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伏見つかさ

Tsukasa Fushimi

Illustration♦かんざきひろ





- Sacred Kuroneko Knight translation v1.0
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ore no outo
konnani kawai
wake ga nai

The story of "me and my sister" so far

Kyosuke Kosaka, an ordinary high school student, has a younger sister named Kirino whom he doesn't get along with.

One day, Kyosuke discovers his sister's "terrible secret".

Kirino, who used to be his perfect sister, turns out to be an otaku who loves little sisters and ero games.

Kyosuke is asked for "life counselling" by his cocky and not-so-cute sister, and gets caught up in all sorts of commotion.

高坂桐乃
kosaka kirino



She is a junior high school student who has just about everything on her plate, including a good figure, excellent grades, and excellent athletic ability, and is even a model. On the other hand, she is also an otaku who loves anime and games.

黒猫
kuroneko



Kirino's otaku friend she met at an offline-party. She makes painful chuuni remarks, but she also has a family oriented side and is good at games.

赤城瀬菜
akagi sena



A classmate of Kuroneko's and a fellow member of the Game Research Club. She looks like a class president but is actually a fujoshi.

新垣あやせ
aragaki ayase



Kirino's classmate and fellow model. She is a close friend of Kirino's, both at school and at work. Hates otaku. She is gentle and good-natured, but she also has a tendency to give Kyosuke a hard time and make assumptions about him.

三浦絃之介
miura gennosuke



He is the head of the Games Research Club, and loves two-dimensional girls, bringing figures and games into the club room.

高坂京介
kosaka kyosuke

Unlike his sister Kirino, he is an ordinary high school student. He has a caring personality and helps Kirino with "life counseling" after they had been in a cold war for a long time.

沙織・バジーナ
saori vageena



She is a tall girl dressed in typical otaku fashion. She is the administrator of the social network community "Otaku girls Unite". When Kyosuke and Kirino attend an offline party held by Saori, they become friends.

田村麻奈美
tamura manami



Kyosuke's childhood friend and a student at the same high school. She talks slowly and does things at her own pace. She and Kyosuke have been together for a long time and they have a comfortable relationship.

高坂悠璃
kosaka Yuri

The second daughter of Kyosuke and Ruri. She has black hair, just like her parents. She is an unconscious siscon who is annoyed by her older sister.



高坂璃乃
kosaka Rino

Kyosuke and Ruri's eldest daughter. Chuunibyou like Kuroneko. Active and lively personality. Loves her father Kyosuke.

Chapter 1

I'm Kyosuke Kosaka. I'm just an ordinary high school student.

I'll skip the self-introduction, which you're probably tired of hearing, and give you a quick recap.

Soon after the start of the summer vacation, Kuroneko and I were invited to a research camp for the "Game Research Club".

At first, Kuroneko did not intend to go, because she was worried about her family.

However, with the support of her family, she was able to participate without issue.

Kuroneko and I spent a lot of time together on an island full of nature.

We sat next to each other on the Shinkansen, chatted on the deck of the ship, toured the island together, researched mysterious folklore, ate the food she cooked, soaked in the hot bath back to back, and slept under the same roof—

It was an insanely fun week.

Play a lot, work dripping with sweat, and fall in love with all your might.

It was such a great summer vacation.

And then that night.

—I love you. Please go out with me.

Under the blooming fireworks, I confessed my feelings to Kuroneko.

—Yes. Yoroshiku-onegaishimasu, senpai.

She accepted with a happy smile, and we became boyfriend and girlfriend.

It's embarrassing to say it myself— Well, This is the story so far.

From here, the stage returns to Chiba again.....

Let's start a new story about me and Kuroneko.

.....

The morning sun shining into the room awakened my consciousness.

I slowly opened my eyelids. The first thing I saw was the familiar ceiling of my room.

It's not from the "Miura-inn" where I spent that week.

And so,

“—!”

I jumped up in a hurry. I looked at the calendar for July posted in my room.

I felt slightly calmer as I checked the date of the camp, which was inscribed with a red circle.

At least, it was just as I remembered it, there was the games club camp.

That's right.

I thought it was all a dream.

It was such an unreal trip.

They were such dreamlike days.

In the end, I even got a cute girlfriend.....

“Honestly..... I'm so pathetic”

I opened my cell phone, which was charging on my desk, and read the email from Kuroneko that I received last night.

—Ffu..... My beloved one..... Today's club activities start at 1 pm. Please don't forget to come.

—After that, let's discuss our "Arcadia Plan".

“.....Haha”

The painful love letter gently melts away the impatience swirling in my chest.

Aah..... I see.

It wasn't a dream.

“Kuroneko..... really..... became my girlfriend”

This is the first time in my life that I'm going out with a girl.

For Kyouzuke Kousaka, she is my first ever girlfriend.

Slowly, slowly, a feeling of joy seeped in, filling my whole body.

I wonder what this is.

I thought I was more the type of guy who would lose his composure when he got his first girlfriend.

Surprisingly, flying high with maxed out excitement—I was not.

Since we started dating, I've had a whole day free, and I'm starting to feel a little more relaxed.....

Surely it's not because of the gentle flow of time on the island, carefully nurturing our relationship.

Looking back, it was only a week's trip.

And yet, it seemed to last forever, as if I had spent my whole life there.

The memories are rich.

I don't think it's a dream anymore.

I vowed to cherish the treasure I had gained at the end of my trip.

“It's hot—..... The weather's too good, damnit”

I walk slowly, looking around at the *nostalgic* city of Chiba.

“No, the asphalt on the road is hot. Geez..... Compared to this, the island was cooler”

I was headed to my high school. Of course, it's right in the middle of summer vacation right now, but we have club activities.

The Games Research Club. I'm going to make a new novel game with the friends I spent my time on the island with.

That's something I was looking forward to, even without Kuroneko.

And one more thing.

In today's club activities, there was an important mission for me and Kuroneko.

As soon as I passed through the main gate and escaped the asphalt, the heat eased up. I walked in the shade as much as possible and reached the school building. After rehydrating at the water fountain, I headed for the club room.

“-Morning”

When I opened the door and entered the club room, everyone was there.

“Ah, good morning, Kousaka-senpai”

“Hey, senpai”

“Oh, there you are my brother”

Greetings came flying one after another.

Let me introduce you briefly.

The first serious seeming boy to talk is Kaede Makabe. He's a sophomore and my kouhai.

The red-haired girl with glasses that called out next is Sena Akagi. She's Kuroneko's classmate, and the number one programmer in the games club. She's also secretly (though not so secret recently) a fujoshi.

And then, the tall boy with glasses who made a familiar greeting is Gennosuke Miura. He's the director of the games club, and is my first male otaku friend.

And then, and then and then!

Watching me timidly, the black haired girl waiting for the right time to speak—

“.....G- good morning..... senpai”

My girlfriend, Ruri Gokou aka Kuroneko!

The moment I saw her, my tension rose suddenly.

Firstly I thought “beautiful and cute”.....!

—Kuroneko is absurdly cute today!?

I think so now more than ever.

It's no wonder that my thoughts and feelings went crazy.

Because, she's so cute and beautiful and lovely.

What was it I was saying about “I have a girlfriend for the first time but surprisingly I'm not flying high” and “Slowly slowly seeping in”. Actually, when I saw her in front of me, it was like woah! Woah!

Well, well well..... Let's calm down a bit.

Seemingly the members were gathered around Kuroneko and having a fun conversation.

“Hey, what's the situation?”

Pretending to be calm, I asked Makabe-kun, who was closest to me.

“Umm..... How should I put it”

He wavered in his words. Instead, it was Sena who raised her voice.

“Isn't it obvious Kousaka-senpai! We're interviewing Ruri-chan!”

“Interviewing? What's with that”

When I glanced at Kuroneko as if to ask “What do you mean?”, she turned bright red and looked down.

I can't get an answer. All I can say is that it's cute.

Then Sena cut in to block my view and spoke in an amused tone,

“Mufufu, before starting club activities, we wanted to clarify 'what everyone is super curious about'. That's why we were going to besiege Ruri-chan with various questions—. I'll ask you directly Kousaka-senpai—”

“You two are going out aren't you?”

“—————Eh”

I was taken by surprise, so I let out a dumb voice.

I tried to act as suspiciously as possible,

“No..... well..... Sena.....? Why..... would you, ask such a thing?”

“Eh—?”

How can Sena not understand? She continued,

“Isn't it too late for that question~? The relationship between you two was suspicious to begin with, and during camp, we did our best to stick you two together in various ways—”

Ah—..... well—..... that's right.

They put us next to each other on the Shinkansen, they arranged for us to be alone in the open-air bath.

They arranged for us to work together while we were there.

At my request, they rigged the lottery for the test of courage for me.

Everyone did a lot of things for us.

Hmm..... *Who's idea was it to rig the lottery?* I don't think it was Sena.....?

Well, no. It's not okay but..... well, is it okay?

Anyway.

It was obvious to the guys at the games club that me and Kuroneko were interested in each other. But, isn't it too early to assume that we're going out?

What about that Sena?

“No no, after the festival, both of you have clearly been acting strange. You're always in a daze, if you think about it, suddenly embarrassed to make eye contact, and going into your own fluffy world together. —Anyone would think 'They confessed at the festival!' 'They must be going out!’”

“Ah.....”

“.....uh”

Me and Kuroneko both blushed together.

Sena looked at us with smiling eyes, and pursed her lips to a pout.

“We've all been waiting for a report from you two, you know? But in the end— until now, you haven't told us anything. —Alright, then we'll just have to ask you directly! Come clean—! Fufu, something like that”

“.....Thank you for the easy-to-understand explanation”

Actually, it's not that I didn't talk about it with Kuroneko.

Whether to report to everyone that we've started dating.

Naturally, it was decided that we would.

We would, but.....

Neither me nor Kuroneko could do it. We don't have the mental fortitude for that.

I mean, come on. On the way home on the Shinkansen, sat next to me was the first girlfriend I've ever had in my life, who I just confessed to last night and started dating!

Before that, there's the matter of enjoying ourselves and rising tension.

I don't know what to do, I feel like I'm in a dream.

That's how I ended up waking up from a terrible sleep this morning.

“.....U- um, let's see. —Well, hey”

As the member's gazes gathered, I looked to Kuroneko.

“.....—”

She squeezed her eyes tightly shut and turned red up to the tips of her ears.

Yeah..... Looks like she doesn't have the capacity to talk.

Well, originally I decided with Kuroneko to tell them.

I came here enthusiastically thinking “Today I have an important mission to do during club activities”.

“I'm sorry for the late report”

I overcame the embarrassment that welled up in me and made my announcement.

“We've started dating”

Cheers erupted.

“Congratulations, Kousaka-senpai, Gokou-san!”

“You finally got together! Well, congrats!”

“Good for you, Ruri-chan!”

The grand congratulatory atmosphere embarrassed me and Kuroneko.

“.....A- aren't you guys..... too happy about this?”

“Hahaha, I'm sorry, but please bear with us, Gokou, Kousaka. After all, everyone was trying their best to get you guys together. Really, it's no exaggeration to say that this is the result of the Games Research Club's activities”

“I'm grateful, really”

The male club members gathered around me, congratulating me, making fun of me, and chopping me hard one after another. Kuroneko, on the other hand, seemed to be surrounded by the few girls and was being talked to in various ways.

“Hey, hey, Ruri-chan. Have you made plans for a date yet?”

“Wh- why should I have to tell you that?”

“Eh—? It's fine! Tell me~~~!”

“.....Not yet. When today's club activities are over..... I was thinking of..... talking with senpai about it”

“Hoh~ love love! Mufufu..... That's right—. You still have summer vacation left to get along and have a good time!”

“.....Yeah, I guess. Maybe”

“Wow, a happy face~~. It's making me happy too. —Ah, that's right, if you like..... I can lend you some magazines that can be used as references for dates?”

“Yes please”

“Wow, a fast bite! Well, here— I'll circle my recommendations”

I can't believe that that Kuroneko has come to interact like that with friends other than Kirino and Saori.

It seems it wasn't just our relationship that was fostered on that trip.

Afterwards, all participants in the club activities would work on creating the novel game.

Let's review this as well.

The Games Research Club is currently working on a new novel game set on an island, inspired by members Kuroneko and Sena.

We actually went to the island to experience the life there ourselves, to research the scenery and folklore, and to take photos.

After discussing and deliberating with the club members—

We decided to make a novel game based on the “Tennyo legend”.

The “Tennyo” can be interpreted in various ways— In other words, the heroine could be an angel, or an alien. Makabe-kun and Kuroneko will be in charge of the scenario.

Currently, Kuroneko is writing a scenario for a girl who fell from the sky - "Haruka Makishima".

Using the PC in the club room, she was writing at high speed, occasionally stopping to let me and the others read the scenario and ask for our opinions.

This would have been unthinkable behaviour from Kuroneko previously. Even if you must abandon yourself, let's create a good game— I can feel that kind of spirit.

While Kuroneko and the other members focused on their work, I was sorting through the materials we had collected during camp. For example, arranging potential backgrounds, writing reports with photos for the folklore we researched, summarizing ideas from meetings, and so on.

There's not much I can do.

I'll be free for the next few days, then, maybe I'll bring in some tools for studying for entrance exams.

“.....”

I want to be near Kuroneko as much as possible.

Since we just started going out, I want to priorities dating over game production—— I have absolutely no intention of saying such a thing.

Sorry for working when we're going out—— Kuroneko also never made any such apology to me.

Creating a game with your lover.

This is just as..... no, more important to us than a date.

Because it's fun.

I'm happy to be able to silently share our values like this.

And so.....

In the evening, the club activities were dismissed.

Now we were the only ones left in the club room.

The curtains softly fluttered in the breeze, and the orange evening sun lit up the room.

“Come, senpai——”

Kuroneko invited me with her back to the twilight.

“I now present to you my 「Arcadia Plan」”¹

“Sure”

What's that? I didn't ask.

I know exactly what she means. After all, it's my girlfriend.

“You're making a plan for summer vacation aren't you?”

“You could say that”

Kuroneko was in a good mood, maybe because her personally coined phrased was understood.

All right! After a week's trip, my chuunibyou language translation skills have improved considerably.

Kuroneko continued with a self-indulgent gesture and tone,

“First of all..... I must apologize to senpai. Yes, for last night..... I foresaw our fate with this red evil eye, and inscribed it in this book of sorcery.....”

Oops, that's a difficult code to understand.

1 I'll mark stuff she says in English with 「Japanese quotes」

“I was so engrossed in writing the game scenario that I was only able to complete one page—”

“The 「Destiny Record」 ”

“In Japanese please”

I'm sorry, I can't share all her values.

“.....In the language of this world..... Fuu, well, a prophecy that describes the fate awaiting lovers, in the near future..... something like that? Thus, it also shows step by step the 「Ceremony」 required to realise my sublime 「Arcadia」 ”

Such a bothersome woman— she's not, it's just that my translation level isn't good enough to understand what she's saying.

However, it's too early to give up. I'm her boyfriend.

I'll try my best to translate it.

“Uhh..... You're making a 'list of things you want us to do together'— something like that?”

“It shows step by step the 「Ceremony」 required to realise 「Arcadia」 ”

People with chuuniby you don't like being summarized.

Oh, but, this reaction means..... seemingly my translation was good.

I surprised myself. I wonder how long I've been able to do this.

Hmm..... Maybe chuuni is an “illness” that can be transmitted person-to-person.²

If it will help me to understand the words of my beloved girlfriend, I welcome it, no matter how eroded by chuuniby you I become.

“So, uhh..... the 「Destiny Record」 hasn't been completed yet. So without a 'list of things to do', the plan for summer vacation from now—”

“ 「Arcadia Plan」 ”

“— You'll make an 「Arcadia Plan」 ”

“That's right.That's why..... I'm sorry, senpai”

For the first time today, Kuroneko showed a somber attitude.

“Why are you apologizing?”

² Chuuniby you - “Chuuni” = second year of junior high (eighth grade) - “byou” = illness

“Giving priority to the game production..... I've neglected you”

“Baka, don't apologize for that. I'm having fun making games with you. I'm happy that you're so absorbed in your work.I thought that was transmitted”

When I spoke with some embarrassment, Kuroneko looked many times more embarrassed than me.

“.....It was transmittedperfectly”

“That's good. —Well, it's true if we had a 「Destiny Record」, we might be able to proceed more smoothly with our 「Arcadia Plan」 ”

This way of talking is super tiring.

“Therefore I want you to continue your mission of describing our destiny”

“Yeah, I got it”

“But you don't have to hurry, game production is a priority. I've said it many times, but I'm happy with that too ”

“.....Th- thank you”

“Besides, maybe it's a good thing you didn't finish it today right?”

“What do you mean?”

Kuroneko blinked her eyes widely. I continued,

“Because, if you weren't so enthusiastic about making the game..... you would have planned our summer vacation by yourself right? That's not right”

“The 「Destiny Record」 Let me write it too”

“.....Eh?”

Fufun, she looks surprised. I'm kinda proud of myself for saying that.

“Wouldn't it be more interesting if we both wrote it?”

“Well— I guess”

Kuroneko was stunned, as if she was pondering a great idea that had been suggested for her creation.

“That's..... right..... it would be..... interesting”

She looked up with a little smile.

“Senpai, that's..... a great idea”

“Right? That's why.....”

I took out a bundle of loose papers from my bag and held them out to Kuroneko.

“How about we each write our own 「Destiny Record」 at home? And then we can combine them later”

I explained my idea further.

“One sheet per day..... write down 'what you want to do with your lover' and give it to the other party. Then we do it together. When the date is over, we put the loose sheets together in a binder—and by the end of summer vacation, we'll have a whole book.How does that sound?”

Kuroneko called it a “book of sorcery”, but I hope that someday in the distant future, it will become a book of memories that we can read together and reminisce about.

Hearing my idea, Kuroneko let out a little giggle.

“Fufu..... Senpai, you're surprisingly maidenly aren't you?”

“Y- you think so?”

Is my idea really maidenly?

Me: “N- no but..... is it alright?”

Even though my face was hot, I expressed my feelings.

Kuroneko: “Yeah, I think it's a good idea. Very romantic”

“What then, don't we feel the same way”

“It's okay for me, I'm a girl”

“Argh—”

“Fufufu..... I'm lucky to have a boyfriend like you”

Kuroneko was teasing me, but her ears were quickly turning red.

“You're embarrassed to say that yourself”

“I'm not embarrassed”

She turned the other way in a huff.

Then she changed the subject to hide it.

“.....Ah, please wait..... if it's loose-leaf, the binding is..... perhaps not suitable for

the 「Destiny Record」. Um..... well, in that case..... I'll make the appropriate binding”

“Sure, please”

“Let's make it a proper book of sorcery”

“Of course”

What is this exchange.

“Ffu..... This is getting fun. Senpai is an expert at pleasing me”

“That's an exaggeration”

“No, that's not the case. Thanks to you, the 「Arcadia Plan」 has made great progress”

“Summer vacation plan' huh.Hey, do you want to meet up tomorrow?”

“_____”

It should have been a casual conversation, but she suddenly stiffened,

“Y- yes”

She answered politely.

Hey, the chuunibyou mood has gone.

“I'd like to see you every day if possible. Even when we don't have club activities”

“Y- yes let's do that. Me too..... that..... I want to see you every day”

“.....Sure”

Belatedly, I realised why Kuroneko was nervous.

Promising to meet her is the same as inviting her on a date.

It's different from when we were just friends.

“.....”

“.....”

We exchanged small smiles silently.

The feeling gently squeezing my heart was pleasantly painful.

It was very similar to the first time I confessed my feelings to her.

A gulp rang in my throat, “Well” I cut to the main subject.

“Go ahead and show me the 「Destiny Record」. You've already written one page right?”

“Yes, right..... The first thing I was thinking of doing when I started going out with you”

She made her initial description while trying to get something out of her bag.

“Ah, wait a minute”

I stopped Kuroneko and grinned.

“Let me guess”

“You look confident. Please tell me”

I nodded, and told her 'what Kuroneko with a boyfriend would prioritize over a date'.

With a calm voice,

“Let's report to Saori that we started dating”

“Yeah, let's ask her plans for tomorrow”

It must have been the easiest quiz in the world.

And so the next day.

Under the guise of 'we're back from camp so let's hang out'— we called Saori.

“Ooh, Kyouzuke-shi, Kuroneko-shi, it's been so long!”

In front of Akihabara station.

Waving her hands happily, the one who ran up to me and Kuroneko was Saori Bajina.

In swirly glasses and otaku fashion, the super tall otaku girl.

An important friend for me, Kuroneko and Kirino.

Saori had now wrapped her hands around Kuroneko's and was shaking it violently.

With a joy as if she had been reunited with long lost family, Kuroneko smiled bitterly.

“You're overreacting.Has it been that long?”

“Fufufu, what are you saying! It's been a week and a few days! Even though it's summer vacation, I couldn't see you— I missed you so much!”

I really missed this super nerdy way of speaking.³

It's strange.

I had seen Saori a little over a week ago, but it felt like it had been years.

It must be because it was such a *long journey*.

Both me and Kuroneko were really happy to see Saori again after so long.

Me: "I missed you too. —Shall we have a little party to celebrate our reunion?"

"Oh, how nice of you to say that. —Mufufu, but if you want to 'celebrate our reunion', should we reschedule it for another day? "

Kuroneko: "Ara, why?"

When Kuroneko asked, Saori's mouth made a ω shape.

"Actually, I'm planning something for our 'reunion party'"

"You really are overreacting"

Kuroneko said with a smile.

"....."

Saori's eyes were hidden by her swirly glasses, so I couldn't see them.

Yet, somehow, I could still feel her gentle emotion.

I ask the leader, who seems to have a plan,

"So, what shall we do today?"

"Hmm, that's right..... I'd like to go to a new place that was recently opened, if that's okay?"

"If Saori found a place, it's a safe bet"

I agree.

She's an Akiba connoisseur who has done her homework.

That's because she's our leader of 'Otaku Girls Unite', Saori Bajina.

And so.

As usual, Saori led us through the streets of Akiba.

There were a few buildings under construction, and I realized that the familiar cityscape was changing rapidly.

³ Saori doth speak like a samurai of olde, thou shan't suffer my paltry attempt to capture such manner henceforth

A city that is constantly changing.

That's Akiba.

"Come on Kyousuke-shi, Kuroneko-shi, let's go!"

Perhaps the only thing that doesn't change is the otaku spirit.

The coffee shop that Saori found had a chic and mature atmosphere, far from the label of "otaku town".

It's just my feeling, but these days in Akiba, there are more and more trendy stores like this.

Saori and Kuroneko, who were displaying their nerdy side, seemed to be standing out a bit, but they didn't seem to mind at all.

I sat side by side with Kuroneko and faced Saori.

After a light meal, I presented Saori with a paper bag.

"It's a souvenir from camp"

"Ooh! How courteous! Hohoh, Inumaki manju..... wonderful, my favourite! Thank you so much Kyousuke-shi, Kuroneko-shi!"⁴

"Ffu..... You're welcome"

"'Inumaki Island', it's an island in the Seto Inland Sea"

"I know it. I have a little connection with that island"

"Huh, is that right. Do you have relatives living there or something?"

"Something like that"

Saori gave a vague answer.

At this point, I didn't know anything about Saori's background, so I let it pass, but— it could be something to do with her family name or lineage.

"As I may have explained before..... We went to camp with the Games Research Club to research for our new novel game"

"I heard that Kuroneko-shi was in charge of the scenario. How did the research go?"

"We achieved considerable results. Senpai, did you bring the photos?"

4 Manju: steamed filled yeast bun confection

"Yep"

I spread out the photos from camp in on the table.

Inumaki Island seen from the ferry. The sloped road leading to the inn. The ocean sunset from the hill.

The midday mountain road full of greenery. The torii at the end of the long stone staircase—

We looked over them while immersed in the memories of the trip.

Kuroneko closed her eyes and opened them again with a distance gaze, then looked to Saori and spoke,

"There's some folklore that's stimulating my creativity— the meetings are progressing, it's going well"

"That's wonderful.Fufu, you seem quite fulfilled, Kuroneko-shi"

"Yeah—..... I guess so"

Kuroneko had built a new friendships at camp, but,

When it comes to best friends, Saori must be the one. There's nobody else she can talk to so easily, who relaxes her shoulders so much. Including me.I'm just a little envious.

No..... There was one other person, I think.

Hm, that bastard..... I wonder what she's up to now.

Ah, stop stop. It's annoying, I don't want to remember that person.

Then, Kuroneko told Saori about the events that happened during camp.

Once she'd finished,

"So Kuroneko-shi, for the new game, what kind of scenario will it be?"

"Just as well. I'd like to get your opinion too. Maybe you can take a look at my material"

Kuroneko took out a bundle of papers from her bag and presented them to Saori.

Saori took them and pushed up her glasses with her finger.

"Hmm, let's see"

She gave off atmosphere of an intellectual editor.

Kuroneko handed her the documents that describe an overview of the story, character settings etc. for the novel game.

"Oh?"

Saori, who had started reading, made a surprised sound.

"Kuroneko-shi, the name of this heroine——"

"It's 'Haruka Makishima'. Is there something wrong?"

"Hmm..... is this beautiful girl, modelled on me?"

Oh, she's getting carried away.

Probably thinking the same thing as me, Kuroneko asked with a frown,

"Huh? I don't think so. Don't say such atrocious things"

"Isn't that a bit harsh?"

"If a friend suddenly asks 'Is this character modelled on me?' wouldn't that be unpleasant?"

"Y- you don't have to go that far! P- please listen to me both of you! I have a good reason for thinking that!"

"Reason?"

"'Makishima' is my family name! My real name is 'Saori Makishima'!"

"Huh!"

It was a surprising confession.

"'Saori Makishima'..... That's your real name....."

Kuroneko also seemed to be acting with an astonished expression.

When Saori saw this,

“Ah, you didn't know after all”

“How could I have known. You never told us”

“That's, well..... the handle name was enough..... It was never a good time to tell you”

That's true. I also only knew Saori as Saori Bajina, and that was enough.

I only just realised. Now it's been said, Saori has a real name too.

“Oh no~ apologies apologies. 'Kuroneko-shi knew my real name and modelled her beautiful heroine after me!'What a thing to think”

Saori wiped her sweat with a handkerchief to hide her embarrassment.

Having heard the situation, it makes a bit more sense, Kuroneko nodded.

I exhaled heavily,

“But..... Haruka Makishima..... Saori Makishima. That's an amazing coincidence”

“It might not be a complete coincidence you know”

“How so?”

“Saori has relatives on the island right? Because I came up with the surname for the heroine from the name of the island.....”

“Ah, I see”

If you think about it properly, it's not such a strange story.

It's still a curious connection, though.

While watching our exchange, Saori was scratching her cheek with a subtle expression, and eventually she spoke to change the subject.

“By the way, Kuroneko-shi, Kyouusuke-shi. There's something I definitely want to ask you”

“Ara, what's that?”

Mufufu, Saori laughed teasingly,

“Today, you two seem more close than ever. In that case, maybe your relationship has progressed while you were travelling——”

““.....””

She hit our bullseye, the two of us went silent, blinking incessantly.

Then we looked at each other. Kuroneko whispered,

“.....what should we do?tell her?”

“.....that's..... what we were originally intending to do.....”

“but, this setup..... Saori broaching the subject is..... unexpected”

“.....your ad lib is too weak.....”

“b- but.....”

When Saori saw us whispering to each other, she became increasingly flustered.

“Eh? U- um.....? Kuroneko-shi? Kyouusuke-shi? I was just joking..... but, maybe..... really?”

“Yeah, we started dating”

In the end, I said it.

Actually, Kuroneko was supposed to tell her with a gallant line she'd devised herself.

When Saori heard our relationship report, she froze with her mouth wide open, and after a good ten seconds or so,

“Really? You two are really— going out?”

“Yeah, really. I wouldn't lie to you”

“.....I'm surprised”

What's with this tone suddenly? It's strangely fitting, and hard to tsukkomi?

Saori was looking at us seriously.

“For a long time I thought..... it might happen someday..... Aah..... my apologies. Let me organise my thoughts just a little more”

“That's..... fine but”

What is that tone? Kuroneko also seemed super aware of it.

After a brief period of silence, eventually Saori cleared her throat.

Phew~~~ a long exhale, and then,

“Congratulations! Kyouzuke-shi. Kuroneko-shi! You both have my blessing!”

Back to her usual voice.

“Sure” “.....Thank you”

The two of us bashfully accepted her blessing.

In the end, I missed the chance to ask about her lady-like tone.

Saori's voice took on a shade of loneliness.

“.....If that's the case, we should refrain from gatherings like this for a while”

“No, we have no intention of doing that”

Kuroneko stated clearly. She didn't even glance at me.

Even if I don't consult you, I'm sure you feel the same way— Yes, she had such conviction.

Saori, on the other hand, was perplexed.

“But, you just started going out right? Shouldn't you want to date every day?”

“That's right..... For the rest of summer vacation, we'll meet every day as much as possible”

“Then”

“That's why we're not going to reduce these gatherings”

“.....Eh?”

“It's called a date when two lovers go somewhere they can enjoy themselves.In other words, for me, today counts as a date as well. Senpai, what do you think?”

“I agree. I'm also really enjoying myself. I'm happy to meet Saori again for the first time in a while”

“Kyouzuke-shi..... Kuroneko-shi.....”

Me: “Ah—..... In other words, that means..... if Saori doesn't mind, gatherings like today are welcome”

Kuroneko: “For the rest of summer vacation..... same as before, will you continue to hang out with us?”

After both of us told her, Saori spoke,

“I'm touched~~~~~! In that case, yoroshiku onegaiitashimasuru~~~~!”⁵

She affectedly feigned tears of happiness.

Is she really pretending to cry..... I won't say anything tactless.

She wiped the back of her glasses with a handkerchief, put them back on firmly, and turned to us.

“Truthfully, I was worried.In hobby groups, people dating can cause..... people to leave..... awkward relationships..... that sort of thing”

I was surprised..... It might be the first time I've ever seen Saori talk so timidly.

“Kiririn-shi is gone..... What would I do if I became estranged from you two.....”

“There's no way that would happen”

Hey, isn't that right? Kuroneko, tell her too.

When I threw eye contact to my girlfriend, “How stupid” she smiled gently at Saori,

“I'd rather break up with senpai than be estranged from you”

“Saori is higher than me!?”

“It's only natural—.....it's not something to cry about”

“I- I'm not crying!”

“Yes yes, senpai is also important. Just as much as Saori”

5 The same as onegaishimasu, but this is Saori's overly polite and old fashioned way of speaking

“Rough! You're being rough with your boyfriend!”

Seeing such an interaction between lovers, Saori spoke,

“..... I really am stupid”

She looked very happy.

After a— *little exchange*, we disbanded.

I got on the train with Kuroneko, and we parted ways at the local station.

Then, instead of going directly home, I stopped by at the Tamura shop

Just as Kuroneko did with Saori, I also had someone I wanted to report our relationship to.

In front of the house, I used my phone to call her.

“Kyou-chan, welcome”

Manami Tamura. My precious, bespectacled, kind and gentle childhood friend.

“I have something to report”

I started talking without a pause. Manami smiled softly.

“Is it about Kuroneko-san?”

“_____”

“Really, don't act so surprised”

She giggled.

At a loss for words, I stumbled one, two steps.

Manami still saw straight through me.

“I understand. I knew it was going to happen. Do you know the rumours about Kyou-chan and Kuroneko-san at school?”

“.....A little”

Until recently, I had no idea.

But, the guys at the games club pointed it out.

There were rumours about me and Kuroneko—

That's a fact, it seems.

I'm plain myself but, Kuroneko is— the number one cutest at school.

If she was often seen together with a boy, there would be rumours.

“So, well, I can guess the general situation”

That's how it is. You're very perceptive, Manami.

“At the Games Research Club camp, Kuroneko-san confessed to you? And you started dating?”

“How did you get such detailed information!?”

It's too good even for a high level guess!

Manami laughed at my tsukkomi,

“I heard from Inoue-san. A former member of the Games Research Club. You went to camp together right?”

“.....Ah..... her”

Participating in the production of the new game, the semi-professional girl in charge of CG.

That was your source of information.....

“Manami, you have a lot of friends”

“That's not the case. It's normal”

Ever since junior high, she's had a lot of detailed information about what happens in school.

Even though she's technologically inept and can't use the internet, she's well informed.

The reason for this unusual situation is simply that she has so many friends and is widely liked. At school, information is shared among close friends. Formed by countless communities, this old fashioned network cannot be fooled.

“But, Manami. That's not quite right”

“Eh?”

“I'm the one that confessed”

“.....”

Manami didn't raise her voice, but she seemed quite surprised.

She blinked her eyes widely.

“Kyou-chan..... confessed?”

“Yeah, that's right. So, we're going out..... Now, I'm going to go around and report to everyone who helped with the matter”

“.....ISee”

Manami said that much and fell silent.

She closed her eyes and looked up to the heavens,

“Hmm—.....”

She seemed to be pondering with a leisurely voice.

It was a common gesture for my childhood friend, so I waited leisurely too.

Eventually, Manami opened her mouth and spoke her thoughts with an unreadable tone.

“Kyou-chan has changed”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah. You've changed a lot. You haven't returned to how you were before, you've just changed”

“If you say so, maybe you're right”

Manami has always been the person who understands me the most.

“Well, I'm a different person to how I was in the past..... It's not strange that I'd change again”

“You changed too much. It's not been long since I last saw you..... but it feels like I'm meeting you for the first time in years. Today's Kyou-chan seems very dependable”

“That tickles. Why are you praising me all of a sudden. I haven't changed that much”

“In that case, it's because of Kuroneko-san..... How frustrating”

“Frustrating?”

“I thought I had changed you. I still thought it was good thing”

“.....”

I won't try to explain. If you already know, it can't help.⁶

For me, it's a story from my past that I'd rather keep secret.

⁶ He's talking about the back-story from volume 11 which I strongly recommend reading if you haven't. If you've seen the “Manami's evil plan” infographic that gets thrown around a lot, it's completely wrong, don't believe any of it.

“But you know” - Manami continued the conversation that only we could understand.

“I was also worried that I overreacted. That I was holding back the real Kyou-chan”

“Manami”

I interrupted in the middle of her story.

“Who I was in the past, who I was a short time ago, who I am now, I'm me. Maybe Manami helped..... maybe Kuroneko helped, but I decided myself to be like that. I can't blame anyone else”

“But”

“I'm myself. Not because of you”

“—I see”

She sighed.

Manami relaxed her shoulders.

“Then, there's nothing for me to say”

“I see”

“Well then,”

“See you, after the holidays”

As usual, we parted with the same words we had repeated countless times before.

The sun was setting on the old streets, and I walked on without looking back on my way home.

That night. I was deeply troubled in front of the blank loose-leaf paper.

Tomorrow, I have a date with Kuroneko.

We will both write a 「Destiny Record」 and show each other, then we'll implement them.

—I want to kiss you

I was about to write that, but my pen stopped at the last second.

“.....Sh-.....h”

Even though I put all my energy into it, my fingertips just tremble and I can't move.

“Aaaaaa— Shit!”

After a long painful process, the “wish” I wrote was——

I'll keep it a secret for now. You'll find out tomorrow.

And so the night dawned, and the morning.

The meeting place for the date was at the main gate of the high school.

Why we have to meet at school when we don't have club activities—

Is because I've rarely met her in Chiba before.

The only meeting places that are convenient for both parties are the station and here.

We don't have any business around the station, so we're here.

I arrived fifteen minutes earlier than the time we had agreed to meet,

“.....Hm?”

A dangerous looking person was standing still on their own.

The first thing that stood out was the outfit. All white gothloli style and sleeveless. The front of the skirt was open exposing her pure white legs. For some reason, she was wearing some kind of broken mask.

What particularly caught my eye, were the enormous angel wing-like things attached to her back.

“What..... is that”

Coupled with the heat haze rising from the asphalt, I wondered if I was seeing a hallucination.

But reality is merciless.

The figure with majestic pure white wings was definitely my beloved girlfriend.

I twitched when she noticed me.

She sent me a bewitching gaze, and spoke with unusually high tension,

“Ffu, so you came”

“Uh..... um..... Kuroneko?”

When I asked with a shudder, sure enough, the reply was full of energy.

“Kukuku..... No, you're mistaken”

She abruptly removed her mask. Her hidden eyes had become mismatched, with red and gold contacts respectively.

——.....It strangely suited her.....

My heart beat at the sight of my beloved girlfriend's cosplay, Kuroneko thrust the back of her hand away, raised one leg, and announced her name in high spirits.

“.....I am now the holy angel 'Kamineko'. From a descendant of darkness, I was reincarnated as a white angel”

“You've become broken so early in the morning. Let's go somewhere cool before it's too late”

“My retainer..... How cold your manner is”

Swish, the holy angel thrust her fingertip towards my face.

Don't you have anything else to say? Her big wings fluttered to me.

Apparently, if we don't talk about it, we can't proceed.

I have no choice but to ask.

“What's with the outfit?”

“It's the robe of a holy angel”

Kuroneko nimbly twirled on the spot— No, I should call her Kamineko as requested.

Kamineko-san, you look very confident in your outfit today.

It's been a long time since I saw such a smug look on her face.

“And..... the huge wings on your back?”

“Since my [class change] from fallen saint to holy angel, my [symbol] has [materialised] ”

“I see”

I don't.

“I mean, how were you able to get through the front door with that”

That's the first thing that puzzles me. Those huge wings would definitely get caught in the front door and wouldn't fit through.

“Yeah..... Although I was in a hurry to go out, at the last second I noticed that the wings would not pass through the front door. However, in a moment of quick-wittedness, I realised that I could just put them on outside”

“I see..... you noticed”

Kamineko-san stupidly colliding with the doorway must have been cute.

Didn't your family try to stop you?

“And so..... I was able to safely attend our date equipped with this removable 'god demon' [wing part] ”

“Your naming sense is also sharp”

“It sure is”

Ahem, Kamineko proudly raised her chest.

She almost tipped over from the weight of the wings, so I caught her.

“Oops, are you okay?”

“Y-yeah..... Thank you..... The weight of the [wing part] could be an issue from now on”

I guess this outfit isn't just for today.

As soon as she'd fixed her posture with my help, Kamineko spoke with a dignified voice as if she hadn't just almost fallen over,

“Now, senpai. Please give me your general comments about me in the robe of a holy angel”

“I told you what I thought”

“Your general comments after listening to my 'holy commentary”

“General comments.....”

That's a very formal way of saying it.

I guess she wants to formally hear her boyfriend's opinion about her clothes on her first date.

Hmm, if that's the case.

“Then, I'll be honest with you”

“Yeah..... What do you think?”

I was staring intently at her whole body, and she looked a little nervous..... Kamineko.

I directed a serious voice at her.

“This, robe of a holy angel is——”

“.....*gulp*”

“Amazing, isn't it really good?”

“R- really?”

“Yeah”

If it makes her happy, that's the best.

If she wants, I would go anywhere alongside Kamineko.

Praised for her proud clothes, Kamineko relievedly stroked her chest.

“I was worried that it might be a little bold..... You told me that white clothes suit me.....”

She must mean the white dress she wore at camp. That really suited her.

The atmosphere now was completely different from usual, and full of new charm.

“Today's clothes suit you too”

“Really really?”

“Yeah”

Really really really.

Certainly I was surprised at first, and taken aback, but when she removed the mask that was the source of surrealism, sure enough, white does suit her. It's lighter than her usual black clothes, and shows more skin,

“You look more sexy than usual”

“.....Baka”

She turned red and walked straight past me.

I don't know by what mechanism, but her angel wings flapped as if to reflect her feelings.

In good humour, I followed her unsteady, almost flying gait.

We walked around the school building and eventually stopped in the shade of a cherry tree.

“Well..... retainer. You wrote 'you know what' right?”

“Of course”

I won't comment on Kamineko-san's strange one-legged pose.

We each gave each other the 「Destiny Record」 we had written at home.

One sheet of loose-leaf.

"You wrote more than me"

"Of course. For example, even if my b—— boyfriend is my opponent..... I can't be defeated as a creator"

At boyfriend, she got stuck.

I totally understand. That also happens when I try to call her my 'girlfriend'.

I pretend not to notice Kamineko's panic.

"It's not a game of 'write as much content as you can'....."

I look down at the description that my beloved girlfriend has written.

"Let me see.....— ugh"

I froze.

The content Kamineko had written went far beyond my expectations.

"Y- you..... this....."

In one word——

Black.

The page was super black!

It's written without any gaps, the smaller the blank area, the smaller the writing.

Rituals between lovers..... bittersweet spells..... it's supposed to be.

.....I can feel the curse of "darkness".

".....Kuu!"

It was a pressure that made me want to look away, but that would disqualify me as a boyfriend.....!

"Wow.....!"

I clenched my teeth and tried to decipher what was written.

——Ask senpai to say he loves me

——Call each other by name like lovers do

Huh? Sh- she wrote such cute things.....!

Wow, at first glance, it looks like a book of curses..... But this is surprising!

".....H- hey"

"Wh- what is it?"

Once I raised my head from the 「Destiny Record」 and faced my girlfriend, who had gone stiff—

".....I love you, Ruri"

".....Feh!"

Kamineko turned bright red immediately. I'm sure I did too.

Call each other by name like lovers do.

That alone was super embarrassing, but I even confessed my love at the same time.

For Kyouzuke Kousaka, it was too high a hurdle.

But apparently, it was the same for Kuroneko.

"Wh- what are you saying all of a sudden....."

Kamineko went limp and crouched down on the spot while covering her face.

"No, it was your request!"

"Th- that's true but..... there's such a thing as mental preparation. You need to give me more setup..... and stuff..... are you trying to kill me?"

She stared at me through gaps in the fingers that covered her face.

I flinched severely and let out a shameful voice.

"Next time! I'll be careful next time!"

"Y- you're still chasing me.....?"

What do you mean chasing!

"Because you have so much stuff here! If we don't work through it steadily, we won't get through it by the end of the day!"

".....Maybe you could stop talking about my 「Arcadia」 like it's a quota"

Kamineko stood up while swaying like in a horror movie.

.....Wow, she got really angry!

Shit! The 「Destiny Record」 was supposed to make fun memories with her.....!

What's with this horrible atmosphere! Gyah— this is not good.....!

Kamineko indignantly pushed up her lower lip, and sternly pointed to the asphalt ground.

"I'm going to scold you, kneel down Kyouzuke"

"You're trying to cook your boyfriend on the hot asphalt! ——Hey"

In the middle of my tsukkomi, I suddenly realized.

"You..... just now..... my..... name....."

".....That's what I wrote.Call each other by name"

She gently relaxed her angry face,

"We've accomplished it"

.....Geez.

For such a princess, I will kneel as much as she wants.

—Call each other by name like lovers do

A passer-by looked at us suspiciously as we drifted into our own little world.

After the eccentricity of the chuunibyouto couple ended, we regained our senses and hurried to another location. The destination was the park.

It's not popular, so it should be a suitable place to fulfil each other's "wishes".

"W- well..... let us continue..... senpai"

"Hmm? Are we done calling each other by name, Ruri?"

".....It's more embarrassing than I expected, let's get accustomed to it little by little"

"Roger"

I nodded with a wry smile.

To be honest, I feel the same way.

Her calling me by first name has incredible destructive power.

From here on, I won't call her Ruri, or Kamineko, but return to Kuroneko.

“Then, let's get to it right away. Of course, it's not a quota— we can enjoy each one in turn”

“Yeah”

“I only wrote a few, so we can leave them until later—”

Once again I continued reading the 「Destiny Record」 written by Kuroneko.

Ugh..... is so detailed it's hard to read.

Umm..... what is this?

—Become trapped in an online game world with senpai

—Develop magic to travel between worlds, and visit every world with senpai

—Become a B-class adventurer with S-class ability

“.....”

This person is dangerous man. What am I gonna do.

“? What's the matter, senpai?”

“No..... online games..... wanna play?”

“Ara, an unusual suggestion. Not a bad one either. However, since we just started dating, let's prioritize activities we can do in the same space”

“Y- you're right”

My girlfriend, what she says is sensible, but what she writes is super dangerous.

Hmm..... For now..... I think we can skip the ones that aren't possible..... Otherwise..... is there anything here we can do.....?

—Awaken a unique skill and defeat the goddess with senpai

—Touch senpai's stomach

—Plan how to reunite in the next life with senpai

—[Concern I] If there is a next life

—[Concern II] If we are born as siblings in the next life

—[Concern III] If we are the same sex in the next life

—[Concern IV] If it is a world with magic

—[Concern V] If me and senpai are reincarnated as demon king and hero and must do battle

—Draw a picture side by side

—Let him touch my wings

“.....”

Can you stop alternating between writing heart-warming and extremely dangerous things?

.....Your wings..... I'm afraid that touching them might have some kind of ceremonial meaning.

“Kuroneko.....”

“Yes?”

“Umm..... Want to touch my stomach?”

“Ara, is that okay?”

“Well, I guess so.....”

I don't know what's fun about it exactly.

We sat side by side on the bench, while Kuroneko was rubbing my belly.

It's a surreal situation. Kuroneko looked happy doing it for a while, and eventually,

“Fuu..... I enjoyed that”

“That's good”

“Now it's my turn”

“Hm?”

“I will grant you your 「Arcadia」 —— However, it seems we were both thinking the same thing”

As soon as Kuroneko stood up from the bench, she took out another sheet of loose-leaf from the 「Destiny Record」 and showed it to me.

An illustration of me and Kuroneko was drawn on it.

The two of us were happily walking hand in hand.

—I want to walk hand in hand

The picture was the same as the “wish” I wrote last night.

When I looked at her, her cheeks were dyed like cherry blossom as she held out her hand.

“Looks that way”

I took her hand and started walking.

A summer morning. We walked aimlessly through the chorus of cicadas.

There was no conversation— Or rather, I was so nervous that I didn't even feel the scorching heat, however, only the feeling of our touching fingertips was clear.

It wasn't the first time we held hands.

But, it was the first time we held hands “as lovers”, since we started dating.

I didn't expect it to be so different.

“.....”

“.....”

Only our fingertips were gently linked together.

How do we look to people around us? Do we look like proper lovers?

Or, would they see the true shamefulness of not being able to hold her hand properly—

“Senpai”

Kuroneko's voice pulled me back from my thoughts.

When I stopped and turned my gaze, she was looking determinedly up at me,

“We shall follow through..... if that is our fate”

With a cool line like an anime, she wrapped her fingers around my palm.



It's what they call a lover's tie.⁷

I shuddered— A strange feeling ran down my spine, and a noise escaped.

“P- please don't make weird noises”

“Sorry..... it tickles.Ah—..... what is this”

I feel dizzy..... Like I'm about to fall.

I'm sure it's not the sun.

“.....Is it, unpleasant?”

“Nah, I'm happy”

“R- right. Then, that's good”

We held hands firmly and started walking side by side again.

Now, there's no way to see us except as lovers.

I'm happy, embarrassed, and glad.

In addition, various emotions that are hard to put into words run through my brain.

.....That Kuroneko is being surprisingly forward.

She was much more assertive than me, as a man—

And yet, she's bashful after the fact.

Even now, she pulls my hand to lead me.

“Hey, do we have a destination?”

I thought we were just going for a random walk.

When I asked, Kuroneko replied, her face blushing from the heat and other reasons.

“Yeah, apart from the 「Destiny Record」There's something I want senpai to do”

“Anything you say”

“Are you sure it's okay without asking for the details?”

“It's fine. I have to make it happen. Because I'm your boyfriend. I'm happy to do whatever you ask”

“.....Thank you, Kyouusuke”

“S- sure”

7 Koibitotsunagi – holding hands with fingers interlocked

Can you stop with the surprise attacks? It makes my heart stop.

Geez..... I scratched my hot cheek with my finger.

“Well, don't hesitate..... to ask”

Then, Kuroneko expressed her first selfish desire to her boyfriend.

“Please meet my family at my home”

“Sure! Leave it to me ——Ueh!?”

On our first date! No way!

Y- you want me to say “Please give me your daughter”——

“..... Why are you so surprised?”

On the contrary, why are you so calm?

Even though you're a super shy person! Even though with romance, you're a super prudish ojousama!

I think “introducing your boyfriend to your family” is a pretty big event!

.....Is there a difference in feeling between me and Kuroneko?

Since a short time ago, she's been very forward, which confuses me as her new boyfriend.

“No, it's nothing”

“I see. Then, let's go”

I don't know.....

Even though we're trying to get to know each other as lovers, I feel like the mysterious parts are increasing.

.....It's difficult, dating.

In this way——

“Senpai..... senpai?”

“Hmm? O- oh..... what is it?”

On the way to Kuroneko's house, I was super frantic, considering her feelings, and trying to prepare myself.

However, my girlfriend would not give me such a leisurely time.

“We've arrived”

“Eh? Already?”

I looked around in a panic. The scenery was familiar..... Without a doubt, this is my neighbourhood.

We live so close to each other.

Until now, Kuroneko had never invited us to her home.

I'm sure Kirino has never been here either.

I feel a little superior. How about that Kirino, I was invited to Kuroneko's house before you.

Kuroneko's house—the Gokou family house was a traditional Japanese-style building.

More specifically, it feels like a Showa-style house.

Kuroneko removed the wings from her Kamineko costume and held them in her arms.

“Senpai, please wait a little. I'll talk to my family”

“S- sure..... Hey, today, your parents”

“My father is home”

“I- I see”

Pressure~~~~~!

Kuroneko looked at me curiously as I froze in place, before she went into the house.

For a few minutes before she came back, I closed my eyes tightly and held my chest, as if in a waiting room for the final interview while job hunting..... I had a distressing time.

Before long, Kuroneko came out through the front door.....

“Please come in”

It's here! Finally! The time to meet “my girlfriend's father”.....!

Uoooooh! Let's go! Let's go let's go let's go! Kyouzuke Kousaka, I'll show you a man.....!

“Sure! Leave it to me!”

“.....What, is with this mysterious tension”

“Hahaha! It's nothing!”

In a manner that was clearly anything but, I set foot in the grounds of the Gokou family house.

It has a small garden, and once inside, a corridor extends to the front and the to the right.

I took off my shoes and entered the house.

“_____”

My breath was taken.

This is because an absurdly beautiful person was walking towards me from inside.

A frighteningly pretty face, thin chest, sloping shoulders, wearing a pure white shirt. A tender expression, coiled by a radiant charm.

Unrealistic beauty.

Kuroneko's family? My dull head thought.

Little sister, but it can't be? She's obviously older than me.

In that case..... Kuroneko's onee-san?

The beautiful woman with long black hair stopped in front of me and opened her lips.

“Good morning”

“Ah, yes, good morning.....”

I barely squeezed out my words. With an even more awkward bow, I said the line I had prepared.

“Nice to meet you, I'm Kyouzuke Kousaka. I'm going out with Ruri-san”

Upon my self-introduction, the reply came with a slightly low voice for a woman.

“Nice to meet you. I'm Shizuka Gokou”

“Ruri's father”

I see. This person isn't Kuroneko's onee-san, it's her otou-san.

That makes——

“F- father?”

Thinking I had misheard, I looked at Kuroneko next to me, and she spoke with a little sigh,

“That's my father”

Right, that settles it.

“.....”

Eeh.....?

Right now, I must have a face like my eyeballs will pop out.

No..... well, sure..... for a woman, he has a thin chest.....

I- is there..... an..... Adam's apple?

I have no idea, he just looks like a super beautiful woman.

Although, I think he does resemble Kuroneko. You can feel the blood connection in the features.

I'm sure when Kuroneko grows up, she will reach perfected beauty like this as a woman.

But that's not the right impression for her otou-san!

It may be too late, but I hurriedly tried to fix my composure.

“Um, how discourteous of me..... I'm sorry”

“Don't worry. I'm aware that I don't look like a father”

He looks away slightly as if embarrassed.

“Likewise, I'm sorry to have disturbed you two. I'm sure you didn't want to meet her father when you've just started dating?”

“No, not at all”

Why did I confirm it!

He seemed to understand my inner thoughts, and spoke apologetically.

“I just wanted to say hello to my daughter's first boyfriend. May I talk to you for a moment?”

“Of course”

“Thank you. —Ah, don't be so nervous. Firstly, let me thank you”

“Thank me?”

For what? When he sensed my doubts,

“Various things. For example, the matter of camp. Without you, Ruri wouldn't have participated, and I've heard she wouldn't even have joined the club in the first place. Even before that, you've helped her many times”

He bowed deeply to me, even though I'm much younger than him.

“Kyouzuke Kousaka-san. My daughter is always indebted to you”

Kuroneko, seeing her father like this, stiffened her body slightly and dyed her cheeks.

She's stuck in the middle of her parent and boyfriend's introduction. If our positions were reversed, I'm sure I'd be the same.

Hoping to ease her tension a little, I spoke calmly.

“It's something I like to do..... Both me and my sister are indebted to Kurone..... Ruri-san, so, it's mutual”

Though I may seem composed, inwardly I'm panicking.

This is because Kuroneko's otou-san is too different from the simulation I was imagining.

He's too short, too friendly— and super beautiful.

What should I do..... That's honestly how I felt.

“I see”

He nodded slightly, and then,

“Ah..... You don't have to call her something different in front of me. I heard that you're calling her by her handle name”

“Understood. It's Kuroneko then”

Until I get used to calling her Ruri.

After we had exchanged reluctant greetings and thanks,

“.....”

“.....”

The place fell silent.

I was too nervous to initiate conversation myself, and he was still standing there motionless.

“.....Instead of out here, why don't you both talk inside?”

Kuroneko said, unable to just watch.

“A- ah.....”

“Y- you're right”

Kuroneko pat the bottoms of the two men who had entered passive mode, to move us into the place.

And so—

The three of us walked down the corridor without conversation.

The slightly awkward atmosphere continued for a while, until suddenly, Kuroneko's otou-san—
Shizuka-san murmured,

“Actually, I'm nervous too”

“Eh?”

“It's a big responsibility to meet my daughter's boyfriend—”

He held his fair-skinned palm to his chest.

The gesture was just like Kuroneko when she's scared.

Seemingly, he's a fairly timid character.

For me, if you say father, I imagine based on my own father, so the personality of Kuroneko's otou-san feels quite unexpected. More than that, I was surprised by how he looks.

Then, the sliding door in front of us opened,

“Otouto-san! Ruri-nee's boyfriend came!?”

An energetic girl jumped out.

Oh, this voice is—

“Oh my god! What are those super dangerous clothes! No way, did you go on a date looking like that!? I'm surprised you weren't rejected!”

Hinata Gokou— Kuroneko's little sister.

I knew it just from her lively voice.

The holy angel Kamineko did not listen to Hinata-chan's words of reason, and let out an exasperated voice.

“Hinata. I told you to be quiet and stay in your room”

“Eeh~? My super negative and shy onee-chan brought her boyfriend to our house!? There's no way I can sit still!”

She ran towards us.

“Otouto-san, did you give your daughter's boyfriend a stern talking to?”

“Of course. Okaa-san asked me to”

“Reallyy? That's strange~ Otouto-san seems so weak~”

“I told you properly. Right?”

“Ah, yes”

He didn't say anything stern.

No, for him, does he even consider that a “stern talking to”?

.....I get the feeling that Hinata-chan's description of weak is very accurate.....

Shizuka-san spoke to Hinata-chan with a benevolent voice.

“Rather than that Hinata, you say hello to Kousaka-san”

“Ah! That's right!”

Hinata-chan turned to face me, and showed me a smile across her whole face.

“Hey! Once again, I'm Hinata Gokou!”

So cheerful! I can feel the mood rising.

“Kyouzuke Kousaka. Yoroshiku then, Hinata-chan”

“Yeah! Thanks for persuading Ruri-nee to go with you before! —What should I call you?”

“You can call me whatever you want”

“Kousaka-kun then”

“Sure”

This kid must have a lot of friends.

She's too easy to talk to.

“Honestly..... this child”

Kuroneko sighed and put her hand on Hinata-chan's head.

“I'm sorry, senpai..... if my sister says anything rude”

“No no, I don't mind”

“Thank you. Ah, that's right..... I'll introduce you to my younger sister too”

She looked ahead to the hallway. Where, hiding half her body behind the open sliding door, a small child with a bob-cut was watching us.

That child——

“Tamaki, come here too”

“Okaay”

The girl trotted over with little steps and bowed deeply in front of me.

“Tamaki Gokou..... Six years old!”

“Nice to meet you, I'm Kyouzuke Kousaka. Yoroshiku then”

I crouched down on the spot to introduce myself while making eye contact.

It's great to greet them properly.

Hinata-chan who's full of energy, and Tamaki-chan who seems smart.

Apparently Kuroneko has two little sisters.

Come to think of it..... I feel like she said that during camp.

I was led by the members of the Gokou household into a tatami-matted living room.

With a wooden table between us, I faced my girlfriend's father.⁸

Kuroneko sat next to me, Hinata-chan and Tamaki-chan sat close to their otou-san.

“Because my mother is working, this is all the family I want to introduce to senpai today”

Said Kuroneko. Next, Hinata-chan leaned forward with her hands on the table,

“After hearing that Ruri-nee has a boyfriend— okaa-san wanted to meet Kousaka-kun the most!”

“Is that so?”

I'd heard from Kuroneko that her otou-san wanted to meet me, but her okaa-san as well— I'd never heard that.

“See, because it's Ruri-nee's first boyfriend. She must be worried about what her boyfriend is like”

Well, that's true.

“That's why I was supposed to bring senpai home. I tried to persuade her that it would be rude and undesirable for senpai.....”

So that's what it was.

“That means..... Kuroneko..... You talk about me at home?”

That time before camp, Hinata-chan knew my name, so I guessed she did a little.

I'm wondering what she's telling her family about me.

Kuroneko looked away from me slightly,

“.....I don't think I have very much”

⁸ Chabudai – traditional Japanese low wooden table

“Li-ar, you have”

The little sister exposed the big sister's lie.

It seems I can get more accurate information from Hinata-chan than from Kuroneko herself.

“When she started club activities— I think it was around that time, Ruri-nee was acting really strange. Okaa-san cleverly found out about Kousaka-kun. 'There's a senpai I'm interested in' —she said”

“I see”

“Hey..... Hinata. That's uncalled for”

“No, you want to hear it too right Kousaka-kun?”

“I absolutely want to hear it”

“See, Ruri-nee shut up for a moment. —Right? 'My friend's onii-san' has 'helped me out in a lot of ways'— I heard something like that”

“Hmm hmm”

That's interesting. Tell me more Hinata-chan.

“Okaa-san and I were talking about how to comfort her if she was rejected”

“.....This is the first I've heard of it..... Or rather, why are you assuming I would be rejected.....”

“Because it's Ruri-nee.That's why okaa-san and I never thought that Ruri-nee could have a lover— Until recently, Okaa-san had completely forgotten about the matter”

“I wasn't told any of this”

Said Shizuka-san. It seems that the male parent was left out of his daughter's love story.

“The phone call before camp— That was the first time I heard it. That Ruri has someone she likes”

Before summer vacation, Kuroneko had called me, wondering whether to participate in the camp.

At that time—

—**You should go**

I had heard a gentle man's voice over the phone.

That must have been Shizuka-san's voice.

“If it hadn't been for that phone call, I still wouldn't have known much about my daughter's romance or school life. I probably wouldn't have met my daughter's boyfriend like this”

Come to think of it, I may have been at a critical juncture that day.

“It's great to meet you”

He said with a smile.

Hinata-chan, in an ill-mannered gesture, wedged her body between me and Shizuka-san.

As if to say I'm still talking!.

“And then! When Ruri-nee got back from camp, she was super excited——”

“She was doing a funny dance in her room”

“Tamaki even.....”

When even the younger sister started talking about 'her big sister's eccentric behavior', the tips of Kuroneko's ears turned red in a panic.

I'll take advantage of the opportunity and pursue the matter.

“Were you dancing for joy?”

“.....I don't know”

Finally, she covered her face with both hands.

“That's when I knew right away—— that Ruri-nee had got a boyfriend at camp. So, we had a family meeting right away”

“Family meeting”

If that happened at my house,

——Kyouzuke, have you got a girlfriend?

——What kind of girl is she? Bring her here

Yikes..... that's pretty rough! If it were me, I think I'd hide in my room and tell them to leave me alone!

“Which brings us back to the beginning”

“So you wanted to bring me here——”

“Right right. But, okaa-san can't take a day off work, so instead, otou-san, who's unemployed and at home, was charged with the duty of assessing Kousaka-kun——That's why! That's the explanation!”

“.....Is that right”

Otou-san is unemployed. That's rough.

I glanced at him and saw sweat on his forehead.

After all, he got cornered just like Kuroneko.

“Well then! Now Kousaka-san knows the situation!”

Shizuka-san clapped his hands and changed the topic.

“Let's all play a game together”

“Eh.....?”

I was perplexed.

What's this guy saying all of a sudden.

“Um, is that..... okay?”

Aren't you going to determine whether Kyouzuke Kousaka is suitable as your daughter's boyfriend?

That's what I meant by my question.

“Sure it is”

He said in a weakened voice.

“I also think it's a bit rude. It seems like kind of a one-sided test. As if she doesn't trust Ruri's judgement”

“Otouto-san, if you have a legitimate opinion like that, you should have told okaa-san directly last night”

“.....She'd get angry. A can't tell her directly”

Weak.

“If you don't perform your duty properly today, won't she get angry tonight?”

“Yeah.....”

This person really is weak.

There's no other way to say it.....

“That's why I'll perform my duty. In my own way”

“So..... how does that relate to playing games together?”

He answered Kuroneko's question calmly.

“If you play together, you can get to know what kind of person somebody is”

“You think so?”

“To some extent. For example Saori-san, who you often play online games with. She doesn't put too much emphasis on winning or losing, and tries to make it fun for all participants of the game. On the other hand, Kiririn-san has a strong desire to beat Ruri no matter what. That leads to unreasonable aggression from the outset. She's certainly competitive”

In that sense, your personality comes out in games.

That's what he's trying to say.

I directed my inner thoughts to Kuroneko.

“Hey, why is Kuroneko's otou-san playing games with Saori and Kirino?”

“When we need one more party member, I have my 'friend' join us”

“But Saori and Kirino don't know the true identity of your 'mysterious friend”

Actually, maybe they don't want to know that their friend's parent has joined the game.

Well, anyway. There's no particular reason to decline Shizuka's proposal.

Building a friendly relationship with my girlfriend's otou-san by playing games together, it's the best one could hope for.

“Let's do it”

“All right”

So that's what happened.

“Then, let's decide what to do. I'll make a few suggestions and you can choose the one you want”

“Sure!”

With my enthusiastic reply as a cue, he cheerfully began his preparations.

His happy face looks like Kuroneko's, even though he's my senior, it made me smile.

“How about a fighting game? Actually..... if my daughter has a boyfriend, there was a line I wanted to say—”

He pulled what looked like a game case out from the closet,

“If you can beat me in this classic masterpiece 'The ● Blade', then I will accept your relationship with my daughter”⁹

Kuroneko: “The idea of fighting in an old game that only you've played is shoddy”

Hinata: “Geez, you were just saying earlier that a one-sided test is no good”

“..... Yeah, I'm sorry”

He became disheartened by his daughter's disparaging words. After regaining his composure, he brought out another game.

“Then..... How about Momotetsu. Everyone can play”¹⁰

“That's also a game where the player who has memorized all the content will surely win”

“It's just like otou-san said. Just trying to play a game makes your personality come out”

“.....”

He was completely silent. I guess he's not a very good communicator.

This is Kuroneko's father.

I can feel the strong blood bond.....!

The silence is too awkward, so let's talk about anything.

“Hey, who's better at games, Kuroneko or your otou-san?”

“I'm better. If we play an old game that dad is good at, he'll lose three to one”

“Isn't that super strong?”

Even if it wasn't an old game, there was no way I was going to win.

If you don't win the game, I won't allow you to date my daughter – I'm relieved it was a joke.

I'm really glad he's a kind otou-san.

“But, that's right.....”

“What are you agreeing to?”

“Kuroneko's love of games and her amazing skill are influenced by her otou-san”

When I said that,

“.....”

Kuroneko went quiet with a dumbfounded expression.

“.....Is something wrong?”

“Ah, I'm sorry. I was a little surprised.I wasn't aware of it before..... it's just as senpai

10 Momotaro Dentetsu – kinda like Japanese monopoly

says..... I remember. Why I fell in love with games..... and taking them seriously.....”

Then, with cold eyes,

“When I was little, my dad used to mercilessly beat me in competitive games”

“How childish.....!”

I thought this would be a pleasant childhood episode, but it wasn't at all!

“Ruri gets angry if you go easy on her!”

Shizuka-san hurriedly made an excuse.

It's not like I don't understand his remark.

Kuroneko is super competitive.

I'm sure that even back then, she would have continued to challenge an opponent she couldn't beat, until she won.

With tears in her eyes, never giving up.

I could almost see the scene.

As I was immersed in deep emotions,

“Senpai, what kind of games do you like?”

“Eh, me? Let's see..... I'm not good at games..... It would be good if there was something that would be fun to play together with Tamaki-chan”

“As expected of Kousaka-kun! That's a good suggestion! Yes, otou-san, take out a game as requested!”

“All right let's go”

—And so.

I spend the morning of my summer vacation at Kuroneko's house, playing games with Kuroneko's family.

In this house, there aren't many low difficulty multiplayer games. After the four of us played a hard old party game on the Dreamcast, it was super cool watching Kuroneko play Ikaruga while everyone talked, and we let Shizuka-san play the shitty game made by the director of the Games Research Club, “Ruinous Rage”. We had a noisy and boisterous time.

—Did we get to know each other a bit better?

I don't know about that..... But it felt like I was mixed into the Gokou family circle for a time.

It was a fun time.

Kuroneko..... No, Ruri Gokou smiles like this when she's at home.

It's a fresh discovery. I fell in love with her a little more.

“Senpai, please stay for lunch”

“Ah, is that okay?”

“Yeah. —Normally, we just eat at home”

“I'd love to, what a treat”

In the far future, if we become a married couple.

I'm sure daily life will be like this.

The man who might one day become my father-in-law kept complaining about “Ruinous Rage”.

The sun was setting in the west.

I couldn't burden them until dinner, so I went home with painful reluctance.¹¹

Our first date since me and Kuroneko started going out.

The memorable day is coming to an end.

Looking back, it's been a noisy day.

In the beginning, I was amazed by the holy angel Kamineko, we called each other by first name, and held hands.

I was introduced to her family.

I even managed to greet one of her parents.

Neither me or Kuroneko are the assertive type, but in just a few hours, we've made a lot of progress.

Deep down I was hoping just a little..... for our first kiss, but that will have to wait.

Of course I understand that it's still too early for that.

That's right, neither me or her are mentally prepared.....

Because we're a platonic couple!

We're different from those frivolous couples who would kiss on the first date as soon as they start going out!

¹¹ Idiom literally meaning “My hair being pulled back”

I'm not making excuses! Ahem, anyway.....

“Ah..... That was fun”

I think so from the bottom of my heart. It was a great day.

And so I arrived back home.

“I'm home—”¹²

When I entered the front door, I had a strange feeling.

There was an air I had dearly missed, I mean..... I don't know how to put it.....

A heart-wrenching sense of nostalgia suddenly swirled around me.

“.....?”

Tilting my head at my own abnormality, I took off my shoes and entered my home.

Suddenly, when I looked into the living room—

Am I hallucinating? I rubbed my eyes.

Because I saw *someone who shouldn't have been there*.

The hallucination sitting on the couch turned to my presence,

“Ah, welcome back”

“.....That's my line”

I barely managed to reply.

There's no way my little sister can be here.

Kirino Kousaka has returned.

Chapter 2

“You.....”

Dyed brown hair, good looks that rival those of any idol, and long, supple limbs.

Sitting on the sofa and relaxing in her extremely fashionable loungewear, it was without a doubt my sister who went abroad to study sports.

Kirino Kousaka.

Being confronted by my sister for the first time in months, I was stunned.

“.....It's Kirino, isn't it”

I couldn't help but ask the question. I thought I must be dreaming.

I thought I'd never see you again.

“What? Who else do you see?”

It's a dream after all. My sister would never speak so softly.

—Huh? Don't talk to me okay?

That's Kirino. However, the hallucination in front of me didn't disappear. In my confusion, I spoke,

“No..... Because,”

“I'm back for summer vacation”

“Ah..... Ah—..... That's what it is”

Even study abroad programs have vacations.

That means that the Kirino in front of me is not a dream or a hallucination.....

“.....Ah—.....”

I should have plenty to say upon meeting her.

I was determined to complain as much as I could.

“Welcome back, Kirino”

Honest words escaped from my mouth on their own.

Aha..... My voice became nasally.

“Mm, tadaima”

Kirino turned her head away for some reason. When she turned back to me, she was smiling maliciously.

“You're about to cry because you haven't seen me in a long time, aren't you? Fuhehe, gross”

“Baaka, I just have a slight cold, that's all”

“Sure sure, whatever you say”

“.....So, how long can you stay?”

“About a week”

“That's short. I thought you were on summer vacation”

Can't you just take a break and stay in Japan for a month or so?

“Dad and everyone misses you”

“No no, because it's summer, I have to practice”

“.....I see, you're working hard”

Kirino felt far away. Even though she was so close to me.

“I guess. I struggled a little at first but..... it feels like I'm finally on track”

“Hmm..... Come to think of it, I got a message from mom.....”

—I won on my own! Baa——ka!

“I won on my own' or something..... What was that about?”

“Huh?”

Kirino suddenly lost her composure, and became flustered.

“Ah, ah— that, that? No, where I'm studying abroad, there's someone who's really amazing. That day, I finally beat them, something like that”

“Huh..... What did you mean by 'one my own'?”

“Eeh? Uh- um..... N- nothing in particular!”

Kirino growled and bared her teeth, and shouted with violent anger.

“Anyway, I have to digest anime and games while I'm in Japan! I don't have time to talk to you!”

With squared shoulders, she noisily headed out of the living room.

I don't understand. What's with this person.

If she wanted to play games to start with, why was she in the living room.

She's the same as always, geez.

Kirino stopped and glanced back at me.

“You”

“Me?”

“Are you going out with Kuroneko?”

“Bufuu.....!”

I choked at the sudden surprise attack.

“You- where did you hear that.....!”

“Saori told me”

“Ah.....”

Thinking about it, that makes sense.

Saori is the only mutual friend of Kirino and I who knows about it.

I wasn't keeping quiet about it. It's not something to keep secret from Kirino in the first place.

It's just—

“I couldn't contact you”

“Mm, that's my fault. I'm really sorry”

She made an honest apology, my eyes widened.

Kirino removed her hand from the doorknob and turned her body towards me.

“At that time, I was really struggling. If I told everyone, I would be depending on them.....”

“.....”

“Things started going well, and I finally felt calm and had a little bit of time to spare— I decided to go back home for the summer vacation. So, for the first time in a long time, I called Saori——”

“She must have been angry”

“Yeah”

Kirino smiled a little,

“I got a harsh scolding. It's all my fault. I regret it”

“Yeah, that's right”

Not just me, but her best friends Saori and Kuroneko, she went abroad without telling us.

Saori and Kuroneko must have been so depressed because of that. So lonely.

Saori was so upset she got uncharacteristically angry.

When Kirino contacted her for the first time in a long time, Saori gave her a harsh scolding. She was that angry.

I finally understood why Kirino was strangely quiet today.

Kirino, who must have been reminiscing about her phone call with Saori, spoke happily,

“For hours..... we were talking”

“I see”

There must have been a lot to say, grudges and stories piled up.

“She finally forgave me..... Then, I told her I would call Kuroneko next.....”

Saori told her that Kuroneko and I had started dating.

“.....Hm”

I can't read her intentions, but if Saori wanted to tell her, I have no complaints.

I have no complaints.....

But I'm a bit curious why it couldn't be me and Kuroneko who told Kirino about it—

Anyhow.

“I can finally report to you. Me and Kuroneko are going out”

“Yeah.Um, I'm not sure what to say in this kind of situation. —Congratulations”

“.....Yeah, thanks”

Somehow, I was embarrassed. My face was getting hot.

As I loitered with my words, Kirino made a suggestion.

“Why don't we all meet tomorrow? In Akiba”

“Yeah, that would be good”

I answered immediately. Even though I would have one less day to see Kuroneko alone.

I don't need to tell you why. Right?

“Well, Saori had already planned it. To meet up after I came home”

“Eh? Ah!”

—**Actually, I'm planning something for our 'reunion party'**

“This must be the 'reunion party'!”

Ah—, I see, I see.

That day, Saori had already received word from Kirino that she was returning home.

—**Fufufu, Kyousuke-shi, I got you didn't I?**

The smug face of my friend came to mind.

“Geez, what an awful surprise”

The bitter smile with which I blurted my complaint revealed the joy I couldn't conceal.

And so—

The next morning, I got off at Akihabara station.

Half a year had passed since I last came to this place with my sister.

“Akihabara—! Wahooooo! I'm he—ere!”

Kirino shouted her banzai high in the sky as she looked around the front of the station.

“No— it's changed, I haven't seen it in so long! Is it okay to take a little look around?”

“It's fine but, aren't we all going to look around together?”

“Just a little! It's still early, just let me take a peek at the stores!”

She charged forward without waiting for a reply.

Yare yare..... She's so excited.

After discovering that the Gokou family was in our neighbourhood, I was planning to meet up before getting on the train, but Kuroneko refused.

She said she wanted to reunite with Kirino in the same way as usual.

Kirino's return seemed to be a special event for her too.

I guess that's why.

A certain someone ran off in full otaku mode saying it was still early, but—

“Senpai”

You see, this one also came early.

I turned to the owner of the voice and raised my hand to greet her.

“Yeah, Kuroneko. Good morning”

“Good morning. Where is Kirino?”

Kuroneko looked around, twirling her gothloli skirt.

“She just charged into Gamers”

“.....As usual”

“Indeed”

A moment of silence fell between us.

It's not awkward..... it's a somehow nostalgic feeling.

Ah, that's it, it's like..... before Kuroneko became my kouhai.

When we didn't get along that well.

That feeling when Kirino and Saori left their seats and we were left alone.

“Haha. How unexpected”

“What is it?”

“No..... I was just thinking back to when I first met you. You were always arguing with Kirino—and didn't talk to me much. At that time, I never thought we would be going out like this”

“Yeah..... me too”

“It's a strange thing”

“No, it's not strange. This fate... is not something that was decided by this world..... I decided it”

I didn't quite understand what she meant, I turned to her.

When our eyes met, she smiled,

“You accompanied me to the 'bring your own' right?”

When she took her novel to the publisher, I accompanied her as an attendant.¹³

“Aah..... That happened..... that.....”

What about it. Before I could say anything,

“That was the first time I fell in love with you”

“_____”

I went stiff.

“Is, that, right”

“Yeah..... For a long time, I didn't realise it myself..... You got angry for me. You were troubled together with me. And comforted me. That made me happy..... When I noticed my feelings, I decided. —That I want to be with this person”

Kuroneko spoke as if us going out as lovers was a checkpoint.

“I decided that, and began to take action. That's why, there's nothing strange about it”

“.....I see”

“I was surprised that you confessed though”

“Haha”

Don't remind me. I'll die of embarrassment.

In this way, me and Kuroneko talked together—

Until.

“You there, what are you doing making out in the middle of the street when I'm not looking?”

When we raised our heads to the voice in front of us, Kirino was there with narrowed eyes and her hands on her hips.

At that moment, Kuroneko went stiff and leaked out a single word.

“Kirino——”

“.....Long time no see”

Kirino grinned.

Kuroneko, stunned, took one step, two steps closer to Kirino and touched her cheek.

“.....Is it really..... Kirino? It's not a figment of my imagination?”

¹³ If you've not read volume 3, it's a bit different to the anime. Fate stole Kirino's novel, so in order to expose her, Kuroneko and Kyouusuke got into Media-Ascii under the pretence of Kuroneko presenting her own novel. Kuroneko had to endure hours of her novel getting criticized by one of the publishers, and Kyouusuke defended her.

“Of course it's the real thing.I mean, your reaction is so exaggerated it's scary”

Kirino drew back as her face turned pale.

Just meeting your friend again after a long time, starting out by checking whether they're real or a hallucination seems like an abnormal idea.

Didn't I tell you on the phone that Kirino was coming to today's gathering?

Honestly, how much does she love Kirino?

“.....I heard the food culture is different over there, did you eat properly? Did the change in environment make you sick? And—”

“Ah geez! Are you my mother!”

No no, even mom wasn't worried about that.

“I'm fine! Look! As you can see!”

Kirino jumped up and down on the spot energetically.

Finally, Kuroneko seemed relieved.

“Right, well, that's good then.....”

“Your friendship is heavy”

“Fuu, you know I only had two friends at that time? Of course it's heavy”

“Don't say that so proudly”

The only people in this world who can make Kirino make this troubled face are Kuroneko and Ayase, aren't they?

Kuroneko, who seemed to have finally gotten used to the shock of the reunion, exhaled as she straightened up, and spoke,

“Well..... Now I can complain with peace of mind.Kirino, how dare you disappear without saying anything to me”

“Sorry”

Kirino obediently apologized. Just like she did for me.

Kuroneko scowled sharply at Kirino,

“I'll forgive you, under one condition”

“..... What condition?”

“Give me your contact details for over there”

“.....*That's* the condition. I was going to tell you anyway”

“That's fine. From now on when we contact you, make sure you respond”

“I get it”

And so—

Kuroneko hurriedly registered Kirino's contact information on her cell phone.

Watching their first interaction in a long time, I smiled,

“Looks like they've made up safely”

“Yeah, isn't that great”

Before I knew it, Saori had appeared right next to me.

“Don't sneak up on me.....”

“Hahaha, sorry about that”

The girl with swirly glasses laughed as she gently watched over Kirino's exchange.

I slapped her on the back,

“Look, Saori, you should go too”

“Ky- Kyouusuke-shi.....”

At first, Saori was confused, but,

“Yeah, I'll join in too”

She ran over to her friends with all her might.

And so,

“Kiririn-shi! Long time no see~~~~~!”

She grabbed them with both arms and pulled them into an embrace.

“Uhyaa!” “Gu.....fuu”



Kirino and Kuroneko screamed as the physically superior Saori expressed her deep affection with a powerful hug.

Still, Saori would not let go and squeezed them with all her strength, delighted to be reunited after so long.

“Did you remember about me?”

“I remembered..... let me go!”

“No no no no! Kiririn-shi! Kiririn-shi! It's been so long! It's been so long! Fufufu I'm so happy~!”

“Listen-! R- really you're still angry!”

“.....H- hey Saori, leave it there, besides Kirino, Kuroneko is going limp”

That hit the bullseye.

I couldn't just watch, when I tried to stop her, Saori released them with a “How rude of me!” while maintaining her high spirits.

Having escaped from nearly being strangled by a hug, Kuroneko's shoulders bobbed as she gasped for breath.

“.....Kukuku..... You really did it Saori. Rubbing hot otaku juice on my neck..... My clothes got damp, you giantess”

“Gya—! My neck is really slimy! Geez~~ it's dirty! You sweat so much it's gross!”

“I really missed the relentless abuse from the both you— Hey, Kiririn-shi!? Kuroneko-shi!? Aren't you being too harsh for young maidens!?”

“I don't know! It's so gross~~~”

These guys..... It's been so long since you met, and now you're like this.

I don't think you can call this a "touching reunion scene" between friends anymore.

But, well, that's that.

It felt like the usual dynamic between the three of them had returned, which was a pleasant feeling.

Just a moment.

I took some towels out of my bag and handed them to the otaku who were making a fuss.

“Here, there's enough for three people, wipe your sweat and make up. Saori, drink some Pocari to cool down a little”¹⁴

“Thank you very much. As expected of Kyouzuke-shi, you come prepared”

¹⁴ Pocari Sweat is a Japanese sports drink

Saori said as she rehydrated.

“Mm, fine then”

Kirino said as she took the towel in a super conceited way. I guess she's treating her brother like a servant already.

And Kuroneko too,

“Thank you, senpai”

“There”

Kirino sullenly cut inbetween the exchange between me and Kuroneko.

From the middle, she turned to look at both of our faces,

“You guys have something to say to me, right?”

Me and Kuroneko pondered for a moment—

“I've taken good care of your eroge collection”

“I recorded all your favourite anime”

“Wow— You did great! Super thank you! —Hey, not that! I heard the situation, but I want to hear the details from you now we're together— first of all!”

Kirino took a step back from us, and thrust her finger towards us.

“Well, what's with 'senpai'?”

Me and Kuroneko looked at each other before answering,

“Kuroneko became my kouhai since spring”

“I joined the same school as him. That's why I call him 'senpai”

“Him~!?”¹⁵

“Kiririn-shi! Kiririn-shi—! Your face! It's unbecoming of a maiden! This is why I told you about this in advance *during our phone call the other day.....!*”

“Sure you told me! But seeing it directly in front of me is different! —Ah! I'm not saying anything unnecessary to them! I'm not mad at all!”

“You say that, but you're about to break free of my restraint! Kiririn-shi! Please calm down~~~!”

¹⁵ In Japanese, “him” and “her” (kare and kanojo) can also mean “boyfriend” and “girlfriend”

Gyaaoon! Kirino yelled and struggled while Saori desperately tried to restrain her.

I don't know why she's so angry in the first place.

And so,

“Ffu……”

Kuroneko stepped forward, mocking the raging Kirino,

“I'm late in reporting this, but since a few days ago…… I'm going out with senpai”

“Hu~~~~~n, ho~~~~~n. ……So?”

“From now on, can you call me sister-in-law?”¹⁶

“Who would call you that! O- okay I understand! You're still my enemy after all!”

“Not enemy, 'ogishi-san'. Please look at me and say 'Ruri-ogishi-san'— go on”

“Grr~……! You're certainly having fun aren't you!”

“That's right. I can feel the sadness and anger of the last six months healing quickly…… After all, revenge is the best entertainment”

“You really have a nice personality!”

“Thank you. I'm glad”

“That's not a compliment—!”

Kirino finally broke free of Saori's restraint and approached Kuroneko.

In a nimble evasive manoeuvre, Kuroneko moved behind me.

With her boyfriend as a shield,

“Kukuku…… Kyouzuke, your sister is scaring me. Please help me”

“Stop squabbling around me!”

I raised my hands to surrender. They circled around me while attacking with gradually increasing ferocity.

“That hurt!”

I kept getting hit by cat swipes and chops hitting the wrong target.

“Fusha! Shuushuu!”

¹⁶ Sister in law = ogishi-san

“Kukuku..... You think that kind of attack will hit me?”

In this way, both of them enjoyed their childish fight for a while, until they were finally satisfied and moved apart. Kirino folded her arms,

“Hm—m, fine! You started dating! While I was away abroad! Even though you're my friend, you did that without telling or consulting me? Hm~~~~m, fine!”

She finally started the conversation we should have had before they fought.

Kuroneko's eyes blamed Kirino.

“You idiot. I couldn't get in touch with you at all, you didn't let me tell or consult you”

“Grr.....!”

“That's why I'm telling you now”

“All right~~~, I get it~~”

Kirino pursed her lips and spoke in a grouchy tone.

But then, as usual, the conversation took a sharp turn.

“I won't be here for long. I want to make sure today”

“What do you want to make sure of?”

“First of all, I have a lot to ask you”

As usual, my sister is a terrible communicator.

She's not giving us the necessary information at all~.

However, Kuroneko answered confidently,

“Yeah, that's fine. Whatever you want”

“Amazing. You could understand that?”

“Of course. Okay, senpai, from now on, we have to get Kirino to accept our relationship. This is a ritual we must complete while Kirino is in Japan. —Senpai, like you did for my family, it's my turn to do the same. —That's what this is about, isn't it, Kirino?”

“Y- you even met her parents.....!”

Kirino was astonished, posing as if she had just guarded a high-power beam.

Such a little sister immediately regained her posture,

“But, well, it's something like that”

Seriously. It doesn't matter what Kirino thinks about our relationship does it?

I thought about it for a moment, but then reconsidered.

Kuroneko is not only my girlfriend, but also Kirino's close friend.

So I guess it's important for Kuroneko to get Kirino's approval of her relationship with me.

“I was going to tell you anyway. Ask as much as you like”

“Hm!”

Kirino snorted and turned away. Just as the mood was about to get worse, Saori came up at the right time said “Now now, Kiririn-shi” to calm her down.

The thorny mood quickly dissipated.

“Come on everyone, let's head to the party venue!”

My chest tightened with nostalgia.

The everyday life that once existed has returned in its original form.

Saori lead us through Akiba.

We arrived on the third floor of a building called “Rental Room @ Akiba-to”

“This is.....”

“Fufu..... Isn't it nostalgic?”

“Yeah, I guess so”

As soon as I got off the elevator, there was a reception desk and several doors lined up in an unadorned hallway.

I was filled with emotion as I looked around the interior.

“I never thought I'd come to this place again.....”

“I thought it would be a good place to have a reunion party with Kiririn-shi”

“As expected of Saori. I think it's a good choice”

Saori, a little embarrassed, headed to the reception desk to check in.

Meanwhile, Kuroneko seemed to be having a conversation with Kirino.

“We had a party here before. Do you remember, Kirino?”

“I remember I remember. See, you became a cat-girl maid and were super embarrassed—”

“Th- that's not true”

Ah, it definitely is.

Kuroneko hiding behind the curtain because she was embarrassed was incredibly cute.

Yes yes, and—

That's right..... as a dangerous punchline, in the end I was given a little sister eroge by my little sister in a maid costume.

Geez— Aah..... that's really nostalgic.

It was only a little over a year ago that my sister and I first came to Akiba.....

It's not like I have a long relationship with this city.

Even so, I have many memories all around Akiba.

Memories of walking together with these guys are deeply engrained.

The city has changed so much in just a few years.

Someday, the cityscape when we first met will only be seen in our memories.

Half a year ago, Kirino disappeared, the days when these members gather, I don't know how long they will last.

Even so, they will be something I will never forget.

“Kyouusuke-shi, this way”

“Yeah, I'm coming”

Saori rented the same room as before.

The episode that Kuroneko and Kirino were talking about earlier—

This is the place where a mysterious event happened, for some reason these guys wore maid outfits to welcome me.

That..... for better or worse, I can't forget.

I was given a contemptuous look from the girl at the reception desk.

Yes, at that time, there was an outrageous sign outside the room that read “Kyouusuke Kousaka's Personal Harem Party”.

Grr..... I'm getting annoyed just remembering it!

Just a moment ago, I was immersed in pleasant sentiment!

But.

Of course, I'm not the main character today, the text on the sign today was different from that time.

Kirino shouted when she saw it,

“Wait! What is this sign!”

Saori: “Yes! I prepared it for you! Do you like it?”

“No no no no! What is this 'Our dearest Kiririn-shi's homecoming party'! It's super embarrassing!”

Me: “Don't you complain about this! It's way better than what I got!”

“Huh!? At that time, I didn't find out until afterwards and almost died of embarrassment! Why do I have to be humiliated twice!?”

Kuroneko: “.....I also noticed on my way home, I thought I would die from shame. My anger from that time is returning, I don't know what I'm going to do”

“Aww..... I'm sorry..... I thought I did a good thing.....”

“You're lying”

“Lies”

“Definitely a lie!”

The three of us struck Saori with our doubt while she pretended to be depressed.

Kirino was even more enthusiastic,

“Saori is a super nice person, but we already know you love these kind of pranks! Every single time I'm just barely angry enough to not attack you! I keep telling you to stop!”

I understand. When you get to know Saori, she can be like that.

When I first met her, I thought she was just a nice person.

“Haha—! I've been exposed ”

“Geez..... you're more childish than I thought”

“Nyufufu..... that's right. I'm a young maiden after all”

I can't see it at all, but that's right.

The otaku girl with swirly glasses, Saori Bajina, isn't just the reliable leader of our circle, she can also act her age sometimes.

“That's why”

Saori spoke in the tone of a prim and proper ojou-sama.

“I love this place, where I can be childish”

I see. Then, I'm proud to be a member of your 'special place'.

We opened the door with the bell attached, and entered 'Our dearest Kiririn-shi's homecoming party'

Ding ding— the bell rang the same as it did before.

—**Welcome home, master!**

—**Welcome home, ma— I can't do this!**

—**It's not what you think. I'm telling you it's not.**

Visions of maid costumes passed through my mind and disappeared.

It's a simple mostly white room. There's an office table, chairs, whiteboard and so on.

It's the same as when we came here last time.

“Well! Let's get started!”

Kirino cut in before we could put down our bags and get settled.

This, of course, means she wants to talk about the matter of me and Kuroneko dating.

“Kiririn-shi, it's a party, let's start with sweets—”

From the backpack she always carries, Saori was taking out drinks and sweets and handing them out,

“This comes first”

Kirino forcibly pushed her way through and noisily sat down on a chair.

“If that's how it is. Then, so be it”

That's what happened.

The seating order was different from usual, with me and Kuroneko sitting side by side, and Kirino and Saori facing us.

As the table was set up for an office, the atmosphere was somewhat like an interview.

Perhaps aware of this, Kirino spoke as if she were the interviewer.

“Well, go ahead”

“.....Even if you say that”

“Right?”

Me and Kuroneko looked at each other with troubled faces, then turned to our interviewer.

“Where should we start?”

“From the beginning, everything”

Kirino crossed her arms and spoke bluntly.

This is a high pressure interview!

“N- now now Kiririn-shi, if you ask like that, the speaker will get lost. Firstly, how about you tell us about the two of you around spring”

Around spring— In other words, from the beginning of the new school year.

Kirino sourly agreed with a “That's fine”, so I started to describe my memories of that time.

“On the day of the entrance ceremony, I met Kuroneko wearing our school uniform on the way to school——”

How Kuroneko had joined the same high school as me as my kouhai.

How Kuroneko told me her real name— that's as far as I got.

“Huh! So your real name is Ruri Gokou!”

“Yeah, hence 'Ruri-ogishi-san’”

“I'm not calling you that! But, it's a cute name. It sounds like an eroge heroine”

“.....I'm sure that's..... intended as a compliment, in your case”

Kuroneko sighed in resignation.

“And? And? Then what?”

“I'll admit it myself..... I'm not good at socializing. As a matter of course, I was isolated in my class——”

She talked about how she was helped by her senpai.

How she became withdrawn with Kirino gone.

How we got together with Saori and complained about Kirino.

How the three of us would often gather and hang out in my room——

“You, my friends! High school girls! Two of them! You brought them home?”

“Don't say scandalous things! It's because you suddenly disappeared!”

“I know but!”

“Kuroneko and Saori aren't just your friends, they're my friends too, so it doesn't really matter”

“No ulterior motive?”

“None!”

“And yet now you're messing around with the black one”

“.....”

I went quiet. I was at a loss for a response.

Ah—, Uh—, after shamefully stammering, what came out of my mouth was,

“N- no..... but, we haven't done anything ero yet!”

What the hell am I exposing to my sister! I'm too panicked.....!

“B- baka..... what are you saying.....”

Kuroneko turned bright red and hit me.

Kirino narrowed her eyes and brought her face closer to scrutinise.

“Hh~mm”

Then she turned to Kuroneko,

“You really haven't done anything?”

“I- is that bad?”

“No— I'm relieved. I know you're not good with that kind of thing”

“.....Senpai, isn't too pushy with anything”

“I know. He's a wuss”

Shit! Don't you dare laugh at me Kirino! Ah, you bastard, Saori too!

“Well, sorry. I got sidetracked. Where did we get to?”

“Senpai was trying to do something about me being isolated in class—”

She talked about how we joined the Games Research Club.

How senpai accompanied her and joined the club even though he's sitting exams.

How I supported her during the competition and stayed with her while making her game.

“.....”

In Kuroneko's story, Kyouzuke Kousaka seems like a hero.

I'm getting itchy listening to it.

You're giving me too much credit! I was just doing what I wanted to do!

I really think she's exaggerating.

Kirino listened with a complicated look on her face.

“And then.....”

The enraptured Kuroneko concluded the episode about about the games club.

“The situation of being isolated in class has improved..... I made a friend named Sena Akagi”

“You did it! At school! An otaku girlfriend!”

“Th- that's right”

“I want to meet her— this Sena girl. I'm sure we would get along”

“I think so too”

Kuroneko smiled and agreed with Kirino.

“Because you two are kinda similar”

“Eh, you mean she's cute?”

“.....I'm not talking about looks. I mean your personalities are similar”

I agree. Sena and Kirino would definitely get along well.

.....But honestly, I don't want them to meet in case they infect each other with their weird hobbies.

Her brother Kohei might get angry.

Kousaka! Because of your sister, Sena-chan got hooked on erogé!

—Something like that could happen.

Well, anyway.

“You'll have plenty of opportunities in time. You're coming back again right?”

“Of course!”

Her reply came back with a smile, and I found myself terribly relieved.

Kirino flashed a toothy grin,

“I've decided. I won't throw away my hobbies after all. I'll chase my dreams while liking what I like”

“Kiririn-shi.....”

“That's why I'll come back often. For eroge”

“Couldn't you have chosen your words a bit better?”

Kuroneko retorted with an exasperated face.

“Fuhehe— Well, I'll tell you about my amazing overseas episode later. Now, your story. You made friends with Sena Akagi— then what happened?”

My sister asked, and I continued,

“The director suggested that the Games Research Club has a camping trip”

“We decided to go to a place called Inumaki Island in the Seto Inland Sea. And then— ”

Kuroneko gave her the details of the camp. It was more detailed than what we told Saori.

Occasionally, she showed photos from her bag.

“This is Sena, who I told you about earlier”

“Oh, she's cute. That key chain on her bag, what anime is it from..... It's rare that I wouldn't know”

The less you know, the better.

I'm already at my limit with an eroge freak sister, I really don't want her exploring new territory with Sena.

If she has a 「class change」 to a fujoshi eroge freak, that would be terrible.

..... Am I using 「class change」 correctly?

Kirino looked at the photo again,

“Wow, that's a suspicious outfit”

“It's the 「necromancer robe」 I made myself. Isn't it cool”

“It would be stupid to wear that kind of thing in the summer. It looks super hot”

“Kuu..... What a masterpiece of mine..... Which reminds me, it seems that I lost that robe during camp”

“Eh? Come to think of it, I don't remember seeing it after that.....”

“It's a shame..... If I had it, I would have more variation for my summer clothes.....”

That was very lucky for me.

Walking alongside Kuroneko wearing that would be very difficult, even though she's my beloved girlfriend.

Though I guess it's a bit late to say that after my date with the holy angel Kamineko.

Then suddenly,

“Here, take this”

Kirino handed a package to Kuroneko.

“What is it?”

“Ah, open it at home. —Some clothes I picked for you. Because if it's you, you won't know what to wear on a date, you might do something embarrassing or worrying, or get carried away. So I bought this for you as soon as I got back to Japan”

“.....Th- thank you. I never thought..... that I'd receive such a gift from you.....”

“Hehe—, you must wear this on your next date, okay?”

“.....I can do that”

Kuroneko hugged the package tightly.

Then, her expression changed to one of confidence,

“But, Kirino..... You know my date fashion is pretty good? Right senpai?”

“Eh.....”

.....I hope she's not talking about the “holy angel robe”.

I had a hard time answering for a moment,

“Yeah! It was super cute!”

I'm not lying! It really was very cute! It really was a dangerous outfit!

It was a statement to defend Kuroneko's opinion, what my girlfriend was thinking, and so she very proudly placed a photo on the table.

Baa- you.....!

“Ffu..... this is the 'holy angel robe' I wore on our first date”

Aah..... a noise escaped from Saori's mouth.

Kirino looked at the photo in shock, and spoke with her eyebrows in a ^ shape.

“You walked around like *this*? Isn't your boyfriend amazing?”

Right? Right!? I feel like this is the first time my sister has praised me in a long time.....!

“Those wings..... your chuuni has gone too far. Next time come to me or Saori— or even that Sena girl would be fine. Talk to someone okay? Seriously”

“Ara, what's wrong Kirino? You're being surprisingly kind today”

“You're making me be kind!”

“N- now now Kiririn-shi! Wh- why don't we hear the rest of the story about camp?”

“Y- you're right..... Then, from where you got on the Shinkansen”

“Okay then”

Prompted by Kirino, Kuroneko continued her story.

How she was intimidated when introduced to Sena's older brother.

The exposing Sena's bro-con episode.

How we borrowed a board game from the other members and played with the Akagi siblings.

“Then we took a ferry to the island. Here's a photo from that time—”

—And so on.

This girl..... has a good memory.

She spoke clearly, even about the small episodes I had forgotten.

What time we got on the Shinkansen, what we ate for breakfast on the second day, I don't think it's important information..... but Kuroneko expressed her thoughts without hiding anything.

Maybe that's why Kirino sensed something was out of place.

“Hey— with all those details, doesn't time flow unnaturally around the evening of the first day?”

“Yeah, you're right, it's strange”

“It's not strange”

“I can't help what I don't remember”

“No no no no”

“.....What is it?”

“Is there an event that you can't tell me or Saori about?”

“.....No..... What an upsetting thing to suggest. What kind of episode did you have in mind?”

Kirino dyed her cheeks and said a few words to the slightly angry Kuroneko,

“.....Like a kiss”

“That's not possible”

Kuroneko stated firmly.

“.....That's something we haven't done yet. Still. Not once”

“Ah, that's right. As you said earlier, you haven't done it 'yet”

I think this is the first time I've seen Kirino so act so awkwardly around Kuroneko?

Eh? What? Am I, being pitied? By Kirino? No way.....

As I fell into dejected silence, Saori's mouth made a ω shape.

“Kyouzuke-shi, aren't you making slow progress~?”

Y- you bastard, provoking me!

“But that's normal! Isn't it? It wasn't possible because Saori was always with us on the first date, on the second date we went to Kuroneko's house, and the third date is today!”

When am I supposed to “do it”? Stop talking to me like I'm an incompetent man!

When I defended myself as best I could, Kuroneko shot me an icy glare.

“Eeh.....”

It's because you're not good with these things. If it's okay with you, it's okay with me..... I'm not reluctant to do it..... Aah no, that's what I was thinking.....! Aargh.....!

“I- I'm sorry Kyouzuke-shi! I didn't expect you to suffer so seriously.....! But don't worry. I have planned measures for Kyouzuke-shi and Kuroneko-shi!”

““““Measures?””””

When we all asked in unison, Saori nodded enthusiastically.

“Indeed. As I said when we met the other day”

“Aah” “That thing”

Me and Kuroneko knew immediately, but Kirino wasn't there the other day,

“What thing?”

She said while looking around at us.

At that time, I omitted our *little exchange*, but on the day we reported our relationship to Saori,

—Would you be willing to let me write in your 「Destiny Record」 ?

That's what she asked us.

For us, the 「Destiny Record」 is a “list of things we want to do together”, but for Saori, it's a “list of things she wants us to do”.

And so——

After Saori explained the 「Destiny Record」 to Kirino, she continued.

“I would like to propose a date plan to the both of you”

“Hmhm. 「Destiny Record」 That certainly sounds like something the black one would think of. So today, Saori brought what she wrote”

“That's right!”

From her bag, Saori took out a *sealed* piece of paper.¹⁷

After receiving it, Kuroneko grumbled with a difficult expression,

“.....I can't read this”

“Fufufu, please open it after tomorrow. This is my 'assignment' so to speak. If you do this, even though you're both reserved, you'll make healthy progress”

“That's fine but..... I'm scared of what's written”

Absolutely, Saori is planning mischief!

Well, even that I'm looking forward to.

After all, it's an “assignment” from Saori. I won't be a bad thing. I'm sure of that.

“.....Hmmm”

Kirino, who was watching our exchange, seemed to be thinking about something.

She suddenly looked up and spoke to me and Kuroneko,

“Hey, that..... Deste-?”

“ 「Destiny Record」 ”

¹⁷ Fukurotoji – Chinese book binding, but in this case probably means folded and glued on three sides

“ [Destiny Record] . Have you written much of it already?”

“Yeah, I wrote about three pages. I didn't bring it today”

“I'm not finished, but about twenty pages”

Wha!? Wait wait wait wait! You mean that black page x20?

I thought you were concentrating on writing the game scenario! You're writing too fast.....!

And then—

To show off her prized possession, Kuroneko took out the jet black book of sorcery with an elaborate gesture.

Even the binding is complete.....!

We said we were going to increase the number of pages one by one! You're doing too much by yourself!

As I stared wide eyed in amazement, Kirino held out her palm to Kuroneko,

“Let me see that”

“N- no”

“Huh~? If you're so proud of it, you should let me see it. I'm super curious. Why won't you show it to me?”

“.....Because it's embarrassing”

She muttered while hanging her head down.

That gesture touched my heartstrings, and my face began to heat up.

.....I know how you feel.

Previously, I had only read one page, it's way too embarrassing to show to anyone else, even a friend. I would writhe in agony.

“I'm sorry Kirino, you'll have to give up on this one.....!”

Having been rejected by both me and Kuroneko, Kirino replied,

“*Hm—m*”

She narrowed her eyes suggestively.

Then, her expression and atmosphere changed drastically, and she looked amused.

“Then, let me write a page in your 「Destiny Record」 too”

“Huh?”

Ignoring Kuroneko's blinking,

“—Saori, do you have anything to write with?”

“Ooh! Kiririn-shi is going to make an 'assignment' too! Please, use this!”

“'Assignment' huh, well, umm..... I don't know about that”

Kirino received a sheet of paper and pen from Saori and smiled mischievously at us.

“It's okay right? If Saori can do it, I can write in it too”

Me: “Y- yeah..... sure”

Kuroneko: “I'm sure it's fine but.....”

“Then it's settled”

Kirino placed the paper on the table, held the pen, and licked her lips.

—I wonder what I should write~♪

That's how she looked. She raised her head,

“I'll listen while writing, so you can keep talking about camp”

Oops, I forgot we were talking about that.

Geez, we really got sidetracked. Kuroneko spoke,

“K- Kirino..... It's supposed to be a date, please don't write 'play eroge”

“Eh~? What should I do then~”

—And so.

Kuroneko resumed talking about camp again.

How we researched the island folklore for the game scenario.

Touring the island in the summer, taking pictures, walking around, experiencing good and extraordinary things.

Playing retro games at the public bath and candy store.

Morning radio calisthenics. Fishing on the embankment. Playing on the beach— and so on.

Not just the refreshing memories—

“In the bathhouse..... there is an open-air bath, and the distance between the women's bath and the men's bath is close.....”

“Hey, Kuroneko! You don't have to tell them about that!”

“O- of course I do.*Otherwise it wouldn't make sense*”

“You're the most embarrassed I've ever seen you!”

—She talks about her love life nakedly too.

Kirino and Saori made fun of my quip.

It was an uneasy time. More than that, it was a rather embarrassing meeting.

To get Kirino to accept our relationship. For that, we were talking for a long time.

“.....Next is the last story”

She finally arrived at the climax.

“That night, there was a festival at the island shrine”

Kirino: “The 'Hiten Festival' you mentioned earlier?”

Saori: “The festival everyone helped to organise right”

Kuroneko: “Yeah, that's right. On the night of the festival, there was a fireworks display..... where.....”

“Where I confessed to Kuroneko”

The place went quiet. After a little while,

“Ooh~”

Saori's admiration slipped out. Unusually for her, her cheeks were blushing.

I guess Saori is a maiden's age too.

Even she might show an innocent reaction to her friend's love story.

Kirino, on the other hand, had finished writing before I knew it and was looking at me seriously.

After hesitating a few times,

“Do you love Kuroneko?”

“I grew to love her over the last six months. Spending time together at camp, I grew to love her even more”

That's why I confessed, I said.

I told my sister with the same temperature I told Kuroneko's father.

Because she's an important person to us.

Kirino turned her attention to Kuroneko,

“How much do you love this guy?”

“You— well..... that's right.....”

Kuroneko stopped her answer halfway, thought a little, and then answered again.

“If senpai died right now, I'd die too. That's how much I love him”

“.....I- is that right”

I understand, but it's too heavy.....

Kirino asked me with as much sympathy as she could muster,

“Are you okay with your girlfriend talking like that?”

“It's fine! Or rather, I love that about her too”

I made a serious face for a moment!

I love my girlfriend, even if she's too heavy.

So, I have to accept it.

Having heard both our answers—

“I see”

My sister smiled with a somewhat lonely smile. Then she spoke,

“I talked to Saori on the phone..... we talked for a long time. And today..... I heard your story. Um..... Well..... it's hard to say.....”

“Sure”

Take your time.

I waited for the words my sister struggled to say.

“I.....I?”

Kirino loitered with her words,

“I thought my brother and friend's love story was seriously gross!”

“Hey! What the hell!”

It looked like she was about to say something nice!

But all she can say is abuse! This kind of thing is so like Kirino!

Man, my chest is filled with nostalgia!

“Fuhehe—”

Kirino laughed with her mouth wide open to make fun of me.

Then, she thrust two fingers towards me.

Between her fingers was a *sealed* piece of paper.

The 「Destiny Record」 Kirino had written.

There was a message for me on the front— *but I couldn't understand what it meant.*

“Here, I'll give you this”

“S- sure.....”

What the hell.

Kirino didn't give me a chance to ask “What are you planning”.

She just spoke boldly,

“I'll accept you guys!”

“Kirino.....”

Kuroneko called the name of her close friend. Kirino answered with a gentle voice,

“I can't stay in Japan for very long any more. So I'll ask you this”

“.....*Are you okay with this?*”

“I don't know! But—”

“Make me feel glad about it”

“.....Please leave it to me”

The two of them stared at each other for so long, it felt like time had stopped.

It was an exchange I couldn't understand at that moment.

The 「Destiny Record」 Kirino had written—

It would be a long time before we read it.

Chapter 3

Early morning the day after we all went to Akiba.

I woke up at 5 a.m., washed my face in the bathroom, and was heading back to my room.

However, as I reached the stairs, Kirino came down.

As soon as she saw me,

“G—..... Good morning”

I greeted her in a weak but high spirited manner.

“G- Good morning”

I guessed right away. It's an otaku thing.

“Have you been playing games all night?”

“Ah —..... anime. I watched 24 episodes in one go”

“You look tired. Go wash your face”

“Yeah —”

Kirino walked past me toward the bathroom with a drunken gait.

This is the image of the morning after full otaku activity.

The body is exhausted, but the heart is filled with joy.

She is clearly..... really planning to go all out while she's in Japan.

And then,

“Ah, that's right”

Kirino stopped and turned around.

“Wait there a little”

“Sure”

.....I think this means “Let's talk lightly as siblings” right?

Of course, I thought so anyway.

But Kirino washed her face, went back to her room, left me alone for another ten minutes, and then finally came back.

“Thanks for waiting”

“What took you so long?”

I think I'm a very forgiving brother for only saying that.

“Huh? I told you to wait a little”

“It seems me and you have a very different idea of what 'a little' means”

You get mad when you're the one who has to wait, even for a minute.

I'm relieved to see you're still the same, you bastard.

Why do you need to change your clothes to stand and talk with your sibling in the first place.

“Well, if you've been up all night, shouldn't you be going to bed now?”

“No, I'm going to hang out with Ayase today”

“That's a tight schedule! Didn't you say you were going to play a lot of games and watch a lot of anime while you were in Japan?”

“Anime is important. Eroge is important. Ayase is also important. So, I'm going to do all of them”

“.....”

I'm stunned. As far as I could tell, it was a serious declaration.

I know that being ranked side by side with eroge would make Ayase livid.

“.....Don't hurt yourself okay?”

“I know. I'm already thinking about it~~~~. Don't worry about your siscon”

“I can't help it”

Kirino smiled suddenly,

“This is my way of recharging”

“I see. Ah-..... was there something you want to talk about?”

“Yeah”

And so, we finally began the chat we had planned originally in the ground floor hallway.

“Well, I haven't told our parents yet”

“.....”

It's going to be an important story. I straightened my posture and waited for my sister's words.

“I'm going to live abroad in the future”

“You mean you can't come home even after your study abroad period is over..... Is that what you mean?”

“Yeah”

“Why?”

“Various reasons— I'm not trying to doge the question, there are various reasons”

My little sister, who is not good at explaining things, seems to be having trouble choosing the right words.

“I got really serious about track and field over there”

“You're doing well right? You were bragging about beating that really fast person”

“I guess, a girl called Ria..... she's younger than me, but she's really amazing..... I don't know how I managed to beat her”

“She must have been a tough opponent”

“She's the second toughest opponent in my life”

“Who's the first”

“I'm not telling you”

Bleh- she stuck out her tongue to make fun of me.

“I see”

“I'm serious about track and field. Even with rivals who I almost gave up against..... I can compete. —I'm starting to see results”

“.....That's amazing”

I meant it. I've always known it, but now I realize it again.

My sister is a really amazing person.

“Hehe..... naturally”

Kirino proudly forced a laugh.

“So, for track and field”

As I was asking the reason she's going to live abroad,

“Not only that. That's a big part of it, but not only that”

I was interrupted by Kirino.

“When I was over there, I was really worried. 'Maybe I have no athletic talent', 'I can't do this'.'*What am I gonna do*'. At that time, I thought about my future again..... what I was told at the modelling agency, I thought about various things..... about what I want to do, what I can do.....

And so. Whatever the result of my studying abroad. Whether it works out or not. After all, in the future, I'm mainly going to be active overseas”

“.....What about Japan”

“I'll be back, of course. I think I might live in Japan for a period. But not forever. I've decided that”

—I can't stay in Japan for very long any more

“You've made up your mind huh”

“Yeah”

“Well, I can't stop you”

“Hehe”

She showed her teeth and laughed mischievously.

The expression on her face was a combination of innocent childishness and mature determination.

“You can come to me for life counselling any time. I'll come running”

“Ba—ka. You should be going all out for your girlfriend”

She slapped me on the back.

I never forgot that pain.

7 a.m. Since Kirino came back, the Kousaka family's breakfasts have been lively.

My father and mother have to interact with their daughter now, since they don't know when they'll see her again.

Kirino, who had hardly slept at all, seemed to be enjoying the family gathering as much as she could.

She's so important to them, geez. I'm a little disappointed that I've lost my edge again.

Well! I'm me, and I gotta do what I gotta do!

Having filled my stomach with the curry that my mother had prepared with great care that morning, I left for the Gokou family household.

Yes, for today's date, the meeting place is at her house.

No, that's not an accurate way to put it.

Because I promised Kuroneko herself that I would meet her at the main gate of the high school at 10 a.m.

And yet, the reason I'm leaving for her house at such an early stage,

“Oh! Kousaka-kun! Fuufuu, you came!”

Is a promise I made to this young lady.

When I arrived at the Gokou family household, before I could ring the doorbell, I was greeted by Hinata-chan who was skipping rope outside. I crouched to her eye level,

“Yeah, I promised. But, is this really okay?”

“It's fine it's fine. Ruri-nee hasn't noticed at all”

This may seem like a suspicious exchange, but it's not like I'm having an affair with my girlfriend's sister (of course!)

—Let me explain.

Last night, I got a call from Hinata-chan on my cell phone.

—**Kousaka-kun, do you want to see onee-chan in her 'true' form?**

—**I absolutely want to see**

—**Then, tomorrow morning, you should come at about 8 o'clock**

Such was the exchange that took place.

Kuroneko will be surprised by my sudden visit but.....

I want to see my cute girlfriend's face like that. Mischievous desires were driving me.

“Uh, what should I do?”

“Uheheh, the plan's all laid out, boss”

Hinata-chan wiped her glistening sweat with a towel as she spoke like a villainous merchant.

She ran to the front door, opened it, and beckoned me with her finger.

“Shh— quietly.Come in come in. And follow me”

“.....Hey, is this seriously all right?”

“What are you saying so late in the game. Kousaka-kun, you're just as cowardly as you look”

“Sorry about that”

Just as I look huh. This girl has a really foul mouth.

—Am I really that cowardly?

A little dented, I followed her instructions and proceeded down the hallway of the Gokou family house. Hinata-chan, who was leading the way, turned around and giggled before opening the sliding door and gestured into the room with her fingertip.

—Look inside?

That kind of gesture.

I nodded, lined up next to her, and sneaked a peek inside.

Thereupon—

Ruri Gokou was wearing a jersey and washing dishes.



“.....”

Not the usual gothic lolita, not a holy angel, not a school uniform, not the Kamineko apron from last time she treat me to her home cooking.

Not the pure white one-piece dress I was captivated by at camp.

Wearing an old jersey, very simple clothes.

In a way that was unbecfitting of “Kuroneko”, she looked very ordinary.

However, my heart was stolen.

I was absent-mindedly lost for words.

“.....”

Right in front of me, my girlfriend was washing dishes for her family.

Like a housewife— she gave the impression of a young married woman.

I wonder how long I was staring at her.

As if to say “I'm tired of waiting”, Hinata-chan next to me,

“Hey Ruri-nee! Kousaka-kun is here!”

Wait, why are you telling her!

“Fueeh—”

Kuroneko stopped washing, as her sister's voice made her shoulders jump.

Then, she hurriedly turned around.

“Se- sesese- senpai?”

Her eyes swirled in a panic.

It was adorable to watch, and the lingering effect from before delayed my response.

“Why are..... you here.....”

As her flustered body trembled, it was Hinata-chan that answered.

“Kousaka-kun said he wanted to see Ruri-nee as her normal, unadorned self, so I gave him a hand!”

“H- Hinata..... you.....”

“Well? Well? Kousaka-kun! Ruri-nee who usually looks so cool, actually looks like this at home!”

“A- ah.....”

Even during this exchange, I couldn't take my eyes off Kuroneko in a jersey.

As I fought against my dizziness,

“.....It looks good, I think”

“B- baka”

Kuroneko turned bright red and scolded me.

“.....Please don't look so much. This..... jersey is.....”

But it looks so good!

I didn't say it out loud.

She hugged her body trying to hide it. The gesture made my heart thump.

I wonder if Hinata-chan knew what she was doing when she proposed it.

Ruri Gokou, unadorned, is so attractive.

Either way, it was a fatal wound for me. The effect is incredible, it seems that I will be shattered into the abyss with a single blow.

If I let my guard down even a little, I would propose to her this very second.

However, Kuroneko herself doesn't seem to be aware of this, and was just ashamed that she had shown her "appearance that she usually doesn't show".

“.....It's, um..... comfortable so..... it looks bad”

It's really not bad at all.

As I waited for her to finish washing— We were wondering what to do next.

“We had originally arranged to meet at 10 o'clock, but we don't need to go to school. Let's proceed with the what we had planned initially”

“We can show each other today's 「Destiny Record」 ”

“Yeah..... well, we can get to the details once we're settled. This way”

Kuroneko urged me out of the kitchen with a curt voice.

Then, Hinata-chan said teasingly,

“Ooh, Ruri-nee is trying to take her boyfriend to her room~~~~♪ Kousaka-kun! Take your time~♪
—Ow!”

Hinata-chan received a quick chop to the head from the blushing Kuroneko.

“.....H- honestly. —And senpai, stop playing around with this child”

“I'm sorry. I got excited too, so don't just blame Hinata-chan”

“.....I- is that right?”

“Yeah, I wanted to see your 'true' face”

“.....Even when I'm with you, that's my 'true' self”

“I mean 'a face you won't show me”

“.....I'll pay you back in due time, please look forward to it”

Kuroneko mumbled softly, blushing and looking reproachful.

Ah, this is 'a face only I can see'.

“That's scary”

I said as I turned away.

I have 'a face I won't show her' too.

It took some time for us to reboot from our romantic haze.¹⁸

And so—

Kuroneko led me to the door of her room, and turned around.

“.....This is my room”

“.....I see”

—**Ruri-nee is trying to take her boyfriend to her room**~~~~~♪

Because of Hinata-chan's unnecessary comment earlier, I became strangely conscious of it.

Both me and Kuroneko were nervous.

“P- please come in”

“S- sure”

“B-but the reason I'm inviting you into my room is because it's the only place in the house where we can talk peacefully—I have no other intention. I didn't mean to bring you here to be alone with you or anything like that”

“I know that!”

She's talking super fast. She's too nervous.

No! I'm nervous too!

This isn't the first time I've been alone with Kuroneko in a closed room. Before we started dating, during game production, when Kuroneko used to often hang out in my room, there were many occasions like that.

Although sometimes my heart would flutter—

Not as much as today.

There's a reason!

Because we're lovers! Unlike that time, we're in a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship!

Two people who are dating, who love each other— alone in her room!

This! This situation is lethal!

You want me to say it clearly? All right— I'll tell you what I mean.

I'm hoping for something ero to happen! Just a little!

“But, if Hinata-chan hadn't called me, we just would have met at the school gates to do what we planned. I don't think it's a big deal”

What I was saying was the exact opposite of what I was thinking.

“Th- that's right” Kuroneko relaxed her guard.

What a dangerous person. She's too defenseless against her boyfriend.

With conflicting feelings, I set foot in her room for the first time.

It was a Japanese-style room with tatami mats, not much different from the other rooms in the Gokou family house.

For a girl's room, it might be a bit plain.

A wooden desk and chest of drawers, a full length mirror by a bookshelf. The only other thing was a sewing machine.

There were some cat accessories that barely seemed girlish. In the middle of the room, a cat that must belong to the Gokou family was sleeping comfortably.

“.....Huh, so this is your room”

“.....Please don't stare so much”

“Sorry. But, it's a nice room”

“If you really think so, I'd like to ask for an explanation. —I don't think it's possible to state your impressions of such a featureless room”

“Is that so?”

It has features. For example.....

“Are you always making clothes with this sewing machine?”

I looked at the well-used sewing machine and smiled.

“The bookshelf, apart from manga and novels, is all creative books. The laptop design shows off your hobby, and there's an inconspicuous makeup-kit in the corner of the room..... It feels like Ruri Gokou's room”

“.....It's embarrassing when you explain it in detail”

Aren't you the one that asked me to explain it?

Kuroneko opened a folding table and arranged two cushions.

“Please sit down. I'll bring you some tea”

And so we sat face to face and drank tea.

Kuroneko spoke up to hide her embarrassment,

“W- well then..... senpai. Let's open tonight's 「Destiny Record」 ”

“It's morning”

She just wanted to say "tonight" to sound cool.

“So what?”

“Nothing.....”

If it's okay with you..... it's okay with me. It sounds more impressive like that.

“So then, senpai, your 'Record'?”

“Of course I wrote it”

I took the loose-leaf from my bag and slid it onto the table.

Kuroneko looked down at what was written-

—I want to know more about Ruri Gokou

—**I want to see her room**

“Today's part has come true already”

“.....Y- yeah, I guess so”

“So, let's grant your wish”

“.....Right, then..... this”

Today, Kuroneko's wish is.....

—**To illuminate the hidden "darkness"**

“.....”

I pondered for a while, but couldn't figure it out, so I asked her.

“Hey, what is the 'darkness'?”

“You don't know?”

“I really don't know”

I'm sorry, your boyfriend's chuuni level is too low. I'll do my best to learn.....

“Simply put, I want to clear up my doubts— about Kirino's 'Record' that you're holding on to”

“Aah, you meant that”

Well, I'm curious what Kuroneko thinks.

“Looking at the *sealed* page, senpai had a strange look on his face. What was it?”

“First of all, *I don't know what's inside*. And, umm, it's just”

Hmm, I put my hand on my chin and worried about the answer. For now I'll be honest.

“There was a message addressed to me on the front”

“What kind of message?”

“Ah—..... For now it's a secret”

“Muh.....” Kuroneko pondered when I answered that I wouldn't tell her.

“A condition for opening the seal' was written, right?”

A display of sharp deduction.

“Correct. Well guessed”

“It's simple reasoning. However, I don't know the details of the message”

“Of course. I'm sorry—”

“I won't ask. Well, it's something that woman thought of. It's most likely a trick to make fun of us.Ffu, to fall for her friendship”

Kuroneko seemed to have reached a conclusion.

I didn't respond.

This is because *I don't think I can meet the conditions* Kirino has set.

This sealed paper will never be opened.

Let's end this discussion,

“With this, has the 'darkness' been illuminated?”

“No, there is one more. The 'Record' entrusted by Saori”

“Ah, that's right”

“Why don't we open that one? I don't think there was any troublesome conditions for opening it. She said it was her person 'assignment', so I'm sure Saori wrote 'something she wants us to do”

“I mean, I'm curious”

“Yeah”

Since we can't open Kirino's 'Record', we can satisfy our curiosity with Saori's 'Record'.

Both me and Kuroneko felt that way.

“Well, go ahead”

Kuroneko took the page written by Saori from the binder and placed it on the table. Then, she brought some scissors and cut the glued part.

The 'Record' was revealed, Saori's 'assignment' was—

—Enjoy yourselves at an amusement park as a couple

—I have enclosed tickets for you

That's Saori all over, overflowing with care and kindness.

The next day at 7:40 a.m. Twenty minutes before meeting time.

I arrived in front of Chiba Station and waited for her by the escalator leading to the monorail ticket gate.

“.....Geez, that Kirino”

I complained about my sister, even though I'm meeting up with Kuroneko.

The reason is, as I was leaving, I had this exchange with Kirino—

—**You're going on a date with your girlfriend today right?**

—**Yeah, that's right**

—**Then, I'll coordinate your clothes for you**

—**Huh? Why???**

When I asked Kirino what she meant, she spoke with a condescending *yare yare* look.

—**I gave that girl some clothes as a present the other day right? She's going to wear them today, so let me pick something that matches for you**

That's none of your business! I thought, but she continued—

—**That way, she'll look even cuter**

I changed my mind. Since the advice is coming from Kuroneko's close friend, who looks like a popular model.

—**.....Is that right?**

—**Sure sure! Listen to what I say!**

Staying quiet, I became a dress-up doll. *Why do you only have these kind of clothes*— she kept complaining!

That's why, about 10% more handsome than usual (according to Kirino), I thought about my beloved girlfriend.

.....What kind of clothes will she be wearing?

I think Kirino's choice will be very different strain from the usual gothic lolita.

Something that goes with my clothes today— I honestly don't know what it could be. When I asked Kirino, she just said it would be “fun to meet her” and didn't tell me.

“.....”

I nervously rocked my body.

Even though we've had a few dates since we started going out, I still don't feel like I'm getting used to it.

Every time, I get nervous as if it was our first date. I'm trembling.

I hope she feels the same way.

And then.

I unconsciously turned to look at the person in the corner of my eye.

Is it Kuroneko— I wasn't sure. Completely spontaneously, my eyes were stolen.

“.....Sorry to keep you waiting”

“.....I just got here”

I replied as my heart and eyes were captivated.

Kuroneko had a completely different impression to usual.

The first thing that caught my eye was the cap she was wearing low over her eyes. The overall boyish coordination is something she never would have chosen herself.

Of course, I had never seen Kuroneko like this before.

“Those clothes—”

“Yeah, Kirino gave them to me that time. Um..... what do you think, I'm..... not sure myself”

Because she'd never worn clothes like this before, it was hard for her to judge herself.

That's why, unlike Kamineko— in her holy angel robe, she couldn't be so full of confidence.

I looked Kuroneko up and down again.

“It's really fresh. This kind of look is nice too”

I commented cheerfully in response to her boyish outfit.

“I..... don't think..... it suits me very well”

“Aah, that's fair. It's different from your usual image”

“.....Don't you think?”

She said looking down.

She spoke with such little confidence about her clothes, I couldn't help but smile.

Geez, her self esteem is low as usual.

All right, if that's how it's going to be, I have an idea here.

I brought my face closer to Kuroneko's.

Then, I lightly pinched the rim of her cap and turned it up.

“Why are you hiding your face?”

“Because.....”

“Whether it's your usual look, or a different image, both are great. I'm glad to be your boyfriend. It's an honour to walk next to you”

I'll just praise her as much as I can.

It's embarrassing, but I can't allow anyone to disparage my girlfriend, even herself.

Kuroneko's lips rippled with embarrassment.

“..... Y..... y..... you're praising me too much.....”

“No, it's all true, I can't say it enough”

“.....”

Kuroneko went quiet and blushed more and more.

She whispered a few words,

“.....Then, thanks to Kirino for choosing this outfit”

“.....Ah, that's right. I guess I'll have to thank her this time too”

“Geez.....”¹⁹

Kuroneko's exasperated voice held the nuance of “you're not being honest”.

And then,

“.....You look cool too”

“.....Thank you”

A counter attack. I almost lost consciousness.

“This was also chosen by Kirino. Because it goes well with your outfit.....”

19 Mou.....

This is bad..... If I can't return the offensive, I'll be knocked down—

If I calm down and consider it properly, I don't know what I was thinking, I said “Which reminds me” to change the subject, attempting a counter attack from the brink of death.

“Today..... that's right. I'm going to call you Ruri from now on”

“Eeh.....?”

Kuroneko's eyed widened, without her coloured contact lenses.

“Wh- why all of a sudden..... It's too early to call each other by name..... I had said”

“No, because”

I'll explain why.

“Saori must have written her 'assignment' as a way to develop our relationship. I don't want to waste that feeling, we have to make an effort, I think. After this date, the next time we meet Saori, I'm sure she'll ask us about it right?”

—Kyousuke-shi, Kuroneko-shi, how were the measures I planned?

—Did they help you develop your relationship?

“—Like that. At that time, I'd like to thank her and say 'they was perfect’”

“.....”

Kuroneko listened carefully to what I had to say, closed her eyes, and opened them again.

She nodded with a look of determination.

“Then, I'll also..... call you Kyousuke”

“Ooh..... That's the way”

Still, the offence and defence between boyfriend and girlfriend continues.

Which of us can make the other more embarrassed. It was becoming such a competition.

“Well, we can't keep being shy about it— Right, Kyousuke?”

“.....Yeah”

Thump, I stiffened as I was hit by her surprise attack.

I grit my teeth and held out my right hand to fire back.

“All right, let's go— Ruri”

Her fingers nervously entwined around my hand.

“Yes”

The two of us started walking side by side.

In the form of an ass kicking from Saori, today's date is going to be a very difficult trial.

Ruri and I first took the monorail to Chibaminato Station.

The monorail, which runs nimbly through the skies of Chiba, has a certain charm that makes me want to use it if there is little difference in arrival time from other modes of transportation. The suspension type cars look futuristic and are often used as scenery in anime.

We sat side by side and chatted.

“I never thought I'd go to an amusement park on a date. Even with my demonic eye, I didn't expect it“

“More often than not lately, your eyes aren't red”

This is because, for various reasons, she's been wearing more and more clothes that aren't gothloli in front of me.

There's been no demonic eyes or evil eyes. When I expressed this, she looked offended.

“Please don't tease me. I'm talking about our dating budget”

“Sorry. Dating budget huh..... That's a big problem for high school students”

Especially if your boyfriend doesn't have a part time job, it's even harder.

A date at an amusement park.

The protagonists of manga, anime, games, and other creative works are often depicted casually going to amusement parks. I've always thought that if I had a girlfriend, I'd probably go on a date at an amusement park.

But you know what happens when you actually get a girlfriend and start making plans to go on a bunch of dates during summer vacation? Let me tell you.

“I don't have any money”

“That's right”

We nodded solemnly at each other. I continued,

“It's also because we just got back from camp. I spent a lot of the money I had saved up on that”

“We've had a tacit agreement to only go on dates in our neighbourhood”

“We haven't eaten out at all”

It's a difficult situation for high school couples.

If Saori hadn't given us tickets, an amusement park date never would have been on our options list. Ruri continued,

“I'm going to exercise restraint as much as possible today as well. We still have the rest of summer vacation ahead of us”

“I know”

That's my firm and reliable girlfriend.

If it were a certain someone, she'd say something like “Huh? You seriously have no money?”. I'm sure after taunting me thoroughly, she would pay.

“Just for today, I'll loosen the purse strings a little. Because it's a rare opportunity”

I shouldn't be saying this, I'll be in trouble later.

“That's true. Let's try to use it in moderation. Oh yeah— in relation to this subject, I have something to report”

“.....What is it?”

I readied myself at her exaggerated tone?

Ruri took a package from her bag and placed it on her lap.

“I made boxed lunches. I heard there's a place in the park where you can bring your own food and drink, so we can eat there if you like”

“Ooh! I'm looking forward to it!”

We don't have to spend money on eating out, and it's a date-like event. Great thinking from Ruri.

However, even if I offer to pay for the ingredients, she won't accept it, so I'll have to think of something else.

We transferred from monorail to train, and arrived at our destination less than an hour after we met up.

The time was 9 a.m.— A little before.

It was another beautiful sunny day, a perfect day for a date. We stopped and looked around in front of the park entrance gate, which had a neat white appearance.

“It's pretty crowded. Is this what an amusement park is like during summer vacation?”

“Who knows? I have no idea. This is hostile territory for me. It's not beyond my expectations”

Ruri sneered slightly while muttering curses like “normie's lair”..... “detestable place”..... in a way that's very typical of her..... I wonder if she understands what she's doing.

“Today, me and you are normies too. Because we came to the amusement park on a date as a couple”

When I raised our joined hands slightly, Ruri squeezed with all her might.

“.....Ffu..... I have now..... lapsed into an existence that I used to detest”

Even though it was a cool line, I was grinning too much for it to land. I couldn't keep a straight face.

As we passed through the entrance gate with the tickets Saori had given us, the costumed mascot came up to us in a friendly manner and handed us a pamphlet.

Amidst the lively background music, we walked down a wide path lined with souvenir shops on either side.

Everything around was colourful and bustling, this really is an amusement park! That's how it felt.

“Well, where should we start?”

I asked Ruri next to me while opening the pamphlet map.

“Regardless of the order, I'd like to ride the standard attractions like the roller coaster and Ferris wheel”

“Ooh, aren't you eager”

“Ffu..... Amusement park attractions are childish and not to my taste. But this is a rare opportunity since Saori gave us tickets, plus it's good research for the novel game.....”

Ruri started making excuses while smirking.

The facial expression doesn't match the dialogue. You're definitely looking forward to the attractions.

Geez, can't be helped. She wants revisit her childhood and have fun, but she can't be honest, so let's help her out. I raised a high tension voice,

“Ruri, let's buy the classic item!”

I bought rabbit-ear headbands. It's a standard item for amusement parks, all the kids on the path were wearing them on their heads.

“Kyouzuke..... aren't you..... having a bit too much fun?”

“I don't think so”

“.....It's a little embarrassing”

Eeh.....? Even though you wear cat ears with your normal clothes?

I don't see the difference. She's difficult to understand as ever.

However, this is where I have to stand firm. I'll get Ruri to forget her embarrassment.

It's more fun that way.

I put on a pair of rabbit ears that didn't suit me at all.

“I want to wear them together with you. Please”

“Well if you insist..... it can't be helped”

Ruri took off her cap and put on the rabbit ears.

As expected, she's the girl that suits animal ears the best in the world.

It's too cute.

When I quickly took a photo of the two of us, Ruri finally decided to abandon her shame.

“Kukuku..... Since it's come to this, I must prepare myself to leave with experience I wouldn't usually have”

“That's the spirit. I mean, do you really need to prepare yourself to have fun at an amusement park?”

“Well, after all, this place is incompatible with me. Look Kyouzuke. Cheerful music is playing, everywhere you look couples and families are laughing happily.Everything around us emphasises that this the land of light element. It is a painful place for us descendants of darkness”

Her buoyant expression turned, dismayed by the mood surrounding us, Ruri dropped her shoulders.

Oi oi, we only just got here and you're already tired. You're really not good with these kind of places.

“There's a bench there, let's sit down and think”

Upon entering an amusement park, the first thing to go and do—

We chose to rest on a bench.

Very appropriate for the descendants of darkness.

Amidst the otherworldly fantasy townscape, we sat side by side and looked at the pamphlet.

“All right, choose your favourite attraction”

“In that case..... first, here”

Ruri chose the fortune area. A place where many so called “fortune telling attractions” are gathered.

“You really like fortune telling huh”

“Yeah” Ruri nodded, “Of course, I'm sure it's not real fortune telling like I'm learning but.....
Ffu..... I'm interested for entertainment purposes”

Ruri asserts dominance over the amusement park attractions.

She's like that when it comes to her area of expertise. I love that about her, it's charming.

“Oh yeah, I remember we did love fortune-telling at camp”

“..... We did, didn't we”

She must have been embarrassed, remembering those days. Her voice became quiet.

Yes, that day, we had our love fortune told at a mysterious coffee shop————.....

What was the result?

My memory is strangely vague, only a happy impression remains.

Surely, we must have been told of a happy future.

“Let's do our best to make that fortune come true”

“.....Baka”

Letting out a peevish voice, Ruri turned away,

“I mean, isn't it your own fortune if you're trying to make it come true?”

“That's what fortune telling is all about. When you get your fortune told— If you get a bad result, you try your best to prove it wrong. If you get a good result, you do your best to make it come true. I think that's fine”

“That's your way of thinking”

“It's no good?”

“No, I like it”²⁰

“.....Baka, you”

My face got hot.

Kukuku, Ruri looked at me and laughed as if to say “I did it again”

20 She says “suki yo” - which can also be interpreted as “I love you” - probably why Kyouzuke got embarrassed?

We walked east from the entrance gate and eventually arrived at our destination.

The Fortune area is a building that resembles a "wizard's house".

After completing the reception, we entered the building. After passing through a short passage, we came to a stone room. Of course, it was probably imitation, but it was quite well done. It looked like a real "wizard's house".

It was dimly lit, but there were faint light sources here and there, illuminating the doors leading to each room.

On the doors, you can see that they are easy to understand, without spoiling the atmosphere.

“Horoscopes” “Tarot reading” “Magic crystal ball” “Name reading” “Souvenir photographs”

—There were signs like this.

Ruri curiously pulled my hand.

“Come on, Kyouzuke, let's go”

“Which fortune should we do?”

“It doesn't matter, let's go around all of them”

“Roger. Then, let's start with the nearest door”

She's excited. She really loves the occult.

And so, we opened the “Horoscopes” door, and I was a little disappointed.

There was no fortune teller inside, just a fortune telling machine.

In that case, I imagine the other doors will be the same. I'm afraid what Ruri's reaction will be, since she was in high spirits.

When I stealthily looked at her, the occult loving girl's eyes were still shining.

“Hey, what's wrong? Kyouzuke”

“Ah, no..... It's a fortune telling machine, I wondered if you're okay with that”

“Fufu, did worry that I might be disappointed?”

“Oh —..... well.....”

As I hesitated, Ruri spoke,

“It's fine”

“Seriously? That's surprising”

I thought she would say it's no good because machines don't have magical power or something like that.

“Knowledge and skill are important in fortune telling. Sometimes a skilled machine can tell a better fortune than an unskilled person”

.....What is a skilled machine?

I guess it must be one that's built based with correct fortune telling methods and procedures.

“That's what the teacher who taught me fortune-telling said”

“Teacher? At fortune telling class— or what?”

“A friend of my grandmother's. When my grandmother was still alive, she used to come over to our house. She used to teach me sometimes”

“Huh”

Maybe that's what nurtured the budding occult-loving chuunibyoutai girl.

“But, according to my teacher, I didn't seem to have any talent. 'Nevertheless, because knowledge and skill are important for fortune-telling, you can be a good fortune teller if you study properly'— she said”

Ruri Gokou has no talent for fortune-telling.

That's a pretty harsh thing to say to a child.

I can imagine she must have been serious about teaching.

“Aah, by the way..... Before summer vacation, I met my teacher for the first time in a while. I thought I would ask her about my relationship with you”

“Eh”

The importance of this story has suddenly increased.

“You know there's a fortune telling place near Chiba Chou Station? That's my teacher's shop”

“Huh..... What kind of fortune did you get?”

“You will be blessed by the people around you”

“She was right”

“I guess so”

We smiled at each other.

The reason we ended up going out was because of the support of many people.

The director, Sena, and other members of the games club.

The members of the Gokou family.

Saori.

And Kirino too.

Many faces crossed my mind.

“She's the real deal— I'd like to get my fortune read too, so let's go together some time”

I said half as an idea for a date, and half real intention.

Ruri shook her head slowly.

“Unfortunately, at the end of last week, she closed the shop. 'Because I'm old and don't have a successor'- 'I'm glad I finally got to tell Ruri-chan's fortune' she said”

“Is that so..... well, it can't be helped”

“Actually, I was scouted. She asked me if I'd like to work as a fortune teller in her place”

“That's amazing! It means you've been recognized by a real fortune-teller right?”

Ruri-san, did you maybe get a job offer? Before me, a third-year student?

“I was honoured to be asked.But I turned her down”

“Eh, why?”

Is it because it's an unstable profession?

“Do you think I'd be able to handle such a communication-oriented job as a fortune teller?”

“.....”

I couldn't say anything back.

All I could say was “Right”.

“..... And I didn't want to quit my part time job”

“Eh, you have a part time job?”

“Yeah..... at a book shop”

“This is the first I've heard of it! Which book shop?”

“In the corner of the shopping district..... You know the small privately run second hand book

shop?”

“.....Is there such a place?”

“.....It's an inconspicuous shop. That's why I'm able to work there”

“Is it okay if I go? When you're working”

I asked humbly. I was worried she might not like it.

However, “Of course” Ruri replied.

“.....That's something I wrote in my 'record'. For you to come to the shop when I'm working”

In other words, that's what Ruri wants too?

As I tilted my head wondered if that was something she would request from her boyfriend, she sensed it,

“I want my boyfriend to— know more about me”

“.....Sure”

I was stupid to doubt it. The reason I wanted to go to Ruri's part-time job was because I wanted to know more about her.

“Then, it's settled”

Another “two people's destiny” would be fulfilled.

As I suspected, the 「Destiny Record」 is an interesting experiment. I'm glad I did it.

By the way, to summarize the results of the "horoscope" by the fortune-telling machine,

'In the very near future, something big will happen for both of you'

'With flames, there will be a beginning and an end'

'Danger looms. Watch for injuries today and tomorrow'

—It said.

There's something mysterious about what was written.

To be honest, I don't know what it means, but Ruri was nodding her head in interest, so it's fine.

Hmm..... That third record is a bit unsettling.

It's like an omikuji, I don't usually pay much attention to them. ²¹

But—

²¹ Omikuji are random fortunes that can be bought at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. Like a fortune cookie without the cookie

“Ara ara, Kyousuke, here on the screen..... Please look at 'Pluto'. We have a strong suggestion of death”

“Don't say that so happily! It's talking about us!”

“Together with you, maybe it wouldn't be so bad to pass into the afterlife”

“That's heavy!”

Since I've got this person next to me.

Today and tomorrow, huh. Okay, I'll do my best to be careful.

After that—

Following “Horoscopes”, we went around “Tarot reading”, “Magic crystal ball”, and “Name reading”.

Me: “Ooh, it says 'The bond between the two of you will soon deepen'! That's great!”

Ruri: “Since it's fortune-telling at an amusement park, it's only natural that the target would get a result they would like”

“The 'horoscope' earlier had a super ominous feeling though”

“.....That's true. I wonder if that means they have no consideration for couples”

Right after that exchange—

“.....Y..... 'You will be blessed with children' it says”

“This is a sexual harassment machine! What a result to give a student couple!”

We immediately got flustered by the incredibly embarrassing result.

And so we came to the souvenir photo section of the building.

A different costume mascot to the one at the entrance gate will take a picture with you. They also have cosplay costumes available for those who wish to wear them.

“Having your picture taken in cosplay..... is a little embarrassing”

“.....”

Aren't you basically cosplaying every day?

I kept my tsukkomi to myself.

“Next person, this way, please!”

The non-costumed staff urged us to go to our respective changing rooms.

From several costumes, I chose the recommended “knight” and joined Ruri again.

Ruri had chosen a “wizard” costume.

A pointy hat, a robe, and an oak staff.

I spoke with a wry smile,

“This suits you too”

“Kuku..... you're right. Sure enough, the equipment of the darkness element is right for me.....”

Swish, she held up the staff as if casting an attack spell.

It was so excessive that the staff member holding the camera let out a serious sigh as we entered the hall.

Suddenly, there was a tap on my shoulder.

It's a costumed mascot.

Boyfriend? He aimed his big round eyes at me with a meaningful nod.

—This guy is a pro. With this alone, somehow what he wanted to say was conveyed.

I showed my teeth and grinned—

“Ruri”

“Eh? Kyou—kya”

Like a knight, I picked up the princess.²²

Well, she's wearing wizard clothes though.

Like this, the two of us and one animal had our picture taken.

That photo left on the camera I borrowed from my father would be my best souvenir.

We left the fortune area and immediately joined a nearby queue.

An attraction with a 20 minute wait time. A roller coaster with a European-style castle motif which seemed to be popular in the park. It seems to be a light one that you can ride together with children.

22 Princess/bridal carry

“Honestly you..... Even though I thought of a good pose..... I probably had a weird face in that picture”

“Sorry sorry. But, I think it looks good. See?”

When I asked while fiddling with the camera, “I won't look” she said in a bad mood.

“.....Want some salted caramel?”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?”

“No no, I don't mean it like that. Heatstroke prevention”

What would be a painful waiting time for a single person can turn into a pleasant time chatting if you stand in line with your girlfriend like this.

In the end, I guess it doesn't matter what you do as long as you're with someone you like.

I put away the bunny ears that might get in the way.

“Ruri, have you ever ridden something like a roller coaster before?”

“No, the last time I came to an amusement park was..... so long ago I don't remember it. This is my first time on a roller coaster”

“Me too actually. The only places we went as a family were Mother Farm and stuff like that”²³

“Please don't make fun of Mother Farm. It's a very nice place”

She got a bit too angry! What kind of feelings does Ruri have for Mother Farm!

“Ruri..... Will you be okay on a roller coaster?”

“What do you mean will I be okay?”

“You're not scared?”

“I'm not scared at all. On the contrary, why would you think such a thing? Ah, so then..... Kyouzuke..... are you scared?”

Even though she was teasing me with her words, for some reason I didn't get angry at all.

Who's saying it is important!

“Actually, I am a little scared. After all, it's my first time. I don't know what it's like”

I spoke my mind truthfully.

I'm really going to ride it now regardless, so depending on how it goes, I might end up screaming in front of her. So it's better to tell her “I'm scared because it's my first time” than try to act tough.

²³ Mother Farm is a child friendly petting zoo oriented amusement park in Chiba

“What a pitiful boyfriend”

Ruri blurted out. Seemingly that hit her weak spot, and she was clutching her stomach and desperately trying to hold back her laughter.

My face got hot.

“I- I'm sorry! No, but..... it's a roller coaster! You're accelerating all at once from such a high place! I don't know because it's a new experience for me, but it definitely seems scary!”

“Fu..... Fufu..... It's an attraction that children can ride under supervision right?You have a surprisingly cute side, don't you Kyouzuke?”

“.....Nugu”

As I was stuck for words in embarrassment, Ruri put her hand on my head as if comforting a baby.

“It's okay..... I'll be right next to you”

“Y- you're treating me like a child!”

And so the line progressed, and we boarded the roller coaster side by side.

Holding hands.

The coaster slowly climbed higher..... and stopped at the top.

“.....Why does it..... stop here? Isn't it too scary?”

“By stopping at the top, they're fuelling your fear by saying 'You're going to fall from here now' 'Prepare yourself'. It's a good way to set the scene”

“You're very calm”

“You're too scared. Look, if you close your eyes, isn't it even scarier?”

“How should I know?”

Seriously..... Am I a coward? Am I always like this?

I don't get how children can ride this! Scary things are scary!

I opened my eyes and waited for the moment.

And—

Thump- after a vibration, the coaster finally accelerated.

With a thunderous roar, it *slipped* down the rail all at once.

The wind blew from the front.

My clothes fluttered and flapped and I felt the skin on my face being pulled.

The cheers and screams of the passengers swirled around us in unison.

“Waaaaaaaaa!”

I also screamed with enjoyment.

Yes, it was fun. The scary part was when the train departed. Once we accelerated, it was just exhilarating. As Ruri might put it, it felt like I became a gust of wind.

The excitement rises endlessly and the heart begins to seek more intense thrills.

“Hey! This! Is fun huh!”

With childlike high spirits, I asked for my lover's agreement.

Thereupon,

“Hyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Ruri was super crying. She was screaming louder than I've ever heard her.

Large tears were born and flew backwards.

“Y- you! You were fine a moment ago!”

“Huu! uu~~~~~!”

Even if she retorts with a big voice, I can't understand her.

I thought if you close your eyes, it would be even more scary.

“It's okay! I'm right next to you! It's okay!”

I had no choice but to squeeze her hand and encourage her.

Finally, the coaster came to a stop—

Ruri was limply slumped over,

“.....Th- there's no way I'd let a child ride in one of these demonic vehicles”

“That's right! That's right!I'll lend you my shoulder, let's take a break after we get off, okay?”

“Haa..... Haa..... Fuu..... I- I'm never riding that again. Absolutely, in my lifetime, never riding it.....”

I couldn't help but smile wryly.

Ruri had a clumsy gait for a while after that, it seems the damage from the roller coaster hadn't faded.

Therefore, our pace was slowed.

After a sufficient rest, we enjoyed ourselves on light attraction such as teacups, and took a leisurely stroll around the park.

At noon, we decided to eat our lunch at the picnic area.

Picnic area. I thought it would be a space with tables and chairs, just like the facility of the same name in a certain amusement park, but it wasn't.

A spacious meadow. It was such a place.

In addition to imitation log benches and tables, drinks and picnic blankets are sold at stalls at the entrance of the area.

We didn't buy anything in particular, but sat under a sparse tree on a picnic blanket that Ruri had brought with her.

“Hey, this feels good”

“That's right..... I, a descendant of darkness, have now completed my [class change] into a light existence. The comfort of the sun..... is not bad”

“Let's put stones on the corners of the blanket so it won't be blown away by the wind”

“You've been quite unmoved by my remarks lately. It's a positive change of course, but you don't have to completely ignore me”

“I've been working hard to adapt!”

“You could respond in the same way. Isn't that real adaption?”

“I can't do it every time!”

I can't think of a chuuni line right away.

This is an awkward flow..... let's change the subject.

“Anyway, are you feeling okay now?”

“Yeah, having been subjected to that abomination”

“Don't push yourself, seriously. You're more important than our date”

It was a topic to divert the conversation, but I meant it.

“Honestly..... You worry so much”

Ruri looked down in embarrassment, her ears turning red. As if trying to hide it, she hurriedly took a lunch box from her bag. It's a shape that can be stacked vertically in three layers in order to fit in a smaller bag.

“Here, please eat— since I made this, for my boyfriend”

She gently opened the lid with her hand.

The first thing that appeared were rice balls. Each one was small and had a cute impression.

“The ones with vertically wrapped seaweed are salmon. The ones with horizontally wrapped seaweed are cod roe. The ones with cat shaped seaweed are okaka”²⁴

“Ooh~..... Itadakimasu!”

“Yeah, please enjoy”

“Then, since it's a rare opportunity, let's start with this cat rice ball”

I took a bite.

“Delicious”

The words came out of my mouth spontaneously. There was no need for flattery, it was a natural reaction.

Ruri smiled gently like an affectionate mother.

“Really, I'm glad. I've made a lot of other things.....”

Then, she opened the lids of second and third tiers.

Karaage, rolled omelette, red sausage, asparagus wrapped in meat..... etc etc.²⁵

I shouted my praises as this menu of “things boys absolutely love” was displayed.

“Ooh! That's good that's good!”

“.....As I expected, this seems to have been the right direction”

“What?”

I asked as I forked fried chicken into my mouth.

“I did. I recognized that bento was a way to show off to my boyfriend”

“Hmhm”

²⁴ Okaka - katsubushi (simmered, smoked and fermented tuna), finely chopped and dressed with soy sauce

²⁵ Karaage – Japanese fried chicken

Well, that might be the case.

“That's why, I thought I should prepare a set of dishes so— you can see my cooking skills at a glance. I'm good at Japanese food, with a focus on fish and vegetables..... that kind of thing”

“Ah, if that's the case, I might have asked for more meat next time”

“Right”

“Why did you change your mind?”

“My father came with me when I was shopping for lunch, and said, 'If you want to feed a high school boy, I don't think that's a good menu”

Good job, father-in-law.

“I was annoyed at the time, but seeing the results, it seems it was good advice”

“You're appealing to your boyfriend like crazy”

“Really?”

“Yeah”

Ruri is always asking for validation like 'Am I good enough'.

Maybe she's not confident in herself.

That's why I always affirm her with all my might. I think that's my role as her boyfriend.

Of course, from the bottom of my heart,

“Because now I want to marry Ruri”

“.....What are you saying”

Part of the reason is that it's so much fun to make her embarrassed like this.

“.....You should eat vegetables too. I..... like healthy people”

“Sure sure”

What an unnecessary request.

With a neat gesture, Ruri picked up an asparagus meat roll with her chopsticks— and let out a giggle.

“Ffu, Kyouzuke—”

With a super malicious expression, she brought it to my mouth.

Then,

“Say aah”

“S- so that's what you're planning.....!”

“Kukuku..... I'll fight back against my perverted boyfriend who takes pleasure in humiliating me. Now, go ahead and embarrass yourself.....”

“You're embarrassed, too! Your face is bright red!”

“B- be quiet. Open your mouth already. Before my heart reaches its limit.....”

Even lunch time is a battle for us.

Geez..... I'm glad there are lots of couples around us.

After that—

We messed around on some attractions. Even though all the scary rides²⁶ were off limits, there were still plenty of places that interested us. For us who only knew amusement parks from creative works, it was a fresh experience.

Truly—

This summer is special.

Even on such a wonderful day, the end is approaching.

The sky gradually turned orange. I spoke,

“We'll have to buy some souvenirs to take home. For Saori and Kirino, since they've been especially kind”

“Then, we can share the cost”

“Let's get something food-based. Something we can all eat together next time we get together”

While having such a conversation, we visited the many souvenir shops and enjoyed shopping on a limited budget.

It was a little difficult to complete my *personal shopping* without her seeing me.

Finally—

“Hey. Before going home, do you want to ride the Ferris wheel?”

“That's, right. Let's do that, then”

²⁶ Literally “scream machines”

We got on the Ferris wheel, the centrepiece of this amusement park.

The view from this attraction, located in the center of the amusement park, is said to be the best view in the park.

—It's close to the ocean. I'm sure it's a beautiful view.

We sat in the gondola, not face to face, but next to each other.

.....Is this okay for a date? It's more appropriate to be closer together right?

As a lover of the ordinary, I'm still desperately trying to remember the dating manual I must have seen somewhere, even at such a time.

My girlfriend, for better or worse, is not normal. There's no manual for her.

The gondola we ride slowly rises.

The magnificent sea that could not be seen from the park spreads into our field of view.

The gondola lurched and swayed,

“Hya”

“Hey, are you okay?”

“Y- yeah.....”

Our bodies were pressed against each other. We moved away as if repelled.

“.....”

“.....”

Awkward silence.

— Aah come on, what am I doing! Our bodies touched..... We were much closer when I lent her my shoulder earlier.

No. I know. The situation is different.

Carrying a girl who was exhausted on a roller coaster, and now we're alone on the Ferris wheel, it's completely different. I tried to speak,

“L- look! All the attractions we visited today look so small!”

“Y- yeah..... you're right..... and the sea is beautiful. Just like what we saw at camp”

“Y- yeah.....”

A strained conversation.

Oh— shit! Sure the scenery is beautiful, but! That's not the point!

In my head..... Everything's jumbled up!

It's different! This is a rare opportunity to ride on a Ferris wheel, I need to make the mood better!

The more I get worked up about it, the more I can't think of the right words. I can't help but feel impatient and rushed.

“.....”

“.....”

.....The silence continued.

Time does not stop, the gondola turns.

This is bad. Very bad. At this rate, the gondola will reach the ground with nothing but silence between us. That's too..... *not good*.

I had to make a decision. I have to move now.

““Um””

We looked at each other, and by coincidence, said the same thing.

“.....Uh”

“.....Aah”

And so, once again, we both fell silent.

What bad timing..... But, I'm sure we were thinking the *same thing*.

Then, once again! How many times!

“Here! Take this!”

I held out both hands.

It was a neatly wrapped box. Ruri took it with a puzzled look on her face.

“.....For, me?”

“Yeah!”

“Can I open it..... now?”

“Do it!”

If she'd asked to open it at home, I'd be in trouble.

She nodded, and with a somewhat impatient but careful hand, peeled off the wrapping, opened the box, removed the contents..... and placed it in her palm.

“.....I”

A pair of heart necklaces.

It's not expensive. It's just a simple pair of necklaces that, when put together, form a heart.

“You were looking at these earlier— weren't you? That's why..... as a souvenir”

“You bought them..... secretly”

“.....Yeah”

“This morning..... We were talking about saving money.....”

“Ah, but..... This is the time to use it”

I can't come up with a good line.

I had thought of something more clever to say, but I was too nervous to remember.

She looked spellbound at the heart, and then straight at me,

“.....Thank you, Kyouusuke. I'm happy”

“You're welcome”

“I'll treasure it.For the rest of my lifeNo, for eternity”

“You're overreacting”

“.....Um, hey”

“Hm?”

“I— had fun, today”

“Me too”

The air relaxed, perhaps because I had successfully completed the mission I set for myself.

Naturally, we looked out the window.

The gondola would soon reach its apex.

The sun was setting into the sea.

The orange light created a shimmering path across the water.

At camp, we also watched the ocean in this way. She continued,

“Yesterday too, and even before that, I had a lot of fun”

“Me too”

And today, we are sitting side by side watching the same scene. I spoke,

“Let's come again, together”

“Yeah”

“Since we don't have the budget, next time will be winter break at the earliest——”

Spring is over, summer is over, autumn is here, and winter is coming.

Then we'll watch the same scene together again. I continued,

“By then, there'll be Christmas and New Year's”

“How about going to hatsumode and watching the sunrise on on new year's day”²⁷

“That's a good idea. Just us two—— or everyone”

“I can't decide”

“I'd like to go more than once”

“You can only see the first sunrise once, remember?”

“In a year's time, or two years' time”

“.....”

I gazed at her face.

Her profile lit up by the setting sun was more beautiful than anything else in the world.

Her eyes widened in surprise when she saw me.

I wonder if she noticed. If what I meant was transmitted properly.

“Kyouzuke”

Ruri called my name.

Then, she carefully held up the necklace I gave her with both hands,

“Perhaps you could put it on for me”

“Yeah”

I put my hands around her neck and put it on her.

She may have noticed my hands trembling with nerves.

²⁷ Hatsumode is the first shrine visit of the new year, a new year's tradition in Japan

“Does it suit me?”

“Absolutely”

“Thank you. I'll put yours on too”

Ruri, like me, put the necklace on me. When I noticed her hands were trembling, I giggled inwardly.

At times like these, maybe we're similar people.

Because there's a height difference, Ruri had to lean forward to put the necklace on me. Inevitably, after a series of motions, our faces came near.....

“.....”

“.....”

Ordinarily, this is the scene where we get embarrassed and pull away.

However, close together, we stared at each other.

In that moment, time felt like eternity.

Slowly she closed her eyes—



We kissed, only a light touch.

For the two of us right now, this is the limit.

If someone we knew was peeping, they would probably laugh at us.

However, that time was the happiest I've ever been in my life.

With the memory of that tryst in our hearts, we headed home.

As we left the grounds of Chiba Station, it began to rain.

“Ah, the weather forecast said it would be sunny all day”

I said as I looked up at the night sky, disturbing clouds were spreading.

A lightning bolt flashed in the distant black clouds.

A few moments later, thunder rumbled.

“Wow”

“We'll be in trouble if it starts to pour. Let's hurry a little”

Just as she said that—

“Onii-san”

A familiar voice called out to me.

When I turned to the source of the voice, I saw a beautiful girl with black hair.

“.....How unexpected”

“.....Ayase? What are you doing out at this hour?”

“.....Do I need to tell you?”

“No, that's, but.....”

Ayase's expression turned to a harsh, serious face.

Hey hey, what's with the scary attitude— This girl is always like this with me.

I forgot because I hadn't seen her recently.

Ayase Aragaki. Kirino's classmate, fellow model, and best friend.

I'm sure she hates my guts——..... but she occasionally asks me for advice about Kirino.²⁸

It's a strange relationship.

“Who is this?”

Ruri asked beside me.

²⁸ More literally “she detests me like a snake”

“Kirino's friend. Hey, you had a near miss with her at summer comiket”

“Aah, that time”

Ruri seemed to have remembered Ayase.

The other party seemed to do the same,

“At that time..... you were with Kirino.....”

Ayase's eyes became even sharper.

Well, to Ayase, Ruri— Kuroneko is an enemy.

Because she's Kirino's otaku friend. She's one of the main culprits keeping Kirino away from her.

—'Danger looms. Watch for injuries today and tomorrow'

A bad feeling passed through my mind, and I stepped forward as if to protect Ruri.

Drip, a large drop of rain wet my forehead.

With thunderclouds behind her, Ayase spoke,

“The two of you..... what kind of relationship do you have?”

“She's my girlfriend..... but”

“I knew it.....!”

I don't know what she's talking about.

Why would Ayase be ready for battle during this conversation!

“Because of you two..... Kirino is.....”

“Hey! What are you saying!”

“Because of you two, Kirino is going away!”

At Ayase's nonsensical cry—

“.....What do you mean?”

Ruri snapped fiercely.

“Kirino is..... going away?”

“You don't know..... anything about that. And yet, you claim to be Kirino's friend..... ”

Unbelievable, Ayase spat out.

Maybe, I thought.

— **I'm going to hang out with Ayase today**

Ayase must have heard the story from Kirino.

—**I'm going to live abroad in the future**

—**I can't stay in Japan for very long any more.**

I think that's why she's so upset— but still.

I don't know why she's getting angry at Ruri and me. She continued,

“Kirino is going to live abroad even after her study period is over”

“.....Is that true?”

Ruri looked at my face and asked.

“Seems like it. —That's what she decided herself”

“.....It's you guy's fault isn't it?”

I turned towards the angry girl,

“I don't know why Ayase is saying that”

“It's onii-san! It's you! That's why.....! 'Kirino decided to leave Japan!' And 'the two of you started dating', there's no way they're not related!”

“I don't understand what you're saying”

All I could hear was nonsense. That's right— at this point, I didn't have *enough information* to understand Ayase's words. I couldn't think of any real reason why Ayase would be angry.

However, someone who could understand it perfectly was standing next to me.

That's why,

“You— girlfriend-san, you understand don't you? What I'm saying is true! Because of you, Kirino is deeply hurt! That's why she's going to leave Japan!”

“.....No way.....”

Ruri took Ayase's words to heart, and was left speechless.

For me at that time, I was surprised by how shocked she was.

“Hey, that's enough Ayase. No matter what, I can't let you blame my girlfriend for that”

“.....You don't know anything”

“Maybe you're right”

At her pained expression, my words became soft.

“I don't think we're on the same page here. I'm probably too slow. I just don't get it. If I can hear your story properly, maybe I can understand. But”

I declared,

“Once you've calmed down. Then, I'll listen by myself. Then I'll think it over again”

I catch raindrops in my palm.

“The rain is getting heavier. It's late at night”

Let's stop for now. Ayase nodded reluctantly, seemingly she understood my intention.

“.....I understand. Then— another time”

“Sure, well, until then, truce”

I tried to act cheerfully. I wanted to reassure the stunned Ruri, even if only slightly.

“Don't worry about it. It's not Ruri's fault”

“Thank you..... it's okay”

As the rain grew stronger.

We watched Ayase leaving through the thunder for what seemed like forever.

Chapter 4

In the rain, I walked Ruri home. We bought an umbrella at a convenience store and walked side by side.

“.....”

“.....”

There was no conversation along the way. Ruri had been silent for a long time.

I don't think it's because of anger. Ayase's comment seemed to have shocked her.

—'Kirino decided to leave Japan'! And 'the two of you started dating', there's no way they're not related!

Is that right.

.....Why did Ayase say such a thing?

No matter how much I think about it, I think it's unrelated.

Because Kirino said so. She said that she made her own decision.

If what Ayase is saying is true, then it means that Kirino was lying when she said that.

I couldn't see it like that.

I don't even see any reason for her to lie to me.

.....That must be right. At least, I can't think of any.

That's why I think Ayase might have misunderstood something—

.....You don't know anything

—That's my opinion.

At the moment, anyway.

“Hey, Ruri..... about earlier”

I spoke my thoughts to her, who seemed to be very upset.

I hope to lighten her heart, if only a little.

However, Ruri's expression did not brighten.

In the meantime, we arrived in front of the Gokou family house.

“.....Here is fine”

“.....Sure. Um, hey.....”

I want her to feel better. Unable to give up on the feeling, I tried to say something. But, Ruri spoke before I could.

“I had fun today. Thank you, Kyouzuke”

“.....Me too”

At last, though only slightly..... she smiled. That alone was enough to soothe my frustration.

“I've made up my mind”

Ruri looked me straight in the face.

.....It seems like she was thinking about it the whole way back.

I straightened my posture and listened closely, she smiled softly.

“I want to enjoy the rest of summer vacation with you”

It was a bit of an anti-climax, I was expecting a heavy line.

“What's with that face?”

“No..... It's just, it seemed like you were concerned by what Ayase said.....”

“You think it's strange that I'm suddenly fine?”

“.....I guess”

When I affirmed, *Fufu*, Ruri let out a bewitching voice.

“I've come to a conclusion regarding that matter. That's why, I'm done thinking about it. That's all there is to it”

Her suggestive tone seemed like the usual chuunibyuu. If that's the case, I can rest assured.

To confirm this, I spoke lightly,

“It seems like you're feeling better”

“Yeah, summer vacation is not infinite. Our limited precious time..... it would be a waste to spend it depressed”

“That's— right. Really, you're right”

The bright smile on her face again cleared up the haze in my heart.

Today, I had a date at an amusement park with Ruri. We toured around a lot and ended up on the Ferris wheel.....

I kissed her, just a touch.

“See you tomorrow, Kyouusuke ”

“Yeah, see you tomorrow”

“Please be sure to write your next 「Destiny Record」 properly”

“Yeah, you too”

It seems we were able to end such a great day on a high note.

After parting ways with Ruri and arriving back at the Kousaka house, I talked to Kirino that night.

About the matter of Ayase's “strange complaint”.

“Strange complaint”— In retrospect, that's not a great way to say it. However, that's how it seemed to me at the time.

My sister interrupted the PC game she was absorbed in to listen to my concerns.

“Okay. I'll take care of it”

She readily agreed.

“Thanks but..... What is it you're going to do?”

“I'll talk to Ayase, clear up the misunderstanding, and convince her. There's nothing to worry about. You said you'd talk to Ayase again, but don't do that either. I don't want to see you alone with Ayase, it's gross”

“Gross..... huh, you.....”

You bastard..... just casually mixing in abuse like that.

“..... Well, please do”

“Will do”

Kirino responded immediately and tapped her chest.

Hey hey..... this little sister is super reliable.

This girl, hasn't she become even more of a perfect superhuman since she came back from abroad?

After a great experience, she's grown..... it seems. She's grown a lot as a person.

“Ah, but”

Kirino said in a *I have to tell you this* manner,

“I'll talk to Kuroneko after Ayase, but—— that probably won't be enough. You better watch her carefully. Since you're her boyfriend”

“.....I understand”

“I'm worried about that~”

“Don't you trust me? What are you worried about”

“Hm—..... It's..... hard to explain~~~~. Umm~~~..... You definitely don't know enough, and if I leave it to you, it'll get messy later on..... but~~~”

She held her head with both hands and began to anguish.

But,

“.....Do I have to explain it? Seriously? Isn't that super awful?”

Kirino grumbled as if talking to herself.

“I don't know what it is, but if you hate it that much, I won't ask”

“Hm— Sorry. You'll have to take care of that yourself”

“That's the plan. It's my problem, I can't leave it all to you”

See.

After returning to Japan, Kirino has started to apologize to me.

The old her would have been more stubborn.

She's changed—— or changing.

Kirino herself.

Our relationship too.

It seems the same as before, but it's different.

That's how I felt.

I don't know if that's good or bad.

After that——.....

Once again, the best summer vacation resumed.

Ruri and I proposed and implemented what we want to do together through the 「Destiny Record」.

—**Have my boyfriend come to see me while I'm working part time**

—**I want to go to karaoke with her and sing**

—**I want to go to the zoo**

—**I want you to read my completed game scenario**

—— and so on.

The act of exchanging diaries, which were filled with chuunibyou elements, fascinated us and never got old.

Ruri was so lively that she seemed to have forgotten about her depression after the encounter with Ayase, and she made me fall in love with her over and over again.

Of course, the memories of summer vacation are not limited to just the two of us.

—**I want to go to Summer Comiket with everyone.**

There was also such a wish.

One day, me and Ruri were surprised to find we had written the same thing.

“Everyone” doesn't just mean the Otaku Girls Unite members Saori and Kirino.

It also includes the Games Research Club members Sena and the director, Makabe-kun etc.

In other words—

“I'm Kirino Kousaka! Yoroshiku then!”

“I'm Sena Akagi. Nice to meet you, Kirino-chan!”

That's why.

Here's a little more explanation..... Today is the afternoon of the last day of summer Comiket.

After some shopping, we met up at a calm place and went for a meal together— That's the situation.

This time however, none of our friends were participating in a circle.

Kirino and Ruri, and the games club group had all been busy with different things.

Game production, scenario writing, digesting a never ending stack of games, dating— things like

that.

At any rate, Kirino will be leaving for abroad again tomorrow.

Making our last memories— I don't want to say it, but that's what it is.

In the morning, we went around the venue with the Otaku Girls Unite group and enjoyed ourselves to the fullest.

That includes me.

Now we've met with the games club, and are moving toward a restaurant near the train station. They introduced themselves while walking under Saori's leadership.²⁹

Among them, Kirino and Sena stood out the most.

Kirino especially, although she was lightly dressed with short sleeves, she looked insanely stylish.

In summer, there are fewer things you can wear, so it's difficult to do anything different.

As usual, she looks like a popular model.

Along with Kirino, I should also praise Sena, who's beauty style can compete with Kirino to some extent.

“No, I was really surprised! For Kousaka-senpai to have such a cute little sister! I had heard about it..... but this is more than I imagined!”

“I also heard about Akagi-san from my brother. You're this one's classmate and friend— he said”

Kirino forcefully put her arm around Ruri's shoulder.

As if she was trying to assert that she was the closer friend. Ruri frowned at her,

“Please stop that. It's too hot”

“Eh—? It's fine really”

“Honestly..... You.....”

Even though she said that, she didn't seem that bothered.

Seeing such an exchange, Sena seemed to guess a few things. She let out a little giggle.

“I want to be friends with Kirino-chan too. I want you to treat me without reservation for elders, like you do with Ruri-chan”

“Then, can I call you 'Sena-chi'?”

“Ah, is that my nickname? Of course that's fine”

²⁹ Kokusai-Tenjijō Station – the train station that serves Tokyo Big Sight exhibition center where Comiket is held

“That's the spirit Sena-chi. I think we'll get along well”

“I thought so too~~~~!”

Kirino & Sena struck a congenial pose, both hands joined with the other's.

I knew it. I knew this would happen if these guys met each other.

“Kirino-chan, let's start the otaku talk right away!”

“All right. I want to get along quickly, can I talk at full power?”

“Fufufu..... We're both secret otaku! Only for this one day of the year! I've decided this would be the day to unleash everything!”

Amazing energy from Sena.

Having been released from Kirino's restraint, Ruri's expression read “This is going to be a disaster”.

On the other hand, Kirino's eyes were sparkling.

“Seriously? Sena-chi, you won't be put off?”

“Bring it on! Whatever it is, I'll take it! In return, you have to accept my habits and long stories!”

“All right, leave it to me! I swear I'll never be put off!”

A dangerous duo was being formed.

Ruri, with half-lidded eyes..... silently scooted away from them to my side.

“It's not safe here. Let's keep our distance, Kyouzuke”

“Yeah..... Urgent evacuation, evacuation”

We escaped to the front of the pack.

We passed Makabe-kun, who was flabbergasted after witnessing the two creepy otaku girls.

“You're pretty good aren't you! It's hard to believe you're so much younger than me.....!”

“Fufufu, Miura-dono! It was good to exchange information with you!”

The director and Saori were talking. It seems a deep otaku conversation was blooming. Perhaps the two otaku group leaders are a good match.

It seems the meeting of Otaku Girls Unite and games club went well.

After the festivities were over, we had a break.

Casually, I looked up at the cloudless sky and stretched out my hand as far as I could,

“Ah————..... Today was fun too”

“Yeah, you're right”

There was a reply to my murmur.

The voice of a loved one,

“This summer..... every day..... has been constant fun”

There was no lie in those words. Even in retrospect, there was no lie.

Really. Really really really.

This summer is special—

It's nothing but fun.

However..... That's right. There's one lonely thing that can't be avoided.

Only one.

—*That time* has finally come.

The next morning.

The whole family gathered in front of the entrance of the Kousaka household.

“.....Come back any time”

“I'm sure Kirino will be fine, but please contact me often”

My parents stood side by side and called out to their daughter.

“Yeah, thank you..... otou-san, okaa-san”

Yes. This morning is the day Kirino leaves for abroad again.

“I mean, otou-san! I'll come back after I reach another milestone, so don't give me that look”

“.....I'm not upset”

My father lied. His expression is— I won't describe it.

Kirino glanced at me and threw a short greeting,

“You take care as well”

“You too”

“Fuhehe”

“What is it”

“Nothing”

Elder brother and younger sister laughed at each other without much meaning.

What the hell. Now we're even more like ordinary brother and sister.

Aah, geez, yare yare really.

“Come on, hurry up and go”

When I shooed her away with my hand, she grinned with her teeth meaningfully.

“You're about to cry because you're saying goodbye to your sister, right? That's why you're trying to make me leave faster. I get it”

“You don't have to spell it out. The feeling is mutual”

“.....”

A snuffle.

Which one of us? Who knows! I'll leave it to your imagination.

I'm sorry for being a stubborn big brother.

Just because this is the last time— it doesn't mean I'm going to be honest with you.

“All right”

Kirino tapped her cheeks as if to shake something off, and looked up.

And then,

“Ittekima——su!”³⁰

She left in high spirits.

It was a refreshing departure, very different to last time.

We only have a few special days left, so we have to spend them carefully.

30 Ittekimasu – “I'll go and come back” – much like itterasshai

In the last ten years of my life, it's become clear.

After all this time, I remembered— or rather, I realized.

Even after my parents went back inside, I watched Kirino leaving for a while.

—Haaa, I really don't know when to let go.

As I wallowed in self pity, a certain person appeared from the corner where my sister had turned.

“.....Ruri?”

The one walking towards me was my girlfriend— Ruri Gokou.

Dressed in her usual black clothes, she approached me with a heavy gait.

Then, she said a few words,

“.....She's gone huh”

“I guess so”

Wondering why she was here—

I made a guess that was probably correct.

“You came to see her off too”

“Yeah, I met her back there”

“Why, we could have seen her off together”

“Yes..... but”

Ruri seemed to be having a hard time explaining.

“Yesterday on the way back from summer Comiket, I said goodbye with Saori..... Actually, I didn't mean to come here. But.....nonetheless, I was lonely..... then I noticed I was near your house.....”

Her natural reticence had kicked in, and she was struggling to get it out.

“While I was hesitating, Kirino came running towards me..... and caught me before I could escape”

“Oh dear”³¹

That's just like Ruri.

That Kirino is a fast runner. Ruri is not athletic, so she can't hide herself in a hurry.

She spoke quickly, as if embarrassed,

“Kirino laughed at me a lot when she realised the situation”

“I'm sure”

It's hard for me to hold back my laughter, too.

“I can't believe that will be my last memory of her..... I really screwed up”

“You can overwrite it when she comes back”

It's not like we're saying goodbye for good.

“I guess so”

Together, we looked into the distance.

I felt comfort being able to share the same feelings.

“Besides that”

I dared to make light of what was now occupying my mind, and raised my voice cheerfully.

If I don't force myself to raise my spirits— I'll lose to her.

“Summer vacation is almost over! I haven't written my 「Destiny Record」 yet—”

“Let's make some great final memories”

She said.

“You beat me to it”

At the end of summer vacation, let's have the commemoration of a lifetime.

Apparently, me and Ruri had the *same idea*.

“Ffufu”

Her smile was uncharacteristically innocent,

“I already have a plan. Will you listen?”

“Of course. Shall we take this opportunity to go inside?”

I spoke lightheartedly. However, Ruri appeared to be deep in thought,

“.....Your parents are home today right. I haven't prepared any gifts to greet them as 'your girlfriend'..... Is that okay?”

“You're overreacting!”

When I went to your place, you didn't give me any time to prepare either!

Why are you only wanting to meet my parents when you're ready!

I guess that's just how she is.

“B- because.....”

“Look, it's fine. —Let's go”

“Hya”

I took her by the hand and lead her inside.

The look on my father's face when, shortly after Kirino's departure, he was suddenly introduced to his son's girlfriend was quite a sight to behold. My mother, who already knew of Ruri's existence, laughed with an attitude like 'So you finally got together'.

.....I'm sure there will be a family meeting sometime tonight.

I was prepared for this! Because sooner or later, this was going to happen!

So, I asked Ruri to come up to my room—

“.....”

“.....”

A strange silence lay between us.

We stood there and stared at each other. I could have invited her to sit down, brought her tea, or done any number of things—

“.....Ah—..... Um.....”

What should I do.

My brain had suddenly become unresponsive.

Previously, even if I was alone in my room with “Kuroneko”, it was never like this.

She was a kouhai of the opposite sex that I was interested in, but I hadn't seen it as such yet.

Kyousuke Kousaka's girlfriend, “Ruri Gokou”, was alone with me in my room.

Oh right, this is the first time that's happened.

It seems we both remembered.

I guess that's why we're so conscious of each other and we've become like this.

“.....”

“.....”

Then, suddenly, I realised.

Ruri's gaze traced my body.

Even though I wasn't touched directly, I felt a tickling sensation run through me.

I mean hey! Gokou-san!?! You know that's an ero gaze right!

The role of man and woman have been reversed!

Kuu! Someone please tell me what's going here——

She's looking at me with sexual eyes! What's a boyfriend supposed to do in this situation!

“.....”

“.....”

The situation was tense, like a duel to the death.

It was cut short by the sound of a discreet knock on the door.

“Uwaa!”

An unintentionally loud voice escaped, I surprised myself.

I rushed to the door and opened it to see my mother's face with a deliberate smile on it.

“I've brought you some tea and sweets——”

My mother looked over my shoulder at Ruri,

“Please take your time!”

“.....S- sure”

Ruri stood upright and nodded.

My mother whispered to me,

“..... We'll be downstairs out of the way, so do your best”

I gave her a thumbs up.

“.....”

Isn't she already in the way?

If she had waited another minute, there might have been an ero development?

I thought grudgingly, but since I've been relieved of my panic, I'll be grateful for the time being.

And my dad! Did he come upstairs because he was curious?

His face stealthily peaked out in the corner, I can see it perfectly! Is he really a professional police officer?

.....The door closed.

“.....Sorry”

I cleared my throat to regain my composure.

“Such noisy parents.Let's sit down and have some tea”

“Y- yeah”

It's a bit awkward, but it's a fresh start.

After a short break,

“Well then..... Kyouzuke, let's begin our meeting. About my 「Ragnarök Plan」 ——”

Ruri showed me her plan in the usual 「Destiny Record」 form.

——Watch the fireworks with Kyouzuke once again

One moment.

“_____”

I felt a strong sense of déjà vu.

Flames blooming in the night sky passed through my mind like a flashback.

When I confessed to Ruri at camp——

Fireworks were in full bloom at that time, I'm sure that's why.

The word “fireworks” caused some striking memories to surface——

If I think about it normally, that's it.

But..... although I can't explain it, I also feel like *that's not it*.

——A dream I was watching fireworks with you somewhere other than here

It was just a dream, I don't even know why I said that during such an important scene.

— **With flames, there will be a beginning and an end**

It's just fortune-telling, not something to worry about.

The fortune could be right, the fortune could be wrong³²— at least, it should be that kind of thing, but why is my heart so shaken?

That little fortune-telling phrase just came to my mind.

It's as if I knew that *there are real fortune tellers who are never wrong*.

I placed my hand on my beating heart.

I could vaguely see the smiling face of someone who looked like my sister—

“—.....Kyouzuke?”

“.....Eh?”

“What's wrong? You seem dazed..... If it's too hot, why don't you turn on the air conditioning?”

“Ah, no, sorry.It's nothing”

“Really? It doesn't look like nothing. You're sweating a lot”

—Am I psychic or something?

Predictive dreams, deja vu. I've been having a lot of these lately.

Right now is just one example.

When I showed up at her part-time job..... even though it was definitely the first time in my life.

For some reason it felt nostalgic.

It felt like I had been there before— even though I hadn't.

“I should be honest, huh”

“Yeah”

Ruri was listening eagerly, so I spoke—

“I'm nervous because it's the first time I've been alone in my room with my girlfriend, and I was thinking there could be an ero development”

“P- please don't say stupid things all of sudden.Your parents are here.....”

“I know that..... At your house or mine, there's never going to be a time when we can be completely alone. To be honest, I think it's a bit of a problem”

32 An idiom in Japan

“P- perhaps you could not talk with such a serious a face..... about such things.....”

—I couldn't tell her the truth.

I brought up an ecchi topic so that my innocent girlfriend wouldn't pursue it.

To be honest, she loves the occult, she would have enjoyed it.

So, why then? I don't even know myself.

“Sorry, sorry. Let's get back to the plan. —We'll go and see the fireworks, then”

“.....Geez”³³

She let out an exasperated sigh,

“This one”

What Ruri pulled out of her bag and showed me was a flyer for a fireworks display.

The scheduled date was quite late, in the latter half of August. The location was near the harbor.

“That sounds good. Let's go there”

Ruri says “Let's do this kind of thing” and I agree “Sounds good”.

To call it a meeting is an exaggeration, that's pretty much it.

It's not like I'm going to turn down a request from her. She spoke,

“.....I'm looking forward to it”

But..... I wonder what it is.

The disturbing deja vu swirled in my chest and would not disappear.

And so, in the blink of an eye, the day of the fireworks display came.³⁴

I think we have one or two more “wishes” to exchange this summer.....

That's all that remains.

In other words, tonight is the “last event of summer vacation”

It's just a bit lonely.

Well, I guess we'll just have to continue in September. I'll make a suggestion later.

It's evening at the Gokou family house. I'm at the front door waiting for *my girlfriend to get ready*.

33 Mou

34 Literally “in the time it takes to say 'Ah”

Meanwhile, I ran into Ruri's family and ended up talking to them.

This one is a bit of a problem.

“What's wrong Kousaka-kun, you seem nervous?”

This person with a cheerful and familiar tone, Ruri's sister, Hinata-chan———— it was not.

“I'm nervous because it's my first time meeting my *girlfriend's okaa-san*”

“My my, you're honest. Shouldn't you say something like 'I'm looking forward to seeing what kind of clothes my beloved girlfriend will change into'—?”

Ruri's mother, Rui Gokou-san. She doesn't look much like Ruri, if Hinata-chan grows up and lets her hair down, she would look like this, that's the impression I got.

Her husband Shizuka-san often gave the impression he was under her thumb³⁵— So I had imagined her as “scary and strict onee-san”.

But when I actually met her, she seemed very kind.

She also had a quirky— and mysterious smile.

I feel like I've met someone recently with this kind of impression, but I can't remember.

“I'm sorry for being such a tactless guy. But that's how I feel”

I continued the conversation with a safe line.

I have no idea what I should talk about with my girlfriend's parents.

When I took a step back to distance myself, Kuroneko-mama took two steps towards me.

Hmhm- she looked me in the face.

“.....What is it?”

Isn't her face too close?

“Iyaa~, you're Ruri's boyfriend”

“Yes, I'm Ruri's boyfriend but”

“Are you the type who believes in fortune-telling?”

Aah..... This person is Ruri's mama.

Conversation is often compared to playing catch.

She's the type that suddenly throws a curve ball without warning.³⁶

35 Literally “spread his buttocks” - a phrase often used to describe a domineering wife

36 More specifically “gyro ball” or literally “magic ball”

“Umm”

I can't catch that! It's impossible to respond to something like that so suddenly!

“To be honest, I don't really believe it”

I half lied. Recently, fortune-telling and the occult— I'm starting to think maybe such things do exist.

“But Ruri likes fortune telling, so I'm trying to like it too”

“So you don't believe in fortune telling, but you want to like fortune telling. —It seems you think carefully and choose your words so that the other person doesn't get offended”

“I'm just speaking my mind”

“Doesn't that mean it comes naturally to you? You're honest— and maybe a little sensitive”

“Is that fortune telling?”

“It's a personality test— girls love them. Sometimes it's confused with fortune telling— but it's completely different. I can't do real fortune telling, but I've met real fortune tellers”

Is that the "teacher" who taught Ruri fortune telling?

Her grandmother— or rather, Rui-san's mother. Her friend was a fortune teller.

“You will never meet Ruri's boyfriend in this house”

“Eh?”

“The result of fortune telling. That's what I was told”

“You're meeting him right now”

“I've met him, haha”

I wonder what this conversation is about. I can't see the main point at all.

It's too sloppy for me to think she's checking up on her daughter's boyfriend.

It's too meaningful for meaningless chit-chat.

It's kind of— evasive and limp.

She's just being herself.

So this conversation works very well as “Rui Gokou's self introduction”.

“Strictly speaking, we're outside— so maybe I can't say I met you 'in this house”

She opened the front door and beckoned me with a weak gesture,

“Kousaka-kun, come here”

“Okay”

I did what I was told and entered the house.

The two of us stood inside the entrance, and Rui-san closed the door.

“Now I've met Ruri's boyfriend in this house”

“The fortune was wrong”

“Yep, that's the first time it's been wrong”

“Eh?”

“I'm surprised. I've had my fortune told by that person over and over since I was a kid— and today is the first time they've been wrong”

“.....”

I finally got it. I've been wondering what she was doing since a while ago.

She was told by a very good fortune teller that she would never meet Ruri's boyfriend, but today she met me. That's why she was surprised.

“Hey hey Kousaka-kun, what does this mean? Was there some kind of trigger that changed our fate? What do you think?”

“I don't believe in fortune-telling”

I try to like it, but I don't believe in it.

Though recently, I've been starting to think maybe supernatural phenomenon do exist—

“So—”

That's why my answer is fixed.

“If there's a fortune that would come between me and Ruri, it's wrong..... More importantly, it doesn't matter to me whether a fortune teller is real or not”

“You don't care?”

“Because I'm not going to do anything differently”

It's refreshing to put it into words.

Suddenly a weight on my chest was lifted. I had made up my mind.

Ruri has praised me like a hero. But I really haven't done much.

At that time, I just tried my best to do what I wanted to do.

I just use my momentum to do what any ordinary person would do.

And that's what I'm going to do, today and tomorrow.

“For the time being, I'm going to create the best memories tonight”

“I see. Then I'll leave it up to boyfriend-kun”

“Leave it to me”

I accepted with a still nervous voice. Rui-san smiled happily before turning her eyes to the corridor.

“Looks like she's here”

“Eh——”

I looked in the same direction she did. And,

“.....S- sorry to have kept you waiting”

From the far end of the corridor, accompanied by her sisters, Ruri walked in wearing a yukata.

The same as her name, the yukata she wore was lapis lazuli blue.³⁷

Tamaki-chan, who walked with her, was looking spellbound up at the eldest daughter.

Hinata-chan looked at me proudly.

—*How about that Kousaka-kun! What do you think?*

With a face like that.

I was so entranced staring at Ruri——

“.....Like Princess Kaguya”³⁸

A stupid reaction slipped out.

“.....Eh..... What..... are you saying.....”

Ruri said while looking down in embarrassment.

Tamaki-chan turned her innocent smile towards me,

“Onee-sama is very beautiful isn't she?”

37 Ruri means lapis lazuli

38 The beautiful princess from “The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter” - a Japanese folk tale

“Yeah, the most”

“B- baka”

Ruri turned bright red and hid her face with her sleeves.

Seemingly, I was able to convey my compliments successfully.

.....Thanks to Tamaki-chan.

“C- come on— let's go”

“Yeah”

I affirmed. As we set out together into the sunset,

“Itterasshai onee-sama, onii-chan”

“Do you best—”

Her sisters cheered us on.

When I turned around, even Ruri's parents were waving at us.

It was a happy moment. I'm sure days like these will continue from now on— the thought made my heart flutter so much I could cry.

We headed for the harbor, which was bustling with festivities.

The ocean at night. The port tower stood out conspicuously over the surroundings. There was a long line of people waiting at the foot of the tower to watch the fireworks from the observatory.

“—We're not gonna get into the observatory, it seems”

I said. Again, I had a strange sense of déjà vu. My heart raced as if to warn me of something.

On the lawn facing the sea, there were many picnic blankets laid out, and many couples, parents and children.

The moderately dimly lit space is perfect for a date between lovers.

We conversed while walking around.

“There are some food stalls. —You want to eat something?”

“I'm okay”

“Really? You're not hungry or anything?”

“Yeah..... Ah-”

Ruri stopped as if she had noticed something. I spoke immediately,

“Let's buy Meruru cotton candy for Tamaki-chan”

“Kyouzuke, how did you know what I was thinking? Isn't it too good a guess?”

“Because you're my beloved girlfriend. Come on, let's go”

“.....Geez”³⁹

Naturally I took her hand and started walking towards the stall.

We bought Meruru cotton candy, then bought Maschera masks from the next stall, and went around the stalls like that.

The two of us played yo-yo fishing.⁴⁰

At the shooting gallery, I won a prize, which was rare for me, and gave it to her.

I won a toy snake in an overpriced lottery.

Ruri *almost* lost herself in shape cutting, it was hard to bring her back to her senses.

And then—

We nestled together on the beach to watch fireworks together *once more*.

With the night sky and sea as a canvas, colourful flames bloomed. Ruri spoke,

“.....It's beautiful”

“.....Yeah”

I wasn't talking about the fireworks,

“Summer is almost over”

“Yes, we don't have many days left of summer vacation”

I'm sure she and I feel the same way right now.

Bababababang—

With a spectacular succession, the fireworks display ended.

The surroundings fell quiet.

A moment of comfortable silence passed, and before long, there was a hint of movement next to me.

39 Mou

40 yo-yo tsuri – festival game of fishing for water balloons with a paper string

When I turned around, Ruri was looking up at me with a red face.

“.....What is it?”

“.....Umm”

A faint but desperate voice.

“.....This summer you spent with me..... How was it?”

That baka. Still speaking so timidly.

I look up at the night sky and speak my mind.

“I'll say it again and again. —It was the best. I'll never forget this summer I spent with you”

“.....Really?”

“Yeah. I've come to love you more than ever”

“.....Thank you, Kyouusuke”

And tonight, I've gained another memory. An incredibly beautiful and precious treasure.

If this was an eroge, this would be the happy ending scene where the credits rolled.

No, that's not right. It's still a bit too soon.

The 「Destiny Record」 was running out of pages.

We have to fulfil the “wishes” that were written until the end.

I wonder what she wants from me on the next page.

I couldn't wait, I asked her on the spot.

“So what's next?”

“—Yeah, next is.....”

Ruri looked down and took out a piece of paper on which her 「Destiny Record」 was written.

Thereupon she paused. Usually, she would show me her “wish” proudly and happily.

What's the matter?

A disturbing premonition passed through my mind.

Drip, drops of water fell at her feet.

That's when I realised they were tears.

“This”

She showed me her final “wish”.

—Break up with Kyouzuke

“.....Eh”

The piece of paper with the “wish” left her hand and danced through the night sky.

“.....Goodbye”

She uttered a one-sided farewell and turned on her heels.

From under Kyousuke Kousaka, Ruri was leaving.

All I could do was look on, dumbfounded—

That's no good!

My own inner voice willed my legs to run.

Don't let her leave here.

A thought like a delusion moved me before my consciousness did.

As Ruri moved away with a staggered canter, just before I lost her in the crowd, I grabbed her hand.

Ruri turned around. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

I knew she was crying. I almost let her leave, crying and hurt.

“.....Ah- umm.....”

The fading voice of the girl I love. The voice that rejected me.

When I thought about it, the strength left my arms.

But I won't let go.

Never.

“.....”

Wearing an anguished expression on her face, she lowered her head.

—You were joking just now right?

—What do you mean break up with me?

—What's with those tears? What happened?

There were so many things to ask and say.

But, I,

“I don't want to break up. Because I love you”

The first thing that popped out was one-sided, selfish desire.

A common line from men who are about to get dumped.

An uncool, tacky, shameful line.

I know that! But you know.....!

I understood *those people's* shameful feelings so much I could die.

Because, I don't want to break up. Because I love her. I can't stay calm, I can't help but express my feelings before asking about the other person's circumstances.

Ruri opened her mouth slowly,

“.....I..... I have to break up with you.....! I- if I..... If I don't.....!”

It was like a scream. So frustrated that her voice couldn't form words.

Still, I knew. There was definitely something going on. I had to do something about it.

“Shit.....!”

What should I do! What should I say to my crying girlfriend!

Think! Isn't there something? A trump card that would calm down the chaotic Ruri and reveal the situation in one shot!

There's nothing like that, except—————.....

—Here, I'll give you this

“Ruri!”

There is.

“There's something we both need to see”

“Eh.....?”

Probably because it was an unexpected line.

The turmoil that had filled her stopped for a moment. Her eyes widened in surprise.

I was just as surprised as she was. In fact, I was astonished.

I never thought that we would actually meet the conditions that had been set.

From my bag, I hastily took out the 「Destiny Record」 binder.

Now, it was my turn to look after it.

During summer vacation, we made many “wishes”. And finally,

The “record” written by Kirino that was sealed.

“.....Kyouzuke, that's——”

On the front, it read as follows.

—If Kuroneko starts saying she wants to break up and you don't understand why, open this together

It's too appropriate for the present situation.

Did she know that Ruri was going to try to break up with me? Did she expect this development?

Are you kidding me?

I didn't think those conditions would ever be satisfied..... I didn't think I'd ever see the “wish” Kirino wrote in my lifetime—— What the heck is this.

What did I miss? What am I not getting here?

I don't understand it, but it's clear what must be done.

The conditions for opening had been met. The “wish” she left us, her “assignment” to us——

We have to read it together.

Her “wish” was brief,

—If you're reading this, then you're in a very bad situation, aren't you?

—Well, listen carefully.

—Dear idiot brother.

—Whatever Kuroneko says, you must not back down.

—Because she really loves you. I guarantee it.

—That's why.

—Listen to her troubles properly and resolve them.

—Just like you did for me.

—Dear Kuroneko

—Honestly, what you're thinking right now, what you're worried about.....

—I don't know.

—That's right. I don't even know when this letter will be read.

—I'm better than my brother, but I'm not all powerful either.

—So, I'll just say one word, “please”.

—For my sake, you have to make up.

And finally,

—If it's you, I don't mind calling you “onee-chan”⁴¹

I could see my sister's pompous smile.

I could hear her proud voice.

“.....”

“.....”

We read her message in silence. Even after reading the whole thing, we couldn't take our eyes off the paper.

Suddenly, I realised Ruri was trembling. She was clenching her teeth, breathing irregularly, and shedding tears.

I don't know which element in this message could have shaken her emotions so much.

41 The furigana says onee (big sister) but the kanji says ogishi (sister-in-law)

I felt the tremendous guilt of what I didn't know like a crushing weight.

“.....Ruri?”

“.....Kirino.....”

She glared at me. And then, said something I didn't understand.

“Kirino loves you!”

She stated directly, with a loud scolding voice that was unlike her.

“.....What?”

“Kirino Kousaka loves Kyouzuke Kousaka as a member of the opposite sex!”

She spoke clearly, without any room for misunderstanding.

“.....That's impossible”

“If you seriously think that, I'll hate you”

It didn't look like she was lying. At least for Ruri herself, it was the truth.

“.....Kirino? Me?”

“That's right. That's why she was deeply hurt when we started going out. That's why she's going abroad again, to get away from us——”

“——Ruri”

“Kirino decided this on her own—— You said that. But we are the reason Kirino decided this.....
She can't stand the situation of the person she loves dating her close friend.....
Kirino is gone because we're dating”

——'Kirino decided to leave Japan'! And 'the two of you started dating', there's no way they're not related!

It all makes sense.

.....You don't know anything

Ayase was right.

I didn't know anything.

A hot feeling welled up in my chest, wetting my cheeks.

“Did Kirino tell you that?”

“No, of course not. There's no way that girl would admit it herself. But I know. Because we've been so close for so long”

Ruri was biting her lip so hard it was bleeding.

“.....I'm a coward. That girl has left Japan..... hurt, lonely, frustrated. If you're going to do that, I'll get your onii-san—— I had cruel thoughts like that”

She continued to spit out her confession.

“Even after Kirino came back, I bragged about my relationship with you, I flaunted it..... I enjoyed it..... I didn't even notice until that Ayase girl told me. No. I was pretending not to notice. Kirino was hurt, she was troubled..... While I was excited to have my first boyfriend”

“So, you're breaking up with me?”

“That's right”

“We're just gonna pretend this never happened?”

“That's right”

“So..... You think everything will go back to normal? That Kirino's broken heart will be healed, and she'll cancel her studies abroad and come back?”

“.....No”

Right, that's not possible.

Our relationship may have been the cause of a major decision for her.

However, to say that's the *only* reason she decided to study abroad—— that would be discourteous.

We broke up so you can come home. We can't tell her that!

That's why, it would be meaningless for us to break up—— No, that's not what I'm saying.

Whether I can convince Ruri. Whether she can forgive herself. It's a matter of emotion.

And one more thing. I'm not just being conceited.....

“You're such a fool”

“Wha.....”

“I keep telling you over and over. ——I love you”

“That's right. But, can you still say the same knowing Kirino's feelings?”

“I love you. More than Kirino”

“.....Wha”

I responded immediately, without missing a step. I had to.

I admit it. I'm a siscon. I love my sister. I keep saying I hate her, and— I'm not lying at all— I hate her, but I love her!

If I had been asked the same question six months ago, I may have been lost. I couldn't answer immediately, I might have got dumped. I might not have been able to choose, or even to answer at all.

I'm such a stupid big brother!

But— But! I spoke with a nasally, desperate voice,

“A lot has happened in the last six months”

“.....”

Ruri didn't reply. But I'm sure she thought back with me.

The story of me and Kuroneko that started in the spring.

The story of Kyouzuke Kousaka and Ruri Gokou.

Those summer days.

“I love Ruri the most. That's not a lie”



“.....Kyouzuke”

“It's true”

Like I said earlier. She always refuses to believe my words when I praise her,

“But,”

I won't let her say a self depreciating line. Instead, I'll drive my true feelings into her.

“Even if you hate yourself, I love you!”

“Eh.....”

Gradually, filled with my feelings, my voice became more and more gruff.

“Even if you're chuunibyou, even if you're cowardly, even if you're self absorbed, you leave me behind and do things I don't understand! Even if your twisted personality is always a pain in the ass——! Even with all your flaws, I love you! I adore you! If you're not confident in yourself, I'll keep telling you over and over!”

Overflowing with emotion, I announced my final “wish” of the summer.

“I love you! So stay with me forever!”

Ruri struggled to respond.

Having let everything out, I felt like I was going to collapse on the spot, but I endured and stared into her eyes.

A stream of tears ran down her white cheeks.

And then——

“Yes”

With her answer, we exchanged a long kiss.

The fireworks were over and the stars twinkled in the night sky.

Epilogue

That's how I came to marry her.

The black and slightly mysterious girl. The painful but adorable friend of my sister.

When I met her, she was “Kuroneko”——

Now, in a pure white dress, “Ruri Kousaka” was standing before me.

Yes.

A long time has passed since then——

Today is our wedding day.

Fresh sunlight poured in through the skylight of the chapel, illuminating the bride and groom.

“——Beautiful”

When I told her how I honestly felt, Ruri showed the same shyness that she had when we first started dating.

“.....Baka, you already saw it during rehearsal”

“It's totally different when it's real life. I've always been impressed every time you wear new clothes, but—— today's Ruri is really exceptional”

If I'm not careful, I'm gonna start crying.

Jeez—— I didn't think I'd be this emotional during the wedding.

It's been hectic from the day we got registered until today. Even today, I've been busy learning the flow of the ceremony, rehearsing with my family, and so on.

I have to finish the ceremony without any mishaps.

I was so preoccupied with that that I didn't have time to think about it.

Until just a few minutes ago, I thought that's what a wedding was supposed to be like.

I was so wrong.

Standing in front of the priest and looking at Ruri as my bride, I was more moved than I have ever been in my life. Oh, man, I'm really going to cry.

Looking up at my face, Ruri smiled at me through her veil,

“Can I cry too?”

“You are”

Kuku, she giggled in return.

—In health, in sickness, in joy,
—In sorrow, in wealth, in poverty,
—To love, to honour, to comfort, to support,
—Do you swear to do your utmost for as long as you live?

—I swear.

The vows are exchanged. The rings are exchanged and the marriage certificate is signed.
Very different from the day we got registered, profoundly heavy real feelings welled up inside me.
Now we are husband and wife, both in name and in reality.
We lit the candles together and the ceremony proceeded.
And then————

With our vows, I lifted the bride's veil and kissed her.

The bride and groom walk through the ceremony hall amidst the congratulations of everyone.
The path was filled with clean light and a shower of flower petals.
The parents of both families are crying.
Ruri's younger sisters are in high spirits.
Manami smiles as she watches over me.
Akagi, *director*⁴² Miura, Makabe-kun and Sena— our fellow alumni and friends.
My colleagues. And from Ruri's place of work— everyone from the publishing company.
Saori showing her true, happy face. Next to her was Ayase.
And even, of course.
There was also Kirino, who had grown up beautifully.

42 Previously he was “buchou” - director of a club, but now he's “shachou” - director of a company

More happy than anyone else at our marriage, she blessed us.

Both me and Ruri's chests welled up with emotion, we were at our limit.

We were smiling, laughing and crying.

After this, we would take commemorative photos.

Because, there would be no foul play. That Kirino..... said something like that.

—Congratulations, my dear friend.

—Congratulations, big brother

—Thank you, Kirino

—Thank you



Ruri mumbled.

I walked on along side her.

From now on, we'll be together forever.

And so, time passes.



When we came back from our family trip to Inumaki Island, the entrance to our house was filled with shoes.

Accompanied by my wife and two daughters, I walked into the living room and saw many familiar faces.

“I was wondering why there are so many shoes in the hallway— what's going on?”

“It just seemed like a convenient time to get everyone together. So I invited them”

The one who answered from the sofa was my sister— Kirino Kousaka.

Kirino stood up and walked over to us.

She still has the same radiant good looks. She's always looked stunning, but now she's a goddess. But enough about her appearance— that's an old story.

This girl— I won't talk too much about her.

“Tadaima, Kirino-oba-chan”

My second daughter Yuri raised her hand in greeting.

“Oh, welcome back Yuri. And don't call me oba-chan”

Yuri smiled as Kirino pat her head roughly.

“And Rino, welcome back”

On the other hand, my eldest daughter Rino—

“.....”

Completely ignored Kirino-oba-chan.

Seeing this, Ruri let out a giggle.

“Ara ara, Kirino— it seems like our daughter doesn't like you huh?”

“Huh? Rino is just at a difficult age. She loves me really. Right—?”

“.....Hmm”

Rino turned away.

“Huh~? Rino-chan—? Aren't you being cold to Kirino-onee-chan~?”

Although she fawned with a saccharine voice, it had no effect whatsoever.

Their relationship, for some reason— It seems there's still some lingering resentment from when young Rino butted heads with Kirino in the past. I don't think that's all there is to it..... but I don't know.

“Rino, it's not good to ignore people. Say hello properly”

“.....Okay”

My eldest daughter replied unenthusiastically, then crossed her arms fearlessly and glared at Kirino.

“Fuu, long time no see, Kirino-oba-sama!”

“So you're calling me oba-chan too. —Long time no see. I'm going to be free for a while, so let's play sometime”

“No!”

Bleh- My eldest daughter stuck out her tongue, before running upstairs to escape from the oba-chan she hates.

She didn't want to be in a place where people gathered— that was clearly transmitted.

Yare yare..... honestly, she's just like the old “Kuroneko”—

Compared to Ruri back then, she seems even more childish, perhaps because she's my daughter.

Maybe it's because of a certain somebody's selfishness back then.

As I was thinking about this, Yuri spoke to Kirino with a sprightly voice.

“Once again Kirino-san..... Thank you for your hard work until now!”

“Oh, thank you! You're always so cheerful, Yuri. Very good, very good”

That's right.

Just recently, Kirino had retired from track and field.

She was one of the top Japanese female athletes, and with her outstanding appearance, she is now as popular as an idol.

She's also appeared in commercials, I mean, one is playing on the TV right now.

A commercial for sports drinks.

She earns a lot more than me— She shines much brighter than me— but still.

There's no need to feel envious any more.

How hard she worked, how much she persevered..... I know it too well.

I'm just proud. From the bottom of my heart, really proud of her.

“That reminds me”

Ruri spoke the words I was thinking. From just that much, Kirino guessed,

“That summer?”

“Yeah. When you came back to Japan and then left again”

That's right

I think that time was a turning point, for us, and for Kirino.

“Fuhehe, when you came out of your way to see me off. That made me laugh”

“.....Noisy. I'll curse you”

I'm sure she deliberately phrased it the way she would in the past.

A few seconds of silence. I wonder how much communication took place there.

“.....Fuhehe”

“.....Ffu”

Out of nowhere, both of them laughed.

After a moment of laughter, Kirino indicated to the entire room with a grand gesture.

“—So, I guess today is like half my retirement party? Whatever you want to call it, I just wanted to get everyone together for the first time in a long time!”

Then a woman with glasses appeared from the kitchen with a drink.

“Kousaka-senpai, long time no see!”

“Oh, Sena— welcome”

Sena Makabe. Maiden name Sena Akagi.

After graduating from college, she got a job at a game company started by director Miura, and a few years later, she married her colleague Makabe-kun.

I still remember like it was yesterday, her brother Kohei went through a rough time.

“Where's *Kaede-kun*?”

“Playing a game upstairs with the director. He wants a highly capable person to playtest it— he said”

“I see”

He's not director of the club any more.

He's director of the company, Gennosuke Miura. To be honest, when I heard he was starting a company, I wondered what was going to happen.

Now, as a company that makes meaningful games, it seems they've won a lot of fans.

I've heard that occasionally the director gets carried away and makes ridiculous shitty games, for me, I'm glad he's still the same.

I looked up at the ceiling,

“I hope they're not causing too much trouble”

“No no, the kids are here, if anyone's causing trouble, it's them. When I said a highly capable person, I wasn't kidding”

“Now my selfish daughter is up there too”

“Ah.....”

Sena made an indescribable face.

It was common knowledge that my eldest daughter is an excellent troublemaker.

“—That's right, Ruri-chan,Do you remember 'Silver Summer?’”

“How could I forget?”

Silver Summer was the novel game that the Games Research Club produced during that summer.

“Because that game changed my life”

After the research camp, the work, which was completed in autumn of the same year, won a prize in a small online competition. The scenario, including the routes written by Ruri, was especially praised as “excellent”. So—

In other words, it was the first time Ruri was told by complete strangers that her work was interesting.

I remember a lot of crying during club activities.

Not just Ruri, but me, Sena and even the other members were crying too.

We celebrated with potato chips and sodas.

“Silver summer” is still occasionally mentioned on the internet as a masterpiece free game.

“That was fun—”

All of it was.

Everything that happened that summer was hot, shiny, and sometimes dangerous.

I'm embarrassed to admit it.

I was young.

“—Yes. I think it was because of that game that I joined the company I work for now. If it weren't

for that game, I'm sure I, the director, Kaede-kun, and Ruri-chan would have led completely different lives”

“Without a doubt”

The successes of that summer even changed the lives of the club members.

Ruri might not have become a writer if it wasn't for “Silver Summer”.

Everyone got a lot out of it. Of course, I got the *most* out of all of us.

As I was lost in memories, Yuri spotted a certain person.

“Makishima-san! You came too!? Long time no see~~~~~!”

She jumped for joy. She hugged her as if she was reunited with her beloved family.

The other party— Saori Makishima, gently hugged Yuri and patted her head.

“Yuri-san, didn't we meet just last week?”

Our leader, who used to be "Saori Bajina", has been appearing more and more as the beautiful ojousama "Saori Makishima".

—Sometimes, though, she shows us what she used to look like.

“No~~! I don't know why, but it seems like it's been years since I saw you! I missed you~~~~~! ”

“Fufu, me too”

For some reason, Saori is good friends with our second daughter.

No, that's it. To be precise, Saori is very close to our whole family.

I'm sure Saori will only be a good influence on the kids, so I'm all for it.

She looked at us with a troubled look on her face as Yuri held on to her,

“—Welcome home”

Me:“Yeah” Ruri:“Tadaima”

A natural exchange. Saori is like family to us.

“Hey..... You know..... Why can't I get the kind of attention that Saori does from the kids? Why don't I get welcomed with a loving hug after I haven't you in a long time?”

An existence below Saori was saying something.

Ruri: “You've been so busy that you rarely come over”

Me: “If you come here being annoyingly pushy and licking their faces, the kids aren't going to like you are they?”

“Grr..... but I always worked so hard to bring souvenirs.....!”

It's not a level that can be offset by souvenirs.

“What about our parents?”

“The four of them went shopping”

It was Hinata-chan that answered.

Just as I expected long ago, she grew up to be just like her mother.

Her charming smile, as always, brightens the mood of the place.

The four of them must mean mine and Ruri's parents.

The current Kousaka family consists of, in addition to me and Ruri, our twin eldest and second daughters, and our first son, a bit older than our third daughter.

To become an adult, get married, have children, build a home, and become independent from your parents.

I wonder if I grew up a little?

From the point of view of the children— am I a good parent?

I don't know. The greatness of the parents who raised me and Kirino now weighs heavily on me.

Our parents get along well with each other— especially our mothers, who are often together.

Our fathers didn't seem to know how to interact with each other, they speak normally now, but they were awkward for a while after we got married.

“There sure are a lot of people today. Even though I'm proud of my living room, if everyone is in here, it's going to get quite cramped”

“Ayase will also be coming later”

“Even more people”

While I worried about space,

“Ogiki-san”⁴³

A woman in a kimono got up from the sofa and called to me.

Who could it be but Ruri's younger sister— Tamaki-chan.

Her hairstyle hasn't changed much, she has the same reverent features as her older sisters. She has grown into a horrifyingly beautiful woman.

43 Brother in law

“Even Tamaki-chan. It's been a long time hasn't it? When did I last see you?”

“This is my first house call since May”

House call.

That's right. Now she's an elementary school teacher— and the homeroom teacher of our first son.

I'm envious of the students who get to be taught by such a cute teacher.

So. As she said, we had a house call in the spring.

“I'm sorry for everything back then”

“No, not at all. I'm a careless homeroom teacher..... I'm sorry”

At the time, our son was having some problems at school.

I'll be blunt, apparently he was isolated in class because of his excessively chuunibyoo behavior..... that's what I was told.

After all, he's the son “Kuroneko”— but this isn't the time to talk about that.

The problem of my son's isolation in class has not been solved yet.

Recently, he seems to be having a rebellious phase again, he doesn't listen to me at all, Rino tries to solve all her brother's problems with violence, and Yuri doesn't try to stop her sister's recklessness.

We've addressed the issue, but we haven't solved the root problem.

Such is the situation.

“It's fine”

Only Ruri, who probably understands her son's feeling the best, would say so.

“That child has many reassuring allies. And— ”

My wife spoke to me,

“I'm sure he will find someone like I found you”

“.....I hope so”

As we stared at each other, Kirino called out in a hurried voice,

“Hey, lovey dovey couple! How long are you guys going to keep flirting? I'm about to show you an interesting video, so sit down!”

Me: “Okay okay, I got it”

Ruri: “I'm coming”

As a couple we went over to Kirino, who was operating something in front of the TV.

“What interesting video is this?”

“A video of Tama-chan's dark history, when she was the second generation Kuroneko”

“Kyaaaaa——! P- please stop Kirino-san!”

Tamaki-chan screamed. Her face was as red as an apple.

“Wh- whawhawha- what horrible thing are you planning! I never heard anything about this!”

“I didn't say anything. Do you hate it that much? Tama-chan was cute at that time”

“I absolutely hate it! My heart will die! If you play that video, I'll never speak to you again!”

“.....Sorry Kiri-nee, you better stop. Seriously, that's Tamaki's weakpoint. It's even worse than when the kids in her class called her 'Tamakin-sensei’”

“Don't say unnecessary things onee-chan!”

“Hm— If Hina-chan says so, I'll stop”

The image of the chuunibyuu girl dressed in a black kimono, “second generation Kuroneko”, had been prevented from appearing in our living room, and with that Tamaki-chan sighed and relievedly stroked her chest.

I posed the question to my sister,

“Where did you find such a rare video?”

“I pulled out my video camera to use at the party today, and it was in there”

Kirino held up a small video camera. She pressed the record button and started filming herself first.

“This is Kirino Kousaka! I'm going to leave my feelings in this video! That summer— since I decided to get serious with track and field, I've been giving it my all..... I'm finally free! Now! I have! No regrets in life! —I'm done! I think. —But it's not over yet! I think. —Everyone should keep watching~~ I feel. I'd be happy if the future me could watch this video and remember how I feel now!”

Kirino said as much as she could in one breath, and flipped the camera around from herself.

Now she's filming Ruri's face.

“How about you?”

“Eh?”

“Your current feelings!”

Ruri looked blankly at the camera that was suddenly pointed at her.

“.....Right”

She immediately smiled and answered clearly.

“I'm happy. To be here with my wonderful family”

“Well, *I'm glad*”

The promise they made in their youth was finally fulfilled.

It's been a long time since then, the seasons have come and gone, but Kirino and Kuroneko are still together.

“Otou-san! I'm going to join onee-chan too!”

“Sure, and if she's bothering the director or anyone, stop her”

Okay, she said.

Mine and Ruri's child ran off.

As I see her go I'm flooded with memories of our mundane everyday life.

Hopefully, they too—



I hope their story will be as miraculous as ours.

Difficulty, Nightmare Hard.

Operating the jet-black controller and shooting down numerous enemy planes.

Calmly avoiding the downpour of enemy bullets.

Zero damage taken. Stage cleared, high score updated.

When I remove the VR headset with a rough hand, my view returns from the fighter's cockpit to my bedroom.

“What do you think?”

“It's not good at all. The difficulty is too high”

“You got a perfect clear”

“I think casual users will struggle even with the default difficulty. You shouldn't let enemies shoot from your blind spot”

“See! I knew it! Just like I said, boss!”

“Grr..... I guess you're right. But in shooting games, you're supposed to get killed a few times..... that's the beauty of it..... wouldn't it be disappointing if you could clear it in one shot?”

“How many times have I told you to drop that line of thinking!?”

The good old adults fought like children.

I feel much closer to them than anyone at school.

Fu, as I smiled, somebody grabbed me from behind.

“What..... do you want!?”

When I raised my voice and turned around, a red haired girl was looking at me with a cheerful smile.

“Hey! You're done play testing right? Let's go play outside!”

“I don't want to. Why don't you go by yourself?”

I told her with an annoyed tone, but she didn't budge at all.

She wouldn't release her unnaturally tight grip.

“You're always in your room! Even though you're a boy, your arms are so spindly! Aren't you gonna turn out like papa in the future?”

“I'm right here you know!”

“Papa, shut up. Hey, let's play soccer today! You don't hate sports right? We used to be in a club together”

She pulled my arm. I can't win with my strength, so there's no use resisting.

As I was leaving at her mercy in silence, the door of the room burst open, and an even more troublesome person appeared.

“—Can you not take my boredom tool with you?”

“Ugh! She's back!”

“.....Nee-san, welcome back”

“Kukuku..... Tadaima! — Now, let's continue our game from last time!”

Nee-san turned on the games console with a well practised hand. I'll definitely accept her request! I don't know what she's planning— but her every gesture conveyed firm intention.

A tyrant who must not be disobeyed. That's what my eldest sister is like.

The silver lining is that my hobbies and attributes match hers. The jet-black tank top and shorts I'm wearing now were given to me by my sister. And secretly..... I'm also learning her cool behavior.

“Wait a minute! Don't just decide that on your own! He was going to play outside with me!”

“Ffu! Go home..... From now on this is a gathering of the 'transcendental'! It's off limits to ordinary people like you!”

“Gah! It's started! Don't drag your little brother into your painful hobby! Keep it to yourself!”

When she stuck out her tongue as much as she could to mock her, a blood vessel emerged on my sister's forehead.

“You've got some nerve!”

A battle between the dark tyrant and female gorilla was about to start.

Then—

“Right, that's enough—!”

The younger sister appeared, she'll mediate this battle easily.

I had a tremendous dislike for this sister who always had a smile on her face.

In other words, this person is “descendant of light”, incompatible with a “descendant of darkness” like me.

“Really now, Ri-nee, are you seriously going to fight with an elementary school student?”

“Seriously? Don't be ridiculous. For a 'God' like me, elementary school girls are just like trash. I'm just messing around. —Now, Kyoma! Time to play with onee-chan!”

“No no, Kyo-chan is supposed to play with me, Yuri-onee-chan. Sorry to the both of you, but you're

going to have to stop. —That's why, little brother, let's go on a date with onee-chan♡

Super yuck—.

I have no other thoughts.

A classmate once told me he was envious that I had such a beautiful older sister— he was a fool.

She's just annoying. Solely annoying. Nothing but annoying. I wish that nuisance would just disappear.

I guess that's what an older sister is to a younger brother.

As I was about to express my words of refusal with all my might—

“.....Ha”

My little sister's eyes opened.

Brother and sister with matching jet black hair.

Unlike my tanned skin, hers was pure white. On her knees, two small black cats were curled up.

Seven years old this year, she's the only one who's younger than me in this house— a feeble existence.

I had promised to play with her when I was done play testing.....

.....I guess she got tired of waiting and fell asleep with the cats.

“Haa~~~~~”

Because my stupid older sisters were being noisy, it seems she woke up.

After a long, wide yawn,

“.....Onii-chan, are you done with you work?”

“.....Y- yeah..... just now”

“Then, let's play”

“_____”

I wonder why.

I can't think of a single negative thing to say about this girl.

When her eyes are staring at me, I can't lie about anything.

That's why I always say this.

“Yare yare, can't be helped”

“Let's all play together”

“Sure”

I'm sorry I'm late introducing myself.

I'm Kyoma Kousaka. Descendant of darkness, heir to the blood and soul of “Kuroneko”.

A being who has escaped the yoke of the mundane and retreated to my own dominion.

Current status report——

I want to rebel against my parents. I don't know much about my aunt, but she is kind and I don't dislike her.

The classmates who bully my teacher are morons. My childhood friend is a gorilla.

I want to live apart from my older sisters.

—My little sister is cute.

Afterword

This is Tsukasa Fushimi. Thank you for picking up "My sister can't be this cute 16 Kuroneko If 2nd volume".

It's a story about a black cat who becomes extremely happy. That's what I had in mind when I wrote this story.

I hope you enjoyed it.

The comicalization of Ayase IF is now available on the same day as this book.

Without favoritism from the original author, it is a wonderful manga work.

Please read it.

January 2021 Tsukasa Fushimi