

Taking Care of My Younger Sister's Too Naive of a Beautiful Yankee High Schooler, Then Falling in Love



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Prologue

The number of years since I haven't had a girlfriend is the same as my age, 20 years.

It's not that I'm not interested in the opposite sex. In junior high school, I had a girl I had an unrequited love for, and in high school, I used to imagine my ideal girlfriend.

However, the desire to have a girlfriend does not coincide with the phenomenon of having a girlfriend. If it were as easy as getting a rice ball from a convenience store, there wouldn't be a single man in this world crying because he wants a girlfriend.

I used to feel a sense of impending crisis about my lack of any luck with women. However, I decided not to feel such impatience anymore.

I decided to pause looking for a girlfriend.

It's not that I'm giving up. I'm just taking a break.

As a student, I have to work hard at my studies.

It's not too late to start having fun with love after you become a working member of society.

And from there, the ideal development would be to be able to get married the moment my love for her flares up.

That's why I don't need a girlfriend right now.

I don't even want one.

To become a fine husband in the future, I'm going to wholeheartedly work hard on my lessons for my wife.

Coming to such a decision, from the point of view of onlookers, I became a diligent and wearisome university student but...

One day, I-Kamijō Tsukasa, was pushed down by a high school girl.

A beautiful girl with blonde hair that seemed to be transparent to the light, was looking down at me, her cheeks dyed pink.

Her looks were so well-featured, that if you were to tell me that she was an angel, I would have to agree with you that she was. Her blonde hair was shining white as it approached the tips, making her look divine. The fact that her hair was a little

black at the roots indicated that she was not an angel but an imperfect human being.

Then her light red lips opened.

"I'll follow you for the rest of my life! Aniki! Please make me your underling!"

[TLN: Aniki = older brother but in a respectful manner]

If she just sat there silently, many men would be blinded and captivated in an instant.

However she declared, with a brave and sharp look that would kick off any man that approached her with ulterior motives.

People call someone like this girl, a yankee.

" 'Aniki'... I don't plan on taking any underlings though."

"Is that so!?"

"After all, I'm not a yankee..."

"I see, that's certainly true... Then, then..."

The beautiful blonde girl pondered for a moment and then suddenly opened her eyes wide.

"That's right, let's become a married couple! I want to get married!! Please marry me!!"

"Haaaaa!?"

My baffled voice reverberated in the room.

I should mention it again, that my history of having a girlfriend is equivalent to my age.

In other words, she and I are not even dating yet.

--And yet, she suddenly proposed to me...

I never imagined that I and that beautiful blonde-Hata Erika, would end up like this.

Chapter 1

Mid-April.

Late afternoon at the National S University.

The student cafeteria was crowded with hungry students looking for lunch. I too was slurping udon to satisfy my appetite.

At the same table, there were two male students from the same faculty as me. The handsome guy with glasses was Hoshino. The stylish guy with brown hair was Tokunaga. They've been good friends of mine since I first entered the school last year.

"Today, on the way to the university, I passed by a very cute JK. Do you think I'll get a chance?"

[TLN: JK = Joshikousei = high school girl]

Hoshino suddenly said, with a serious look on his face.

I consider this guy, who sometimes says stupid things with a cool face, to be a disappointingly handsome guy.

"No, don't aim for a chance with a JK. You should be prepared to take care of them for the rest of your life. No actually, before that, don't lay hands on a minor while attending the faculty of education."

When I retorted in a fast voice, Hoshino quickly adjusted the position of his glasses with his index finger.

"I haven't said anything about making a move yet. I just wanted to ask you if you think there is a chance for us to go out. And let me tell you, I have no intention of going out with a JK after I become a teacher. That's why I'm asking you now."

-No, what about even now...?

Even if you said, "I haven't said anything about making a move yet," what do you think will happen after you start going out with her? If you asked 100 people this question, all 100 would come up with the same answer.

While I was too dumbfounded to say anything, Tokunaga said.

"Isn't it cool? There's not much of an age difference between a high school student and a university student. University students have an adult charm that their classmates don't have, so won't they fall for you?"

"You sound like you've already made one fall for you.."

Hearing Tokunaga's point, I frowned. Then Tokunaga said with a nonchalant look on his face.

"I did."

"You did...?"

I dejectedly hung my head.

Looking at me, Tokunaga smiled.

"What? Are you jealous? That's right, high school girls have nothing but charm! That radiance! The freshness and youthfulness! It's a special thing that only high school girls have!"

At first glance, Tokunaga is a fashionable man, like a fashion model. But for some reason, he seems to be a middle-aged man on the inside.

He must have bumped into a middle-aged man at a corner somewhere and the two of them must have switched places on the inside. That's what I keep telling myself...

"I'm not jealous. I'm not interested in high school girls. I'm definitely not going to make a high school girl into an object of romantic interest."

I said sullenly, and Hoshino inclined his head to the side.

"Why? Do you like older women?"

"It's not that... My little sister is a high school girl, so I don't really feel that way about high school girls in general..."

"Ho-? I see? So you feel like all high school girls are like your little sister?"

"Well, maybe something like that."

I have a younger sister who is seventeen years old and is a second-year student in high school this year. So it's an everyday occurrence that my sister's friends visit my house.

They are close to me, and if I wanted to get closer to my sister's friends, it's doable. But I can't just go after the friends she brings over. I don't want my sister and her friends to be on bad terms because of me doing something like that.

As a result of trying to be a 'Good Onii-chan', I excluded high school girls from my love life.

That's how I became that way by my own free will.

But for some reason, Tokunaga gave me a heartrending look.

"In other words, because you couldn't woo any of your sister's friends, you became adamant that you weren't interested in high school girls..."

"W-r-o-n-g!! Or rather, I don't even plan on falling in love with my university classmates, so I couldn't even care less about that!!"

-Fuck you... Selfishly pitying people just because you're popular...

These two people have lived naturally popular lives without doing anything. We can talk about studies and other things, but when it comes to love, I can't be on the same wavelength at all.

An overwhelming difference in love experience.

It was impossible for me to be on equal footing with them in the field of love. I bitterly realized this last year.

As a sad 20-year-old with no experience with women, I guess I'll just have to wait for the topic to end.

As I stopped joining the conversation and slurped the rest of my udon, Tokunaga smilingly asked me.

"So? Is your little sister cute? Also, are her friends cute too?"

"I'll never introduce you to them."

When I said it in a low voice, Tokunaga's face stiffened. Apparently, he could tell that I was serious.

-Though if you met Mana, I think she would just send you flying with a kick.

I gulped down the udon soup, thinking of my little sister, Mana, who dyed her hair brown and has been getting more and more barbarous lately.

Eleven o'clock at night.

Coming home from my part-time job at an izakaya, I noticed that there was a lot of noise at the entrance of my house, and stopped myself from opening the door. [TLN: izakaya is basically a japanese bar/pub that serves food and stuff as well.]

Then the doorknob I was about to touch turned and the door was pushed open.

"Mana! See you tomorrow~!"

"Arisa and Runa, be careful on your way home~"

The lights inside the house and the voice of an active looking high school girl came rushing out through the doorway first.

And then after one another, a red-haired JK and a long-haired brown-haired JK came outside together. The girl with red hair was named Runa and the one with long hair was named Arisa.

With dyed hair and uniforms, at first glance, they both look like gyarus. However, they are the same as my sister, yankees.

"Ah, Tsukacchi! What? Did you just get back from a date?"

Runa-chan looked at me and smirked.

"I was at my part-time job..."

When I replied with that, Arisa-chan sighed intentionally.

"Good grief Runa you.... If Mana's brother had a girlfriend, we wouldn't be here right now."

"Ha? But why?"

I didn't understand what Arisa-chan meant, so I asked back.

Then she smiled and said,

"Because if Mana's brother had a girlfriend, the earth would split in half!"

"Are you trying to tell me that it's impossible?"

"No way... I don't really think that there's zero chance of the earth splitting though?"

"Shit! Just you wait! When I become a working adult, I'll marry a beautiful woman who's going to blow your mind!"

"Ah, that has a probability of zero though."

"Be quiet! Shut up and go home! You delinquent girls!"

I yelled at Runa-chan and Arisa-chan to shoo them away. Then Runa-chan and Arisa-chan ran off, laughing loudly.

"Be careful on your way home-!"

When I finally added that, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan turned around and waved back.

They look like yankees, have bad behavior, and enjoy making fun of people. I wouldn't want to get close to them if they weren't my sister's friends, but I don't hate them as her friends. I truly do believe that.

As I was waving back at them, Mana crossed her arms beside me and said smoothly.

"If you half-heartedly lay a hand on my friends because you're thirsty from your lack of girlfriends, I'll never forgive you."

"Yes yes... I won't do something like that. I have no intention of falling in love until I become a working adult."

Is it me or does that statement sound like 'It's fine if you are serious about it'... Must just be my imagination.

"Even if you say that, I don't get it. My friends are all cute."

Somehow she's proud about it.

Seeing my sister like that, I narrowed my eyes in happiness.

I was happy to hear the word "friend" come out of Mana's mouth.

Actually, Mana had been a truant for a while in junior high school.

Back then, Mana wasn't a yankee like this, she was a docile and timid girl. Because of this, her classmates began to bully her, and the days that she didn't want to go to school kept increasing.

It was a yankee classmate, who saved Mana at that time.

After becoming friends with that yankee classmate, Mana became living like a yankee. With nothing left to fear, she successfully graduated from junior high school and went on to attend a high school full of yankees.

Now that Mana had become a Yankee, her looks became more flamboyant and her language became worse. Even so, she seems to be having fun every day, which makes me happy.

-During the time when Mana didn't go to school, she looked so painful that I couldn't even look at her...

As an older brother, I was grateful for the yankee friends who befriended my sister.

It's enough to have just those feelings for my sister's friends. It is not possible for me to have more feelings for them than that.

"-I can't imagine falling in love with my sister's friend!"

I said this to Mana and went into the house first.

It's not a question of whether or not they're cute.

In the first place, the Yankee JKs from the low class high school make fun of me a lot. I thought I should not forget that this would not birth a chance for me to fall in love.

Chapter 2

I saw off my sister's yankee friends and went up to the house first. Then Mana, who came up to the house later, passed me and headed for the changing room x washroom.

[TLN: x for combined as in they were both combined together because I'm too small brain to find a word replacement for the c-word that would normally go in there]

"I'll go into the bath first."

"Eh? I want to go first though... I just came back from work."

Even though it's a non-smoking establishment, working part time in an izakaya can make you smell like a lot of things. The hourly wage is good, and it helps that I can make a good amount of money in a short time. But to be honest, I didn't like working at an izakaya.

I don't really like the smell of alcohol. I don't really like drinking alcohol myself, or maybe I don't have a good compatibility with it.

Anyway, the first thing I want to do when I get home from work is take a bath.

But Mana isn't the type of little sister who'd say, 'Thank you for your hard work at your part-time job! It's fine if you take a bath first!'... If it was Mana back in junior high, then she might've said something like that.

When I protested, Mana gave me a look of blatant disgust.

"Haa? Absolutely not. I don't want to get into the same bath that Aniki entered into."

"Wow-A typical adolescent is here~"

I said in a monotone voice.

Then Mana laughed scornfully at me.

"In exchange, I'll let you use the leftover water from my bath, so you can be grateful to go after me"

--If I actually entered afterwards and was grateful about it, wouldn't I be a terrible older brother?

I almost retorted back, but stopped myself.

If I say that, I'll get kicked for real. Mana just wants to take a bath first anyway, she just wants to see my frustrated face.

Even though she was my biological sister, she was not someone I could win a serious argument against.

When I saw Mana close the bathroom door, I let out a big sigh.

Mana takes long baths and the remaining water is unusually low. So, it would be more efficient for me to take a quick bath first. However, there was no way Mana would listen to me even if I gave her such a good argument. She's an adolescent after all.

There was no way around it. I decided to wait in my room until Mana finishes her bath.

-*door opening noise* [TLN: no it's not creak, it was 'Gachaa' in the raws so.]

When I opened the door, I entered my room for the first time in about 16 hours.

For some reason, the lights that were supposed to be off were on, and I froze in place.

My eyes immediately caught sight of the trespasser.

A blond yankee wearing the same uniform as Mana. Her long, back-length hair was excessively bleached, and it seemed to glow white as it reached the tips.

Her long eyelashes were clearly visible even from this distance. Her facial features were clearly defined. I'm sure everyone who saw her would judge her as a beautiful girl.

I too think that she's a beautiful girl.

But, she's beautiful... It's not that type of situation to just leisurely watch on.

The girl in front of me was on one knee with her legs spread apart, reading a manga while resting her cheek on her hand.

Because she had a pose that would let me look inside her skirt if I wanted to, my Onii-chan switch was instantly flipped on.

"Hey-! Close your legsss!"

"Ha!?"

Perhaps she was so focused on her manga that she didn't notice me returning. When she heard my angry voice, the beautiful girl... Hata Erika-chan, jumped in shock.

"Ah-Jeez! You scared me! What's with you, Mana's Onii-san?"

"Hey! First things first, close your legs!"

"Why?"

"I can see inside!!"

"Isn't it fine if you just don't?"

"I... I can see it without trying to see it!!"

If there's a gap, you'll want to see it. If something usually hidden is visible, you'll want to see it. This curiosity is almost instinctive. It's not something you can completely eliminate from your brain by simply having the intention of not looking.

When I looked at her angrily, Erika-chan closed her legs as if she was bothered.

I was concerned about her attitude. It was as if she was saying, 'Don't worry about every little thing.'

Wouldn't this be something that girls are usually warned about at home? At least Mana, even though her behaviour is deteriorating, cares about the state of her skirt.

There were many things I wanted to say, but I held back and asked Erika-chan.

"More importantly, why is Erika-chan in my room?"

Then Erika-chan answered, while flipping the pages of the manga she was reading.

"I started reading it and unexpectedly got hooked. I'm almost done with it, so wait."

"The other two have already left."

"Ah-Runa and Arisa have to be back home before the date changes I think."

"Then, are you fine Erika-chan? Don't you have something like a curfew?"

"Nope. It doesn't matter when I go back, and it doesn't matter if I don't."

-Even if you think it's fine, wouldn't your parents be worried about you...?

I thought so, but I didn't say it. It is possible that she has a complicated family situation, since she became a yankee.

In fact, Runa-chan's household is run by a single mother, and I heard from the person herself, that her mother's job consists of providing racy services to men.

If I were to talk to Mana's friends based on the common sense of my own family, there was a high possibility that I would hurt them. I was quite cautious about how I treated my sister's friends.

Erika-chan continued to read manga for the next thirty minutes. I was at my study desk, using my laptop to complete my university assignments.

Then Erika abruptly started talking to me.

"Hey Onii-san, don't you have more exciting manga?"

I looked over at Erika-chan and saw her putting the manga in front of the bookshelf.

Did she finish reading it? If so, why didn't she put it back on the bookshelf?

"I'll leave aside the fact that you entered my room without permission and read my manga, so can you at least put the manga back where you found it?"

"Huh? Are you trying to change the subject? Maybe you do have some somewhere? Something that's overflowing with Onii-san's tastes."

"I'm not trying to do that! And also, I don't have that sort of manga! Even if I did, I wouldn't show it to anyone under the age of 18!"

"Wow-you're desperate! That feeling means it's in this room somewhere, right?"

Erika-chan surveyed the room while grinning.

If she stood straight and smiled, she would just look like another cute and beautiful girl. But Erika isn't the type of person who can look prim and proper like that.

Erika-chan bent down and started rummaging under my bed.

"Where is it~? Where~ is~ it~?"

The red light started going off in my brain.

The skirt problem has occurred once more. She bent over with her butt facing me, and I could almost see inside her skirt again.

-My head hurts.

I went to my computer, trying not to look at Erika-chan, who was too free-spirited.

"It's not there. There's no point in looking for it."

"Eh~? Is that so? But Arisa's Onii-san hides it under his bed though?"

-What have you been doing in someone else's house?

I put my hands together in prayer for the affected victims. He must've had a hellish time having the oasis of his heart exposed and played with by yankee girls.

In order not to waste their precious sacrifice, I decided to forestall.

"Well, I'll say it bluntly, I'm not a paper person."

"What!? You're an e-book guy!?"

"That's what I mean. It's impossible for Erika-chan to see it because it's heavily password protected. You'll have to come back when you can hack it."

"Ugh... There's no way a yankee who attends a low-class high school like me can attain such an advanced skill...!!"

Erika-chan grimaced as if she was vexed about it.

She's still a beautiful girl even while furrowing her eyebrows, and I can't be the only one who thinks it's kind of a waste.

By the way, I made her turn her attention to the electronic devices, but I don't have anything suspicious like that on my computer or tablet. My favorite books have covers changed with completely different books, and they're tucked away in a closet among some difficult-looking university textbooks.

What I said earlier was a lie made up so that she would give up looking for it.

And just as I had hoped, Erika-chan let out an exaggerated sigh.

She must have realized that she couldn't do anything on her own and gave up. A very good decision. Thank you.

"Tsk- how boring~ Well, I guess I'd better get going."

Leaving... I was slightly concerned that she wouldn't.

"Onii-san, see you later~"

While waving her hand crudely, Erika-chan left my room.

"Ah, take care~"

I called out to her, just like I did with Runa-chan and Arisa-chan.

-I'm finally alone...

She was my sister's friend, so I couldn't help but fuss about her. Feeling as if I had finally returned to my own room, I breathed a sigh of relief.

In my room that had become quiet, I could hear Mana and Erika talking in the hallway.

"Ah, is Erika leaving too?"

"Yeah, Mana, see you later~!"

"See you tomorrow~!"

Mana's voice is noticeably brighter when she talks to Erika.

Mana has a number of yankee friends and is very close to Runa-chan and Arisa-chan, who she hangs out with all the time.

But Erika-chan is special.

Because, Erika-chan is the one who saved Mana by helping her fit in when she was on the verge of dropping out of school.

--I made a friend. She's blonde...and she looks like an angel.

I still remember the first time Mana, who was gradually regaining her cheerfulness, told me about her friend.

Mana had called her an angel, so I had imagined her to be beautiful and kind. So when Mana first brought Erika-chan to my house, I was speechless.

It was because her friend was not a blonde angel, but a blonde yankee.

Despite her pretty face, Erika-chan gave me a penetrating sharp look and greeted me with a "Heyo~" I was so shaken that I replied with the same, "Heyo~" I'd never greeted anyone like that before in my life. [TLN: hard to TL ちーっず, 'chiisu'.]

But it seems that Erika-chan liked that, and since then, she's been calling me "Onii-san" and has become attached to me.

For Mana, Erika-chan is her best friend and benefactor.

That's why, I am also especially grateful to Erika.

"Nn?"

As I got closer to my bed, I smelled a sweet odour. It was not my own, neither was it from one of my belongings, a good smell.

"What's this smell... Why does it smell slightly familiar...?"

Was it the smell of Erika-chan who was here a while ago? No, I didn't smell this from Erika-chan while she was walking around nearby.

As I was sniffing the sheets while tilting my head in puzzlement, someone suddenly called out to me from behind.

"What are you doing~?"

A cheerful voice.

I was shocked and turned my head to see Mana behind me, grinning down at me.

"I came over to say that I was done with my bath but, what were you doing? Don't tell me, were you sniffing Erika's lingering scent~?"

"N-no! You're wrong! I was only wondering where this strange smell could've come from!!"

"Hmm~? You're not aiming for Erika, are you?"

"No, I'm not. I only think of Erika-chan like my little sister."

"Really~? Erika is very beautiful, so I thought it would be inevitable that Aniki would have some sort of interest in her, no? But, just because you can't confess to

her face to face, don't go becoming a pervert who gets satisfied by smelling her scent."

Mana snickered and walked out of the room.

"I won't become like that..."

I scratched my head.

It seems that all of them like to tease me and play with me. I wonder if this is a unique expression of affection for the yankees.

"I don't think there are many older brothers who are so gentlemanly to their sister's friends and so understanding of the Yankees. I wish they were a little nicer to me..."

I seriously consider myself a good brother. But there is no one who would say that to me. I wonder if I'm just being overly self-conscious.

"Well whatever. I'm tired... I'll take a bath and go to bed..."

As I headed for the bath, sighing, I forgot about the strange smell on my bed. And when I came back from the bath, I couldn't remember anything about the smell.

I was so tired after working hard at my part-time job after going to university... that I fell asleep at the blink of an eye.

Chapter 3

Early May. After a long-term holiday.

I was heading home at seven o'clock in the evening for the first time in a long time.

"I'm so happy... I can go home at this time for once."

Normally, this is the time I would be working part-time at the izakaya. But I quit my job at the end of April.

It had been a while since I'd stopped by a bookstore on my way home, and it was only seven o'clock after I was done shopping. The thought of being able to spend the rest of the evening at a leisurely pace was enough to make me excited. I could relax and study, and read a book. I could watch the TV show I've been wanting to watch in real time, not recorded.

I always came home at eleven o'clock at night, and I broke into a smile as I thought of the elegance of the evening.

"-I'm home~"

As soon as I opened the front door, I was greeted by the sight of a miserable mess of shoes. They were the shoes of the yankee girls.

They seemed to be hanging out in the house again.

This house is where Mana and her friends hang out most of the time. My mom and dad are not prejudiced against the yankees, so they must be comfortable here. My parents would be furious if they tried to smoke or drink, but they wouldn't get upset if the yankee girls stayed up all night making noise as long as they didn't do anything illegal.

The reason being, my parents are very grateful that Mana has friends that she can truly trust.

Thinking about the future, Mana might not be able to stay a yankee forever. But she has been studying hard and getting top grades in high school. My parents laughed and said, "She was always a serious and quiet girl, so she would be able to change again if she needed to."

Even though they're my parents. I'm still amazed about their lenience.

-Ah well, I'd be more relieved if they stayed here at home, instead of playing around in other places and never coming home.

I arranged everyone's shoes together and went into the house.

Mana and the others' laughter echoed down the hallway.

I stopped in front of the door of my room.

Strange.

Somehow, I feel like I can hear the sound of the yankee girls coming from my room.

No, there's no way.

My sister's room is next door. I'm sure their voices are so loud that it's just echoing through here.

-There's no way Mana and the others are making a racket in my room...

Yesterday, Erika-chan was in my room, but that's Erika-chan, so it doesn't count. Erika has been coming to my house since she was in junior high school, and has been in my room many times. Even if I told her not to enter without permission, she would still come in, so I had no choice.

But is it possible that my room has become a hangout for yankees while I was away...?

The result is the same even if I stay here. Open it and find out! If they're in the middle of a prank, they'll be caught red-handed!

I resolutely opened the door fully.

And then...

"-Haa!? Why are you back home so early? What about your part time job?"

The first one to react when she saw me was my sister, Mana.

"Huh? Tsukacchi, did you get fired?"

When she saw me, Arisa-chan grinned.

"It must be that! Did you mess with the manager's girl?"

Runa-chan faced me and pointed sternly.

"There's no way Onii-san has the guts to do that, do you?"

Erika-chan said while reading a manga and drinking from a juice box.

The low table was lined with juice boxes and snacks.

Everyone was completely at ease in my room.

"What the hell is this!? What have you been doing while I was gone!? Don't tell me, have you always been making a racket in my room all the time!?"

I was working part-time at an izakaya on weeknights, so I came home around eleven o'clock almost every night. It was also the time Mana's friends went home, so I didn't know where or how they were playing in our house.

Please, tell me I'm wrong.

While wishing that, I looked at Erika-chan, and she giggled.

"You just noticed? You're so thickheaded for not noticing the lingering scent of JKs in your room. If you're like this, if you get a girlfriend in the future, you'll get dumped for not even noticing that she cut her bangs you know?"

"Wha!?"

Is this the kind of yankee party that has been going on in my room every day...

I staggered and held my forehead with my hand.

"No way..."

I'm an idiot, I'm an idiot for not noticing it the whole time.

No, now that you mention it, I do remember having a strange feeling of discomfort...

"Haa!? Now that I remember, there was a strange sweet smell on my bed! That was your doing wasn't it!?"

When I said this, the yankee girls looked at each other and tilted their heads in confusion. Then they started to sneak around and whisper. I couldn't hear them well...but they seemed to be talking about how they had so many ideas of what had caused it that they didn't know when or what it was.

And then eventually Arisa-chan raised her hand quickly, and said calmly.

"Maybe it's the smell of the hand cream I spilled on your bed?"

"S-so that's the reason..."

From the looks of it, there were probably hints that the yankee girls had been in and out of the house before, hidden here and there in the room.

Would I have normally noticed them?

Or did I not notice because I'm too thickheaded?

No, I'd like to think that I was too tired from my part-time job to think about it...

"So? Why did you come home so early?"

Mana asked, sucking on the straw of a juice box.

"I changed my job. One of my friends at university introduced me to a tutoring job. It's mainly during the day on weekends, so from today on I'm free on weeknights."

When I explained seriously, Runa-chan started to make fun of me.

"Eh~? One-on-one lessons with a cute high school girl? Will you teach stuff other than studying?"

"Like hell I am! And anyway, the students are all from a boys' high school!!"

"Oh, so BL..."

"I'm only teaching them to study!!"

Why are you assuming that love is involved? And what the heck does that mean?

I think I want to make the world more aware of the fact that a part-time tutor's job ends when he lays a hand on a student.

"And so, I'm going to study now!!"

Mana replied lightly as I said that.

"Ah, okay."

"Yeah... Well, then."

I headed for my study desk.

It was still before eight o'clock.

What should I do now?

"Kyahahaha! Runa is funny!!"

"Aren't you exaggerating!?"

"I'm serious!! This is for real!!"

For some reason, the yankee girls chirping behind me showed no signs of leaving.

I said I would study, and Mana said 'alright'.

Even then...why...

"Shut uuuuupppp!!"

I yelled at the Yankee girls.

And then immediately, Mana yelled back.

"Aniki is the one who should shut up!! You noisy virgin!!"

"Wha!"

It was shocking to be yelled back at, but it was also quite shocking to be called a virgin by my own sister.

My face instantly became hot, and I was so surprised and confused that I couldn't speak.

Seeing me like that, Runa-chan laughed and said, "Ahaha! Tsukacchi, your face is bright red, you know." And Arisa-chan said, "Should we help you with that~?"

"That's none of your business!"

I shouted so loudly that my throat hurt.

I didn't want my sister's friends to worry about that.

"You guys should all go to Mana's room! Why are you making a racket in my room!?"

And to that, Mana easily replied.

"Because Aniki's room is bigger and cleaner."

"Then keep it clean!!"

My room isn't big and clean just for the Yankee JKs to hang out in.

Then, Mana laughed.

"Isn't it fine? In exchange for renting the room, we're giving you something incredibly valuable."

'Huh? What precious thing?"

"The good scent of JK."

"Don't make fun of me! I don't take pleasure in smelling that!"

"Didn't you enjoy smelling Erika's scent yesterday?"

"Didn't I already deny that yesterday?"

When did my sister become such a difficult creature to handle?

After her class change to a yankee, I think Mana has really become tough.

As an older brother, I'm glad that my sister has become stronger. But at this level, I can't be honestly happy.

-Damn it, if I don't get rid of these devilish yankee girls, I won't be able to spend my elegant evening properly...

As I was carefully wondering how to drive them out, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan stood up.

"What? Don't tell me you're planning to kick us out?"

Runa-chan sulkily glared at me.

"Do you think we'll just meekly accept that?"

Arisa-chan laughed fearlessly.

-Don't tell me, are they planning to scuffle with me!?

My heart started beating faster at this unusual feeling.

Even though they were high school girls, they were yankees. I braced myself, wondering what I would do if they came at me with their fists.

And then...

"Here~, this is a service you know? So can you give us permission to stay here~?"

While saying that, Runa-chan started flapping her uniform's skirt. Of course, Arisa-chan was doing the same.

The two of them made a motion of lifting their skirts softly and lowering them vigorously, sending a breeze towards me.

The wind created by the flapping of JK's skirts.

No, moreover, when they lifted their skirts, I could see their legs all the way up to the top...



"Girls shouldn't be doing that!! It's shameful!!"

Unconsciously, what came out of my mouth was a speech similar to that of a mother's.

"Pffff.... Tsukacchi, are you a mom or what."

Runa-chan burst into laughter.

"It's useless to get your hopes up, you know? We're wearing underwear that's meant to be seen so it's not a big deal~" [TLN: 見せパン, google at your own discretion, R18]

While saying that, Arisa-chan suddenly rolled up her skirt.

Long legs. Black shorts. A glimpse of her stomach.

"That's not the problemmmmm!! Even if you say it's fine to see it, it's your choice! In this society, there are the types of dangerous guys who'd get excited just by seeing under a skirt even if you're wearing something like that you know!? It's not okay to do something like that wherever and whenever you want!"

The motherly spirit in me cried out in worry, knowing that there were JKs who would do such a dangerous thing, walking around outside without a care in the world.

No, more importantly, why do I have to educate the Yankee JKs like this? I don't want to stimulate the motherly instincts in me any further.

"So, Aniki's also one of those dangerous guys?"

Mana said with a dubious face.

"I'm just giving you a general heads up!! I'm not talking about myself!!"

My head hurts.

Where the hell is my elegant evening...?

As I was getting worn out, Erika-chan, who had been quietly reading a manga for a while without joining the conversation, suddenly stood up.

"You're still going on about that... Runa and Arisa, you should know that Onii-san isn't like that right?"

Erika-chan said, putting her hands on her hips.

I was faintly hoping that maybe she was going to give me a helping hand...or that she was finally ready to move to Mana's room...

But Erika-chan easily betrayed my expectations.

"Onii-san wouldn't approve if you deceive him with underwear like that, if you're gonna show him, do it fair and square with actual..."

"I'm not talking about that, you low class high school yankees!! If you can't speak Japanese properly, don't come to my rooooooooooom!!"

When I fully erupted, the yankee girls cackled and ran off to the next room.

Of course, the snacks on the table and the juice boxes were still there.

"If you're gonna play here, then clean after you're doneeeeeee!!"

Everything I say is like a mother.

When did I become a mother with four yankee daughters?

My cries of anguish fruitlessly echoed in my room.

Chapter 4

When I came home from college, I took a deep breath and opened the front door.

The entrance was littered with shoes. It seemed that my sister's yankee friends were at my house again.

Today as well, I made sure that their shoes were arranged before going upstairs.

There's nothing wrong with my sister's friends coming to the house. I'm more than happy that she has friends, so I don't want to kick them out of the house just for leaving their shoes littered around or making a bit of noise. Really, I don't give a damn most of the time but...

I finished washing my hands in the bathroom and stood in front of the door of my room.

Once more, I took a deep breath.

After making sure that fresh oxygen was circulated to every cell in my body, I resolutely opened the door.

-*door opening noise*

"Ah, Aniki, welcome back."

When I opened the door, Mana was the first to speak, raising her hand lightly.

Then, both Runa-chan and Arisa-chan also said, "Welcome back."

...Erika-chan who was reading a manga, stopped to glance at me a bit, and then continued reading her manga without saying anything.

"I'm back..."

Whenever I hear someone say "Welcome back" to me, I have to reply back with "I'm back". It was a courtesy to the person who welcomed me, and it came out of my mouth by reflex before I could even think about it...It made me swallow the actual words that I should have said when I opened the door.

"And then-"

Mana and the others resumed chatting without a care in the world.

It was a natural flow, and the atmosphere was about to return to what it was before I opened the door.

But then I came back to my senses.

"No, why are you guys just nonchalantly relaxing in my room!?"

I was actually going to say this the moment I opened the door. However, when they said, "Welcome back," I absentmindedly lost my train of thought for a moment.

Then Mana clicked her tongue.

"Tsk. I thought that if I said "welcome home," he would accept it without hesitation, but it only lasted a few seconds."

So, a premeditated crime. As expected of my little sister. She knows me well... Wait, this isn't the situation to be getting impressed.

I'm going to complain to Mana.

"It's obvious!! No, I did forget for a moment, but this is my room! I'm the only one who's supposed to be here!"

The yankee girls that I'd desperately tried to get rid of yesterday had easily returned. There was no way I'm going to let this pass.

While I was sulking, Mana shrugged her shoulders.

"Isn't it a rare experience to have four JKs say 'welcome back' to you? Why don't you be more grateful for that? Four of them, you know? Four! Not one or two, but to have four JKs surround you and say 'welcome back' is a service that you can't get unless you go to a pseudo-JK cafe in a certain Electric Town." [TLN: Electric Town is Akihabara.]

"Don't just force that sort of service on me as you please! And if I may point out a small detail, I'm not surrounded, and Erika-chan didn't say welcome back, so it was only three people."

"Haa? Erika, say it properly will you. Aniki, were you upset that you didn't get a 'welcome back' from Erika?"

Mana warned Erika.

Erika-chan looked up from her manga, looked at me and tilted her head curiously.

"Did you really want me to say 'welcome back' that badly?"

"No, I didn't say that though."

"Then it's fine, isn't it? Whether I say 'welcome back' or not, it doesn't really make a difference, does it?"

How easily said.

It may be true, but...her way of putting it felt a bit uneasy.

As if she had noticed the strange mood between us, Mana said in a deliberately cheerful tone.

"Well, well! For now, Aniki's free to go and do your own thing, and don't worry about us!"

What's with that inexcusable remark?

"This is my room, why does Mana need to tell me that I'm free to do whatever I want?"

Usually, it's the other way around. I should be the one saying that... I'm not going to say it though.

"Are you planning to kick us out again? Tsukacchi, you're too narrow-minded. That's why you can't get a girlfriend."

Runa-chan sighed exaggeratedly.

"As-I-said! Isn't it fine if you go and play in Mana's room?"

"Tsukacchi, have you not seen Mana's room? We can't stay in that place."

For her friends to brand her room as 'That place', has Mana's room become that much of a messy place? She used to have a scrupulous personality, but now she

has become a person with a messy room... Was this another effect of her class change to yankee?

As I stared at Mana anxiously, Arisa-chan pointed towards Mana's room and said.

"It's crammed with so many cute stuffed animals that there's no place to put your feet. And if I drop some juice or snacks on them, she gets really mad that the stuffed animals get dirty. It's fluffy and cute, but you can't relax at all."

"What the heck. Why don't you just gather the stuffed animals at the edge and make space for them?"

If it's not a messy room, then isn't it fine?

I thought so, but for some reason, everyone looked at me vacantly.

What was going on? Is it possible that the room is overflowing so much with stuffed animals that there is no room to even make space?

"A-anyway! We want to make noise in this room! That's what we've always done! You can't ask us to move now!"

Mana said in desperation.

"I used to be absent when you did, but now things have changed. Now that I'm coming home early, you'll have to figure out another way."

"Damn it... you're stingy!"

"I'm not stingy! Mana is also stingy for not cleaning up her own room!"

Finally, a fight broke out between the siblings.

When Mana and I were arguing for a while, Erika-chan stepped in to calm us down.

"Alright alright, calm down. This isn't a problem we can just solve by talking about it, can we?"

"No, let's talk about it and work it out..."

You've already given up on the idea that you can't do anything about it... You have no intention of solving the problem through discussion.

"What's the best way?"

Mana asked Erika-chan. Then Erika-chan replied.

"Let me see...how about the winner of a game gets to stay in this room?"

"No, why? Why should I, the owner of the room, be kicked out depending on who wins a game? At least let me share the room with you if you win."

"Ah, that's fine. Let's do that. Onii-san."

Erika-chan broadly grinned at me. I feel like I've been set up...

"Ah-fine I get it. That's fine and all, but what kind of game are we going to play? Do you want to play a junior high school level math speed solving game?"

"Ha?? That's too brutish though??"

My game idea was immediately rejected by Mana.

'Fufufu,' Then Erika-chan started laughing.

"I'll suggest the best game ever. The name is, Bust Size Guessing Game!"

"Come again?"

I had a bad premonition, and my face stiffened up.

"I'm going to ask you to guess the bust sizes of the four of us using the alphabets. If you can guess everyone's size, game clear. This room will officially be yours."

"No, that's too brutish."

What are you asking from me who has no experience with women? There was no way I could guess their bust sizes while they were still wearing their uniforms. No, I wouldn't understand even if they showed me their actual bodies.

"Fine! But isn't it too hard with no hints? Aniki is a virgin after all."

Mana started getting carried away.

"Well, as a hint, I'll allow you to touch me! You can touch me as much as you want and measure my bust size!"

Erika-chan gave me permission with a smug look on her face. She looks like she's ready to kill me socially.

I let out a big sigh and scratched my head.

"There's no way I can touch you... Are you sure about this game? Runa-chan and Arisa-chan, are you really okay with me guessing that?"

When I asked for confirmation, Runa-chan smiled boldly and said, "If you can guess it, guess it," and Arisa grinningly said, "Don't worry. If you guessed right, I'll honestly say you guessed right."

Apparently, the only way to get rid of these yankee girls was to win this game.

--I heard that most Japanese women's bust sizes are B, C, and D cups. And there's one thing I can't forget. Hoshino told me that bust size is the difference between the top and underbelly of the chest. In other words, if the underbelly is thin, the bust size looks smaller than what we boys imagine. The four of them are slim, so their underbellies are probably thin. So the actual size of their breasts must be bigger than what I expected at a glance.

Since I couldn't touch them, I had no choice but to simply deduce.

However, there was no need to guess for all of them.

"-Mana is a C cup."

"Haa!? Why do you know that, Aniki you idiot!"

When I said this, Mana's face turned bright red. It seems that I was correct.

"Don't tell me... you check my laundry..."

"No, I don't. The other day, Mom went to buy some new ones, and when we got home, you and Mom were talking about the size in your big, stupid voice! You said it was bigger than before."

"Don't listen to me!! At least pretend that you didn't hear me!!"

"That's why I pretended I didn't hear it until now!"

Don't forget that the one who made me break my silence was none other than yourself.

"Mana is a C cup... Damn, even though I thought we were comrades...!"

Runa-chan held her head in frustration. Judging from this reaction, I'd say...

"Then, Runa-chan is a B cup."

"Nooooooo! I don't wanna be the smallest among my friendsssss!"

Runa-chan collapsed in tears on the floor.

If you had such an inferiority complex, why did you allow us to play this game? It's a serious question.

"Then, what about me?"

Arisa stood in front of me with a calm expression.

Her chest looks bigger than Mana's, but I don't know how big the difference is. It could be the same as Mana's, so maybe a C or larger.

No, she must be confident about her size, judging by her composure. In other words, she must be a D or better than Mana...

"Do you want to touch them?"

Arisa lifted her own breast. Just from that motion alone, I could see that they were a decent size.

-I've heard that a large size is generally considered to start with E cups. So that means...

I made up my mind.

"E cup?"

'Wow-correct! You're good!'

I was happy to have won, but I had mixed feelings about whether it was worth it or not.

"I'm the last one."

The last boss, Erika-chan, stood in front of me.

Somehow, I feel that Erika is a large size. But what size that corresponds to is a mystery.

As I pensively stared at Erika-chan, she smiled at me.

"If you don't have the courage to touch them, why don't I strip and show you?"

'I'm fine thanks.'

I answered immediately and stopped her.

Even if there were more hints, there was no proof that I could guess correctly. So the best plan would be to give the answer with the least risk.

--Eii, to hell with this!

"...F?"

As I said this, Mana-chan, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan's expressions changed. Then Arisa-chan grabbed Erika-chan's arm.

"Eh? Wait. Erika's an E-cup, right?"

"Err...was I? Wasn't I an F?"

"No no! No matter how you put it, that's growing too fast! You were definitely an E cup before! We were the same, right!?"

"Ehhh...? When I went to buy new ones, I think I bought F sizes though...?"

"On purpose! You're doing this on purpose!"

After saying that, Arisa-chan began stripping Erika-chan's uniform.

"Wha, wai, what are you doing!?"

I began panicking, and Arisa-chan replied.

"Confirming her size! I'll take off her bra, and check the size written on the tag!"

"No, don't do that in front of meeeeeeee!"

I panicked and escaped from the room.

As I was sighing loudly in the hallway, I could hear the lamenting voices of the JKs from inside.

"It was actually an F... All the answers were right."

Apparently, I had won the Bust Size Guessing Game. But I was the one who left the room.

I gave up and quietly headed to the living room so as not to overhear them talking about busts in my room.

I don't think I'll be able to go back to my room today until the Yankee girls go home... was what I thought.

Chapter 5

My dream of making good use of my evenings would not come true by any means.

For the past two days, my room has been occupied by Yankee JKs, and I've spent many nights just fighting with them.

"Definitely today... I'll show them by obtaining my own time."

The time was 6 o'clock in the afternoon.

When I got home from university, I stood in front of the front door and fired myself up.

But as soon as I opened the door, I noticed something different.

"Huh? No shoes?"

The shoes that were usually scattered about, were nowhere to be seen... which meant that Mana and her friends were probably not in the house.

I should have been lucky that they weren't here, but I felt disappointed that all the fighting spirit I had, went to waste.

I walked to the bathroom with a difficult face, washed my hands, and headed for my room.

Today, I couldn't hear anything as I approached my room.

—They really aren't here... It was quiet inside the house.

Where did she go? Well, she's a high school girl, she must have a lot of places to play. It was only six o'clock, a normal time to play. There is a possibility that she might have gone to another friend's house.

Wherever they went, they were probably making noise in their usual way. I imagined Mana and the others having fun, and my cheeks relaxed a little.

—Well, I'll just properly relax today....

When I opened the door, my room was completely dark.

I immediately pressed the light switch near the entrance.

The room lit up quickly.

Then...I immediately noticed something unusual in the room.

The futon on the bed was bulging as if it was wrapped around a single person.

It was a trap.

I instantly went into alert mode.

If there's someone hiding in my bed, it's either Mana or one of her friends. In other words, the yankee girls are probably trying to catch me off guard by pretending not to be in the house, then suddenly jump out and surprise me.

—Kukuku. I can see through all your thoughts, yankee girls. Don't think you can outwit me with your low-class high school yankee level thinking!

The first to move wins.

It's fine if I simply peel the futon off her before she jumps out.

Without hesitation, I headed for the bed and peeled off the futon with great force.

—*rustle*

The existence that was hidden in the bed was exposed under the bright fluorescent light.

Her blonde hair was so bright that it reflected the fluorescent light. Long eyelashes framing her closed eyelids. 'Su—Su—' Regulated breathing escaping from her slightly open lips.

It was Erika-chan, curled up on the bed in a circular shape.

—No, are you really asleep?

I retorted in my mind. The reason I didn't say this out loud was because I wasn't sure if I should let the sleeping Erika-chan continue sleeping like this.

Not knowing what to do, I stood still and looked at Erika-chan's sleeping face.

She had a beautiful sleeping face. When she was sleeping, she didn't look like a yankee, she looked like an innocent beautiful girl.



...To be honest, she was so cute that my heart was pounding.

—Wait, it's bad to just keep gazing at her whether she's asleep or not!

I retorted to myself and looked away from Erika.

There was no sign of any other yankee girls lurking in this room. If they were lurking around, they would have come out to tease me when I was staring at Erika-chan.

If that's the case, then Erika was acting alone.

Maybe she was trying to scare me, crawled under the futon and fell asleep. Maybe the others... left Erika-chan alone and went out. I don't think Mana and the others would go through all the trouble to put away the shoes at the entrance to make it look like no one was there.

As I was pondering, Erika stirred.

"Nn.....morning??"

She looked at me with a half-asleep face.

"It's past six in the afternoon. It's still night."

I replied honestly.

Then Erika-chan yawned loudly and said,

"Fuua... Onii-san, thank you for the inconvenience."

"Um...that's my bed though..."

"Yeah. I know. On the contrary, if it's your room but it's not your bed, wouldn't that be crazy."

"That's true.... That would be crazy."

Erika-chan continued to roll around on the bed while talking with me. For some reason, she showed no signs of getting off the bed.

"Why were you sleeping in my bed?"

I asked her straight.

"Ah, sorry... I got really sleepy because of my period."

"Don't you think you could be a little more subtle about it?"

'I'm not feeling well'... you could've responded with something like that. The reply was so direct that it was hard to respond.

I know that men should be understanding of women's periods, but I would get perplexed if my sister's girlfriends suddenly come out to me about their periods.

If I had a girlfriend before, I might have been able to accept it a little more naturally, but...I've never had that experience.

Unaware of my feelings, Erika-chan continued.

"I'm the type of person who has a heavier period on the first day than on the second..."

"Too frank..."

"What's so confusing about that? You have a sister, so it's normal to talk about it, right? Periods."

"No, Mana doesn't talk about it openly in front of me."

"Hmm. So that's how it is. Well, I'm an only child, so I don't really understand stuff like that."

As Erika-chan said this, she slowly raised her body and sat on the bed.

"...I'm hungry. Please give me some food, Onii-san."

"Pardon?"

"I'm so hungry, I can't get out of bed. I can't. Please help me. Or I'll never get out of your bed."

"Haa!?"

Erika was sitting on the floor, swaying from side to side and chanting, "I'm hungry~I'm hungry~". She looked like one of those mascots sold in hundred-yen stores that shake from side to side when the sunlight hits them. Mascots are not this noisy, though.

"What about Mana and the others?"

I asked Erika-chan.

"They left me behind. Runa said she wanted to go buy some manga, so maybe they're at the bookstore in front of the station?"

"I see..."

If there's no one else to take care of Erika-chan, I'll have to take care of her...

"Hey~Hey~I'm hungry. I want to eat cup ramen~"

Erika-chan swayed from side to side.

Erika-chan, who was swaying left and right on another person's bed, chanting "I'm hungry~", honestly looked very cute.

"Good grief...it can't be helped. I'm going to go prepare it now, just wait a minute."

"Alright~"

I reluctantly went to the kitchen and took out a cup of ramen from the cupboard. We always have a stock of cup ramen in the house. It's a kind of emergency ration that I eat once in a while and buy more from time to time.

I put the cup of ramen on a tray and poured hot water from the kettle. After putting the lid on, I put the chopsticks on the tray and carried it to my room.

"Thanks for waiting~. Here, your cup of ramen."

"Yay~"

Erika sat down on the bed and cheered happily.

I put the tray I had brought on the low table and said to Erika-chan

"However, I won't allow you to eat on the bed. If you want to eat, first, get out of bed."

Then Erika got off the bed reluctantly. Judging by the look of her, she must have been planning to eat in bed if I hadn't said anything.

Erika-chan crawled over to the low table. She opened the lid of the cup of ramen and put on a happy face with chopsticks in her hand.

"Itadakimasu!" [TLN; if you don't know what this means, you ain't a true weeb]

Erika's cheerful voice.

Even among Mana's friends, Erika-chan is not particularly good at etiquette, but even so she says 'Itadakimasu' properly. It should be obvious, but for a moment I was impressed.

However, I immediately frowned. Erika-chan...started to eat her cup of ramen with a very strange way of holding her chopsticks.

It was like a primitive man who had just learned to use tools. Her chopsticks were clenched together in her right hand and had no function of grasping anything. She

was simply lifting the curly noodles from a cup of ramen, twisting them in a messy manner.

—What the heck!? What’s with this way of holding chopsticks!?

I shuddered as I watched Erika-chan eat.

I know that I am a detail-oriented person. I also know that people can live a normal life without worrying about such details.

However... I was a man who would not forgive something like ‘an empty toilet paper roll left on the holder’ or ‘a messy way of holding chopsticks’.

“You know...Erika-chan.”

“Eh? What?”

“I don’t think it’s right to go so far as to say this to my sister’s friend but... can I say something?”

“Yeah?”

Erika-chan was staring at me. I looked straight back at Erika-chan and appealed to her from the bottom of my heart.

“Do you think you can live with that way of holding your chopsticksssssss!?”

“Yes!?”

Erika-chan stared in amazement as I suddenly snapped at her. But I didn’t hesitate to grab her right hand.

“Hold the bottom chopstick between the base of your thumbs! Hold the upper chopstick between your thumb, index finger and middle finger! This is the correct way to hold chopsticks!”

I semi-forced Erika-chan to fix the way she held her chopsticks. Erika-chan, who now held the chopsticks correctly, looked at them with a frightened look on her face.

“Eh...? They’re shaking so hard though...?”

Indeed. The chopsticks were shaking like a newborn fawn.

“That’s because you’re not used to it. But this one is definitely more beautiful!”

As I assured her, Erika-chan suddenly became fidgety.

“Eh...? This, is beautiful?”

“Ah, it’s beautiful. Holding chopsticks in a messy way is only a disadvantage, so you should fix it now. Erika-chan is a beautiful girl, so I think it’s even more of a waste if you don’t.”

“Fuee!? B-beautiful!?”

Was it such a surprise for me to call her a beautiful girl... Erika-chan turned bright red and her mouth started flapping shut and open.

“Eh? Is it that surprising? Erika-chan is a beautiful girl, I’m sure many other people think that as well.”

“No no! No one’s ever told me that before!! You’ve never gone out with a girl before, so how can you say stuff like that so smoothly!!”

“Even though I’ve never gone out with a girl, I’d still say that. It’s the same as saying ‘that cat is cute’ or ‘the hero is cool’, Erika-chan is beautiful.”

“Aaaaaaa stop saying that!! I’m using chopsticks in a way I’m not used to, so let me concentrate!”

What did I say wrong? Erika-chan started eating her cup of ramen sullenly.

—Was it wrong if I said she was a beautiful girl?

Erika-chan is obviously a beautiful girl, so I don’t think there’s any other way to describe her.

I scratched my head and looked at Erika-chan.

Erika-chan was eating her cup of ramen with the correct way to hold the chopsticks, looking pouty but somehow looked adorable as she tried her best.

“Yeah. That’s a much better way to do it.”

I nodded in satisfaction, and Erika-chan’s eyes widened and her lips firmly pursed.

“Nn? What’s wrong?”

“Shut up! And don’t look at me!”

“Ehh!?”

This is my room, and I’m the one who brought you that cup of ramen...

I wanted to tell her that, but I stopped myself just before I could.

Erika-chan's cheeks were tinged scarlet, and her eyes seemed to be a bit wet.

Was it because of the heat from the cup of noodles, or was it because she was not feeling well?

Either way, when I saw Erika-chan's expression, I decided to forgive her for being so selfish today.

Chapter 6

The following day, 7 o'clock, Friday.

I was sitting at the study desk in my room.

Tomorrow, I'll finally start my part-time job as a private tutor. I was in the middle of finishing up the study handouts for the job on my laptop.

Fortunately, the yankee girls were away. There was no Erika-chan on the futon either.

I was completely alone.

Even though it's my room, it's weird because this is the first time in a long time that I felt like this.

"Ah-How pleasant! Being able to concentrate on my studies is the best!"

I couldn't help but say it out loud, feeling a pleasant sense of liberty.

Just as I said that, the door to my room opened.

"You're monologuing too loud!"

"Waaaaaaa!!"

Erika-chan appeared out of nowhere.

I was surprised to see someone I wasn't expecting, and embarrassed to be heard talking to myself, so I ended up shouting.

Erika-chan looked at me and smirked.

"Onii-san, are you the type of person to monologue a lot? Are you really that lonely? Honestly, don't you think it's not enough that we didn't come hang out here yesterday and today?"

"No no! That's not true!! Leaving that aside, what are you doing in my room all of a sudden!?"

"Of course it's because I have something to do."

Saying that, Erika-chan entered my room and... jumped onto my bed.

"Well then, good night~"

"No, no, wait, wait, wait."

I hurriedly stopped Erika-chan from pulling the futon over her head and trying to sleep.

"I told you I had my period yesterday. It's only the second day. It's painful."

"Then why are you sleeping in my room!?"

"Because last night was the most snug sleep I've ever had. As gratitude, I'll leave my warmth on your futon so let me go."

"I don't want that sort of gratitude!! You can't sleep in my room!!"

She has such a nonexistent sense of danger that I have a headache. Or is it that she doesn't see me as a man at all? That in itself is headache inducing though...

"Then, what about Mana and the others!?"

There was no sign that my sister or any of her other yankee friends were home. If they were here, I would've known immediately because of the noise.

"Mana and the others are at a nearby convenience store. I came first because I have a stomachache."

"Then why don't you just wait in Mana's room? Don't sleep in my bed!"

"Tsk. Then, I'll just roll around." [TLN: she said gorogoro]

"Both sleeping and rolling about! You can't do either of them!"

"Isn't it fine just for a while~? Ah, Onii-san, if you want to sleep, you can sleep with me~"

Erika-chan said, in a sweet voice like a spoiled child. She rolled over on the bed, looking up at me with both arms outstretched. Her appearance was completely like that of a girlfriend waiting for me to come to bed. [TLN: i don't think i did her cuteness justice so just imagine it about 10000x cuter]

-No wait. She's not my girlfriend. Why was I getting a bit excited!!?

I purged all my worldly desires from my mind.

Then, after pausing for a while, I said to Erika-chan.

"For now... don't roll around in that uniform!"

I wanted to get Erika off the bed by any means, and that was the line that popped into my head.

Then, Erika-chan pouted.

"Eh~? Is there a problem with that~?"

"Problem...?"

'Don't roll around in your uniform', was what Mom used to say to Mana, so it was instilled into my mind. That's why, if she asked what the problem with it was, I'd be at a loss for words.

"Err... the skirt will get creases, right? Wouldn't it be time-consuming and expensive to send it out for proper cleaning to fix that?"

I thought about it and answered, and Erika-chan looked at me with a dubious face.

"Are creases that big of a problem?"

"Since you wear those clothes all the time, I thought it would feel better if they were clean and tidy."

"...Onii-san, do you think a high school girl in a clean uniform would be better?"

"That's right. If their uniform looks wrinkled and dirty, then I'd think that they're a sloppy person."

"...I see."

Erika-chan looked uninterested. However, she understood my point and got up from the bed and sat on the edge.

"Onii-san, is there anything else you think I should fix about myself?"

Erika-chan asked, dangling her feet.

"Let me see... Ah, at the entrance! I always thought about this but, arrange your shoes properly before you enter the house!"

"Why?"

"Because..."

At this age, it seems like it should be common sense, but this reaction is weird. I felt like a mother explaining to a kindergartener.

"...I guess it's to prevent people from losing track of their own shoes or people who come after them from losing their shoes."

"Do you usually worry about people coming after you?"

Erika-chan tilted her head in puzzlement.

I sighed and proposed to Erika-chan.

"Well then, imagine this. There was a place you really wanted to go, and when you arrived, the people who arrived before you left their shoes in a disorderly mess, what would you think?"

"I'd want to kick them hard. Because they're in the way."

"It's up to you whether you're angry or sad or disgusted, but it's not a good feeling. That's why, arrange your shoes to not make someone else feel bad for something of your own doing, just as you would've felt."

"Hmm...I see. I'll try to be careful from now on. Though, I'm very forgetful so there might be days I don't do it."

Surprisingly, she listened to me honestly. I was quite happy with that.

"It may be difficult to immediately be consistent, but just being able to think that way makes all the difference. I'm sure one day you'll be able to do it naturally."

When I smiled at Erika-chan, she looked away, looking a little embarrassed.

Erika doesn't have a lot of common sense, but she's kind enough to talk to Mana when she used to be all alone. She's also surprisingly honest and cute.

"Is there anything else?"

She asked bluntly.

"Um...Oh yeah. I know it's not something you really need to fix, but there's something I've always wanted to tell you, but never have."

"Eh? What?"

"Erika-chan, thank you very much for always being such a good friend to Mana."

I told her how I had always felt.

Then, Erika-chan suddenly got up from the bed, her lips pursed and a weird expression on her face. The pillow fell off the bed from the recoil of her standing up.

"Ah-that's enough! I'm done resting! I'm going to go play with Mana and the others!"

"Ah, hey! Come back and fix this first!"

Scolding people isn't really my hobby, but when it comes to looking after the yankee girls, I have a lot of complaints. Especially when it comes to Erika-chan.

I looked at Erika, feeling sorry for all the lecturing, and as expected, she looked disgusted.

"...Onii-san, you're too nitpicky about everything. About skirts, about shoes, about pillows.. That's why you can't get a girlfriend, okay?"

Something stabbed me deep in the heart. Is this sorrow gushing out of the wound...

"I'm devoting myself to my studies! It's fine to worry about love once you're a working adult. I'm not trying to get a girlfriend, so it's no wonder I can't have one!"

"Isn't that just an excuse~? You're lying to yourself that you don't want a girlfriend because you can't get one no matter what you do, right?"

Erika-chan snickered.

The beautiful girl with angelically good looks was starting to look like a devil.

But I didn't want to let Erika off the hook.

"I admit that those are just excuses but-"

I said to Erika-chan with a serious face.

"-Even so, even if Erika-chan thinks it's just a small detail, I'll keep on advising you. You can be bothered if you can't do something, but you won't be bothered if you can. And if you stop even before trying, I think it'd be a loss for Erika-chan if you don't realize it."

If I didn't have any feelings for Erika, I wouldn't bother caring for her. That's the way it is, it can't be helped. It's easy to give up and say it's useless.

But I feel like I want to tell Erika-chan.

This is...a proof that I care about Erika-chan.

Hearing my words, Erika looked at me dubiously.

"You mean I should know some common sense?"

"Something like that... When you go out into society, everything is based on common sense, so if you don't know anything about common sense, you'll often be looked down on by people. You don't want that, do you, Erika-chan?"

"I don't like it... when people look down on me."

It was painstakingly difficult to communicate clearly to a yankee. But Erika-chan reluctantly picked up the fallen pillow and put it back on the bed.

I'm glad that my feelings were conveyed. Just as I was relieved, Erika grinned at me.

"However, Onii-san, could it be that you were worried about my future~?"

As expected of Erika-chan. It only took her several seconds to get over the depression from the preaching time.

How quickly she switched her mood to make fun of me.

While admiring her oddity, I answered.

"Of course I'm worried. Erika-chan's been coming to my house for a long time now, and you're already like a little sister to me."

"Hee~? A little sister~. I see, since you decided to not bother with love now, so you don't think of me as a love interest~?"

"Erika-chan? No way, absolutely not!"

When I heard Erika's words, I couldn't help but laugh.

"Hmm? Then, what would you do if I said that I wanted to be your girlfriend right now?"

"Eh?"

My laughter receded.

Erika-chan, who was staring at me, seemed to have a more serious expression than usual.

-Don't tell me, Erika-chan likes me...?

I never expected that my sister's friend would like me.

I mean, that's impossible...

As I was frozen in confusion, Erika-chan suddenly burst into laughter.

"Ahahaha! Onii-san's face is too funny~!"

"Ah! Hey! You were making fun of me!"

"What~? Did you get flustered by thinking I was serious? Did you imagine that your sister's friend might become your girlfriend~?"

"No, I didn't! I was just baffled by how impossible it was!"

"Hoo~? Impossible, you say~?"

Erika-chan patted me on the back as she walked by, heading for the door of my room.

"You know, in the manga in Onii-san's room, it says, 'There is no such thing as impossible'."

"So it's not impossible for Erika-chan to suddenly become a neat and tidy JK either."

"Ha? That's absolutely not possible!"

In the end, I teased Erika-chan as she ran out of the room blushing.

I chuckled alone in my room.

"Good grief... she's adorable."

I unintentionally muttered to myself.

I really felt like Erika-chan was my sister.

I'm worried about her future because she doesn't have any common sense. I can't leave her alone because I don't want her to get into danger.

I want to teach her many things. From now on, too.

I went towards my bed where Erika-chan had left the futon in a mess. Since she was just sitting on it, the futon was still warm, and I arranged it carefully while trying not to touch it.

...Getting excited over Erika-chan who was like a little sister to me, was a feeling I wanted to avoid.

Chapter 7

It was a rainy Saturday evening.

On my way home from my part-time job, I was walking through the rainy downtown area holding up my umbrella.

Today was the first day of my part-time job as a private tutor. The students were two high school boys who were aiming for the university I attend, National S University. I had just finished tutoring one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The high school boys, who had done well in their basic studies, were quite knowledgeable and were able to understand what I taught them with ease. It was a big difference from the high school girls I usually deal with who had difficulty understanding the basics. It was so easy to communicate with them that I was almost moved to tears.

"Ah-I'm so glad I changed my part time job~. Earning money this pleasantly is the best~."

Teaching others is a good learning experience for me as I'm aiming to become a teacher in the future. I have to thank Tokunaga for introducing me to this job.

It was raining, but I was in a bright mood.

"Nn?"

I was in such an upbeat mood, when I suddenly spotted a familiar figure walking among the people on the street.

Wet blonde hair.

A high school girl walking drenched without holding an umbrella... Erika-chan.

"-Erika-chan!?"

I rushed over to the high school girl and called out to her.

Then just as I thought, the person who turned around was indeed, Erika-chan.

"Eh? Onii-san?"

"What happened to you!? You're soaking wet!!"

I quickly brought Erika-chan under my umbrella. But she was already so drenched that water was dripping from her hair.

"I was just wandering around doing some errands though?"

"Do you not have an umbrella!?"

"I don't. I left my house in the morning. I didn't even know it was supposed to rain."

I remember it started raining a little after noon, when I was tutoring at the second house. How long had she been walking in the rain?

When I looked at Erika-chan with concern, she looked down awkwardly. Perhaps it was because she was wet from the rain, but Erika-chan looked less energetic than usual.

I gently said to Erika-chan.

"You'd better go home and change your clothes. Are you done with your errands?"

"I'm done, but I don't want to go home."

"But you'll catch a cold if you stay like that."

"It's fine. It'll dry up."

She was somewhat stubborn and more aloof than usual. It seemed as if it was written on her face that she wanted to be left alone, but I pretended not to notice.

"Then, come to my place."

I grabbed Erika-chan's hand and started walking. Erika-chan looked a little surprised.

"Eh? I said I'll be fine so..."

"You idiot. You're soaking wet, how can you be okay? You should take better care of yourself."

When I said that, Erika-chan fell silent.

We walked together in the rain in complete silence.

The sound of the rain hitting my umbrella was so pleasant that I didn't feel bored even though we were silent.

"-I'm home~! Mana! Are you here-?"

I called out loudly, as soon as I entered the front door of my house.

Then Mana, who had just come out of the bathroom, turned around and looked at me with a startled look on her face.

"Eh!? Erika!? What happened!?"

Mana rushed over to the soaking wet Erika-chan.

"I was soaking wet, so Onii-san picked me up~"

Erika-chan smiled bitterly.

Her words made it seem as if she was like an abandoned cat.

"Show her to the bath. Then lend her a change of clothes."

Mana replied, "Okay," and began walking to the bathroom with Erika.

"Ah, wait, I have to arrange my shoes properly."

When Erika-chan arrived at the door, she suddenly looked back at me. I'm glad to see that you remember what I said and tried to put it into practice. But...

"It's okay for today. I'll take care of it. Hurry up and take a bath."

When I said that, Erika-chan silently gave a small nod.

I watched to make sure Erika-chan went into the changing room with Mana, and then I rearranged her shoes.

Erika-chan's shoes were heavy from absorbing the rain.

"...I can't just leave this as it is."

I went to the kitchen to get some old newspapers and shoved them into Erika-chan's shoes at the entrance. This way it'll be a bit drier by the time she heads home.

As I wondered if there was a faster way to dry them, my nose started to itch.

"Achoo!!"

My left shoulder was wet from bringing Erika-chan home while under the same umbrella. If I don't do something about it, I'm sure I'll catch a cold too.

I decided to leave Erika-chan's shoes and went to my room to change first.

A few minutes after bringing Erika-chan home.

I was in the living room using the hair dryer to try to dry her shoes as much as possible.

I laid out some newspaper on the floor and placed Erika-chan's sneakers on it. The hair dryer was switched on to warm air, not hot air, to avoid damaging the shoes. Then I stuffed the shoes tightly with newspaper.

"Aniki~? Where's the hairdryer~?"

I turned toward the voice and saw Mana coming into the living room with Erika-chan. Her complexion seemed better, thanks to the hot bath. She seemed to have borrowed Mana's casual t-shirt and pants, but her long blonde hair was still wet.

"Ah, my bad. I was using it to dry Erika-chan's shoes."

"Erika first. Give it to me."

Mana held out her hand for the hair dryer. I turned off the dryer and handed it to Mana.

"Erika, sit here."

Mana sat Erika-chan down on the sofa near me.

Erika-chan was somewhat in a daze and did as Mana told her to. Then Mana started drying Erika-chan's hair with the hair dryer.



Meanwhile, I took out the newspaper that I had stuffed in Erika-chan's shoes. After collecting the slightly damp newspaper, I stuffed a new one inside.

"...Why are you stuffing my shoes with newspaper?"

The moment the sound of the hair dryer stopped, Erika asked me. She looked at me as if she were looking at a suspicious person. I wondered if it looked like I was playing a prank on her.

"Newspapers are very absorbent, so they can take the moisture out of your shoes."

When I explained, Erika said, "Hee~?"

"Is that common sense? Will people look down on me if I don't know that?"

Erika-chan asked me. I was a little worried because she looked a little different from the usual Erika-chan.

"No, it's just some sort of life wisdom that's useful to know... If you don't know it, you won't be ridiculed. But if you know it, you might appreciate it."

"I see."

Erika-chan muttered in a small voice.

At that moment, Mana had brought over a cup of barley tea for Erika-chan.

"Do you want some?"

Mana said, and Erika-chan took the cup and drank it.

I looked at them, and said,

"Why don't you at least say thank you?"

"What will happen if I don't?"

Erika-chan stared at me.

She didn't get angry at me for pointing out the details, she was honestly questioning it.

"If you don't say it, Mana might not be able to tell that you're grateful or happy for the tea, and that might bother her. On the other hand, if you said 'thank you,' Mana would be happy."

"Ah-I don't really mind that. I already know that Erika doesn't say such things often."

Mana smiled wryly at the sudden mention of her name.

Erika-chan stared at Mana.

"Do you want me to say thank you, Mana?"

Mana scratched her cheek in confusion at Erika-chan's straightforward gaze.

"Well, I'd like you to say it if you're grateful. If Erika is happy, then I'll be happy as well, and I'd be glad that I was useful in any way."

Mana's words were straightforward and easy to understand. Her feelings must have reached Erika-chan, too. Erika-chan looked at Mana and smiled.

"Mana, for the barley tea...thank you~" [TLN: sankyu]

"Ah, yeah..."

Mana's face turned red. I think she's embarrassed.

The interaction between the two of them felt pleasant, and a warm feeling spread in my chest.

"And then..."

Suddenly, Erika-chan turned to me. She faced me properly and took a small deep breath.

"...Thank you too, Onii-san. For worrying about me, and bringing me all the way here to your home, thank you."

I hadn't expected her to thank me as well, which caught me off guard. My chest felt ticklish and my heart rate increased.

"...Yeah, you're welcome. I was wondering if I was being an annoyance while trying to help you, so I'm glad to hear you say that."

When I replied, I felt Erika's cheeks had turned a darker shade of red.

"By the way, what were you doing before you got soaked by the rain?"

Then I asked her something that had been bothering me.

Erika-chan then answered with a slightly troublesome look on her face.

"Ah-... I was looking for a part time job."

"A part-time job?"

"Yeah. I want to get out of my house fast, so I need a part time job. But, I can't really use honorifics and such, so I get fired after a while. I don't really know much common sense either, so I wonder if I'm just a hindrance wherever I go. Recently I can't even clear interviews."

Erika-chan said a little sulkingly.

She said it in a light-hearted tone, but it sounded like she was serious about wanting a part-time job. I was about to say, "Then I'll give you some advice on how to make a good impression at your job interview," but I decided against it, thinking it might be a bit meddlesome.

"Well for now, I want to spend more time having fun with Mana and the others."

Erika-chan put the cup with the remaining barley tea on the table and stood up.

"Mana, these clothes, can I wear them while going home?"

"Eh? It's fine but... you're leaving? It's been a while, so why don't you have dinner with us?"

"It's fine. You've taken care of me so much today, I don't feel like being taken care of even more."

'Nihhi,' Erika-chan laughed and headed for the door.

"Ah, your shoes!"

I hurriedly grabbed Erika-chan's shoes and chased after her.

"They're not completely dry yet, but I think it's better than when you came."

When I placed Erika-chan's shoes in the doorway, she gave a small "thanks" and began to put them on.

"Amazing. They're pretty dry already. Amazing..."

Erika-chan was impressed with her dry shoes.

"...Really, there's so much I don't know..."

The words that suddenly spilled from her pink lips were very quiet. And they seemed to be tinged with melancholy.

"Thank you for today, Onii-san. Mana too."

She said her thanks and walked out of the house.

Mana, who was diagonally behind me, snickered.

"She excessively thanks you for your advice, doesn't she."

She walked back into the living room, humming to herself, happy with the change in her friend.

I was alone, staring at the front door from where Erika-chan had left.

She listens to me when I warn her and tries to correct her bad habits. I don't think Erika-chan's lack of common sense is because she hates common sense and stubbornly refuses to use it.

She just doesn't know. She has never been exposed to that knowledge. Or she wasn't taught the importance of it.

-Anyhow, she's such a docile and bright girl, so it's a shame...

Common sense can be a shield to protect you. And ignorance can be a sin. There are many things in this world that you can't get away with not knowing.

That's why we study. We accumulate knowledge. To protect ourselves... and in order to protect our loved ones.

-I wish I could teach you properly, about the things you'll need when you go out into the world...

The brotherly spirit in my heart was in turmoil as I worried about Erika-chan. But at the same time, I was frightened of what would happen if she became depressed and kept her distance from me.

Chapter 8

Studying at the university every day. Part time job as a private tutor. While I was doing those things, Erika-chan's face would suddenly pop into my head.

A girl who is honest but has no common sense. When I think about it, I don't know why such a girl as Erika-chan decided to become a Yankee.

No, I knew very little about Erika-chan.

She was a kind girl who helped Mana when she was lonely. That alone was enough for me to interact with her until now. That's why I didn't bother to get to know Erika-chan's private matters.

--I wonder if it's bad for an older brother to meddle into the circumstances of his little sister's friend...

One night.

I was sitting in my room at my study desk. Of course, I was alone.

There was no sign of the yankee girls at home today. They had been trying to occupy this place for some reason, but my part-time job changed and I came home earlier, so I guess they felt bad about making a racket here.

For a moment, I felt a little bad for making them feel considerate, and I hurriedly shook my head.

No no, in the first place, it's my room, why should I be worried about it?

It's only natural for me to be alone in my room. I don't need the option of being in a yankee hangout.

They'll probably come storming into my room again anyway. I'd better get on with what I'm doing while I can.

To refresh my mind, I drank the coffee on my desk. The bitter taste spread in my mouth and drowned out the gloomy feelings inside me.

Then, as soon as I reached for my computer's keyboard... The house suddenly became noisy.

A storm was coming. Before I could prepare myself, the door was thrown open.

"We're back~! Tsukacchi, look at this~! I got an amazingly huge stuffed mushroom from the arcade~!"

Runa-chan's voice. And then, a huge mushroom was thrust before my eyes energetically. The umbrella part covered my vision completely, and I hurriedly tried to push it away.

"Too close!! It's too close for me to see it!!"

Grasping the soft stem of the mushroom, I tipped it to the side and finally got a clear view. While I was struggling with the mushroom that Runa-chan had pushed on me, I saw Mana and Arisa-chan starting to set out drinks and snacks on the low table...

"No, why do guys have your heart set on partying here!?"

I shouted, and Mana said calmly.

"Isn't it fine? I thought you might occasionally need some JK essence in your room. I'll sprinkle it all over the air, so you can enjoy it in peace."

"What am I gonna do with JK essence sprinkled in the air!?"

My time alone was tragically fleeting.

The silence was easily destroyed by the three yankee girls.

-Hm? Three?

Then I realized... Erika-chan wasn't here.

I asked Mana.

"Where's Erika-chan?"

"She said she was looking for a part-time job and would stop by later. It's unlikely she will come today, whenever Erika says she'll come later, she never comes."

"I see..."

The day I brought Erika-chan home, soaking wet, she said she would take a break from looking for a job for a while. But she's still on the search today...

"Do you want a part time job that much...?"

I muttered, and Arisa-chan smirked.

"Hmmm~? By any chance, are you feeling lonely because Erika isn't here~?"

"N-no I'm not! It's not like that... I don't know much about Erika-chan, so I was wondering why she wants a part time job that badly..."

When I said that, Mana, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan looked at each other. And when I saw that Runa-chan and Arisa-chan nodded their heads in silence, Mana turned to me and said...

"Do you want to hear about Erika's family situation?"

"Eh...is it fine?"

"If it's Aniki... I don't think it's a bad idea to tell you. Erika has always been struggling to find a part time job, so I thought maybe Aniki could help her..."

Runa-chan and Arisa-chan nodded. I could tell that Mana and the others were also worried about Erika's search for a part-time job.

"Can I ask you to do so?"

I sat down near the low table with the three of them. Then, Mana started talking.

"Yeah. First of all, Erika is in a single mother household. Her father... I don't really know about him."

"I see..."

"And so, her mom works at a snack bar. When Erika was little, it used to be a hostess bar. I don't know about when Erika was very little, but when she was old enough to be aware of her surroundings, her mom wasn't usually at home. An aunty in the neighbourhood used to make meals for her... Erika's mom has always had very little concern for her."

"Oh...she's lived quite the heavy life."

I imagined little Erika-chan home alone, and my heart ached a little.

And then Runa-chan said,

"My mother is also in that sort of business, but I always had my grandma at home, so I never felt lonely. I think it must have been hard for Erika, who spent a lot of time alone."

Then Arisa said while smiling.

"But wasn't she lucky to have such a nice lady in her neighborhood? All I had were my scumbag parents."

"Well, we're lucky enough that we're allowed to go to high school~" Runa-chan said, "I know. I'm grateful that they didn't ask us to work after graduating from junior high school," Arisa-chan agreed.

I knew that everyone was different from me, who had lived a comfortable life. I just happened to be born in a good family, was naturally loved, my selfishness was naturally listened to, and naturally had dreams and hopes.

But, what is natural for me, was unnatural for them.

I asked Runa-chan and Arisa-chan.

"Hey, why did you two become yankees?"

Then Runa said a bit bashfully.

"Eh~ why was it? Because I desperately wanted to make the most of my present day, it just naturally happened."

Arisa-chan nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, that's right. When I was fighting with various things, I became a yankee. Yankees are a fighting breed after all."

Maybe the status of "yankee" meant something like being armed. Even Mana became a yankee in order not to be defeated by her heartless classmates who hurt her.

They become yankees to survive in the present moment.

Yankees have a strong image of fighting with other yankees, but what each of them really fight against may not be other yankees, but something deep within themselves.

When I was silent for a while, Runa-chan slapped me violently on the back.



"My my, don't make that sort of face! Even though it's like this, we live a much more enjoyable life than you think."

"...Do you resent your parents?"

"Eh? No matter what kind of parents you were born to, you'll always resent them at least once, right?"

That's true. I sometimes find my parents disagreeable. It's a path that everyone goes through when they reach puberty.

While I was agreeing, Arisa-chan then said,

"If parents are scum, their children are also called scum, and it's true that we yankees may be scum in the eyes of the world. But we don't want to lead the same life as our parents. Our parents have their own lives, and we have ours. We're fighting to be something completely different."

Even in the face of adversity, the Yankee JKs continue to take on the challenges of life without giving in. Their resilience was dazzling.

"How cool... all of you."

I honestly muttered and laughed, and Runa-chan and Arisa-chan looked at each other and laughed.

I didn't understand why they were laughing at me, so I was just looking at them vacantly. Then Mana said,

"Aniki who can accept us like that is admirable. From now on, please keep thinking of us like that."

She sounded pompous, but somewhat proud of her words.

The air in the room was calm and everyone was smiling, despite the heavy subject of their family situations.

It was almost midnight.

Runa-chan and Arisa-chan had already gone home, and Mana went to take a bath. I went to the kitchen to get a drink, and then I realized that I had forgotten to lock the front door.

Suddenly, I felt like there was someone outside the door.

I didn't think it was possible, so I put my shoes on and opened the door. Then... I saw Erika-chan there.

"Erika-chan...?"

"Ah, sorry...Everyone left, right?"

"Yeah... they left at about eleven, as usual."

"Is that so~...I was late. What a shame."

Erika-chan chuckled.

"Did you... find a part time job?"

When I asked, Erika answered while playing with a small stone that was lying on the doorstep with the tip of her shoe.

"They said if I wanted one, I needed to dye my hair black first."

"... Do you absolutely hate it when it's not blonde, Erika-chan? I think it's easier to go with black because you don't have to re-dye it..."

Erika-chan's natural black hair was visible on the top of her head. Normally, it would be time for her to dye her hair again, but Erika-chan always dyes her hair only after the black part of her hair becomes much more prominent.

"But if I dye my hair black, wouldn't I become less yankee-like and be ostracized by my friends...?"

Erika-chan seemed a bit uneasy.

"Isn't the first thing that matters to a yankee is their spirit, not their appearance? How can you stop being friends with someone just because they changed their appearance? You're yankees, after all."

Even though I was not a yankee, I was talking about yankees like I was one of them. I felt a little embarrassed afterwards, and scratched my itchy temples.

Thinking that I would be teased... I braced myself.

But Erika-chan looked at me and gave me a gentle smile.

"Onii-san, you're cool."

Erika-chan was smiling in the shining light from the front door, and she looked beautiful. A chilly May breeze blew, making her long blonde hair flutter.

"Onii-san, you're studying to be a teacher at the university, right?"

"Yeah, what about it? I study at the faculty of education now."

"Then one day, are you going to teach students like me?"

"Yeah, I guess so. Well, my first choice at the moment is to teach high school Japanese, so I guess that's what I'll do..."

"I'm sure you'll be a good teacher. I'm jealous of those who get to be Onii-san's students."

Erika-chan's words made me happy, and I thanked her.

"Thank you. When Erika-chan says it like that, it makes me want to do my best."

Erika-chan's movements stopped.

She stared at me as if time had stopped, and after a moment, her pink lips moved.

"Really. Being thanked...is a pretty happy feeling."

Erika-chan smiled bashfully, and told me "Good night," before turning to leave.

"Good night. Have a safe trip home."

I called out to her as she disappeared into the night. Erika-chan did not turn around, but I continued to see her off.

-Just before she turned the corner from my house, I thought I saw Erika looking at me. I couldn't see what kind of expression she had on her face. But I saw her give a small wave.

I stared at the corner for a while after Erika-chan disappeared from my sight.

I remembered what Mana and the others had told me about Erika-chan's circumstances at home today, and felt gloomy.

I guess Erika's home is not a place where she feels at ease. That's why since a while back, she never says "I'm going home" whenever she leaves.

--Whether I say "I'm back" or not, does it even make a difference?

I recalled what Erika-chan had once said to me, and it was painful.

Now I can guess why Erika-chan said that.

"It'd be nice if she came to visit tomorrow as well."

If our house was a place where Erika-chan felt at home, I wanted to welcome her.

Chapter 9

It was now June.

Recently, my part-time job as a tutor has been going well, and I feel like I'm getting used to balancing it with my university studies. I've always been a person who likes to study, so it was fun to live a life where I could think about my studies

all the time. I think it was the right decision to quit my part-time job at the izakaya.

And now... I was getting used to having Yankee Jks in my room.

“Hey~ hey~ Onii-san. Do you not have more dirty romance manga?”

It was nine o’clock in the evening.

On the floor of my room, Erika-chan was lying on her belly in her school uniform, reading a manga. And I was at my study desk.



"No, I don't. Those types aren't to my liking."

"They're all about being reincarnated in another world. And also, harems. So you want to be reborn and live an unconditional popular life."

"No, I don't. I just think it's purely interesting as a manga, so leave me alone."

When I'm reading a manga, I want to think about other worlds. That's why I liked manga that were unrealistic.

I sighed and glanced at Erika-chan.

“Don’t complain about that while borrowing someone else’s manga.”

“I’m not complaining. I know you enjoy it. It’s just, sometimes I just want to read some incredible love-hate relationship type manga.”

“Erika-chan, what kind of mood is that...”

While we were having a silly conversation, I was working on my computer, making a handout for my tutoring the next Saturday. It was a special training printout tailored to each student’s weaknesses.

Mana and the others are out again today. Lately, Mana and the others have been out, and Erika-chan has been coming to my room alone more often. It doesn’t seem like they’re fighting and going their separate ways, though. [TLN: HMMMMM]

—Was it because she wanted to be alone? No, if she’s in my room, since I’m here she wouldn’t be alone anymore so...

Maybe she wanted to be alone with me... I thought about that, then laughed at myself. What the heck is that? What kind of reason would she have to do that?

I drank a cup of coffee from my study desk and tried to concentrate on printing again. But then, Erika-chan spoke to me again.

“Onii-san...is it really impossible for me to get a part time job?”

“Hmm?”

When I looked at Erika, she was still in the same position reading the manga. And then, she kept talking.

“No matter where I go, they always say, ‘You can’t work here.’ On the other hand, ones that usually say, ‘Won’t you work here?’ are usually suspicious, so I don’t wanna work there.”

Her hand seemed to have already stopped turning the pages.

“...You said you wanted to get a part time job so you can leave your house, right? Erika-chan, what do you want to do after that?”

I asked, and Erika-chan asked me back.

“Are you asking me what I want to do in the future?”

“Ah—yeah. Something like that.”

“In the future...um, it might not be a big deal or anything but...”

“Yeah?”

“I, I want to be normal... I want to be a normal person who can use honorifics properly, I want to live a life where I can work normally like everyone else...”

The word ‘normal’ that Erika-chan used had a lot of weight to it. The meaning of the word ‘normal’ varies from person to person, and sometimes it can seem to mean the same to everyone, but sometimes what it really means is completely different. This is why it can cause disputes, but I could somehow understand what Erika-chan meant by ‘normal’.

Not having to worry about where to live, what to eat, or how to live. Not having to worry about how to make money, and having a stable job. A normal and modest life is nice, but sometimes wanting to eat good food and buy your favorite manga. Erika-chan would like to be someone who can live like that...

I want to help her.

That was the feeling boiling inside me.

“...If you’re willing to change...should I lend you a hand?”

I said, as nonchalantly as I could.

“Eh, but, I’m stupid... It’s going to be super hard, you know!?”

She reacted much stronger than I expected. Erika-chan hurriedly put down the manga, raised herself up, and crawled closer to my study desk.

Seeing Erika-chan looking so motivated made me feel happy, and I gave her a big nod.

“Sure, I’ll go along with you. Everything you want to know, everything you want to be able to do, I’ll teach you everything.”

Erika-chan was flustered.

“Err, what should I start with? There’s so much that I don’t know! I want to learn simple cooking, how to vacuum, and I don’t really know how to fold clothes properly either...”

“Yeah. That’s fine. Let’s do them one at a time.”

Erika-chan pursed her lips tightly. Her eyes were sparkling and wide open, and her cheeks red.

Her happiness was written all over her face.

“Thank you...Onii-san.”

Lately, Erika-chan has been saying ‘thank you’ to me more often. And I think I’m enjoying being with Erika-chan more and more.

Since then, I’ve been teaching Erika everything she wants to know.

How to use honorifics. How to separate garbage. How to read the weather forecast. How to shop smart... and many more things.

Some people may think, ‘You can find that stuff on the Internet nowadays.’ But some people find it difficult to understand what is written on the Internet. There are people to whom someone’s normality does not apply. But it doesn’t mean they can’t understand anything. If you sit next to them and slowly explain things to them, they may understand surprisingly quickly.

Then, about three weeks passed.

“He~! I didn’t know that rice is not washed with detergent!”

One day, while she was practicing how to wash rice in the kitchen, Erika-chan said,

“There are detergents for food, but you can just wash rice with water.”

“Why can’t we use hot water? Isn’t it cold in winter?”

“It said that washing rice in hot water degrades the flavor of the rice.”

“Is it ok as long as I don’t complain about the taste?”

“That’s up to you, but if you’re going to eat it, wouldn’t you want it to taste good? I read on the Internet that if you don’t like cold water in winter, you can heat it up to 20 degrees.”

“I won’t be able to tell if it’s 20 degrees or not by touching it.”

“Why don’t you use a thermometer?”

“That’s a pain...”

Even while saying things like that, Erika-chan seemed to be enjoying herself.

Learning something new can be fun. That is what I wanted Erika-chan to experience before anything else.

“—Say, Erika-chan. You’ve been doing your best at learning things recently, so why don’t you take a break once in a while?”

“Eh? A break?”

“You’ve been spending all your time studying with me instead of playing with Mana and the others. Do you want to go out somewhere as a reward?”

“A reward!? Eh!? Where should I go!?”

“Well...wherever Erika-chan wants to go is fine. Rest assured, Onii-san here will pay for it.”

“Then, the movies! And also, the aquarium! Then we’ll go to karaoke!”

“It’s fine. Alright. Well then, how about this Sunday?”

“Don’t you have work?”

“My students happen to have errands, so I’m on break.”

Both of us smiled.

“You’re the best! I’m looking forward to it!”

She smiled as if bursting with joy. It was the best smile I’ve ever seen that made me really glad I asked her out.

Sunday. It was a beautiful sunny day.

I was waiting for Erika-chan under the big clock in front of the station.

It was twelve o’clock, the appointed time, but there was still no sign of Erika-chan.

—Speaking of which, I’ve never seen Erika-chan in her casual clothes. She probably won’t come in her school uniform right... I’d be a bit anxious walking next to a JK in uniform.

What would I do if a police officer asked me, ‘Excuse me, what kind of relationship do you have?’ Would it be convincing if I said, ‘She’s my little sister’s friend.’? No, we’re not that far apart in age, and it wouldn’t seem like a strange relationship to begin with....

As I was worrying about that, I was tapped on the shoulder. I turned around to see Erika-chan with her blonde hair pulled up in a ponytail.

“Sorry to keep you waiting...”

“Ah, yeah...”

Erika-chan was wearing a white t-shirt, dark coloured jeans, and a long black waistcoat. A waistcoat is basically a long vest. I remember it well because when Mana wore it once, I said ‘long vest’ and she sent me flying.



It was a very simple and refreshing outfit. But because she had a beautiful face and great style, she looked dazzling and gorgeous...

"What's with you... Don't just stare at me like that..."

As I was unconsciously observing Erika-chan, her cheeks reddened and she pouted.

"Ah, sorry...Then, shall we go?"

"Yeah..."

I started walking side by side with Erika-chan

We were about 30 centimeters apart, and I couldn't tell if we were close or far apart, which made me feel all tingly.

We first went to the movie theater to watch an action movie about a Yankee JK fighting zombies.

It was a pretty intense series of battle scenes, so I was glad I had lunch first. By the way, Erika-chan was smiling the whole time for some reason.

"Was it that funny?"

I asked Erika-chan after the movie was over.

"Yeah! The zombies were funny!"

Apparently, she found the visuals of the zombies funny. Well... I guess everyone has their own sense of humour.

After the movie, we went to a nearby aquarium.

As we walked along, looking at the fish, Erika-chan's feet stopped at the outdoor penguin corner... and she didn't seem to move from there for the next 30 minutes.

"Um...Erika-chan. Shouldn't we move to a different area?"

"Just a while more..."

She said that, but her 'just a while more' didn't show any signs of ending.

"Erika-chan, do you like penguins that much?"

"I've never seen penguins in the flesh before, they're so cute... I'll burn them into my memory so that I never forget it, so wait."

Erika-chan, who had been laughing at the zombie movie earlier, was now staring at the penguins with a serious expression.

The look in her eyes was serious. So serious, that her gaze seemed to be like a sharp blade.

With such a sharp sparkle in her eyes, some people would probably shudder and run away. The penguins, however, were grooming themselves on the rocks as if they had nothing to do with it.

She seemed to like them so much that she lost track of time.

This might be the first time I've seen Erika-chan so engrossed in something. She seemed to like it so much that I made a suggestion to her.

"Then... why don't we buy a stuffed penguin from the souvenir shop?"

"Eh!? Ah, but, I don't have money so...I'll just look at them."

"Ah, I'll buy it for you so it's fine."

"No no, you already paid for everything from the movies to the aquarium, I can't rely on you that much."

"Don't be reserved. It's fine. Stuffed animals aren't that expensive of a thing. Besides... I was the one who thought of buying it, so let me show off for once. If you refuse, I'll feel lonely."

As she gazed at the penguin, Erika-chan had an expression of distress.

But the love she had for the penguin must have been great. Erika-chan looked at me, and smiled.

"Well then, I'll have you buy the most expensive penguin at the souvenir shop, you know?"

It was just like Erika-chan to say that, and it made me a little happy.

"Fine. Let's go to the souvenir shop and buy Erika-chan's favourite penguin!"

"Alright! Let's go! To the souvenir shop!"

Surprised by Erika's psyched up voice, a couple nearby looked at us.

Normally, I would have warned her to not shout in public. But today was a break after all.

Maybe I was in high spirits from seeing Erika-chan like that.

The fun times passed by in the blink of an eye, and it was now eight o'clock at night. I grabbed a light meal instead of dinner at the karaoke bar and sang for three hours...I was starting to get tired because it was much different from my usual life of studying at the university and working part time.

"Should we go home soon?"

"Eh~!? I want to play more though..."

Unlike me, who was feeling tired, Erika-chan was still full of energy. She hugged a 30-centimeter-long stuffed penguin with one arm and played with the microphone on the table with her free hand.

"But I had fun today, and since you bought me a penguin, I'll let you off for now. Thank you. Onii-san."

With that, Erika-chan took her hand off the microphone.

She seemed very reluctant.

I thought that it was a bit cute.

"Hey, Erika-chan...If you keep doing your best at your studies with me, would you like to go to the aquarium again as a reward? I'm sure you'd love to see the penguins again."

"Seriously? I'm going! I'm definitely going!"

"Yeah. Then, let's make that a promise. Also, there's going to be a university festival in the fall, so you should invite Mana and the others and come to it."

"Oi oi. Are you sure it's okay for the four yankee JKs to go?"

"It's alright. I'll show you around."

"I see... I'm a little excited! It's been a long time since I've felt this excited about the future!"

"When you grow up and can take care of yourself to some extent, you'll have a lot more fun. Right now there are a lot of things you have to endure and work hard for, even if it's harsh, there's definitely fun things waiting for you in the future... So, let's do our best."

When I smiled at her, Erika-chan quickly dropped her gaze back to the penguin.

"Yeah. I'm looking forward to it... I have to do my best..."

Erika-chan gently caressed the stuffed penguin. Her eyes looked unusually affectionate... and for a moment, I was captivated by her profile.

Chapter 10

It was July.

One month has passed since I started training Erika-chan in the necessities of everyday life.

Erika-chan is now able to hold her chopsticks correctly and eat her meals. She can arrange her own shoes and those of her friends when she comes home, as well as folding her clothes properly.

I still have much more to teach her, but she is definitely growing up step by step.

--I'm deeply moved....

In my room, I was looking at a notebook and was touched by it. This is the 'I did it' notebook. This notebook is a record of Erika-chan's growth, where she writes down every single thing she can now do.

No longer am I a mother who was watching her child grow... No, since I'm a man, shouldn't I be more of a father?

--No no, I'm not old enough to be a father, so I'll just be an older brother.

It might be a bit bad for an older brother to keep a record of his little sister's growth, but she pretended not to notice. It's not like I'm using it for anything weird, so it's probably okay.

--At this rate, by the time she's in her third year of high-school, she'll have a lot of common sense.

I opened the book at hand and thought about what I should teach Erika-chan next.

I've been reading a lot of books on manners and necessary knowledge for life lately, and I've been thinking about what I should teach Erika-chan.

The goal is for Erika-chan to become an independent adult, and I'll teach her everything she needs to know to do that... I was very enthusiastic about that.

-Knock knock

"Onii-san. It's Erika. Is it fine to come in?"

Behind the knocking, I heard Erika-chan's voice.

She used to open the door without saying a word, but she has grown so much in the past month of training. Onii-san was very deeply moved.

"Go ahead~"

I called out, and Erika-chan opened the door. Then, with an unusually serious expression, she entered my room.

"Nn? What happened?"

"Eh? What?"

"No, somehow, it's like you have a more serious expression than usual."

Erika-chan's sharp eyes glittered. I wonder if she's planning to have a serious fight with some yankee.

Then Erika-chan sat upright on the floor and tapped the floor in front of her knees.

"Onii-san. I need to talk to you. Please sit down."

"Eh?"

"Just sit down."

The kind of pressure exerted by not saying anything, something unique to yankees. I can't believe it's the same person as the beautiful girl who was lovingly caressing the stuffed penguin before.

"Yes... what is it?"

--Is she perhaps angry with me?

I don't remember doing anything to make her angry, but it still made me anxious. But since there was no reason to go against her, I obediently sat upright in front of Erika-chan.

Erika-chan, who was facing me, stared straight at me, and then started talking.

"I've been thinking about something... for a long time."

"Nn?"

"On how to stay with Onii-san forever."

"Nnn?"

I couldn't figure out what she meant, and my eyebrows naturally wrinkled.

--What did you just say? Did you say you wanted to stay with me forever?

It was so sudden that my brain couldn't process it.

Then, while I was in a daze, Erika suddenly grabbed me by the shoulders.

With that force, I fell backwards.

--I was being pushed down by Erika-chan.

Erika-chan looked down at me with serious eyes. Erika-chan's dangling blonde hair touched my cheek and tickled a little.

"...What? What's wrong?"

My voice was unusually tense and stiff as I asked this question. My mouth was suddenly dry.

I couldn't hide my confusion and didn't know what to say. As I was looking pathetic, Erika-chan silently looked down at me.

Then, suddenly, Erika-chan said with a stiff expression.

"I'll follow you for the rest of my life!! Aniki!! Please take me as your underling!!"

My brain couldn't keep up with all the processing, but finally it had stopped. It was an error.

--Nn? Follow me for the rest of your life? Underling?

What is this yankee girl suddenly talking about?

I've been spending more and more time with Erika-chan lately, and I thought I was slowly getting used to her unpredictable thought process.

However, I had never thought that she would say something like this.

My brain, which had been frozen for a while, finally found the right words to respond.

"Aniki... I'm not taking any underlings though?"

"Really!?"

"I mean, I'm not a yankee..."

"I see, that is true... Then, then..."

Erika-chan was desperately pondering something.

More importantly, I wondered why I was pushed down. I was perplexed and couldn't understand the reasoning behind it.

This is the first time I've seen Erika-chan from this angle. Or rather, it's the first time I've ever looked up at someone like this.

I didn't know what to do, so I could only watch Erika mumbling and worrying. I waited for a while, and then suddenly, Erika-chan opened her eyes wide.

"That's right, let's become a married couple! I want to get married! Please marry me!"

"Haaa!?"

As expected, I immediately understood what she meant this time. Immediately, a baffled voice came out of my mouth.

"Marriage!? With me!? Why!?"

"I'm an immature person. I've always been a hopeless person. I'm sure everyone around me knows how hopeless I am. Yet, despite knowing how hopeless I am, no one tried to help me. But, Onii-san was different. You tried to change me. Onii-san is the person who made me grow as a person! That's why I want to be with you forever, and I was thinking about how to do that."

I could tell from Erika-chan's serious eyes that this was no joke. The Erika-chan of a few months ago would have burst out laughing and made fun of me for getting flustered.

But I know that Erika-chan, who has been working hard, would never joke like this with a serious expression.

"A-Are you serious...?"

Just in case, I asked to confirm.

"I'm serious. If you don't believe me... I'll show you that I'm ready to give my all to you."

Erika said, straddling my abdomen, and started to take off her uniform...

"--Wait wait wait! I get that you're serious! That's why for now, please keep your clothes on!!"

I caught a glimpse of Erica's stomach, and my face got hot. I mean, I should hurry up and get her off me.

I don't know where to start. I guess I should calm Erika down first. And when Erika settles down, I hope I can settle down too.

"You know... Erika-chan. It's not that easy to get married. There is an order to these things."

"Order...? Ah, I got it! Marriage certificate!! Alright! I'll get it right now! Should I go to the police station!?"

"Wait! I beg of you, don't go to the police station for that!"

Erika-chan lightly backed away from me and was about to run to the door. I hastily took her hand and held her back.

"The marriage certificate is in the city hall! No, before that, that's not what I meant by the order, shouldn't the person you marry usually have to be in a relationship with you as a lover for some time?"

"You mean going out? Then, let's start going out!"

I like Erika-chan. But this feeling of liking is not that of a romantic feeling for the opposite gender. It's more like brother-sister love or family love.

I don't want to hurt Erika-chan, who is very important to me... I have to say this carefully.

"...I'm sorry. I only think of Erika-chan as an important little sister. That's why... I can't respond to your feelings."

When I said this, Erika-chan intently stared at me.

I felt like running away so I looked away. But, Erika-chan kept on staring at me.

"...You don't hate me, right?"

Erika-chan asked suddenly, and I honestly nodded my head.

"Yeah... I don't hate you."

"I see, alright. That means from now I- So it's fine if I show Onii-san how much I like you, and make you like me as the opposite gender, isn't it?"

Erika smiled fearlessly.

I have a bad feeling about this.

--Don't tell me... she hasn't given up at all!?

My hunch seemed to be right on target, and Erika said confidently.

"I got it! Tomorrow, I'll pour all my heart and soul into it! So just wash your neck and wait for what's to come!!" [TLN: basically a JP proverb about waiting for what is to come/or literally waiting for your beheading.]

I froze for a moment because of her excessively sharp parting threat.

"No, why the heck should I wash my neck!?"

I thought you were going to make an effort to make me like you. Now it feels like you're full of spirit to bring me down resentfully.

"Nn? Speaking of, why wash your neck? If you wash your neck, it feels like you can just wash your whole body. I use it a lot, but Japanese is sometimes very cryptic..."

"You know, washing your head means preparing to be beheaded. Which means, you should be prepared to be punished or sanctioned. Please don't just use the saying that much without knowing its meaning!!

"Seriously! That's pretty dangerous!!"

When I saw Erika-chan laughing in astonishment, I let out a deep sigh.

I wondered how this Yankee JK, whose Japanese language skills were questionable, was going to tell me all about her feelings for me and win me over.

As I looked at Erika-chan, who was brimming with mysterious motivation and confidence, I felt anxious about the future.

Chapter 11

It was the middle of July.

Early afternoon at the National S University.

The student cafeteria was crowded with hungry students looking for lunch. I was also eating a beef bowl to satisfy my appetite.

At the same table were Hoshino and Tokunaga, who were also in the same faculty of education as me, and they were eating the same beef bowl as me.

"I was dumped by my girlfriend."

Suddenly, Hoshino said with a serious face.

"I finally got into a healthy relationship with a cute JK and was raising my likability, but she got mad at me for following her friend with my eyes and dumped me."

"You're dating a human being, don't talk about likability like it's a game. I mean, if you were transparently eyeing other girls, it's obvious that she'd dump you."

I obviously retorted at Hoshino, who was making a face as if he was asking if he did something wrong. Why is Hoshino such a fool despite being good-looking and good at studying?

Then Hoshino quickly repositioned his glasses with his index finger.

"Damn... if I knew it was going to be like this, I should've immediately made it into an unhealthy relationship..."

"Go stand under a waterfall and wash away all your worldly desires."

I wish you didn't make a scummy statement with a cool face like that.

I felt pity for Hoshino, who couldn't be normal, even though he would be popular if he was normal.

"I wonder if I should stop looking for a girlfriend and live a withered life like Kamijō..."

With those words, Hoshino rested his cheek on his hands and started eating his beef bowl.

"You shouldn't rest your cheek on your hands while eating. Also I don't have a withered life, I'm just dormant... at least I used to be."

In the process of admonishing Hoshino for his rudeness, I ended up slurring my words. I recalled Erika-chan proposing to me.

Tokunaga, who had been engrossed in his beef bowl, as if he had noticed my complex expression, asked me.

"Nn? What is it? You sound like something happened. Maybe you've found a girl you like?"

"Umm... I'm not the one who fell in love though..."

"What!? Did someone fall in love with Kamijō!?"

In response to my words, Hoshino shouted loudly. I wanted him to stop overreacting, because it's rude, but more than that, I wanted him to stop making noise in the cafeteria. The female students at the nearby table were glancing at our table.

"What? Who is it?"

Tokunaga leaned forward and questioned

When I answered, "My sister's friend," Hoshino shouted once again, "So a JK!?"

"Hoshino, I beg of you, just shut up and eat your beef bowl."

I picked up a chunk of meat from Hoshino's beef bowl with my chopsticks and shoved it into his mouth. Hoshino silently ate it.

"Well, well~? So then, how is it now? Do you want to go out with her?"

Tokunaga said to me while smirking.

"Honestly, I have only thought of her as a little sister, so I rejected her. And now she's ferociously appealing..."

I didn't want him to overreact, so I omitted the part where she suddenly proposed to me.

"Eh? What kind of ferocious appeal?"

As if he was very curious about the phrase 'ferocious appeal', Tokunaga leaned even further forward.

"Firstly... she wrote me love letters... lots of them."

I decided to tell them about the day after the proposal.

Erika-chan brought a large number of love letters with her that day. Perhaps she ran out of cute writing paper, but the love messages were written on the back of school printouts and even on the back of commercial flyers. I was surprised to find out that Erika-chan had such passionate feelings for me, but...

"...When I read them, I was taken aback. The contents were a bit weak, and it was full of misspellings and scribbled out letters. It was the first time I saw someone make the mistake of writing the character for 'strange' instead of 'love' in 'I fell in love', and the character for 'love' in 'I love you' has a high stroke count, so it was written in a messy way to gloss over it."

[TLN: ok... where do we begin... The first mistake she made was writing '変'(kanji for strange) instead of '恋'(kanji for love), the second was about the strokes in '愛']

As I was explaining the love letter I got from Erika-chan, Tokunaga frowned.

"Don't tell me, you... Did you point those out in front of the person herself?"

"Eh? I did though? I checked it with a red pen."

"You total idiotttttt! You really don't understand anything about a woman's heart! This is why amateur romantics are unpopular!"

This time, it was Tokunaga who shouted. It's pretty painful to be shouted at as an 'amateur romantic' in the school cafeteria.

"I can't help it! It's my ambition to become a Japanese teacher! I love the beautiful Japanese language! I can't just ignore it when it's wrong!"

As I justified my actions, Hoshino, who had finished chewing his meat, joined the conversation.

"So? What was that JK's reaction?"

"Eh? Ah, she practiced writing kanji and happily learnt how to write '愛' properly though?"

When I carefully taught her how to write, Erika-chan obediently practiced. She then handed me a piece of paper with the phrase, 'I love you' written neatly on it, saying, 'This is for the real thing then.'

"What's with that extinct species of naturally positive JK... If you showed up in front of me, I would've made you happy instead of making you do something pathetic like that..."

Hoshino held his hand to his forehead as he listened to me.

Tokunaga nodded in agreement with Hoshino.

"So? Leaving aside the Japanese teaching, did you reply to her love letter?"

Tokunaga asked me with a serious face.

"No... I just received it and said 'thank you' though..."

When I answered, Hoshino's eyes widened.

"Why though!? Do you only teach how to correct love letters or something!? Reply to her properly!"

"I've already told her that I can't go out with her because I think of her like my little sister. So how am I supposed to respond to someone who writes me love letters even when I refuse?"

Erika-chan was so naive that she wouldn't have been able to do anything if I hadn't advised her. It was my brother's heart that wanted to do something for her.

When I imagined going out with Erika-chan, hugging her, and eventually kissing her... I felt kind of guilty.

He must have noticed the subtle expression on my face. Tokunaga looked at me and smiled calmly.

"Well, Kamijō is just too serious. Your biggest concern is that she's a JK isn't it? If so, you can ask her to wait until she's no longer a JK. If that happens, then maybe Kamijō will be able to see her as a member of the opposite gender."

It's true that what I'm most concerned about is the fact that Erika-chan is still in high school. Is it fine for me to make it clear that it's impossible until she graduates?

As expected of Tokunaga, who has a high level of love. Thanks to him, I think I know how to explain it to Erika-chan.

My heart felt a little lighter.

However, Hoshino frowned

"It's weird that you'd prefer her to not be a JK..."

"You need to be more self-restraining."

After retorting to Hoshino's questionable comment, I started eating the rest of my beef bowl.

That evening.

When I came home and went to my room, I found Erika-chan lying on my bed for some reason. She even went to the trouble of covering herself with a futon and was completely relaxed.

"Welcome back~. Onii-san."

Erika-chan looked happy as usual. I was a little relieved to see her like that

I was worried about Erika-chan after Hoshino and the others lambasted my handling of her love letters today. I was wondering what would happen if Erika-chan was actually shocked...But it seems that concern was unnecessary.

I scratched my head and spoke to Erika.

"I'm back. Um... Erika-chan. That's my bed..."

"If you want to use it, why not use it with me? Here..."

Saying that, she rolled up the futon. Erika-chan beckoned me to join her on the bed. Her shirt was unbuttoned more than usual. Her cleavage and light purple bra were slightly visible.

--She's definitely doing it on purpose...

Instantly, my brain ordered me and said, "No looking! She has no awareness!"

"Nn? What's wrong? Onii-san. Your face is red, you know? If you have a fever, why don't you sleep with me?"

"Thanks for your concern. But I have to write a report for university, so I don't have time to sleep."

"Eeh~? Aren't you straining your body too much~?"

"Don't worry about it."

If I seriously keep her company, I'll be doing exactly what she wants.

I went to my desk and started preparing my report. As I was about to start up my computer, I saw Erika-chan's figure creeping up behind me reflected on the black screen.

Erika-chan tightly snuggled up to my back and peered over my shoulder at the computer. Something warm and soft was pressed against my back. Naturally, it was impossible for me not to feel them.

[PR: WOOO]

"Are you going to write that report on the computer?"

"That's right."

"Amazing... You look cool like an adult man."

If someone called me cool next to my ears, it's natural that my body temperature would rise. It's a physiological reaction, regardless of my will.

"Huh? Onii-san, your ears are red, you know? Wouldn't it be better to rest with me on the bed after all?"

"If you're worried about my ears turning red, could you please stop whispering in my ear? Also while you're at it, I'd appreciate it if you moved away from me...."

I was unconsciously speaking in a polite manner.

"I don't wanna. It somehow feels good and warm clinging to Onii-san. I don't wanna move away..." [TLN: once again there's no way i did this justice, so imagine it about 15 million times cuter.]

This time, Erika-chan put her arms around me from behind and hugged me tightly.

The closeness increased.

"Um Erika-chan. I can't move my arms."

"I'll let you go if you marry me."

"Erika, about that, I'm definitely not going out with you until you graduate from high school."

"Why not? Why not while I'm in high school?"

Erika-chan pouted.

"That's because... you're still a child in high school. You can't do a lot of things then..."

"What do you mean by 'a lot of things'~?"

"T-that is... like kissing..."

At that moment, I felt something soft on my cheek.

I was so surprised that I was speechless.

"Haa? Even high schoolers can kiss just fine though~?"

The lips that touched my cheek were smiling happily.

Seeing this, something inside me snapped.

I stood up abruptly from my chair, and Erika-chan looked up at me with a slightly surprised expression. I stared down at Erika-chan in silence, and then closed in on her. Surprised by my unexpected action, Erika backed away and was driven against the wall.

I trapped Erika between my body and the wall and put my face close to hers.

"Don't tease an adult too much. You may think I can't do anything about it because I don't have any experience in love, but a man can act on instinct if he wants to."

When I said it in a lower voice than usual, Erika-chan's face turned red. Her neck and the skin peeking out from the chest of her shirt became beautifully crimson. Because her original skin tone was white, I could see the change clearly.

Erika-chan's reddened face and moistened eyes were quite a sight to behold. But this was just a performance. I wasn't trying to be serious at all.

I immediately moved away from her and patted her on the head.

'You're like a little sister to me, so I'll get along with you as much as you want, so cool your head a bit.'

I said, and Erika pursed her lips in frustration. Her face was still red and her eyes were still moist.



--I may have gone a little overboard.

As I was reflecting on whether I had scared her too much, Erika-chan suddenly grabbed me by the collar.

Erika-chan pulled me closer, and her lips met with mine.

"-Baka. There's no way I can cool down after that. Rather... I'm burning up."

Her eyes sparkled sharply.

Not good. These are not the eyes of someone who has given up.

Erika-chan quickly let go of my hand and left the room.

"Well then, see you later~"

Erika-chan said as usual, as she left the room. Since she didn't look back my way, I couldn't tell what sort of expression she had.

"I'm beaten..."

I muttered in the room I was left alone in.

I was trying to force her to give up, but it looks like I instead kindled a fire inside of her.

Even though it was already too late now, I recalled the feeling of Erika-chan's lips, and my face grew hotter.

"You're like a sister to me so... Don't make my heart pound like this..."

I was now a little more conscious of Erika-chan, and it was kind of frustrating.

Chapter 12

A certain day in August. The city I live in, was experiencing sweltering heat day after day.

Students were now on summer vacation. I was busy with my part-time job as a private tutor, so I was working from morning till night most days.

Sometimes when I was at home, Erika-chan would ask me to teach her something. I had been dodging Erika-chan's approach and teaching her things that would help her in her daily life.

No matter how much I rejected, fled, or dodged, Erika-chan never stopped approaching me. Erika-chan seemed to be enjoying the whole series of communications.

One day after a long day like that.

I had a day off from my part-time job and I was unusually home for lunch when I saw Mana and Erika-chan in the living room.

"I'm home."

"Ah, welcome back. Aniki."

"....."

Mana said, "Welcome home," but Erika didn't say anything. And on top of that, she didn't even make eye contact with me.

"...What happened?"

When I asked Mana, she replied dully, "Yeah...wait," and glanced towards Erika-chan. It seems that she was worried about whether or not it was fine to say it.

But Erika-chan kept quiet and didn't say anything.

Something seemed to have happened, but perhaps it was best not to mention it. With that in mind, I tried to talk about something cheerful.

"Oh yeah, Erika-chan. Since it's summer vacation, do you want to go to the aquarium again?"

Erika-chan reacted with a twitch.

"Now that you say it, Erika and you went to the aquarium together before didn't you? I would like to go too though~."

Mana said sulkingly.

"Okay, okay. Then let's all go together, and invite Runa-chan and Arisa-chan too!"

I said generously.

And then suddenly, Erika-chan stood up.

"Sorry... Mana, as expected I'll just go home."

"Eh? Erika? Perhaps, did you want to go alone with Aniki?"

"That's not it!!"

Unusually, Erika-chan raised her voice.

I didn't expect her to deny it so strongly. Even Mana had a surprised expression.

"Sorry..."

Erika-chan said awkwardly, and left the living room.

Mana and I were frozen in the living room. We heard the sound of a door opening and then closing at the front door. The sound of footsteps pitter-pattering outside soon faded from my ears.

I apologized to Mana.

"Sorry... Somehow, maybe I brought up the wrong topic?"

"...I don't really understand, but perhaps, she was at her breaking point..."

Mana's expression was dark and somber.

"What happened to Erika-chan?"

"...During summer vacation, there's no school, right? That's why, the time you spend at home also increases, right?"

"Yeah..."

Earlier, Mana had been wondering if she should say it in front of Erika-chan, but now she started explaining to me without hesitation.

"Her mom's boyfriend stays at home all day long, so it's hard for her to stay at home. Her mom has work at night, and just sleeps alone during the day. That's why, while Erika was alone with her mom's boyfriend during the day, her stress accumulated... This morning, she had a big quarrel with her mom's boyfriend."

"I see... so that's why she came to our house?"

"Yeah. She was in a horrible mood, so I was trying to calm her down. Then Aniki came home but..."

"You mean Erika-chan's mood got worse when I came back?"

Erika-chan usually takes the initiative to get involved with me. We had a good relationship on a day to day basis, although it was a little chaotic with the fact that we didn't go out with each other.

It was the first time that she hadn't looked at me, and simply avoided any contact with me.

"It was the first time I heard Erika talk like that..."

It seemed that Mana was also shocked to see that sort of reaction from her for the first time.

There were tears in Mana's eyes, and her lips were trembling a little.

"Aniki... what, what should I do? I-I want to be helpful to Erika..."

"Mana..."

"Even now, I still remember it vividly. During junior high, the day that Erika first talked to me..."

Mana cried a little and told me about the day she first met Erika-chan.

It was the day when her classmates were scribbling insulting abuse on her desk, teasing the plain and docile Mana. When a shocked Mana went to the rooftop to jump off, she found Erika-chan, who looked like a blonde angel. Erika tossed a piece of chocolate from her pocket into Mana's crying mouth...

It was the first time I heard Mana talk about the day she met Erika-chan, and my chest tightened.

"I was surprised that she brought chocolate to school, but I was even more surprised that it tasted so weird. And when I said, 'It doesn't taste good,' Erika burst out laughing... I even started laughing so hard, that I forgot I was going to jump off the roof..."

While crying, Mana suddenly laughed as if she remembered.

"She invited me and said, 'You, you don't enjoy school, do you? Wanna skip with me?' ... Aah, that's when I realized that I didn't have to put up with what happened in the classroom, and there were other places I could stay in. If Erika wasn't there at that time... maybe, if she didn't talk to me back then... I probably wouldn't be here today."

"...I'm grateful to Erika-chan. She saved Mana's life. She gave you the strength to change yourself."

"That's right. Even if I didn't die, I don't think I'd have gone to high school. I would just hole myself up at home forever..."

Mana wiped her own tears with her hand.

Then, with a strong look, she pleaded with me.

"That's why, if Erika is in trouble, I want to help her. This time, I want to be the one who saves Erika! Aniki! Please lend me your strength!"

I had no reason to refuse.

I immediately nodded vigorously.

"Alright. I want to help Erika-chan too. I'll cooperate."

"Thank you... Aniki."

It's thanks to Erika-chan that Mana and I are able to talk face to face like this. If it's for the sake of my sister's beloved friend, I'll gladly lend my strength.

--No, that's not all. Erika-chan is very important to me, and I want to help her too.

I clenched my fists tightly.

"So, for now let's split up and look for Erika-chan. If she's in trouble at home, she won't return home."

"That's right. I'm going to look for her in the city, around the places where people often hang out."

"Alright. Then, I'll start looking for her in vacant lots and parks around here."

"OK. I'll leave it to you."

Mana grabbed her phone and headed for the door. I made sure my phone was in my bag too, and headed for the door.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon. I had missed lunch, but that didn't matter. I was so worried about Erika-chan that I couldn't afford to go eat lunch.

When we both opened the front door, the hot air rushed into the house.

"Hot..."

An irritated murmur escaped from my mouth as I stepped outside.

The August sunlight mercilessly shone on me.

I'm dizzy. I feel like I'm going to be drenched in sweat soon.

But I can't let something as trivial as that stop me.

"Mana. Make sure to rehydrate properly and be careful of heat stroke. If you get sick, call me right away."

"Roger. Erika... I hope you're somewhere cool..."

"Yeah..."

If someone is wandering around in such hot weather because there is no place to stay, they will get sick even if they are young. There is even a risk of losing your life.

Mana and I ran off in different directions. Mana went towards the station. I headed toward the residential area.

In the direction I was heading, there were a few small vacant lots and a large public park.

When I was little, I had fights with my parents and ran away from home many times. So I had several candidates in mind for a place where she would go to be alone and calm herself down.

--I wish you'd be around here...

I really wanted to be the first to find her. I want to find her and listen to her. I want to ask her why she's angry.

I ran down the road under the blazing sun, praying that I would find Erika-chan.

The first lot... she's not there. The next one... she's not there either.

Eventually, as I approached the park, the sound of cicadas became louder.

The cicadas were chirping so loudly and I couldn't understand what they were trying to say. It sounded like they were trying to invite me there, but it also sounded like they were refusing to let me come here.

But it didn't matter what the cicadas were saying to me.

Without hesitation, I stepped into the park and entered the shade of a tree.

It was cool.

There were several large trees in the park, which blocked the direct sunlight. That alone made a huge difference in the temperature I felt.

I wiped the sweat off my face with the sleeve of my shirt and checked to see if Erika-chan was there.

The swings. A slide. A seesaw. A jungle gym.

There were no children playing because of the heat, and the playground equipment looked lonely.

Benches. Water fountain. A toilet.

There was no sign of people anywhere.

--Ah, that's right. The clay pipe that I used to hide in, must be at the outskirts of the park.

A large clay pipe in the shade of a tree. On the other side of the fence, there is an old, tattered house, and the area has an ominous atmosphere that keeps kids away.

But the clay pipe was my favorite hiding place.

I could even hide inside there from the rain and wind most of the time. In winter, my bottom got a little cold, but it was warmer than being in the open air. In summer, the coldness of the clay pipe was so comfortable that I sometimes fell asleep while hiding there. It is a place filled with many memories.

I peeked inside and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Erika-chan..."

I called out. Then a shadow moved in the dimly lit hole.

Then a beautiful blonde girl looked up at me.

Chapter 13

Even under the blazing sun, the clay pipe in the shade of the park was a little cool and pleasant to touch.

Erika-chan was sweating a little, her face was bright red but she didn't look like she was about to collapse.

"I'll go get a drink now, so wait there."

I said that and headed for the vending machine in the park. I bought two bottles of drinking water for the two of us and quickly returned to the clay pipe.

"Here you go."

I put the bottle inside the pipe and Erika-chan took it.

With Erika-chan inside the clay pipe, I stayed outside and leaned against the tube to rehydrate. Then I called out to Erika.

"Mana and I were looking for you. I'll let her know that I found you."

As I fiddled on my phone, I heard a voice from inside.

"It's okay to tell her that but... don't tell her where we are."

"...Alright."

I replied and called Mana.

"Ah, Mana? Yeah, I found Erika-chan... yeah. Right. So I'm gonna talk a bit more with Erika-chan, then I'll take her home, so just wait at home... Yeah. My bad. Then..."

As I hung up the phone, Erika spoke to me.

"Did Mana tell you? About what happened today?"

"Yeah."

"I see..."

That was the end of the conversation.

How should I start the conversation? I was a little lost.

Even though our conversation stopped, the chattering cicada's voice didn't stop. I wondered what the heck they were screaming about. I listened to the cicada's conversation for a while, but then I decided that it was no use being like that so I started talking to Erika-chan.

"...Hey, Erika-chan. Why did you become a yankee?"

"...Eh?"

"Ah, no... I don't really know much about Erika-chan so... I was wondering what your motivation was to become a yankee."

"Hee~, you're interested in my history?"

I thought Erika-chan laughed a little inside the clay pipe.

"I am."

I answered clearly.

Silence fell.

But after a while, Erika-chan spoke up in a quiet voice.

"In order to talk about it, I'll have to start with my background..."

"Is it okay to ask about it?"

"Umm... Well, whatever. It's Onii-san after all."

She seemed to be a little hesitant, but Erika-chan agreed. Then she began to speak in an indifferent manner.

"My mom used to work in a hostess club when she was young, and she was popular in her own way. So she moved from one man to another and accidentally gave birth to me."

Erika-chan's tone was light, as if she was talking about the TV show she watched last night.

"So my mom doesn't know who my father is, but she doesn't want to do a DNA test. She has zero interest in me from the beginning. She doesn't think I'm cute, and she wishes she never had me. I'm sure... that she has no reason for giving birth to me."

"I see..."

"I think she was waiting for me to die in the wild. But I was lucky, and a neighbor auntie took good care of me, so I was able to live without any problems. The worst was... when I was 10 and had a high fever..."

"Go on..."

Indicating that I was still paying attention, I urged her to go on with her story.

"When my mom found out I had a fever, she didn't come home for three days. I guess she was waiting for me to die. I was so disappointed at that time, and... frustrated. I was so frustrated that I was determined to live. I decided that I would survive and be so happy that she would envy me."

After her miraculous recovery, Erika-chan stopped staying at home quietly and started to roam around outside. Then she talked about how she started hanging around with some older Onee-sans.

"Those Onee-sans, were they yankees?"

I asked, and Erika gave a small laugh.

"I didn't know they were Yankees at the time, I just thought of them as cool Onee-sans. But I became a yankee while I was hanging out with them, so I guess they were yankees."

"I see... Erika-chan, you've met some good people."

When I said that, Erika-chan asked me after a short pause.

“Onii-san, you’re serious yet you’re not repulsed by the yankees. Why?”

“Umm... if you ask me why...”

I looked up at the trees and answered.

“To be honest, I am a little scared of yankees. If someone who looked like a yankee came to my house, I’d get nervous and get scared when they talk to me. But I can accept Mana’s friends, regardless of whether they are yankees or not, and if they are yankees who gave Erika-chan a place to belong, I think they must be good people.”

“That’s why I... like Onii-san.”

Her voice sounded a little like she was crying, and I rushed to look inside the clay pipe.

“Erika-chan...”

“Onii-san.”

The timing of my call to Erika-chan and her attempt to talk to me coincided. I held my tongue, trying to listen to what Erika-chan had to say.

I kept my mouth shut and peered into the earthen pipe, and Erika-chan stared at me.

“About earlier, I’m sorry. Even though Onii-san invited me to go to the aquarium again... I must’ve made you feel bad.”

She looked at me with anxious eyes. I smiled at Erika-chan to reassure her.

“It’s fine. I should be the one to be sorry. Did I say something to upset you?”

“No, it’s not Onii-san’s fault... It’s my... It’s my fault...”

Tears fell from Erika-chan’s eyes.

“The stuffed penguin that Onii-san bought me... that guy threw it away. Even though I said I’d cherish it... Even though I said I’d cherish it more than anything! But, I couldn’t cherish it properly. I should’ve taken more care of it, so that guy wouldn’t have thrown it away...!” [TLN: I’m gonna throw hands] [ED: So you’ve chosen death...]

Large drops of tears were falling from her eyes.

“That guy... your mom’s boyfriend?”

“Yeah... that guy... on his own...”

I remembered the day when Erika-chan and I went to the aquarium. And how she was hugging her stuffed penguin with love and care.

The stuffed penguin was a special one that Erika-chan had picked out at the gift shop. She chose it from among the many different kinds of penguin goods, and also from the crowd of stuffed animals with the same face, after much deliberation.

She must have cherished it even after she got home.

“I slept with it everyday. That stuffed penguin was so warm, that I could even bear with that guy’s unbearable presence! I thought that I would never lose to his disgusting gaze! I’m sorry... Onii-san. I’m so sorry...”

The cause of this morning’s quarrel was apparently because her mom’s boyfriend had arbitrarily thrown away Erika-chan’s precious stuffed penguin. The reason why she wouldn’t make eye contact with me when I came home, and the reason why Erika’s demeanor changed when I mentioned the aquarium, was because she felt bad for me. Finally, I understood everything.

I could feel something welling up in my chest.

I want to give Erika a hug right now. I wanted to hug Erika right now, but I felt like I shouldn’t go that far with her yet, so I held back.

Then, I calmly suggested.

“Let’s go shopping again. You can look at all the penguins and choose another stuffed one.”

“But they don’t have the same stuffed animal. That was the only penguin that I bought when I went to the aquarium for the first time with Onii-san...”

“...You cherished it that much, didn’t you? Thank you. Next time we go to the aquarium, I’ll buy you a second one. We’ll find another one who can be of help to Erika-chan.”

“...Is that really okay?”

“Of course it is.”

I reached out my hand to Erika-chan.

Erika, who had been crying, took my hand in her thin hand.

It was a delicate, soft hand. I felt like I might break it if I held it too tightly, so I gently and slowly led her outside.

“Let’s go home for now. Mana is worried about you. Then we’ll eat and calm down. I’m actually quite hungry.”

When I said that, Erika-chan giggled.

“Sorry... I ran out immediately after Onii-san came home didn’t I? Did you come looking for me without eating first?”

“There’s no way I would be able to swallow my meals while worrying about my precious Erika-chan... Seriously, I was really worried, you know.”

I patted Erika-chan’s head. As I continued to lightly stroke her head, I felt the temperature of her head suddenly rise.

When I looked at her, I saw that Erika-chan’s face was bright red.

“Nn!? Erika-chan!? Your face is bright red, are you okay!?”

I panicked.

“It might be a heat stroke!”

“Haa!? I’m fine! It’s definitely not a heatstroke! My face can turn red even without a heat stroke! It’s fine so let’s go home! Mana’s waiting for us!”

Erika-chan left me behind and strolled out of the park. Judging by the way she walked so briskly, she might not really have heat stroke.

I chased after Erika-chan, and soon we were side by side.

“And so... Erika-chan.”

“What? Is something still wrong?”

When I spoke to her, Erika-chan glared at me. It felt like she had ‘Don’t worry about me too much’ written on her face.

“It’s not that...”

“So what is it?”

“You should stay over at our place for a while. I’ll talk to your mom for you.”

Erika-chan stopped in her tracks.

"Are you going to meet my mother?"

Erika-chan's eyebrows were furrowed as she looked at me with concern.

"Yeah. I'll talk to her properly so you can stay over for summer vacation. I'm sure Mana would be happy, and my parents would agree as well."

"I... I'll go with you."

"Is that fine?"

"It's okay... Onii-san, you're doing your best for me. So I want to do my best together with you."

"Alright. Then, let's go together."

Erika-chan squeezed my hand as we began to walk. It may not be normal for two people who are not lovers to hold hands. But today, I felt like holding hands with her.

Chapter 14

In the strong sunshine that scorched everything, Erika-chan and I returned home while holding hands.

Our entwined hands were wet with sweat. But we didn't say a word as we headed to my house, still holding hands.

When we finally arrived and opened the front door of my house, Mana was already at the door. She seemed to have noticed us coming home and was waiting for us.

"Geez! You're late! Do you have any idea how worried I was!?"

Mana angrily handed us each a towel. It was a cold wet towel. When I pressed it against my face, the cool water soaked through my hot skin.

Erika-chan buried her face into the wet towel and shouted.

"What the heck this feels goooood~"

Mana then said in a slightly pissed off tone.

"I expected you two to come back home bathed in sweat, so I put the cool towels in the fridge in advance!"

I thanked Mana.

"Thank you, Mana! You're so thoughtful..."

"You're welcome! It's all thanks to Aniki's upbringing! A long time ago, one day when I came home drenched in sweat from my club activities, I remember Aniki preparing it for me like this!"

Mana was a member of the softball tennis club from the first year of junior high school until she stopped going to school. I remember preparing these cooling towels for Mana when she would come home from summer practice with her face all red.

With my sister's fine play, our sweating soon stopped and we went to our respective rooms to change our clothes.

Then we went to the living room to have a late lunch. At the table, Erika was wearing a simple black T-shirt and loose shorts. She seemed to have borrowed some of Mana's clothes.

"I knew you two would come home hungry, so I had it ready for you! Be thankful and eat up!"

Mana put her homemade sandwiches on the table. It looked so good that I was practically drooling just by looking at it.

"Aaaaaaaah Manaa~. You're the best little sister..."

"I didn't have anything else to do! If I didn't do something, I'd just be worrying uselessly!"

Erika-chan apologized to Mana, who was still pissed.

"I'm sorry... Mana. For making you worry."

"I'm glad as long as you're safe. And then, what did you talk about that it took so long?"

I answered Mana's question.

"Actually after this, I'm planning to go along with Erika-chan to her house."

"Eh?"

Mana was surprised.

"I was thinking of keeping Erika-chan at our place for the summer vacation. I'm going to talk to her mother."

"Really? That's great~!"

"I don't know if Erika-chan's mother will say yes or no, or how she'll react, but I'll try to convince her."

"Can't we just let her stay here without telling her?"

"I don't want to get in trouble later for taking her daughter in without permission. Besides, she needs to go home at least once. Erika-chan definitely has some things she wants to bring with her. A change of clothes, summer vacation homework."

For some reason, the moment I said 'summer vacation homework', I felt as if both their faces stiffened up. But, well it's fine. I'll just pretend that I didn't see it for now.

"Hold on... can I not come with you?"

Mana timidly asked me.

"I'll keep my mouth shut so that Aniki won't be at a disadvantage. I just want to be with Erika."

Understanding Mana's concern for her, I asked Erika-chan.

"What should we do? Is it fine for Mana to come along?"

"Yeah. It's fine... I'll be happy if Mana is there with me."

Erika-chan looked at Mana with a bashful expression.

The two of them had a small smile on their faces.

We ate our sandwiches and drank our tea in one gulp.

After the meal, the willpower surged up from the bottom of our stomachs.

After placing my hands together and saying, "Thank you for the meal," I stood up.

"Well then, let's get going. Boss fight."

Hearing my words, Erika and Mana nodded.

I was full of motivation.

It was 3:30 in the afternoon. The day is not over yet.

Mana and I went to the same junior high school, and Erika's house is in the same city. We went to different elementary schools, but it was still relatively close.

The three of us walked under the blazing sun again.

If we had a car, we would have been able to go out in a car with the air conditioning on full blast. It's a shame that I don't have a car or a driver's license. I may have to consider getting a driver's license in the future.

That was what was going on in my despairingly scorched head.

It was so hot that we were almost silent the whole time. Sometimes Erika-chan would tell me the direction to her house. But I couldn't bring myself to talk. No, it was better not to talk because it would help me conserve my energy and reduce my thirst.

We eventually arrived at the place Erika-chan led us to, a small apartment. The walls were dirty, and there were chips here and there. There was no way this place was properly managed. The adjacent dumping ground was littered with trash even though it was not trash day, indicating the low standard of living of the residents.

We each wiped our sweat off with our towels and headed for the apartment.

I pressed the doorbell next to the door that Erika-chan pointed to.

The sound of the cracked bell rang out.

.....But no one answered.

"Are they not at home?"

I asked Erika-chan covertly.

"No, she's definitely here. She's just not using the answering machine because it's too much trouble."

"I see. Well, I guess I have no other choice..."

I had no choice but to hit the doorbell repeatedly. After about a minute of continuous ringing, the door finally opened.

"What's going on~?"

As soon as the door opened, a sweet, thick, indescribable scent drifted out from inside the room.

The door was opened by a woman with brown hair and a glazed look in her eyes. She was wearing a black camisole dress and a purple shawl. Her bosom was wide open, which made it difficult for me to look at her.

I tried my best to only look at her from the neck up.

"Are you Erika-chan's mother?"

When I said that, she immediately asked, "What did she do?" Moreover, she looked annoyed.

At any rate, she seemed to be Erika-chan's mother.

"No, Erika-chan didn't do anything... Ah, before that, I'm Kamijō Tsukasa. My little sister is Erika-chan's friend..."

While I was talking, Erika's mother was just looking at her nails. Then, when she suddenly noticed Erika behind me, she exclaimed, "Ah."

"What the heck. So that's where you were. The person in question. So what? What do you want? Actually, who are you?"

--Isn't that what I was explaining to you just now!?

I screamed with all my might inside my head, but kept a smile on my face on the outside. It's fine. I anticipated this much.

"The one next to Erika-chan is my sister. She is a friend of hers. So today, I wanted to talk to you about letting Erika-chan stay over at our house for the summer vacation..."

"Stay over? Isn't that fine? Why don't you just do as you wish?"

As I was talking to her, she replied easily.

While playing with her own hair, Erika-chan's mom starts playing with her phone. She hasn't made eye contact with me since a while ago.

"...You're too casual about it."

"I'm not interested in the girl. I don't care wherever she stays over. Are you stupid enough to come and check on me every time?"

My iron smile nearly cracked.

Don't do it, don't do it... I can't stand in the same ring as her. I have to talk calmly to the very end.

At that moment, an ill-bred man walked from the back of the room.

"What's up?"

"Aah, it's Erika's friend's brother. He's letting Erika stay at his house."

"Hee? That's all he came all the way here for? What an upright Onii-chan you are~."

The man looked at me and laughed, then at Erika-chan and sneered.

"You've got a surprisingly cute personality, running away from home just because I threw away your stuffed animal."

So this is the guy who threw away Erika's beloved stuffed penguin.

I didn't mean to come here to say anything to Erika-chan's mother's lover, but I couldn't leave without saying something.

"...Why did you throw it away?"

I asked the man.

"Ah? I didn't really have a reason. It was in front of me, and I didn't need it, so I threw it away. It was like garbage. That thing."

The man scoffed. It's a crude laugh.

When I glanced at Erika, she was glaring at the man as if she was trying to avenge her parents.

"Even though you lived in the same house, haven't you seen how much Erika-chan cherished that stuffed animal?"

I was angry too. My rationale for wanting to respond calmly clashed with my instinct to vent my anger, and my expression faded to nothing.

A mother with a bad attitude even though she is greeting her child. Cruel remarks repeated in front of the person herself. On top of that, her boyfriend is a piece of trash.

I'm trying to be patient, but my anger is welling over.

"You guys... you don't know anything about Erika, do you? You don't know what Erika cares about now, what she wants to do in the future, or what she's working so hard for..."

"Future?"

Erika-chan's mother tilted her head confusingly when she heard my words.

"The girl's future is set. When she graduates from high school, she's going to get a job in the same night business, so she can pay back the money I've spent raising her."

"Come again?"

"What's that look on your face? After all that's the only use for such a hopeless child, isn't it?"

Even a Buddha gets pissed off after the third time. If a Buddha is allowed to be pissed off after the fourth time, I think I have the right to be pissed off too.

I was about to yell at her, but just then Erika-chan embraced me tightly.

"I'm going to work like a normal person and marry Onii-san! I'm never going to be like you! And I'll never do what you want!"

Erika-chan yelled at her mom while hugging me.

Erika-chan's mother and her boyfriend looked puzzled for a moment, then quickly sighed in annoyance.

Erika-chan's mother snickered at her.

"I see? Did you get seduced by this man?"

"You're wrong! Onii-san isn't like that! Don't put me in with you, who has no discerning eye for men!"

"Ah, whatever. I've got to get ready for work. You can stay with him, marry him, do whatever you want."

No matter what anyone says, Erika-chan's mother will probably always be like this.

--But, it's enough. I've done what I needed to do.

I looked at Mana. Then Mana, who is very perceptive, immediately took Erika-chan's hand and said,

"Come, Erika. Let's go get your clothes and other stuff."

"Ah, yeah..."

Mana and Erika-chan went up to her room and started to gather her belongings. Erika-chan's mother and her boyfriend stared at them. I also watched from the open doorway.

In less than five minutes, Erika-chan and Mana came out of the room with plastic bags in both hands. Erika-chan's personal belongings were peeking out of the plastic bags, packed in a messy manner.

"Aniki. Let's go. I want to get out of here as soon as possible."

Mana said.

"I feel the same way. Let's go."

I said, and Mana and Erika-chan nodded.

When I turned around to leave, the front door was already closed.

--Erika-chan has always been struggling alone in that small apartment.

I won't have to return Erika-chan to that apartment for a while. I felt a great sense of accomplishment when I thought about that.

The days are long in summer, and the sunlight does not abate even after four o'clock in the afternoon.

We were slowly making our way home, supplementing the water that was spilling out of our bodies with sports drinks from a passing vending machine.

As the tension of confronting Erika-chan's mother dissipated, I gradually felt a surge of regret. I was desperate at the time, but when I cooled down, I began to think that maybe there was something else I could have done.

I should have said something more to those two. Something that would have made them regret not properly cherishing Erika-chan..

Just by being able to keep Erika-chan in my care, I had accomplished my goal. However, I felt uncomfortable. My body was sticky with sweat, which made me feel even more uncomfortable.

However, Erika-chan's voice was cheerful and lively.

"Ah, I feel so refreshed~! Thank you, both of you~! Onii-san, you looked cool while speaking up for me! Hey hey, did you hear what my mother said? She said, 'Stay with him, marry him, do whatever you want.' I got permission to get married!"

Erika-chan's face was radiant. When I saw Erika-chan like that, the regret I had felt earlier disappeared.

--As long as Erika-chan is happy... It's fine.

My shoulders relaxed. My cheeks naturally loosened.

At that time, Mana cheerfully elbowed me.

"Oi oi Aniki~. Why don't you go out with Erika already? You need to respond to her feelings."

"Eh? Huh? Speaking of, Mana, did you know that Erika-chan liked me...?"

"Yeah, I knew it."

"From when!?"

I was flustered. Even though I hadn't told anyone else that Erika had confessed to me, or that she was approaching me fiercely...

Then Mana replied calmly.

"Eh? From when... Around the time Erika started studying various things with her Aniki?"

"That's a long time ago!"

No wonder she had no reaction when Erika-chan yelled at her mother, saying "I'm going to marry Onii-san!"

While I was astonished, Mana said in an exasperated voice.

"Because I knew that, I took care to make sure that it was only Erika and Aniki alone in the house, you know?"

"Eh? So that's the reason it's only Erika-chan who's been coming to our house lately!? Nn? Wait, don't tell me, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan know it too?"

"That's obvious, right?"

"For real!? No way!? I didn't notice it at all though!?"

Mana and Erika-chan were cackling happily.

Then as if to make fun of me, Mana said.

"Hey Aniki. You need to set Erika free from that house. Aniki cherishes Erika too, so why don't you go out and then marry her? Or do you still think of Erika as your little sister? Are you really not aware of it?"

The words were said in a light tone, but they weighed heavily on my mind.

--For me, Erika-chan is...

It brought back the emotions I felt when I saw Erika-chan crying in the clay pipe in the park.

She was like a sister to me. Yet, I couldn't answer immediately.

Chapter 15

The night that I brought Erika-chan to stay over after talking with her mom, I couldn't sleep very well, so I just lounged around on my bed.

I looked at the clock and saw that it was almost one o'clock.

I could no longer hear the sounds of joyful laughter coming from the next room. They must be tired and sleeping soundly. I was probably the only one awake in the house.

When I explained the situation to my parents, they welcomed Erika-chan with a smile. Erika-chan will be staying in Mana's room next door from tonight.

This way, I could let Erika-chan stay at our house without worrying about anything.

I felt relieved. But for some reason, I couldn't calm down.

I kept thinking about Erika-chan.

—Erika's mom was way beyond my expectations...

Erika-chan hadn't even acquired the bare minimum of manners. I imagined that her parents were probably very ill-informed of such things.

But they were much worse than I expected and to be honest, it really pissed me off...

Whenever I taught Erika-chan something, she would eagerly try her best to grasp it. She's a good girl at heart. Even so... why does Erika-chan need to suffer like that?

—She can stay over at our house for the summer vacation, but she can't do that all the time, can she...

A feeling of wanting to protect Erika welled up inside me.

I want to make Erika-chan smile. I want to make Erika-chan happy. I want her to live such a happy life, so that she can forget all the unpleasant things that have happened to her until now.

I... want to stand by her side.

—Do you still say that you see Erika as your little sister? Are you really not aware of it?

The words Mana had said to me on the way home became a refrain in my mind over and over again. I had been asking myself the same question over and over again. [TLN: A refrain is the line or lines that are repeated in music or in poetry — the “chorus” of a song. Basically that statement kept looping in his head.]

When I saw Erika-chan crying because her stuffed penguin had been thrown away, I felt that she was lovely.

She must have cherished the stuffed animal as a memory of the first day she went to the aquarium with me. What she treasured more than anything was probably her feelings for me.

I felt like hugging her. That was not a brotherly desire to comfort his sister.

—Whether she’s my little sister’s friend or a high school student, it doesn’t matter. I, am in love with Erika-chan.

It was the first time for me to be loved so honestly by someone. And—it was also the first time that I wanted to love someone so much.

I hadn’t been aware of her as a member of the opposite sex before, so I was at a loss as of what to do from now on.

What should I do when I see Erika-chan tomorrow? What should I say to her? How... do I convey my feelings to her?

No matter how I thought about it, I didn’t find a good answer very easily.

My long night seemed to go on and on.

When I suddenly realized that it was morning, the clock was pointing to seven o’clock in the morning.

The dazzling sunlight was already shining through the gap in the curtains. It was going to be another hot day.

I got up and stepped out of bed.

I fell asleep before I realized it, but I have no memory of when I fell asleep. I must have fallen asleep because my stamina went down to zero while I was struggling to sleep.

My feet were so light that I felt like I was floating from the lack of sleep. It was a weird feeling.

I headed to the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth. Erika-chan and Mana were probably still asleep. The room next door was quiet. It's probably time for my parents to go to work, so they aren't home...

While thinking about this, I opened the door to the bathroom.

“—Ah!”

Just as I was about to open the door and go inside, I heard a girl's voice.

“Eh?”

I hadn't slept well, and my brain was half asleep. I was in a daze and my vision was blurrier than usual.

I didn't notice that there was a person on the other side of the door...

I went into a state of thoughtlessness and my body stopped moving. Because of that, I couldn't take my eyes off the person who was inside.

Long, slender and beautiful legs. Smooth, white skin. Toned stomach. Wet golden hair. And above all... my eyes were drawn to her tender chest.

Erika-chan was also frozen in her position in her navy blue underwear, wiping her hair with a towel. Her eyes were wide open and her lips were quivering. Her vermilion tinted cheeks somehow made her look even more erotic.

“O-Onii-san...?”

When she called out to me in a puzzled tone, I quickly came to my senses.

“S-sorry! I'll get out immediately! —Ah!!”

In my haste to get out, I crashed into the already closed door. I hit my forehead hard and my vision was filled with sparks.

“—Oww!”

“Onii-san!? Are you okay!?”

It hurt so much that I couldn't even speak, and I actually teared up.

As I crouched down on the spot, holding my forehead in intense pain, I sensed Erika-chan coming to my side, worried about me.

“Onii-san! Look here! Let me see your wound!”

Erika-chan pulled my hand away from my forehead.

“Eh?”

When I looked up a bit from my crouched position, Erika, who was bent over on her knees on the floor, started observing my forehead at point blank range.

“...Yeah. It’s red but it hasn’t swollen yet... It made a terrible noise, but I’m glad it didn’t crack or anything...”

Erika-chan’s chest filled my field of vision as she gazed down at my forehead. It’s too much of a VIP seat. What a destructive view.

The blood in my entire body began to circulate at an unprecedented rate, bursting through the breaking point.

I felt a sharp pain in the back of my nose, and then something hot came pouring out of my nose.

“Ah...”

“Eh? A nosebleed!? Did you hit your head that badly!? Should I call an ambulance!?”

“No, um, I’m fine! I’m fine so... for now, I want you to please put on some clothes!”

I shut my eyes, held my nose, and pleaded with all my might.

“Ah... sorry.”

Erika-chan, embarrassed after she finally realized the situation, apologized.

“Why the heck is Aniki lying there with a nosebleed?”

Mana looked at me and yawned.

As I was on my bed resting, Mana finally woke up leisurely. Erika-chan was sitting next to me.

“Human beings are creatures whose blood vessels inside the nose can easily break due to the stress of physical fatigue and lack of sleep...”

I stuffed a tissue up my nose, and mumbled an explanation while casting my face down.

And then, Erika-chan easily revealed the reality that I was trying to avoid.

“In the morning, while I was taking a shower and changing my clothes, Onii-san accidentally walked in on me. He panicked and crashed into the door.”

“Eh~?”

Mana laughed, but her eyes weren’t laughing. Her face seemed to say, “What have you been doing this early in the morning?”

“I didn’t sleep properly, so I forgot to check properly. I did not have any ill intentions.”

I explained, and Mana smirked.

“Well~... isn’t it fine? You should take responsibility for it, go out with her, and marry her~”

“Ooh! Mana! You’re smart! That’s a great idea!”

Erika-chan said, “I understand,” and started clapping.

“You see... it’s important to calm down in order to stop a nosebleed. If your blood pressure rises too high, it will be difficult to stop the nosebleed... Now, please let me calm down...”

I beg of you, please leave me alone for now.

For the first time in my life, I had a nosebleed. And the reason for it was because I was staring at a girl’s chest... It was too embarrassing.

Mana, who may or may not have sensed that I was devastated, headed for the door with a yawn.

“Well whatever. For now, I’m going to go eat breakfast.”

Mana left the room. After that, I felt a little relieved.

Finally, the room became quiet.

“Are you sure you don’t want to sleep?”

Erika-chan asked me with concern.

I replied with my nose pinched and my head slightly turned down.

“The basic rule for hemostasis is to place the affected area higher than the heart. If you fall asleep, your nose will be at the same level as your heart, right”

“I see. If you are sitting, your nose is above your heart, so it is easier to stop the bleeding.”

Erika-chan nodded her head.

“Onii-san you know a lot of things, but why do you know these things? How did you learn them?”

Erika-chan asked me curiously. Erika-chan has asked me questions many times before, but today I’m acting strange. I can’t help but think Erika looks cuter than usual as she tilts her head and asks me questions.

— — This too, is an effect of my lack of sleep... probably not.

After all, I was beginning to be conscious of Erika. Not as a little sister, but as a member of the opposite sex.

I wonder if falling in love really changes the way I see the world.

My brain seems to have gone into a romantic mode, and I find myself wondering about Erika’s words and actions. I haven’t felt this way since high school, when I fell in love at first sight with a senpai on the same committee.

“...I think it’s fun to learn about things you don’t know. I read a lot of books. And then, I read a lot of articles on the Internet. Some of them may be useless for the rest of my life, and some of the information that I thought was very useful may later turn out to be misinformation. Still, I try to find out as much as I can because it might be useful to me or to someone else someday.”

I still have a long way to go. I need to study harder. To become a man who can properly protect the people I care about.

As I answered the question, I admonished myself.

Then I looked to the side and saw Erika-chan, her long legs dangling, looking at me and smiling serenely.

“Onii-san’s knowledge has really been helpful. I’ve been helped by that seriousness of yours a lot. Thank you...”

Erika-chan giggled and continued.

“If Onii-san didn’t teach me, I probably wouldn’t be able to say ‘thank you’ even now. I wouldn’t know how to hold chopsticks properly, and I wouldn’t know how to put my shoes together. I wouldn’t know how to cook, clean, or do my laundry.”

“I remember there was a time like that...”

It was only a few months ago, but I felt nostalgic.

“Have I... Have I been able to change properly?”

I still vividly remember Erika-chan saying that she wanted to be normal.

“Yeah... You’ve changed, a lot.”

When I said that, Erika-chan smiled happily

To be able to get closer to your goal. To be able to see the appearance of such a person, and support them. To be able to share the joy together... I think these are the elements for the growth of people.

And when you see the person you are supporting change for the better, you yourself begin to change as well.

Encouraged by her dazzling figure, I felt that it was time for me to move forward.

Chapter 16

It was Mid-August.

As usual, we are bombarded with sunlight so strong that it scorches nearly everything. It’s no longer a world where we can live without air conditioning.

Updates of the highest temperatures are broadcasted on TV every day, along with heat stroke warnings. It makes me want to stay in the comfort of my air-conditioned house.

However, just sitting at home because it’s hot is depressing. At times like this, a change of scenery is important.

Today, I brought Mana, Erika-chan, Runa-chan, and Arisa-chan to the aquarium.

“Waa~! Fish~! There’s fish over there! Fish over here too!”

As soon as we entered the aquarium, Runa-chan clung to the tank and shouted loudly.

If she were a small child, it might be pleasant to watch, but when it’s a high school girl doing it, it’s a little embarrassing to watch.

Arisa-chan, who was in the same grade as her, seemed to feel the same way and grabbed Runa-chan by her nape and tore her off the tank.

“Don’t put your finger marks on it! And don’t put your mouth on it either!! Are you an idiot!? Why the heck are you kissing the water tank!?”

“It felt nice and cold.”

“Idiot. What would you do if there’s some weird old guy who’s already had his mouth in here?”

“Geh!! Don’t say stuff like that!!”

Mana laughed at Runa-chan as she scrubbed her mouth with her sleeve.

“Ahaha. You’re too excited.”

As she said that, even Mana was up much earlier than usual, getting ready to leave. It was like the morning of a field trip.

While I was feeling satisfied with seeing the four of them enjoying themselves, Arisa-chan approached me with a grin on her face.

“Though I have to say, Mana’s Nii-san, you can do it too, can’t you~? Going to the aquarium surrounded by four high school girls... It’s no longer a case of having flowers in both hands~. Isn’t this a harem now?”

I responded to Arisa-chan exasperatedly.

“Where’s this harem you’re talking about? I feel like a teacher in charge of leading a field trip.”

I wondered how it would look from the outside to see a male college student in the midst of four high school girls. To be honest, I’m a little embarrassed.

Then Mana said to me, clapping her hands.

“That means Aniki’s dream of becoming a teacher has been fulfilled! Congratulations~! Now you have no regrets!”

As Runa-chan and Arisa-chan started applauding and said, “Congratulations~”, passerbys began to give me scrutinizing looks.

“Please don’t pretend that my dream has come true because of this!”

First of all, I don’t want to be a teacher because I want to lead field trips. Moreover, why are they giving off the vibe as if my life is now complete?

The yankee girls tease me anytime, anywhere. As I was getting fed up with their rampantness, Erika poked my arm with her fingers.

“Listen Onii-san. Can... Can I go off for a bit?”

She fidgeted and pointed towards the stairs. There, at the bottom of the stairs, a toilet could be seen.

“Ah, the toilet! Sure, why not?”

“N-no, not there!”

Her face turned red as she got angry.

“Penguins! I want to see the penguins!!”

“Ah! The penguins! My bad!”

“I’m going to ignore the route we decided on because I want to see them as soon as possible! I’ll go then!”

Erika-chan seemed to have nothing but penguins on her mind, as if she was a fan wanting to meet her favourite idol.

Once she decided to go, she was quick. Erika-chan headed for the stairs without even hearing our reply. There was a sign on the stairs that said, ‘Penguin Corner this way’.

As I was following Erika-chan with my eyes, someone whacked me on the back.

I turned around in surprise. The culprit was Mana.

“Why don’t you go with her? Me and the others will go along the planned route.”

“Ah... ok.”

With Mana’s encouragement, I headed for the stairs. As I climbed the stairs, I glanced back and saw the three of them pointing at the fish and cackling.

—Well, it’s fine. We can go our own ways.

I brought the four along together, and thought we’d get the chance to get along and make some memories but... they’re all as unfettered as usual.

Of the four yankee girls, my little sister was the one with the most common sense. With Mana, they probably wouldn’t bother the other customers too much or cause any problems. If something happened, she would call me right away.

I entrusted Runa-chan and Arisa-chan to Mana, and headed for the penguin corner where Erika-chan was headed.

When I went to the penguin corner, I saw Erika-chan looking at a large tank of penguins amongst families with small children.

She held the fence surrounding the tank and intently stared at the penguins... The sight was so picturesque that I wanted to take a picture of it.

In the indoor penguin corner, you can clearly see the penguins swimming. Surely if we climbed the stairs next to the tank and went outdoors, we would be able to see the penguins on land, just like when we came to this aquarium in June.

I weaved my way through the crowd and slipped through next to Erika-chan, who was right in front of the tank, and called out to her.

“Won’t you go up there today?”

Erika-chan replied without taking her eyes off the penguins.

“I tried it once, but it was too hot. I can’t concentrate on the penguins.”

She wanted to devote all her attention to watching the penguins. The response conveyed such enthusiasm.

It was indeed blazing hot outside. The air conditioning here is good, and the sight of penguins swimming in the tank is visually cool.

—As usual, she’s completely obsessed with penguins. If I start talking to her, I might be a nuisance.

I didn’t want to disturb Erika-chan, so I kept my mouth shut and watched the penguins swim by.

Penguins waddle around on land, but once they enter the water, they swim in jet mode. I think the gap between their adorable appearance and their cool appearance is the reason why they are loved by both adults and children... What am I thinking while looking at penguins?

I wonder what Erika-chan thinks about while she looks at the penguins.

I was curious and glanced sideways at Erika-chan.

Erika-chan’s eyes were serious. It had been almost ten minutes since I arrived, but she hadn’t taken her eyes off the penguins for a second.

The other visitors around me looked at the penguins and left within a few minutes. It was just me and Erika who stayed here forever.

Erika-chan's upright eyes swayed as she followed the penguins. Before I knew it, I was looking not at the penguin, but at Erika-chan's beautiful profile.

"Onii-san..."

I was startled. I thought I was going to be reproached for staring at her.

But Erika-chan continued, not taking her eyes off the penguins.

"I'm happy to see them again..."

She smiled lovingly at the penguins. A smile that made me feel happy by simply being next to her.

"You really like them, don't you?"

"Yeah. I like them."

Erika-chan looked on fondly.

"Hey, Onii-san. Are penguins warm to touch? Or are they cold?"

"Umm... they're birds. They're basically warm. But if you hugged a penguin who was swimming around on a hot day like this, it would probably feel nice and cold."

"Birds?"

"It means that they're from the same family as other birds."

"Penguins are birds?"

"Oh... so that's where you're starting from..."

I thought it was typical of Erika, but I was a little worried. I wanted to ask if she thought that they were a type of fish, but I also didn't want to ask that... I hope she doesn't think that everything in the aquarium are fish...

"There was a picture book on penguins in the souvenir shop, wasn't there?"

Erika-chan suddenly said.

"A picture book? That's right... I think I did see one last time but what about it?"

"I brought some of my secret savings along. That... maybe I'll buy it. I want to properly learn about the things I love..."

Looking at Erika-chan's slightly embarrassed face, I felt my heart fidgeting in my chest. I couldn't control the urge that was rising in me, so I patted Erika-chan's head.

"Erika-chan, who tries her best for penguins, is very cute."

What am I saying while patting her head in a public place like this? But I couldn't resist the urge to pet her and say something.

I wondered if the temperature outside had risen to the point where the air conditioning in the museum was no longer working. My body felt so hot that I thought so.

But it seems that I was not the only one.

—Erika-chan, who was looking down, her ears having turned bright red.

I resolved myself.

Right now, I'll tell her. How I feel about her.

I took my hand down from Erika-chan's head and placed it on top of her hand that was holding the fence surrounding the tank. Her hand jerked slightly, but I kept squeezing it tightly.

Both of our body temperatures were equally as hot as the other.

"—Erika-chan. Will you please go out with me?"

"Eh...?"

Hearing my words, Erika looked up. Her big eyes looked straight at me.

"I like you, Erika-chan."

I, too, looked Erika-chan in the eyes and told her.

Erika-chan's eyes blinked a few times.

Then with her light pink lips, she asked.

"Isn't that 'like' for someone who you thought of as a little sister?"

"Yes. I've always liked you as a sister. I first met you when you were in junior high school after all, and I had a strong image of you as my sister's friend who had saved her."

She was someone I cherished. I intended to cherish her.

“That’s why when Erika-chan told me that you liked me, I was perplexed. The feelings of “love” I held for you, and the feelings of “love” Erika-chan held for me were different. But also... it was the first time someone conveyed their feelings of love to me so straightforwardly.”

It was so sudden and confusing. I didn’t know how to cherish her. I was worried about how I should do it.

“When Erika-chan kissed me for the first time, I actually became quite conscious of you. But you were like a little sister to me, so I tried my best to fool myself not to be conscious of you as the opposite gender. I was afraid to see you as the opposite gender, so I was being stubborn.”

“...Onii-san you’re so stubborn.”

Erika-chan giggled.

“Yeah. I’m sorry for being such an inflexible and stubborn person. But, since some time or another, I could no longer deceive myself by thinking of Erika-chan as my little sister. I had no choice but to accept that I like you as someone of the opposite gender.”

“When was it that Onii-san started falling in love with me as a woman and not as a little sister?”

When did I start falling in love with Erika-chan as a woman and stopped trying to deceive my own feelings? I no longer remember when it happened even if I think back.

But I remember one thing for sure. I’ll never forget it. What happened that day...

“Since the other day when I met your mom, my way of thinking has clearly changed...”

“...In what way?”

She was rushing ahead.

She was waiting for me to say something.

I came this far, now I no longer had any hesitation in my mind.

“When Erika-chan’s precious stuffed penguin was thrown away, and when you apologized to me for it, your feelings pierced my heart. I loved you so much, that I had to respond to your feelings properly.”

Those tears broke the shackles that I had in my heart.

My true feelings, which I had kept locked away because I didn't want to see her as a romantic interest. My uncontrollable feelings that I had tried to deceive until now by thinking of her like a little sister.

"I want to protect Erika-chan as a man. I want to cherish you. I want to support you. Many other feelings are welling up inside me. Even for me, it's the first time that I've fallen this deeply in love with someone. I'll definitely be awkward and you might sometimes be irritated but..."

With sincerity from the bottom of my heart. I compose my words.

"I want to be with Erika-chan. That's why... will you go out with me?"

We stared at each other for a long time in front of the water tank where the penguins came and went.

Erika-chan didn't say anything for a while, just looked at me and smiled with the corner of her eyebrows lowered.

And then finally... she gave one, large nod.

"Yes... gladly..."

I breathed a sigh of relief when I heard the answer I had been waiting for.

From today onwards, I'm Erika-chan's boyfriend.

I won't lie about my feelings anymore. I'll properly tell her that I like her.

I won't hesitate about my feelings of love.

"Ehehe," Erika-chan giggled and said.

"I'm so happy... This is probably the happiest I've ever been in my life."

It might be the first time I've seen Erika-chan's face this happy.

My face naturally broke into a grin.

I can't believe how happy it feels to be in a relationship. The feeling of elation that the state of mutual love brings is unbelievable.

Erika-chan also seemed to be in high spirits.

"Fufufu. Then, now we can do this and that, everything we've been refraining from, right?"

——‘This and that’?

I have a bad feeling about this. That’s right. There was something I had to tell her straight up.

“Um... Erika-chan. I plan on having a healthy and wholesome relationship with you until you graduate from high school. This is non-negotiable, so thank you!”

“Haaaaa? What the heck!? What does that mean!?”

“That’s why... I won’t do anything that might be regulated because you’re in high school.”

Since it is a public place, I used a low voice to tell her. However, I was immediately answered in a loud voice.

“Even though we’re going out!? Even though it’s mutual!?”

“Yeah. I’m doing this for Erika-chan’s sake too.”

“Eeeh... this is somehow different from what I imagined...”

What was this girl going to do as soon as we started dating? It’s a little scary, so I’m not going to ask...

Looking at Erika-chan’s displeased face, I asked her with a troubled look.

“Then... As expected, should we postpone the start of our relationship to after your graduation?”

“I don’t want that! Fine! I’m fine with a wholesome relationship!”

She said it in a desperate way, so it was cute.

I couldn’t help but let out a small laugh.

Aah, being lovers is such a good feeling.

I feel like I want to keep looking at Erika-chan forever.

But then I looked at the clock and was pulled back to reality.

When I realized the amount of time had passed, I unconsciously let out, “Eh?” from my mouth.

“It’s been over an hour since we got here! What happened to Mana and the others? They haven’t passed by here, have they?”

“Wouldn’t they have just ignored the planned route and gone straight to the souvenir shop?”

“I see. That’s true... it doesn’t feel like that they’d seriously keep looking at the fish...”

Rather, they might think that the souvenir shop would be the most fun.

I moved away from the fence, still holding Erika-chan’s delicate hand.



"Shall we go to the souvenir shop and choose a stuffed penguin for you?"

"Yeah... let's go choose one."

A happy smile.

My heart started beating even faster.

The place where their hands overlapped was moist due to our mutual tension and excitement. The feeling reminded me of the day I brought Erika-chan home from the park.

This was the second time I walked with Erika-chan's hand in mine. But this time was different from the last.

We put our palms together perfectly and entwined our fingers between each other's fingers. This type of handholding... I think, is known as the 'lover's hold'.

Our tightly connected hands, seemingly conveyed our feelings to each other.

I hope to be able to do this, for many years to come...

Chapter 17

When Erika-chan and I headed for the aquarium's souvenir shop, we found Mana and her friends. They were laughing hysterically, waving their stuffed spotted garden eels around.

"Hey! Stop making noise!"

I warned the three yankee girls as soon as I arrived.

When they heard my voice, the stuffed garden eels immediately stopped moving.

And then they all approached Erika-chan and me at once.

"Ahh!"

Mana, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan exclaimed in unison.

"Shut up. Also, don't point at people with spotted garden eels."

I let go of Erika-chan's hand and retrieved the three pitiful spotted garden eels that had been swung around by the yankee girls. Then I gently returned them to the nearby spotted garden eel corner.

While I was doing that, Mana and the others surrounded Erika-chan.

"Oho~? Did you perhaps finally get the OK? Did Erika confess again?"

When Mana asked Erika-chan, Erika-chan shook her head and bashfully said,
"No."

"Onii-san asked me, 'Will you go out with me?'..."

"Eeeeeeeh!?"

The yankee girls exclaimed loudly. Everyone in the souvenir shop turned to look at us to see what was going on.

--Every last one of them... Why do the people around me never discern about the right time, place and occasion...

My university friends, my sister, and her friends are somehow all extremely lacking in modesty.

I was embarrassed to be associated with them, so I picked up a ballpoint pen from a nearby counter. I tried to pretend to be a customer who just happened to be in the nearby area and had nothing to do with the yankee girls.

But the yankee girls who can't read the mood, pointed at me and clamoured.

"And then!? What else did you say to her, Tsukacchi!?"

Runa-chan snapped at me.

"That's... a secret."

Erika-chan said shyly.

"Uwaa~ Erika is completely in maiden mode!!"

Arisa-chan writhed in agony.

"Good grief, my Aniki is such an indecisive fool~. I'm really sorry for making you wait, you know?"

Mana apologized for some reason.

"Why are you apologizing, Mana?"

I couldn't ignore it, so I asked Mana.

Then Mana let out a big, obvious sigh.

"That's obvious. You thought about it a lot, but there was no actual reason to not go out with her, was there? You're too slow to decide. You're too slow to respond. If it was someone other than Erika, you'd definitely get dumped on the spot. Thankfully, Erika is completely devoted to Aniki."

"That's... That's true. I think it's just as you say."

If Erika-chan had given up on me when I first turned her down, we wouldn't be in this situation right now. Even if my romantic feelings for Erika-chan had sprouted then, it would've already been too late.

I'm glad I made it in time.

As I was relieved, Arisa-chan puffed out her chest and boasted.

"We were kindly watching over indecisive Mana's Nii-san too. Shouldn't you be grateful to us as well?"

I couldn't help but chuckle at Arisa-chan's excessively brazen words.

"That's right, isn't it... I'm grateful."

I turned towards Mana, Runa-chan and Arisa-chan, and thanked them.

Then suddenly, as if to say, 'I've been waiting for those words,' Mana raised her hand. Then, she called out to her three yankee companions.

"Well guys! As a token of his appreciation, Aniki is buying each of us a souvenir, so feel free to choose one!"

"Ha!? Why would Mana be the one deciding that!?"

No one listened to my protests.

Runa-chan and Arisa-chan immediately ran off while shouting, "Yaay~!" Then, Mana took Erika-chan's hand and started chasing behind them.

"Hey! Erika too, let's go!"

"Ah, yeah!"

The yankee girls scattered around the souvenir shop in the blink of an eye. This level of footwork is worthy of respect.

"Good grief... How much is the total cost going to be..."

...Even as I said that, I had a smile on my face.

I looked over at Erika-chan, who was looking very happy as she looked around at the souvenirs. From time to time, she would say something to Mana and the others and laugh. I watched her with a fond smile.

Just looking at the smiling face of the person I love warms my heart. I whispered in my head over and over again, "I'm so, so glad."

--It's a rare day. Maybe I should buy something too...

Satisfied after looking at Erika-chan for a while, I wandered around the store to see if I could find anything interesting.

Stationery. Stuffed animals. Sweets. T-shirts. Hats. Handkerchiefs.

There was nothing in particular that I had to buy here, but what would be a good souvenir to buy to commemorate my visit? I was quite perplexed.

After wandering around, I reached the book section. Then I spotted Erika-chan holding a stuffed penguin. Apparently, she chose the same stuffed penguin that she bought last time.

"...For number 2, you want the same one?"

When I called out to her, Erika-chan turned around.

"Ah... yeah. I've seen all of them, but this stuffed penguin is my favourite."

"I see. I'm glad it's the same one."

"But, this one has a different face compared to the last one. The one before... was more similar to Onii-san."

"Eh? You chose a stuffed animal that looked like me?"

When I said that, Erika-chan's face turned red.

I stared at the stuffed penguin that Erika was holding. I have no idea how the heck it resembles me.

While I was in a staring contest with the stuffed penguin, Erika-chan restlessly flipped through a penguin picture book.

I then started talking to Erika-chan.

"Say. What type of penguin is this?"

"Eh? Type... um... which one is it?"

What Erika-chan was looking at seemed to be a list of penguins. I peeked over her side to get a better look at the picture book.

"Can I see it too?"

"Yeah... so?"

"Isn't it this one? Emperor penguin."

"Ah, you're right! Emperor... I feel like I've heard of the word before."

"It means emperor." [TLN: the first time they said it, it was in english, 'Emperor,' when he explained the meaning, he said it in Japanese, '皇帝'.]

"Fufufu. It sounds kinda strong."

Just as I was comparing the picture book and the stuffed penguin over and over again, something soft poked and prodded me on the back.

"Nn?"

Erika-chan and I both turned our heads almost simultaneously.

The first things that appeared in my view were three stuffed penguins. Erika-chan beamed when she saw them.

"Ah! Are you all getting penguins too?"

The people standing behind us were Mana and her friends, each holding a stuffed penguin. So the soft thing that poked me was the beak of a stuffed penguin.

"Oh! I've seen all of them in the picture book."

It was interesting to see how all three of them had different kinds of penguins, and I was excited to compare their stuffed animals with the illustrated book.

"Mana's one is known as Adelie penguin. Runa-chan's one is a Rockhopper. And Arisa-chan's one is a Humboldt."

As I said the names, Arisa-chan made a face of disgust.

"Humboldt? That doesn't sound very cute at all."

Hearing this, Erika-chan followed up energetically.

"That's not true! Humboldt penguins are cute too! And anyhow, Arisa can just call them whatever she wants, right?"

"Hmm," Arisa-chan pondered.

"Then... Nii-san."

"Eh?"

Arisa-chan decided on what she wanted to call it. It was the same way as she usually calls me though... I wonder if it's on purpose.

"Let's get along then~! Nii-san! From today onwards, you'll sleep with me right?"

Arisa-chan hugged the stuffed animal as if she were deliberately burying it in her cleavage. Because of the way she called it, I felt as if it was me who was being held in her chest.

While I was bewildered on how to react, Runa-chan said.

"Then, I'll call mine Tsukacchi~"

"Then, I'll call mine Aniki!"

Following Arisa-chan, Runa-chan and Mana seemed to be planning to call it the same way they called me.

Erika-chan became furious at the thought of that.

"Hold up! Why is everyone calling theirs the same way they call Onii-san! Onii-san is mine!"

Then Mana, Arisa-chan and Runa all giggled. Then, Mana said with a malicious expression.

"Isn't it fine~? Aniki is like everyone's older brother isn't he~?"

"I-it's not fine! Because, Onii-san is my boyfriend."

Mana poked the flustered Erika-chan's nose with her finger.

"He's your boyfriend, right? If so, how long are you going to keep calling him 'Onii-san'?"

Erika-chan's big eyes fluttered.

Then, she said to me, with a sidelong glance and her cheeks dyed red.

"Tsukasa..."

The sight of her bashfulness seized my heart and I gasped for breath. I felt as if I could hear my heartbeat pounding through my entire body.

The sheer destructive power, just by being called by my name by my girlfriend... What kind of heart does everyone else in love have? You'd need a heart of steel to be fine after this.

But fortunately, I quickly regained my composure, thanks to the yankee girls who were cheering on with "Hyu~ Hyu~" [TLN: fake whistling noises]

This is no time to be soaking in the moment of 'My girlfriend is adorable'... If we don't start going home soon, the yankee girls' excursion will never end.

--I can't tell if they're trying to cheer us on or trying to get in our way. Well... it's probably a bit of both.

It was a fine play to get Erika-chan to change her way of calling me, but it's hard to thank them honestly.

Many times, I think, if I go along with them too seriously, it'll be a loss for me.

I let out a short breath and headed for the cash register, changing my mind.

"Alright, then I'll be heading for the cashier. Whoever doesn't follow me, will have to pay for themselves~"

"Ah, wait up Aniki! I want some snacks!"

"Tsukacchi! Let me buy some snacks!"

"Nii-san, let's buy some spotted garden eels too~"

"Only one piece per person! I won't pay for the people who don't keep their promises!"

"Are you our mom~?" Mana and the others chimed in.

I completely disregarded the three of them. Then, I handed back Erika-chan's stuffed penguin to her.

"I'll buy it for you."

"Ah, thanks! Tsukasa!"

Erika-chan bashfully called my name again.

She was fidgeting. Instead of the stuffed penguin, I wanted to tightly hug Erika-chan instead.

That kind of thing... I can't do it here though.

If I became unrestrained, who would control everyone? I stood in line waiting at the counter, telling myself that I was the last frontier.

Then Erika-chan came running up to me. She hugged my arm tightly.

"Fufufu. From now on, I don't have to hold back from doing these things anymore."

With a happy face, she snuggled up to me.

I felt the softness of her chest against my arm. Her fingers gripped my clothes tightly. The heat cascaded from the place of contact and spread throughout my body.

--It's been like this since the moment she became my girlfriend... Am I going to be fine from all this heart pounding excitement?

The electronic beeping sound coming from the cash register seemed to be ticking down the countdown until I reached my limit.

Chapter 18

When we returned home from the aquarium, it was already six o'clock in the afternoon. My mom was at home after coming home from work.

Mana handed a gift bag to Mom.

"Mom, this is a gift from Erika and me."

"Ara~! Thank you, Mana and Erika-chan."

What came out of the bag was a cookie tin decorated with illustrations of fish. Mom loves cute things, so she seemed very happy.

"Well, you both have cute stuffed penguins, don't you?"

Mom looked fondly at the stuffed penguins that Mana and Erika-chan were holding. Then Erika-chan said elatedly.

"Mana's one is an Adelie penguin, and mine is an Emperor penguin! 'Emperor' means emperor." [TLN: penguin types in english, the explanation for it is in Japanese.]

"Ara ara! Erika-chan, you're like an expert on penguins!"

Erika-chan was so taken in by Mom's praise that she even started to show her the picture book she had bought today.

"I'm still learning! From now on, after I learn everything about penguins, I'll teach Mana's Mom too!"

"Mmhmm. I'll look forward to it."

Erika was happy to see Mom so happy.

Seeing her like this makes me think that I'm no match for my mom.

Mom is always amazing.

When Mana became a yankee, and when Mana brought all her yankee friends over, she accepted it very naturally. She didn't look reluctant at all.

When I told her that Erika-chan would be staying at our house during the summer vacation, she easily accepted, saying, "It will be fun and lively." She listened to Erika-chan's story as if she was listening to her own child.

— — That's why I respect her, because she's like that. My dad is also broad-minded. I'm glad that both of my parents are so kind...

Mana and Erika-chan were busy telling Mom about their day. I left them there and went to my room first.

I collapsed onto my bed.

I'm pretty tired from all the things that happened today.

If it were a game, going to the aquarium while controlling four yankee girls would be hard mode. Runa-chan and Arisa-chan are especially annoying because they tease me whenever they can and drain my mental energy. But if I let them loose, they'd make a big clamour in public and I'd be in trouble.

But it wasn't all hard work today. There was a big accomplishment that made up for all of that.

I recalled Erika-chan's happy face when I confessed to her. That alone raised my heart rate unnecessarily.

I haven't had a girlfriend for 20 years, but now I have one. And what's more, she's so beautiful and cute that she's wasted on me...

However, I can't just be in high spirits about it forever. Today was not the goal. It was the start.

I confessed to Erika-chan after deciding to protect her. For Erika-chan, I have to graduate from university, get my teaching license, get a good job, and earn money...

What should I do to prevent Erika from having a hard time in the future? When I started to think about such slightly difficult things, I suddenly became sleepy.

— — ...But, it's fine for today. After all, today is a special day because I started going out with Erika-chan...

The more I relaxed, the more sleepy I was.

I started to feel light-headed, and eventually, I couldn't think of anything.

It seems that the yankee girls weren't the only ones who were in high spirits.

I forgot to eat my dinner and fell asleep.

When I suddenly woke up, it was twelve o'clock at night.

"Oh no... I fell asleep without taking a bath..."

I can't believe that I, of all people, forgot to take a shower and fell asleep. I screwed up.

I felt like taking a shower right now, but I was really hungry. So I grabbed a change of clothes and headed for the living room first.

The hallway was already dark. There was no light leaking from any of the rooms. Mana and Erika-chan must have been tired and gone to bed early.

I walked to the living room, trying not to make a sound with my footsteps, and found a wrapped side dish for me on the table.

"I'm thankful..."

I put my hands together over my cold hamburger steak and lukewarm potato salad.

"Thank you for the meal."

It was late at night, so I decided against eating too much. I just ate a hamburger steak and potato salad and drank a cup of tea. With that, I felt my empty stomach was satisfied.

"Let's take a shower..."

Careful not to make too much noise, I walked to the bathroom, turned on the light, opened the door gently, and closed it softly.

I had taken a bath when everyone was asleep many times before. No one in my family has complained about the noise of me taking a bath in the middle of the

night. However, I don't want to disturb anyone's sleep by making a strange loud noise. So I acted cautiously.

I took off my clothes, went into the bathroom, and turned on the shower. The water was nice and warm, and I started washing off my sweat.

Since I was fast asleep just recently, I wonder if I'm going to be able to go back to sleep... While I was worrying about these weird things—

Suddenly, the bathroom door made a clattering sound— and opened.

"Eh?"

Startled by the sound, I looked at the door. Then, a beautiful blonde haired girl peeked in bashfully.

"Should I wash your back for you?"

"Huh!?"

Erika-chan had a bath towel wrapped around her, but she didn't seem to be wearing anything underneath it. The loosely wrapped bath towel looked as if it was about to come undone at any moment, which made me nervous. Because of the way she put her hands on her chest, the ampleness of her chest is emphasized, and it's dazzling...

"Hey hey hey heyyyy!"

"Ah! Hold on!"

I hurriedly pushed Erika out and closed the bathroom door. Then I held the door so that it wouldn't open.

On the other side of the door, Erika-chan was protesting, banging on the door.

"Why are you keeping me out!?"

"I'll ask you the opposite, why are you trying to come in!?"

"Ha? I'm your girlfriend so I should be allowed to take a bath together with you."

"E-even if you're my girlfriend..."

— Eh? Do people take their baths together with their lovers?

I have zero experience in love, and I don't know the right answer. I want to look it up on the Internet, but I don't have my phone at hand.

Anyway, I should calm down for once.

I took a deep breath to calm down.

The worst development that could happen right now... would be someone noticing the noise in the bathroom, and witnessing the current situation.

In other words, don't make a fuss. I needed to talk to Erika-chan calmly before anyone noticed the situation.

I whispered to Erika-chan on the other side of the door.

"Erika-chan, have you taken a bath yet?"

"Nn? I did though? I saw Tsukasa going in, so I thought about going in together."

"No no... I'm going to take a bath by myself so... can you please restrain yourself?"

"Why do you want to take a bath by yourself so badly? Wouldn't it be better for us to take a bath together?"

"Better?"

"You can look at my body as much as you want, you know?"

"That... That may be true but..."

"I'm your girlfriend, so there's nothing wrong with looking at my body, okay? Don't you want to see it?"

Certainly, it is legal to look at the nakedness of the person you are dating as long as they say it is okay to show it to you. And if you ask me if I want to see it or not, that is, of course...

—No, this is bad!

If I end up seeing it, it might be inexcusable. Besides right now... a certain part of me is already hot.

"Erika-chan, you know..."

"O-owwww"

Just as I was about to present my honest opinion to Erika-chan, she suddenly made a pained sound behind the door.

“Eh? W-what happened? Are you okay?”

“Ouch... Tsukasa, help...”

“Eh? Wait are you okay—”

Thinking it was an emergency, I went to open the bathroom door.

As soon as there was a small gap in the door, a hand appeared from the other side of the door, grabbed it and opened it completely.

“Fufufu! You fell for it! There’s nothing to hide between lovers, right? In other words, you shouldn’t hide your body either!”

Erika-chan stood in the doorway of the bath.

I hurriedly used a bucket to hide my thing.

“Why are you hiding it?”

“I’m embarrassed! Please don’t make me take a bath with you!”

“Eh~? Why are you more shy than me?”

“No, I think Erika-chan is bolder than most normal people, so please don’t make yourself the norm!”

“Haa? So for our entire lives, we won’t take a bath together? Even if we get married? Even if we become husband and wife?”

Erika-chan, wearing only a bath towel, closed in on me.

“No, I don’t know if it’s for the rest of our lives or not, but not for a while!”

“For a while? How long do you mean by that!?”

When Erika-chan said that with great vigour, her bath towel came off her chest.

The bath towel, while gently floating in the air, was quietly pulled to the floor by gravity. The youthful body wrapped in the towel was exposed, and the beautiful, tender-looking twin mounds swayed.

I guess she didn’t expect the bath towel to come off here. Erika-chan froze in her state of stark nakedness.

Of course, I froze as well.

A few seconds passed.

Suddenly, Erika-chan picked up the bath towel that had fallen on the bathroom floor, ran to the changing room, and closed the door with a bang.



There was a loud bang, and I was startled.

“Um, Erika-chan?”

I gingerly called out to Erika-chan, who had disappeared to the other side of the door.

“So Erika-chan, you’re embarrassed to take a bath together with me after all, aren’t you..?”

“J-just now, what happened was a little unexpected, and I wasn’t mentally prepared for it, that’s why!”

“No, isn’t that why you’re embarrassed...?”

“Hold on, I’ll prepare myself mentally now, so wait.”

“No no, you don’t have to do that! Isn’t it fine now? Please just return quietly for today.”

“Muuu... Fine.” [TLN: pouting noises]

I heard a little cute growl and then a sulky voice came in reply.

On the other side of the door, I could hear Erika-chan getting dressed. I leaned my back against the door and breathed a sigh of relief.

I can’t afford to cross the line with Erika-chan yet.

When we started dating, I told Erika-chan that I wanted to have a wholesome relationship with her until she graduated from high school. I have no intention of reversing this.

Erika-chan acknowledged that too but... what was she thinking when she barged into the bathroom?

— — Don’t tell me, did Erika-chan think that was still in the scope of a wholesome relationship?

No no, that’s just an overestimation of my reasoning.

“It’s a good thing I’m not the only one. Good night.”

“...Then, I’ll be off. Good night.”

We exchanged our voices through the door.

Shortly thereafter, I felt the door to the bathroom open and felt the vibration of the door closing.

— — Was she okay with it? I hope I didn’t make her feel bad...

I don't know what expression Erika-chan had when she left. My chest tightened at the thought of what I would do if she had come to hate me.

"I can't help it... This is one thing I absolutely cannot compromise on, and I need Erika-chan to understand this too."

There are many variations in the way men and women communicate their love for each other. If they tell each other that they are irreplaceable, the relationship can continue without having to do anything with each other naked.

I switched the shower to cold water from hot water.

I continued to take cold showers until my head and body were cold. Until I no longer remembered what had just happened.

Once my mind was empty, I went out to the changing room.

...Then, I stepped on something left on the mat.

I looked closer and saw that they were pink women's shorts.

"Ha??"

It wasn't there before I went into the bathroom earlier. In other words, this belongs to Erika-chan. She must have changed her clothes and returned to her room, so why is it here? Was she in a hurry and forgot it? That means, don't tell me that she doesn't have them on right now...

"No, it's a trap. She's definitely trying to incite me into thinking that..."

I pretended not to notice and left it on the mat.

Why is it that she has to study because she doesn't have that much common sense, but somehow she can show quick-wittedness like this? She has the appearance of an angel, but on the inside she's a yankee. And sometimes, she can be a little devil.

Sure enough, after I got into bed again, I ended up just thinking about Erika-chan.

I had just taken a cold shower to rid myself of my worldly desires, but thanks to the shorts, they came back.

One after another, the memories were brought up in tandem.

When I closed my eyes, Erika-chan's naked body floated behind my eyelids.

Just by looking at it for a few seconds, it was completely recorded in my brain.

“Ah, come on...”

A pathetic voice escaped from my mouth.

What is the purpose of this ordeal? I wanted to ask anyone that would listen to me.

Before I knew it, I seemed to have fallen asleep and it was morning. The light coming through the curtains was dazzling, and I turned over in my sleep... And then I felt something soft in my hands.

“Eh? What is this...?”

It was soft and warm.

I was still half asleep, so I caressed and rubbed the mysterious object.

Then the mysterious object squeaked in a cute voice, “Hyaa!”

“Eh?”

I immediately woke up.

Before my eyes, there was a blushing Erika-chan.

“Geez... Don’t touch me in strange places. It’s ticklish, you know?”

Her cheeks were a little puffy. But she didn’t sound angry at all.

“...Why are you here?”

I asked timidly.

“I’m your girlfriend, so it’s fine to sleep with you, right?”

“No no no! Even if you’re my girlfriend, no!”

“Eh~!? Why not!?”

“I’ve decided to go out with you, Erika-chan, but I told you it would be a wholesome relationship! Any behavior that could lead to an unhealthy relationship is prohibited!”

“I don’t know what’s wholesome and what’s not! I like you, so why is it unhealthy for us to be together! Isn’t it more unhealthy for us to not be together!?”

"I understand what Erika-chan is saying but, what I say is no good, is no good!"

"Then isn't our going out completely pointless!"

"I'll do my best to not make you feel lonely... So please, forgive me for this..."

When I begged her, Erika-chan looked at me with a frustrated look on her face.

"I'm already lonely."

She spat that out, and left the room.

I was left in the room, holding my head and sighing.

"I have to do something about this..."

I don't want to think that I made a mistake in confessing my feelings. I don't want to think that I was too quick to go out with her. I have to properly accept Erika-chan's feelings and make her feel comfortable.

"Even I... really want to hug you, Erika-chan..."

The place where Erika-chan was sleeping just a while ago was still warm...My chest tightened painfully.

Chapter 19

Barging in while I'm in the bath, and sleeping together without me being aware of it... Erika-chan's actions are very hard to keep in check. I don't know if it's because we just became lovers, but it's very troubling for me, who wants to have a wholesome relationship.

— I need to have a proper talk with her, to make her understand that...

We're in a relationship, and I want to properly accept Erika-chan's feelings, and I want to have a mutually satisfying relationship with her. If I don't put those feelings into words, they won't be conveyed.

I made up my mind to talk to Erika-chan when I got back, and I started preparing to go to my tutoring part-time job.

Spending time with Erika-chan is important, but I also want to work hard for my future. I want to have money to buy books and go on dates, and I also want to acquire the teaching skills necessary to be a teacher.

"— Okay! I'm gonna get pumped up and go to my part-time job!"

I grabbed my bag full of textbooks and handouts and left the room.

It was around 5 pm when I got home that day.

There were no shoes at the door, and I knew immediately that there was no one in the house.

“Erika-chan must have gone out too...”

I couldn't find Erika-chan's shoes anywhere, which made me feel a bit dejected.

— I wanted to see her as fast as possible, so I hurried home but... perhaps the timing wasn't right?

There was no one in my room either. There was no sign of someone having been there at all. I wondered if anyone was reading manga or lying down on my bed without permission.

Thinking of that, I felt a little lonely today.

Maybe I ruined her mood because I pushed her away from the bath and this morning. I felt anxious.

Maybe she lost her affection for me...

No, I don't think that's the case with Erika-chan. If she ended up disliking me because of that, she would have given up easily when I rejected her confession once.

— The fact that I'm feeling this depressed over it, probably goes to show just how much I've fallen in love with Erika-chan.

The figure of Erika-chan popped into my head. She was always full of energy and expressed her love for me with her whole body.

Just thinking about Erika-chan's smile brings a warmth to my heart. As long as Erika-chan is smiling beside me, I think I can hold myself back until she graduates from high school but... I wonder if Erika-chan and I feel differently.

Later, at six o'clock, my parents came home. But even by seven or eight o'clock, neither Mana nor Erika-chan came home.

I waited anxiously for Erika's return, but after I ate dinner and took a bath, I became extremely sleepy.

Studying requires a lot of brainpower on the part of the teacher as well as the student. When I was dealing with high school students who were preparing for entrance exams, I too became enthusiastic and exhausted.

— — Maybe, I'll sleep for a while...

She didn't seem to be back yet, so I decided to sleep while waiting.

I turned off the light and dazedly walked over to my bed. I threw myself down on it and almost fell asleep. I managed to crawl over and position my head on the pillow and close my eyes without pulling the futon over my head.

As I listened to the sound of the second hand of the clock echoing faintly in the room, my consciousness quickly faded away.

— — *clack*

I was asleep when a small noise reached my ears. It seemed to be the sound of a door being closed. At the same time, I felt the presence of someone in the room.

The light from a nearby street lamp leaked through the curtains of the window. Thanks to this, the room was not completely dark, but dimly lit. And since I had been asleep earlier and was used to night vision, I immediately recognized the person there.

— — Erika-chan?

The one standing in the middle of the room was Erika-chan.

Why did she come here?

I stared at Erika-chan, thinking in my half-asleep mind. Erika hadn't yet noticed that I was awake.

— — Come to think of it, I was waiting for Erika-chan's return so I could talk to her...

As my head slowly began to turn after waking up from sleep, I remembered what I had been thinking about before going to bed. However, I thought that if I woke up suddenly, I might startle her, so I kept pretending to be asleep and looked for the right moment to wake up.

What should I do?

As I was pondering, Erika moved. Seeing that, I felt even more stuck in place.

Because, in the middle of the room, Erika-chan... started taking off her clothes.

She took off her shorts and T-shirt and stripped down to her underwear. Because I couldn't see her well, Erika-chan's silhouette was very weirdly beautiful and lascivious.

“Tsukasa...”

Erika-chan approached me, calling my name. I frantically pretended to be asleep.

“Tsukasa... Hey, wake up.”

A weight was added to the edge of the bed. Then I felt Erika-chan’s hot breath on my face.

“...Let’s do it?”

I was startled by what she said, and my eyes flew open.

“Ah, great. You woke up.”

Erika-chan was before my eyes, smiling. She was overlooking me, as if examining my expression.

Erika-chan shyly touched my cheek, and her hand slid straight down and caressed my nape.

“I’m your girlfriend so... isn’t it fine? I want to do it.”

Even in the dark, I could see that Erika’s lips were bewitchingly moist. The wistful expression on her face made my body hot.

If I reach out, I can touch Erika-chan’s body. I can put my feelings into that smooth, soft body.

But that’s not what I want to do right now.

I should’ve told her properly before she did this. This... is my responsibility.

I raised my upper body and sat on the bed. Erika-chan was on her knees and hands on the bed, staring at me.



"Erika-chan... sorry. I can't do it right now."

".....Why?"

Erika-chan's voice was stiff and a little angry.

"Do you... Do you know how much courage I had to summon in order to do this?"

I felt the stifled anger and sadness in her quiet voice.

"I know..."

"Lies. You don't understand at all. If you really knew, you'd hug me right now..."

"That..."

"You want to have a wholesome relationship, right? You don't have to do it with me, but at least embrace me close to you. You can at least do that much, right?"

I felt like I shouldn't hesitate. If I'm slow by even a second, I'll definitely hurt Erika-chan's trust. Thinking that... I embraced Erika-chan.

My hands were stuck on her slightly sweaty skin. Erika-chan's chest was pushing up against my chest, and I could feel the rapid beating of her heart. Her sweet fragrance tickled my nostrils. Soft and warm... It was pleasant just embracing her.

And how lovely...

The various emotions that flooded my brain just by hugging her. It was an overwhelming amount of heat that transcended reason.

Then why wasn't my reason defeated right there and then...? It was the desire to cherish Erika-chan until the very end that kept my reason intact.

"Listen here... Erika-chan."

When I deliberately whispered into her ear, Erika-chan's body jumped.

"I'll say it frankly, so listen carefully."

"Nn..."

After confirming that Erika-chan nodded slightly, I continued.

"You see... Right now, I'm holding back a lot."

"Eh?"

"What... did you really think that I didn't feel anything?"

"Yeah. Because... you still won't do anything to me."

"Don't underestimate me. I really want to kiss Erika-chan right now, I really want to hug you closer, and um... I want to do a lot of other things."

"I-is that so?"

"Of course. If my cute girlfriend comes in front of me in that appearance and says, 'Let's do it?' and 'I want to do it,' there's no way I wouldn't feel anything... So Erika-chan, do you know why I won't go beyond that?"

"I don't. I don't know, that's why... I thought you didn't have any interest in my body, I became anxious, that's why I did this to try and make sure of Tsukasa's feelings!"

"I do have interest. Of course I do. But... I want to cherish Erika-chan."

"Cherish?"

Erika-chan asked me..

I replied while gently holding Erika-chan in my arms.

"I too want to hug Erika-chan and convey my love to you. But, that also comes with risks. Erika-chan is still a high school student, so I don't think I want to take that risk and make love to you."

"Risk... you mean having a child, right? I... I don't mind if it's Tsukasa."

"I'm glad you said that. But if that happens, Erika-chan might have to drop out of high school. I might have to quit college and start working right away. We might be able to get by somehow or another then, but what about in a few years, or ten years? When my kids grow up, would I have enough income to support my family...?"

"Are you thinking that far ahead... Tsukasa?"

"I think that there are people who can protect their families and dreams in those times. But I... I'm not good at those haphazard things. I have to worry about whether or not I can properly protect the things I want to protect."

As I said that, Erika-chan squirmed in my arms.

When I let go of her hand, she pulled away from me and sat upright on the bed.

"...I want to stay with Tsukasa forever."

"Yeah..."

"I was happy that we were going out, but I got anxious thinking what would happen if you cast me away, that's why I thought that if I did this, I'd be able to be with Tsukasa forever..."

"Yeah... I'm sorry I couldn't get rid of that anxiety faster."

When I apologized, Erika-chan shook her head.

“No, I should be the one apologizing. I didn’t really understand what Tsukasa meant by a wholesome relationship. I felt like you were just casting me aside. Even though... you love me this much, I’m such a moron...”

I felt even more apologetic when I saw Erika-chan’s depressed face.

“No, it was my fault. I should have explained it like this from the beginning.”

“No no, it was my fault! Normally... I think people would’ve guessed it. But I’m an idiot who can’t understand anything unless it’s explained to me from A to Z!”

“No no no! I made you anxious!”

“No no no! I didn’t believe in Tsukasa!”

We were both apologizing to each other, saying that it was our fault, then the laughter started welling up...

We exchanged glances, and started laughing.

“Then, Sometimes... is it fine if I hug you tightly?”

“I’ll do it any time, as long as you’re dressed.”

“Fufufu. I see. But, it feels good to have someone touch your bare body, so it’s a shame...”

“I’m holding back, so you should hold back properly too.”

“Alright~”

Erika-chan replied reluctantly. Then, she looked at me and smiled.

“Tsukasa, won’t you stop calling me by ‘Erika-chan’ already? I feel like I’m still being treated like a little sister.”

“Ah, really? Then... Erika.”

“Yeah. That’s nice. Now I really feel like Tsukasa’s girlfriend.”

Erika-chan... No, Erika smiled boldly and brought her face close to mine.

And like that, our lips overlapped.

The soft sensation was pleasant. I could feel Erika’s feelings for me coming through it, and they seemed to run through my whole body.

“Really, is it fine to not go beyond this? You’re getting hard though?”

Erika-chan smiled wickedly.

“Since you’ve confirmed that my reproductive functions are normal, you can be satisfied for today.”

“Hmm~? Then, I’ll have to do a periodic check up. For the sake of my future husband.”

“Please give me a break...”

Erika, who was smiling in front of me, was not an angel, nor was she a little devil, nor a yankee. She was just a normal girl.

She was raised without parental love and without common sense, but she is a strong girl who believes in a bright future. She is the person who saved my sister, the cute girl who fell in love with me... and now she is my lover who I want to cherish for the rest of my life.

For this to have happened... I’m sure if I got in a time machine, and told the Tsukasa of a few months back, there’s no way he would believe me.

Chapter 20 – Epilogue

The number of years since I had a girlfriend is the same as my age, twenty years.

Because I didn’t have much luck with women, to save my own skin, I stopped looking for a girlfriend while I was still in school.

It’s not that I gave up on it completely. I could make a serious effort on it once I became a working adult. It doesn’t matter if I don’t have a girlfriend now. I just need to meet the one woman I can love for the rest of my life.

So when I hear about the guys around me flirting with their girlfriends, I don’t feel anything. Even when I see a cute girl, I don’t develop romantic feelings for her.

I thought I had turned off the love switch completely.

However, you never know what is going to happen in this world.

There is no such thing as impossible.

That wonder of the world... I experienced it personally.

A specific day in April.

Early afternoon at the National S University.

The student cafeteria was crowded with hungry students looking for lunch. I was eating curry there to satisfy my appetite.

At the same table were Hoshino and Tokunaga, who were also in the same faculty of education as me, and they were eating curry just like me.

"-Hee, so all the students that Kamijō tutored have been admitted here?"

Tokunaga said to me.

"Yeah. I'm glad they all got into the department they wanted. It was a good experience for me. Thanks for introducing me to the part-time job."

"No problem. Do your best this year too."

I'm planning to increase the number of students I take this year. I was motivated to do this for my own studies and also to earn some money.

"Hey, forget something like that, are you coming to the mixer?"

Hoshino, who had been eating his curry in silence until a moment ago, suddenly said with a serious face.

I frowned when he called my important part-time job 'something like that'.

"What are you saying suddenly?"

"The three of us will form a team and work closely together, each of us fighting to bring down our target."

"That's more like a sport than a mixer."

I exasperatedly retorted.

"That's right! Mixers are a sport! One for all! All for one! Getting a head start is unforgivable! Fight to win with your team!"

"What the heck happened to you recently..."

Hoshino seemed unusually enthusiastic about the mixer. As I was repulsed by his enthusiasm, Tokunaga explained to me.

"He was dumped by another girlfriend last month, and recently he's had a three time losing streak at the mixers he went to. Since it's unusual for him to not have a girlfriend, he's being impatient. I told him to take a break since he's started to get a bit greedy but..."

Hearing this, I said to Hoshino with a serious face.

"Hoshino... You should stop getting girlfriends just to fill your current loneliness, regardless of who they are. You may be satisfied with the fact that you have a girlfriend now, but she may be looking for someone to spend the rest of her life with. Wouldn't that kind of gap in the sense of values for the two of you, cause a rift in your relationship?"

"...You're on a relationship hiatus, but you sound like you know what you're talking about. What is it? What's going on?"

Hoshino stared at me, as if he had noticed my change.

I nonchalantly finished my curry and drank some water. I made sure that my tingling mouth was refreshed, and answered.

"Aah... I didn't tell you this, but I've had a girlfriend since the summer of last year."

"Ha?"

Both Hoshino and Tokunaga said in unison, and stared at me astonishingly.

In the evening.

After classes, I went to a cake shop and bought five pudding a la mode.

They were for my dad, mom, Mana, me, and Erika.

Carefully carrying the bag so that the cups wouldn't tip, I headed home. On the way, I recalled everything that had happened since last summer.

In August, when Erika and I became lovers. Erika had been living at my house all summer, but in September, she went back to her mother's house.

It seems that her mother's lover is still living with her, but Erika is still resolutely fighting. I wish I could free Erika from that house right now, but I don't have the strength to do so yet.

I told her to call me immediately if anything happened, and to come running to my house if anything happened. Then I told her she could stay at my place on weekends.

Erika came to our house almost every day with Runa-chan and Arisa-chan, and returned home around eleven at night. Then, she came to stay with us on Friday nights and went home on Sunday nights.

This routine took us through the fall and winter.

During the winter and spring vacations, she came to stay at my house. So in the past six months, I think she's spent more time at my home than her own.

When I come home, it has become natural for Erika to be there and tell me 'Welcome back'. I began anticipating her saying that.

We're still lovers, and we haven't crossed the line yet, but I already feel like we're family.

--When I say 'family', I don't mean like a little sister. Of course, it's my bond with her as my beloved partner.

I arrived home as usual and opened the front door as usual.

"I'm home~"

As usual, I called out as I headed into the house. When I do this, my cute blonde girlfriend usually comes running. Then she would say 'welcome back' and jump at me...

--I was expecting that, but today was different.

It didn't work that way today.

When I walked in the door, I froze in place.

I was captivated by the person who greeted me.

The first thing that caught my eye was her glamorous black hair.

I didn't realize how much a single hair color could change my impression. Since I had only had the impression of blond hair from the first time I met her, my brain was confused.

"Welcome back... Hey, what do you think?"

Big eyes staring at me. Her cheeks were red, as if she was embarrassed. Her lips were slightly pouting, as if she was getting impatient because I was frozen in place, unable to say anything.

"Eh? Eh? That, but, ehh!?"

I knew I had to say something quickly, but I couldn't get the words out. Because...

--Erika has become a neat and tidy JK!?

She said there was absolutely no way she was going to change her hair to black. I didn't think this would happen suddenly either.

As my mouth flapped open and shut at her transformation, Erika's mouth twisted.

Did she get mad because I didn't say something decent?

No. Her eyes are smiling.

Erika seemed to be frantically trying to hold in her laughter... but before long, she reached her limit and erupted.

"Ahahahaha! I'm sorry! I didn't think you'd be this surprised! It's just a wig!"

"Eh?A wig?"

Erika yanked the black hair off her own head without hesitating. Then, the blonde hair that I'd become used to seeing appeared from under the mass of black hair.

She untied her blonde hair, which she had tied up to hide it in her black wig and removed the hair clip with a click.

In a flash, it was back to normal. Erika appeared, her long blonde hair flowing in the air.

"Were you surprised?"

Erika smirked.

"I was! Your whole atmosphere changed, as if you weren't Erika at all."

"Hmm~? So? How was it? Which version of me do you like more?"

"That... I think Erika would look good in anything, and I like both Erikas. They're both cute.."

I was a little angry that she was teasing me, so I told her how I felt as straightforwardly as I could. As I expected, Erika turned red and clammed up.

Why do you get embarrassed despite being the one to instigate people? You're just so cute. I really, really want to hug her.

--Aah, I really want to hug her right now.

I want to hug her and tell her how cute she is. I have a feeling that Erika would kick me when she reached her limit of embarrassment, but I still want to hug her.

I took off my shoes and went into the house, feeling conflicted inside.

"But what happened to you all of a sudden? Why did you get a wig?"

"I thought I'd at least make my hair black while working."

"Hee~? I see, so that's your way of having black hair without actually dyeing it back."

"Yeah. They said I could have blond hair, but I didn't want to cause any trouble."

"Eh? Um, that line makes it sound like you already have a part-time job though...?"

Erika nodded with a slightly bashful look on her face.

"I've been hired for a part-time job. It's a coffee shop in front of the station."

"Eh!? That's great! When did you go to the interview?"

"I happened to find a job opening this morning, and I was kind of attracted to it, so I went directly to the store to ask for a job. I told them that I had tried to get a part-time job in the past, but it had never worked out... Then the owner and his wife answered me on the spot."

"I'm glad! I guess the people at the store understood that Erika was really a hard worker!"

Listening to Erika, I couldn't help but feel happy too.

I couldn't hold back any longer.

I hugged Erika with all my might. Erika snuggled up to me as well.

"How did they know I'm a hard worker when we've only talked once?"

"People can tell. That's how it is."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. Well~... You did a great job by not giving up."

"...Now that I'm in my third year of high school, I want to work hard for my future with Tsukasa."

Erika let out one big breath and looked straight at me.

"For almost a year now, even before I started dating Tsukasa, I've been learning a lot from you. Now I can cook almost anything by looking at a cookbook, and I can

clean and do laundry as well as anyone. It's a far cry from the days when I didn't even know how to hold chopsticks. I can feel the change in myself."

"Yeah. Erika really did her best. You had the strong desire of 'wanting to know and learn'. It's really admirable."

"Thank you. But I was able to do my best, all because of Tsukasa. You taught me everything you could, and you were good at teaching. And also... you took me to the university festival, took me shopping, and you were good at making me relax as well."

"I'm happy to hear you say that."

I smiled, and Erika smiled happily too.

Erika has changed a lot in the past few months, but the biggest change I think is that she has become more mature. She doesn't make fun of other people as much, and has become calmer. I feel that her dignified beauty has been emphasized because of this.

Lately, when I see Erika smiling, my heart becomes restless.

"I'm definitely moving forward for the future that I want. And I've finally found something I can do. I used to be unable to do my job properly at my part-time jobs, but I feel like I can do it now. I'm sure I can be adaptive and do my best."

"Oo... Erika's saying four-character idioms..."[TLN: yojijukugo, aka four character idioms, lost in translation sadly, the one he is referring to would be '臨機応変', which basically means to adapt to one's surroundings as is required.]

"Hey! That's not the point you should be moved about!"

"Ah, sorry sorry."

We've been dating for almost eight months now, and every day I fall more and more in love with Erika. Watching her work so hard, it would be impossible for me to lose my feelings for her.

Erika's eyes looked a little moist as she stared at me, and my reasoning wavered...

--I'm beaten. Erika hasn't graduated from high school yet. I need to have a wholesome relationship with her until then...

I hugged Erika again, fighting against my own decision. After feeling each other's warmth for a while, we pulled apart and our eyes met. And then, as our lips got closer and closer-

--*clang*

The noise brought me back to my senses.

I looked in the direction of the sound and saw a red-faced Mana looking at me and smiling wryly. At her feet, Mana's phone had fallen.

"Sorry... I was going to go to the living room quietly but... it slipped from my hands..."

"Ah, no, yeah..."

"Please go ahead and don't mind me... Ahaha."

"Ah, yes... thank you. Ah, I bought some pudding a la mode, can you put it in the fridge?"

"Ah, okay... Yes. I'll put it in the fridge."

A little sister who witnessed a kissing scene between her brother and her best friend, and an older brother who was seen in the kissing scene by his younger sister, have mixed awkward feelings.

Erika was also embarrassed, and she was looking down the whole time.

After Mana took the bag of pudding a la mode and hurried off to the living room, Erika and I were still frozen there.

"Um, Erika... Let's keep the time and place in check, shall we?"

"Y-yeah... That's right."

I've just gotten home, and I haven't even washed my hands yet. I walked down the hallway to go to the bathroom to calm myself down.

But then, she tugged on the back of my clothes.

I leaned backwards. I could feel Erika's breath on my ear.

And then she whispered into my ear.

"Later... Let's definitely continue from where we left off."

My heart jumped at her sweet voice, and I think I had a funny look on my face.

Even if she learns a little bit of common sense for the future, or gets a part-time job, Erika will still be Erika.

Whenever she sees an opportunity, she'll take a provocative attitude, and... try to shake up my reasoning and my heart.

I turned around and faced Erika, patted her on the head, and gave her a resolute, provocative look in return.

"Alright. As a celebration for you finally getting a part time job, I'll do some amazing things within the scope of a wholesome relationship, so be ready."

Erika's face instantly turned red. However, she immediately returned a strong gaze at me.

"-Bring it on."

The beautiful Yankee JK, who looked like an angel, laughed like a little devil.

Chapter 21 – Afterword

Thank you very much for picking up this book. Nice to meet you. My name is Maripara.

I'm a scenario writer for the YouTube channel {Sekai no Fushigi}, where I write original scenarios for manga videos. If you're wondering which video scenario I'm working on, you can search for Maripara on Twitter.

I started writing scenarios for Sekai no Fushigi Channel when I had just started working as a scenario writer. At that time, Sekai no Fushigi Channel was mainly about "What would happen ifoo" stories and miscellaneous topics. If you do, you must be a long-time fan of Sekai no Fushigi. Thank you for your support. If you didn't know, please watch the past videos! I'm sure you'll find something useful. If you've never heard of Sekai no Fushigi, check it out on YouTube right now!

I've been writing scenarios for Sekai no Fushigi for over two years now, so a lot has happened. I've been in contact with Sekai Mama, the administrator of Sekai no Fushigi, and we've had a lot of discussions about how to make the channel more accessible to many people. Sekai no Fushigi Channel has now become a channel that focuses on romance and heartwarming stories.

When I write the scenarios for Sekai no Fushigi Channel, I try to create a 'gentle world'. It's a kind world so that everyone can think, 'I wish our world was like this.' I would be happy if the people who watch my videos feel warm and happy, or if they thought of doing their best today, and doing their best tomorrow. I've received a comment from someone who said, "I like this channel because you can take moral lessons even after you grow up." I was so happy that I kept a copy of the comment. I also kept a copy of the comment that said, 'The stories on this channel are 500% made by virgins.' I was personally touched by it.

To get back to the topic at hand, there was a time when I myself experienced the bottom of my life. At that time, I was supported by many people, and I am here today. I have been constantly saved by the people I have met in my life.

If the Mana in this story had not met Erika, she would not be smiling today. And of course, Tsukasa too. And Erika, if she hadn't met Tsukasa, she would have been treated poorly by adults for her lack of common sense. The existence of someone else supports and saves someone else. Just by living a normal life, I believe that we are repeatedly saving and being saved.

I would like to thank Sekai Mama for giving me a reason to live, the scenario writers who support the foundation of the channel together, the unsung heroes who work behind the scenes, the illustrators who visualize the world of the scenario beautifully, the voice actors who speak in beautiful voices that soothe our hearts, and the video editors who put together the videos... and to all the people who support Sekai no Fushigi Channel.

In order to novelize the Sekai no Fushigi Channel's videos, Sekaimama asked, "Maripara-san, would you like to write a novel?" Thank you very much to Sekai Mama for believing in me as an unknown, to S-sama, the editor in charge, and to the editorial staff of Fujimi Fantasia Bunko. The illustrator, Ichino Yuyu-sensei. All of the illustrations were wonderful and made me tremble, but the moment I saw the cover illustration,, I thought, "It's my dear Yankee JK Erika!" I was so moved. Really, thank you very much.

I hope I can leave something warm in the hearts of those who read this book.

We look forward to your continued support of Sekai no Fushigi Channel.

Maripara

Illustrations





「あっ！」

ドアを開けてそのまま中に入ろうとした時、
女の手が聞こえた。

「え？」

俺は腰不足で、腰の半分が隠れている状態だった。

ホーッとしていて、境界もいつもよりぼんやりしていて、

気が付かなかった。ドアの向こうに人がいたなんて……

俺は思考停止状態になり、体の動きも止まった。そのせいで、

中にいた人物から目が離せなくなる。

すらりとした長い脚、白く滑らかな肌、

きゅんときゅんしたお尻、黒った金色の髪、

何より……美らかうな顔元に目が吸い寄せられる。

紺色の下着姿で、腰をタオルで拭いている体のまま、

エリカちゃんも顔真っ赤。

大きな目を丸く開いて、唇が震えている。

朱色に染まった頬が、なんだか赤計の熱っぽさを醸し出していた。

「お、おにーさん……っ」





美人ヤンキー

妹の友達の

マリパラ

イラスト:一乃ゆゆ

原作/監修:セカイノフシギ

世間知らず
過ぎて世話を
焼いていたら
惚れられ
ました

I was taking care of my sister's friend, a
cute high school girl, and then we liked
each other.

F ファンタジア文庫



JK

妹の友達 美人ヤンキー

I was taking care of
my sister's friend, a
cute high school girl,
and then we liked each
other.

世間知らず
過ぎて世話を
焼いていたら
惚れられ
ました

