thought she is a devil, however, in fact, she is a nice person.

“No, it’s only her appearance is good. Seriously.” – said Suzuki with an unusually serious face. I see, she’s becoming a different person at home. I can’t imagine that, though.

“Oh...” – I remembered one more contradiction.

“Suzuki, didn’t you say you weren’t at the fireworks festival?”

I remember I asked Suzuki about the festival on the first day after the summer vacations, and he definitely said he didn’t go.

“Eh? Yeah, I remember you asked me about Edo River Festival. I wasn’t there.” – Suzuki asked.

“We visited Sumida River Festival.” – the sister continued.

“We visited Sumida River Festival, too.” – I can hear Koigasaki’s voice behind the sister.

“Eh?” – I couldn’t think for a moment.

“Could it be you asked Suzuki-kun about the Edo River Festival? And you mistook the festival you visited with Edo River Festival?!” – asked Koigasaki with a disappointed look, like what on the earth you have told Suzuki-kun.

“Well, as I remembered...”

This means, despite we have visited Sumida River Festival, but I mistook its name and asked about another festival?..

If I had asked correctly, the flow would be “Did you visit the Sumida River Festival?” ->“Yeah!”-> “With a girlfriend?”->“It was my sister, not a girlfriend!”, and everything would be settled?

“Whoa, what a fool I am!” – I embraced own head and lay on the table.

I have played like I’m very repenting now, because Koigasaki might scold me later. After few seconds, I slowly raised my head and looked at Koigasaki. She looked at me too. Oh, crap, she would scold me, I thought, but...

“You’re such a fool.” – she said with a smile on her face. She was disappointed, but I can’t feel anger there. Even if she tried to ignore that in front of Suzuki, she can’t do that perfectly. She is not angry now. Did the revealed fact Suzuki has no girlfriend change her bad temper?..

“Okay, let’s sing, then!” – Suzuki’s sister gave me the DAM.

“But... I feel somehow sorry for pushing brother and sister aside...”

We came just to reveal whether Suzuki has a girlfriend, and we did it, also the person Suzuki agreed to meet came, so we should leave, I thought.

“Eh? Do you have a curfew?”

“No, I’m okay.”

“Ah, I told my parents I could return later today.”

“So let’s sing together! The more people the merrier!”

“Eh? Are you sure?..”

We accepted her words and remained at the karaoke with the Suzukis.

“What is this log? Are those the songs Sou-chan sang?!” – suddenly, the sister screamed seeing the DAM log.

“Yes, what is it?”

“Sou-chan! I told you many times to not sing these otaku-ish songs in front of

commoners! Why don't you listen to me?!" – scolded him the sister, casting a glance at Koigasaki. Did she mean Koigasaki?.. Well, of course, Suzuki already told her I'm an otaku. So she is rising Suzuki as a hidden otaku... that's magnificent! However, Suzuki is a completely open otaku, so her education is failed.

"Not at all! I like these songs! Please, don't mind me!" – Koigasaki actively rejected this, shaking her head.

"Eh, really? Do you like anime songs?"

"Well, I like vocaloid songs, I listen to them often!" – she replied to the sister's question in a business manner, as if it's an interview.

"What a surprise. You don't seem that way! So we can sing otaku songs together!" – said the sister with shining eyes.

Hey, does it mean the sister is an otaku as well?.. Suzuki, then Murasaki-san, and now she... I feel I'm surrounded by otakus that don't look like otakus.

"Okay, sing a vocaloid song for us, then! I used to listen to them, but I don't know modern songs, so I'd like to hear some!" – the sister gave the DAM to Koigasaki to select a song.

"Sure! Okay, then..."

Koigasaki played with the DAM for a while, and then she entered a song. One of the new songs of the vocaloid Hibine Ruru showed up on the display.

"This?.." – Suzuki reacted on the song name.

"Okay, I'm starting!"

When song's prelude began, Koigasaki properly greeted the audience and stood up.

"..."

The song started. I was honestly surprised. It is the first time I'm hearing her singing, but she is on the same level with Suzuki. Her voice is cute, a good match with Hibine Ruru's cute voice. I guess, she was a good singer from the start, and she has been hearing this song many times. It seems it was true, that she likes many songs among Hibine Ruru's songs.

“You did it very well! I was impressed!” – Suzuki’s sister applauding her after the song is over.

“Yes, you very good... The best of everything I ever heard.” – Suzuki praised her too.

“Eh?” – it was unexpected for me.

“Do you like Hibine Ruru?!” – Suzuki stood up and came close to Koigasaki.

“!!!” – Koigasaki was nervous from the start, and now she seems she would faint away. We can see it, hey.

“Y-yes! I’m listening to them all the time!” – Koigasaki... you don’t have to speak strictly with somebody from your class. Wait a minute, isn’t it the first time Koigasaki is speaking with Suzuki? Except for the cosplay event.

“Do you know ‘I am your princess’?!”

“Y-yes! It’s my favorite, I’m listening to it very often! It’s bad this song is absent in the karaoke...” – excited Koigasaki nodded few times. Yes, I believe “I am your princess” is one of the popular songs of Hibine Ruru.

“I was thinking to perform that song in the Light Music Club, at the cultural festival next month! Would you please do the vocal?!”

“...?!”

Suzuki took Koigasaki’s hand while talking with her. Oh, that’s no jokes...

“E-e-h?! Eh... Well, i-if you are okay with me! I would be happy!!!”

Koigasaki is in panic, she looks like she is going to faint already, but she is nodding. Koigasaki will enter Suzuki’s band?..

“Thank you! I always thought a girl should sing that song, not me! And I’m so happy such a skillful singer would perform it! I have to inform other band members!”

Suzuki in excitement released Koigasaki’s hand and started to do something on his iPhone.

“Koigasaki, are you okay?” – I cut into their conversation because her look worried me. I’m happy she got closer with Suzuki, but his band is full of boys,

are you sure you will sing there?..

“I... I will do my best! I’ll train all the time! I’ll strive to sing the best!” – Koigasaki showed her strong decision to Suzuki.

“Oh, thank you so much!” – Suzuki is smiling hearing her words and Koigasaki become lighthearted.

After that, the karaoke party continued, all of us sang a song one after another. Suzuki’s sister ordered karaage, takoyaki, and chips, and treated us with that. I had no dinner, so I was hungry and received that with gratitude. Suzuki sat next to Koigasaki so she was nervous all the time. As it was revealed that we can sing otaku-ish songs, so we sang everything to our heart’s content. Anime songs, game songs, deviant songs of adult games, vocaloid songs, popular among otaku artist’s songs... it was a lawless area of otaku. Koigasaki knew only vocaloid songs, so her repertoire quickly ran out, and she started to sing usual AKB idol songs at some point in time. Sometimes, Suzuki has spoken to Koigasaki, and she wavered each time.

The distance between Suzuki and Koigasaki decreased in a moment at this karaoke. It was unexpected for both me and Koigasaki. All that effort to meet with Suzuki by hearing Hibine Ruru songs was granted today. I should be happy with that, my assistance is fulfilled, too. I believe I wanted to bring them together. However, why am I feeling uncomfortable now?.. What is this strange feeling when I looking at them sitting next to me? I have a guess, but I don’t want to admit it no matter what.

The karaoke time ended, and we left the room.

Suzuki’s sister paid for everything using her credit card. I and Koigasaki told her we could pay too, but she refused, saying like “Don’t mind!”, “Let’s go to a karaoke together next time, then! I want to go to a karaoke with young folks once a while!”.

What a free hearted person... I was impressed, and we thanked her.

“Hey, Kasshi-kun!”

“What is it?”

She spoke to me when Koigasaki and Suzuki went out to a toilet.

“They seem to be pretty close... Are they dating?”

“Eh?!”

She means Koigasaki and Suzuki? Are they really seem so close?..

“No, they didn’t talk a lot until today, and they have to get along just now.”

“Oh, I see... Okay...”

It seems she was trying to say something like, ah, what a boredom.

“Is in your school a girl close enough with my brother?”

“Oh, well... He is very popular among girls, but it looks he is not interested in girls at all.”

“I see. He is still suffering from that...”

“Eh?” – I couldn’t miss that meaningful phrase.

“Ah, didn’t Sou-chan tell you?”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“I’m sorry for waiting!” – Suzuki returned from a toilet and we had to finish the conversation. So I guess Suzuki has a good reason preventing him from dating... I’m very interested, but I can’t ask any more in front of Suzuki himself. Why didn’t he tell me about that? Aren’t we friends? I wonder would he answer if I ask him next time?

After that, Koigasaki returned too, so we went to the station by four of us. I and Koigasaki got to the Sobu line, and the Suzukis got to the Chuo line, and we parted our ways.

“See you tomorrow, Kasshi! Koigasaki-san, I’m looking forward to the cultural festival!”

“Yes, bye!”

“S-sure!”

“Take care, you two.”

We bowed to the sister and left.

“That hour in the karaoke was the happiest time in my life!” – Koigasaki told

me, when we were on the platform. It seems her eyes were heart-shaped, so happy aura surrounded her.

“Kashiwada, thank you for taking me to the karaoke!” – she took my hand and shook it.

“S-sure...”

I didn't a thing, I thought, but decided to not say that.

“Can I really be so happy? Could it happen I'd be in an accident?”

She made a happy sigh. Oh, Koigasaki looks like a different person. Then, we get into a cab. It was almost empty, so we sat.

“By the way, are you serious you'd sing at the festival? The light music club members are boys.”

“...! I-it's okay... I'm feeling better talking with men recently, and I think I've got used to schoolmates...”

Yes, I agree her androphobia got better in comparison with the time when the school has begun.

“The most important is that Suzuki-kun admitted me! I have to meet his expectations no matter what!” – Koigasaki said passionately. She is really serious. Probably, she wouldn't listen to me no matter what I said.

“Sure thing. Give your best!”

“Why are you speaking like it's not your business? We have a treaty, right?”

“Eh?!”

“We restored the treaty!”

“Ah... Yeah...”

I remembered that our treaty is restored.

“Oh, I remembered! You abandoned the date with Azuki-chan in the middle!”

Koigasaki got pale suddenly and started about Sakurai-san again.

“I didn't abandon! I have her permission.”

Why for do you think I did that?

“Listen to me carefully! Today you must call her and apologize! No emails, call her! And promise her to treat her instead!”

I couldn't figure her motives and tilted my head.

“I believe it was you who blamed me for I'm going to play with another girl while having the girl I like. Why would you say it now?”

“Well... Yes, but it's crude towards a girl to leave her all of sudden and go to another place! You got it?! Make sure you called her and apologized!”

“Oh, okay, okay...”

Why is she so desperate? I don't get her. I think she would care if it was about my relationship with Hasegawa, but Sakurai-san... We came to Koigasaki's station, so she told me again to call to Sakurai-san and ride from the cab.

I came to my station. Today I was on feet, not by bike, so I'd have to walk about fifteen minutes to home. I thought it's the perfect time to do what Koigasaki told me, so I dialed Sakurai-san while I remember. I started thinking how to apologize. I'm sorry leaving you suddenly. I enjoyed today with you. I'll treat you somewhere as an apology... Or something like this, I guess. Wait... it has been few tones, but Sakurai-san doesn't answer.

[Connecting to the answer phone]

It ended up by calling to answering machine. Well, she might be in bath at this time, or whatever... I think she would answer me when she saw my calls. And I put my phone into a pocket.

I was so stupid thinking like that...

I returned home, took the bath, played a game a little, but Sakurai-san didn't reply even when I was going to bed. I forgot about that for a moment, but remembered again when I was going to sleep and started to worry. However, it could be her phone's battery is low... No, I couldn't hear tones in this case. What then? She returned home and she was so tired she fell asleep? Yes, definitely. I remember I worried when I received no reply from Koigasaki, and the reality was trivial. Why am I worrying for nothing every time? I am a man, so I have to take that easily or I won't last long otherwise, – I convinced myself and sleep.

Chapter 6

The next day Sakurai-san didn't call me, moreover, she didn't send me an email! I worried and sent her an email.

[Hi! I'm sorry for calling you today all of sudden! I wanted to apologize for running away yesterday... I'm very sorry!] and I put a sorry emoji in the end. I had a shift afternoon, so I went to work with uneasiness.

“Welcome!”

I've been doing my job at the front desk, but it was hard to concentrate. I was thinking about Sakurai-san.

“Aya-cha-an! What has happened with that man from before?”

My co-workers are gossiping in the kitchen, as always: the idol (lol) Watanabe Aya and one more girl, sempai from a university. “That man”? Didn't Watanabe-san was after Yamamoto-san?

“Oh, that one? He was so pestering me.”

Oh, Watanabe-san shows her true form in front of a woman, the idol (lol).

“It happened I came to a date with him once, and it seems he got arrogant, but since that day he started calling me and sending emails. I don't pick up the phone, but his emails are the real bother. Why is he so dumb?”

smash

At that moment I lifted up the receiver to notify a client that it's five minutes left, but hearing that conversation my hand moved, and I dropped out the receiver.

.....

I want to die. Right now. But wait, me. My case and case of the idol Watanabe-san are completely different, aren't they? We were playing, and Sakurai-san invited me. Also, I hadn't been sending emails and bombing with call that much, I had called her once, and sent one email...

“Really? But weren't you in a good mood playing with that man?”

“Of course I was, because he is a handsome one! But he wasn’t an interesting guy, he could speak with me... Also, he received a call from somebody, I guess it was another woman! And he talked with her ignoring me! Isn’t he a creep?”

...

I wonder does Sakurai-san think this way, too? N-no, wait... I should compare Sakurai-san with this wicked idol. They are different people, so they should think differently. However, my situation is somehow similar... I got ignored by a girl after playing with her, so could it be she is thinking... No, I should not rush things. She might have sent me a reply, and it’s on my phone already! Something cute, like, I’m sorry I fell asleep yesterday, I’m not worrying about that, let’s play another time~, like Sakurai-san would do usually. Oh, I wish my shift would end already. Why does the time go so slow?

“?!”

I was immersed in own thoughts when I noticed the girls in the kitchen staring at me. And the phone is ringing. Oh, I was so deep I didn’t notice the phone. What is happening with my ears?.. They can hear or not on their own. I picked it up quickly and received an order for drinks. I bet they were disgusted by me floating up in the clouds, and would gossip about me when I leave the shift. Oh, I don’t care what two bitches would say about me, but I don’t want Sakurai-san to hate me...

After the shift, I quickly returned to the waiting room, and took out the phone from my bag. No emails or missed calls. I was shocked, so I quickly changed my clothes and returned home.

Let’s think again clearly.

First, she didn’t seem angry when I said I have a business. In fact, she smiled. That is why I was relaxed when I went to Koigasaki. And she didn’t seem angry before that. Unlike the date with Hasegawa, I was calm, and didn’t commit a single mistake. Also, I did everything Koigasaki told me regarding a date, so I guess I wasn’t that bad. I did not anything that could make Sakurai-san angry or displease her. The only bad thing I did, I was thinking about Koigasaki, spilled the melon soda, and left for Koigasaki in the end...

Why did she stop replying to me, then? I couldn’t figure that by myself. I

decided to talk with Koigasaki next day.

The next day, on Monday morning, Sakurai-san sent me a reply. I opened it quickly...

[I'm sorry for missing your call. Don't worry about that]

That was all. It's way too short as for Sakurai-san, and has no emoji or deco stickers as usual. She even didn't put a dot in the end. It's so plain I won't be surprised I received it from Hasegawa. I couldn't help but felt I must know what is hid behind this style transformation. However, the fact she replied at all is reassuring.

[I'm really sorry!]

I replied in that moment, and decided to talk with Koigasaki at school.

In the second I came in my class to sit on my seat, when my bag was grasped.

“Oh!” – I was surprised. It was Koigasaki. Well, she always acts so violently.

“Come here!”

“Uh?”

I left my bag on my desk and followed Koigasaki into the corridor.

“What is it?”

“Look.” – Koigasaki showed me a pink paper bag.

“What is this?”

I looked from the top and saw the Murasaki-san's dojinshi that Koigasaki bought at the summer Comiket wrapped with cute pink paper.

“Well, I have no suspicions about his girlfriend anymore, and I'm going to hand over it to Suzuki-kun, despite it's a bit late...”

“What is with this wrapping?”

“Yesterday, I cooked a madeleine with my mother's help!”

She is motivated as always...

“Come with me to the B class, I'm embarrassed alone!”

“Okay.”

We came to the B class, and I glanced inside. His seat is the rear seat in the entrance row. He was reading some book alone. That’s a good luck.

“Oh... Su...” – I was about to call him, when Koigasaki grasped my sleeve.

“What are you doing?!”

Why she stopped me?!

“There are so many people in the class! I would stand out if I would call him now! And girls who like him would notice me...”

I don’t think you should worry, because it’s me who was calling him...

“A-also, he is reading a book with a serious face, I don’t want to bother him...”

“I won’t call him if you start saying these things again.”

“Also, I feel embarrassed handing it him directly, after all... And don’t know what to answer if he would ask me why I have this book, how I bought it, how did I know that he wants it... I probably won’t give it to him directly, after all...”

“So what you plan to do, then?”

“I’ll put it into his desk when the classroom of the B class is empty! I’ll write the letter, of course.”

“I guess, it would be rather easier for you...”

I wanted to say that I came here not for this, but remembered I wanted to talk with her.

“By the way, I have...” – I couldn’t finish, the chimes are sounded.

“Crap...”

We quickly returned to our class. I want to talk about Sakurai-san, but it’s not an urgent case, I can talk with her later.

I hesitated to speak to Koigasaki, until the lessons are over. I have no plans meeting with Sakurai-san soon, so I can talk about that later. Kiritani went to his club, so we parted with him, and I went to return a book I’ve taken from the library. Then, I noticed Suzuki leaving the B classroom.

“Are you going home now?” – I clapped on his shoulder.

“Oh, Kasshi!”

“?!”

In the next moment, Suzuki suddenly jumped at me.

“What are you doing?!” – I was trying to tell him I’m not into this.

“Kasshi, Kasshi, you’re so kind! How can you be so kind?”

He was so excited I don’t get what he is trying to tell me.

“Huh?”

“But why would you act as a stranger, put it in the desk instead of handing directly? And added something like a present...”

“Eh? Eh?” – I noticed Suzuki has the pink bag that Koigasaki wanted to give him this morning. I thought she successfully gave it, but...

“It was you who put it, right?”

What?..

“What?!”

“Did you buy the book I wanted, at the summer Comiket?”

“No! It wasn’t me!” – I rejected it, looking at happy Suzuki. Why was he deluded in this ugly manner?

“It wasn’t you?”

“No! I would never use such bag, and I would give it you directly instead of putting into the desk.”

“Well, I thought it’s strange, too...”

Suzuki looked at me with an easygoing face.

“So who did it, then? I was sure you did it because you were the only person I told about the book.”

“Ah. By the way, wasn’t there anything from the sender? A letter, for example?” – I remembered Koigasaki was speaking about a letter.

He took out a four-folded piece of paper, opened it, and showed to me. It's a page from a note book. There was Koigasaki's gyaru-ish handwritten text that I feel I saw somewhere.

[Dear Suzuki-kun!

Pardon me the sudden letter.

This is a dojinshi of the circle "Blueberry" I happened to buy at the Summer Comiket.

Please, read it if you like.

in addition, I cooked a madeleine yesterday. I am not sure whether you like it, but please have it.]

In the end, there was a picture of some enigmatic animal, similar to a bunny, in a way so it looks like the bunny said it.

By the way, "Blueberry" is a Murasaki-san's circle name. Also, the letter is obviously girlish, it seems Koigasaki tried her best to write it. The sender's name... is absent. What a stupid!..

"Did you write it?"

"Of course I didn't! Look at this handwriting, and this girlish picture... How could I write it?!"

"As I thought..."

Suzuki with a puzzled face is looking at the letter again. I wish I could peek into his mind ever once...

If I say the Koigasaki wrote it, everything would be settled. However, it would bother to explain to him why she knew, and I probably would have to reveal our treaty to Suzuki. In either way, I was the only person who knows which book Suzuki wanted, so I'll have to tell him that I've told Koigasaki that, but I'm not sure how to approach with this. Therefore I decided to tell Koigasaki that she forgot to write her name and talk with her. I can't just do things on my own...

"I wonder who did, if you say it's not you... A present from gods?.."

"What are you saying? W-well, I'll ask somebody."

I thought it's a finish when she gave him the book, but... What a bother. I thought I have to let Suzuki know that the sender is Koigasaki faster.

I parted with Suzuki and went to the library when I saw there Hasegawa who took some book.

"Ah, Hasegawa!"

I was too busy with my own problems I didn't speak with Hasegawa recently, so this is a good chance.

"Hello, Kashiwada-kun." – replied Hasegawa. I can see, it's a paperback edition, but she is holding it in her arms at the chest, so I can't see its title.

Actually, our library has light novels. Yet, I was afraid the fact I'm an otaku being revealed, so I didn't take it. What if Hasegawa took one of them? Let's ask.

"Oh, what book did you take?"

Strange... I felt some kind of deja-vu. Where from?...

Ah! I saw a dream after the fireworks festival, I guess. I came to the library to return a book, meet Hasegawa, Hasegawa noticed that book, and I told her I'm an otaku. Then, she replied she is an otaku too... what a convenient dream. If that dream was prophetic, the situation in the contrary, and Hasegawa took a light novel, – I started hoping for strange things.

"This?" – Hasegawa handed the book to me, showing its title.

"!.."

It was a mystery novel, very popular nowadays.

"I see... I have read it! It's interesting."

If Hasegawa is an otaku, she is definitely hiding it far better than me. My guess was false. I wonder could Hasegawa reveal it if I would confess that I'm an otaku? Usually, hidden otaku are happy meeting the same otaku. Or, rather, it's true for me. I was thinking to confess her about that, but if she is not an otaku, I would be terribly embarrassed, and all my effort of hiding it in school until that day would be gone in vain. The stake is too high, I prefer to avoid that.

I was immersed in such thoughts when I noticed that Hasegawa is looking at something. I looked at the same place – there were some anime magazines. Our school has this kind of magazines too. I was happy knowing this when I entered the school, but I was a hidden otaku, so I never took them? But Hasegawa is looking at them with some kind of interest, could it be... I can't help myself. I feel I must ask it.

“Are you interested in anime magazines?” – I gathered my courage and asked her.

“Yes...” – Hasegawa replied, however...

“It's interesting why a school library would have that kind of books?”

“Eh?” – I was surprised a bit, and looked at her face. Her face was disturbed, I never saw it... Like she is disgusted.

“I think it's inappropriate literature for healthy senior school students.”

“Eh?..” – said coldly Hasegawa. I couldn't say a word. She was looking at those magazines with disgust.

“Oh, Hasegawa... You don't like this kind of... anime, manga, and games... Right?..”

“Yes. I guess, I rather dislike it.”

Dislike... Hasegawa said it clearly.

“I s-see... And what about those people, who like it, otaku?”

“Otaku people... Well, I think I rather dislike them.”

She dislikes otaku... Hasegawa's words resounded few times in my head. I couldn't say a word because of the shock. I was silent for a while, so Hasegawa felt it strange and looked at me.

“A... Ah, I see!” – I made a smile for her.

“Okay, then. I have to go to the staff room, so bye.”

“A-ah, okay, I'm sorry for stopping you! Bye!”

Hasegawa left the library.

Could it be it was a big misunderstanding? That if we have a mutual interest, we would be closer than now. I was happy thinking about it. I don't know why she knew the character's name on that pizza box. But her reaction now... I can feel she hates otaku culture.

I don't know why, but she hates otaku culture and otaku with it. Does it mean I have to give up my otaku interests in order for Hasegawa to like me?.. Am I able to do that? This is half of me, at very least.

I was so shocked I just stood still in the library.

Afterword

Long time no see, my readers! My name is Murakami Rin. Thank you very much for reading the fourth volume of "Otariya". After I finished this volume, I participated in a live concert of "Shinsei Kamattechan", ALONE, bought DVD of the manga "Moteki", and started to run a Twitter account after "No way such a real-ish things could happened only if I start a twitter" (I stopped it quickly because I didn't get what is happening there). And I was invited to junior high alumni party, and I was unsure what to do, – if I won't go I'd be a loner, and if I go – I would regret of what I could do. Well, my "underworld" life never changes. I was a model during my school age, and now I'm less of the reals that Kashiwada.

Mr. Manager, thank you for all your appropriate advice! I've troubled you again, I'm sorry.

Mr. Anapon! Right now, I can't see your pictures except for the cover and the frontispiece because you haven't finished them yet, but new characters are illustrated very cute, I can't wait to see all illustrations! Thank you again!

Dear readers who sent me the letters. I enjoyed reading them! They encouraged me. Thank you very much!

And, my dear readers! Thank you very much for reading my novel!

Also, some news at the end. From this April, this work will be converted to the manga in the Monthly Comic Alive! I think they are informing about this in other places, so look there for details. It's very interesting, I'm reading it with pleasure

every time! (lol) I will give my utmost to creating an interesting novel, I'll be happy if you follow it with me in the next volume!

Murakami Rin

<https://kondeesite.wordpress.com/omae-o-otaku-ni-shiteyaru-kara-ore-o-riajuu-ni-shitekure-volume-4-2/>