Holding On

Summary

The Main Character befriended Sayori early in his childhood, but what if Monika took her role as a childhood friend? How would things be different between the two? Will they fall in love or will they be each other's "dearest friend"? Even if they wanted to be together, an outside force would find a way to interfere with their relationship, testing their bonds to the very limits.
Encounter

It was a sunny day August, me and my family have moved in almost a week ago.
In just one week, I was forced to move on and leave my friends behind.
My only form of communication to them was by Skype or more reliably, telephone.
After all, it has only been about four years since Skype has been released, and internet around our area isn't all that reliable.
But ever since we moved here, I refused to go outside, despite the fact that I loved going outdoors.
It was strange, new world outside. So of course I was going to be intimidated.
To bide the time, I played with my toys or watched cartoons in the TV.
My two favorite pastimes weren't enough to quell my boredom, however.
And so, all I did was just wander the house and rolled about.
My mother understood what I was going through, and periodically tried to get me out of the house and meet new people.
So far, I was successful in thwarting her attempts by finding something to do.
This time however, I had absolutely nothing to do, thus allowing my mother to attempt to get me out once more.
"Val~! It's time for you meet new friends! No use in staying in the house all the day!" My mom called.
I gave an annoyed groan.
I jumped up from my resting place and ran out.
"But, mama! I don't want to go outside! It's all so scary! I don't know anyone from back home!" I yelled, running to whenever my mom was.
I saw her on the sofa, reading her favorite book, "The Precursor of Markov".
She chuckled and closed her book.
At this point, I would have just found something to do and avoid her.
Particularly, a new toy story idea would pop up, or a show I like would come on.
But, that wasn't the case today.
My mom patted a place for me to sit, to which I did.
Once I did, she rubbed my hair, letting her hand glide through it.
"Let me tell you a story, little Vally. When I was your age, we moved a lot. And each time I moved, I used to go outside all the time and explore, only this time it was permanent. And that's when I met
your dad. As seven year olds, we did silly things like go on magical adventures, skip rocks over the water, climb trees, or even go hiking! I am sure that you will find someone that will play with you!"

I shuddered from the fear of meeting someone new.

"But I don't want to play with new people! I want to play with my old friends! And I am not seven! I am turning eight next month!"

I saw my mom give a deadpan reaction.

And then, she sighed at my reluctance to leave.

"Honey, as sad as it sounds, the only way you can play with your friends is by Skype or telephone. I know it isn't the same thing as playing with them when they are right in front of you." She stated.

I frowned, feeling sullen over the truth.

My friends were there most of the time, just so we can play and go on adventures.

The truth on the fates of my friends, hurt.

"Mama... I miss them." I muttered, lying my head on her lap, looking onto the distant door.

I felt my mother's warm hand caress my hair, soothing me somewhat.

"I know. I know it hurts to leave friends behind, especially if you are close to them. But the best thing you can do, Vally, is to move on. You can't hold onto the past, forever. You need to take the future into your own hands, deary. It's time that you make new friends, and enjoy what life has to offer."

I tried to take my mother's word into consideration, but the only thing holding me back was the fact that I couldn't let go of my friends.

"It'll take time, Vally. Eventually, you are going to move on, stronger than ever!" My mom cheerily stated.

I looked up to her, seeing her caring smile.

"Okay, Mama. I believe you, but I am going to start tomorrow!" I stated, face-planting into my mother's lap.

She gave another sigh to my acceptance.

We then heard the door unlock, causing me to bounce up and run to the door.

"Papa is here! Papa is here! I know he will play with me!" I chanted.

The door opened, to reveal my dad wearing a business suit and carrying a suitcase.

He wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"Wow... today was a long day!"

He visibly brightened when he noticed me and picked me up, holding me in my arms.

"Hey, sport! How are you settling in?"
I frowned at the mention of that.

"It's so weird! I want to play outside! But, I am scared of making new friends! So I was hoping that you would play with me!"

My dad chuckled at my little tantrum.

"Eh... maybe later, son. Why don't you make new friends outside, like your mother said?"

In response to his answer, I pouted and crossed my arms.

"No!"

My mom walked up to him and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"Hey, Deborah." My dad greeted, kissing her back on the cheek.

"Ah, Harold. I missed you! What would you like? Would you want some dinner? Want me to ready a bath? Or... do you want me?"

My dad smirked at my mom, to which I had no idea why.

"I'll take you on." He smugly said, winking at her, causing my mom to giggle.

I cringed at his choice.

"Ew... Papa! Are you going to eat Mama?! That's disgusting! Why don't you eat some dinner and take a bath at the same time?!!"

Both of my parents' faces turned a deep red.

My dad cleared his throat.

"Um... that's a good idea! Why don't you go outside, son? I'll meet you there, once I am done... eating. A-And taking a bath! Haha..."

I didn't get why they were acting so funny, but ultimately brightened up at the thought playing with dad.

"Fine! But you better hurry, dad! I'm going to the park to play with rocks and trees, all to make my newest adventure!"

I got off my dad's arms and ran towards the exit.

"Don't wander off too far!"

"Try your best to stay safe and not get hurt!"

I opened the door with newfound vigor, causing it to swing right open.

My energy to play couldn't be contained and I ran outside.

I yelled into the sky.

"Okay!"

I ran as fast I could to the park, hoping that I would break my record of running speed.
The air was cool, the smell of pine trees, and orange skies made me more excited to play.

I can't wait to play with Papa!

We can play ball!

Push me on the swings!

Buy some ice-cream!

And maybe skip some rocks!

Once I made it to the park, I realized there was no one in the slides, monkey-bars, or water-showers. Every kid around my age started to walk with their parents home.

I frowned at the prospect of making new friends, despite my initial fear.

I still wanted to play with them, however.

Even if I was scared.

I decided to wait for my dad to come over, so I planned on playing with the swings for the meantime.

As I walked over to the swings, I saw a girl.

She was wearing a white dress with a white hair-bow, in her coral, brown hair.

That girl was sitting on the swings, motionless and leaning against the supports of the swing to lay her head on.

Should I talk to her?

She's so lonely...

And I want to be friends with her.

I want to have fun with her as well.

She's a girl in need!

In need of a friend and having fun!

But what if she doesn't want to play with me? What if she doesn't like me and walks away?

Mom and Dad said that I should always try, no matter what.

So, here goes nothing!

With a positive outlook on the situation, I walked towards the swing.

She was still dragging her feet across the ground, tracing the grass and dirt with it.

With a smile, I sat on the other swing to her left.
The girl immediately looked to her left and saw me.

She had a small frown to which was replaced with a smaller smile.

I mentally readied my self and greeted her first.

"H-Hello! My name is Valkyrie! What's yours?" I enthusiastically greeted.

Her smile started to brighten a little more.

"H-Hi... my name is M-Monika." The girl answered.

I continued my pleasantries.

"You look a bit down! Want me to help you with the swing?"

She looked reluctant, unsure if she wanted to play or not.

"Do you want to play with me?" She asked back.

I nodded.

"Yep! It must get pretty lonely sitting here all by yourself! So let's play!"

Her small smile started to brighten.

"Um... Okay!" Monika answered.

I jumped off my swing and grabbed onto the supports of her swing.

"Ready?" I asked, before commencing.

She looked back and nodded.

"I am ready..." Monika said, with great sense of confidence.

It was a confidence that she knew of and could draw upon.

And so, I pulled back as hard as I could, walking backwards to.

Once I gained sufficient distance, I let go.

The swing set started to creak slightly, indicating that she was now moving.

Monika took off, exerting her weight to move higher, and then leaning back to gain more speed.

I continued to push her, just so she can go higher and higher.

Each push elevated her to new degrees.

The rush of the swing caused her to become happier and happier.

I enjoyed giving her the rush of speed and momentum, causing me to also happier.

It didn't take long for her to start giggling.

A giggle that also made me happier as well, and allowed me to enjoy the moment.
"Hehehe~! Higher! Higher!" She chanted.

I started giggling along with her, now fully happy that I was successfully making her happy as well.

Once she didn't need my help, I jumped on my swing and started to gain speed as well.

Taking a few steps back, I brought my legs up and pushed up.

After a few seconds, I reached the same speed as Monika.

"This is fun with a friend on the swings!" She said.

I looked to my right, seeing her long, brown hair flow across the wind.

I smiled at her.

"Yeah! Everything is fun with friends!" I agreed.

We enjoyed being the swing for a while, before getting bored of the rush.

I planted my feet down, to provide friction and to stop the speed.

Monika followed suit and jumped off gracefully.

"That was fun!" She said, enjoying our moment together.

I nodded to agree with her.

"Yup! That was fun! It was just like old times!"

She raised an eyebrow.

"Eh? Just like old times? Did you move here?"

I wringed my fingers together, nervously.

"Well... yeah. I moved here almost a week ago. And, I... I was scared to make friends. But, now I am not! Are you my friend, Monika?" I asked.

She jumped up.

"Yeah! We are friends!"

For the first time, ever since I arrived here...

I felt a sense of security and a stranger sense of camaraderie.

Monika then grabbed my hand.

"Come on! Let's play some more! Let's go on an adventure!"

I beamed at her, knowing that everything was going to be alright.

"Okay!"

We ran into the woods, but making sure that we were still close to the areas that we know of.
After getting a proper boundary set, we then played some imagination games, involving roleplay. Roleplay such as me being a knight or prince of some sort, and Monika being a princess or a heroine in distress.

We used a large rock formation as our base of operations and carried sticks to fight off imaginary creatures.

But to make it seem more fun, the last fight involved fighting a dragon, or a the largest wooden formation we saw.

There, with our combined might, we broke the the wooden dragon, we sat on the ground and laughed it off.

After we finished laughing, I looked to Monika.

She was smiling at me.

A smile that seemed almost perfect, but at the same time, so imperfect.

Monika caught onto my staring.

"What's wrong?" She asked, still smiling.

"Your smile..." I muttered.

That caused her to stop smiling, and frowned again.

"Oh... I am sorry if it looks bad." She apologized, adopting a neutral-frown to cover it up.

I shook my head at her reaction.

"No, no! I like your smile! It's looks really good!" I assured.

My words had a strange impact on her.

Monika started to smile again, but in a weird way.

"R-Really?" She asked.

I nodded.

"Yep! Your smile looks really, um... uh... hmm... what's the word? Oh yeah, cute! I like it!"

Monika for some reason had red cheeks, but started to laugh weirdly.

"Thanks, Valkyrie. I really appreciate it."

I waved my hand at her.

"Don't call me by my full first name, Monika. Call me, Val! But don't call me Vally! I hate being called that!"

She giggled at my outburst, giving me a toothy smile once she collected herself.

"If you have a nickname then I have one too! Call me, Mon!"
"Oh... Mon? Okay, Mon! I have a question for you! But... are you okay with me asking it?"

She shrugged.

"Yeah, I am okay! Ask it, Val!"

That pumped me up.

"If you want me to... um. Why were you sitting on the swings alone?"

Monika started to frown at that question.

"Oh..."

She then looked away, with a somewhat hurt expression.

The way she frowned made me hurt as well.

I wanted to do anything I can to make her smile again.

"Well... whenever I talk to boys, they just don't talk to me properly. Whenever I walk up to them, they just mumble something and walk away. It kind of hurts when they don't talk to me. They... they never walk up to me and ask me how I am doing, or if I want to play with them." She explained.

Monika looked at me with warmer eyes.

Her frown was replaced by the smile I liked.

"Hey, Val. Did you know that you are the first boy to talk to me normally? You didn't walk away, or speak so quietly..."

I shook my head.

"No! I didn't know that! Um, do you know why they do that?"

Monika looked off into the distance again, the question hurting her again.

And each time she looked away, the pain I felt amplified.

"I don't know actually. It's also the same whenever I talk to some girls, but they just think I am there to bully them. I just want to play with them or maybe talk with them. They sometimes be downright mean to me."

I didn't get what she meant by "some girls".

Somehow, she knew what I was thinking.

"By some girls, I meant that some girls talk to me, but they look as if they are in a hurry. Those girls just want to talk to me and then leave."

Monika mustered the courage to look at me again.

"That's why I sit alone, Val."

She crawled up to me.

"Do you promise to be my friend, Val? Can you promise that you will always be there for me?"
Monika asked, keeping an unsure frown.

I gave a toothy smile, warming her up inside.

"Yep! You're my first friend here, of course I am going to be there for you! That's what friends do!"

She shined her smile back at me, causing me to be even more happier.

"Thanks, Val!" She said, hugging me in joy.

It was somewhat strange for me to hug a girl.

I thought that hugging a girl would be the sensation as hugging a guy or my parents.

It was somehow warmer, and more caring.

"Your welcome, Mon!" I managed to say, my words subtly becoming entangled by the feeling.

We looked up at the sky, and it was starting to become purple.

I pouted at the sight of the arrival of the night sky.

I looked down to her, to which I saw her still gazing.

There was a twinkle in her green eyes.

A twinkle that hoped for better days ahead.

I aimed to make that a reality, by being her friend.

"Mon, I think we should go home. Do you want me to walk you there?"

She shook her head.

"No... you don't have to. Where do you live? I think I live a bit far from you..."

I waved a hand at her dismissively.

"I live up the block! The park isn't that far from my home!"

She tapped her chin in thought, thinking about the location of where my home was.

"My home is in the same block too. Did you move in a week ago?" Monika inquired.

I nodded.

"Yep! I moved in a while ago, and I am still getting used to this place. It's too peaceful!" I replied, adding my input into the mix.

Monika giggled at my opinion of the neighborhood.

"I know! It's sometimes a bit too quiet! Why can't there be a parade, a march, or something?"

I shrugged.

"I don't know. That would be something that this place needs!"
I stood up and brought my hand up for her. "Let's walk home together!"

Monika took my hand, to which I pulled her up. She gave an little jump once she got off from the ground. "Okay! Race you there!"

I gave her a competitive smirk. "You bet!"

Both of us readied ourselves for the run of our lives. I outstretched my leg to start on, and Monika followed suit. "1!"
"2!"
"3!"
"Go!"

We took off, starting into a dead sprint towards our homes.

I was surprised that Monika managed to outrun me in certain points of the race, but fortunately I had the stamina to outlast her.

In the end, I won the race by a mere second. We made it to our homes, both of us breathing heavily.

Although, I was the one breathing even more heavily then her, as I rested my palms on my knees. I looked up to her. "Hey! Did you go easy on me?!

She nodded reluctantly. "Yeah... I had to. You were kind of slow! Hehehe~!"

I gave her a playful frown.

The sun has already set, as it was nearly night time. "Maybe, I was! It's probably caused I was tired! Anyway, that's my house!" I pointed.

She gave an "ooh." at the sight of it. "So I was right! You have to be the new neighbors that moved in! Now we can play any day!" Monika cheered.

"Yeah! We can come over to each of our houses, and play!" I cheered as well. "Um... are your
parents going to let me?"

She nodded enthusiastically.

"Mhm! My parents are pretty cool! My dad is the head of a development studio! Are yours cool as well?"

I was shocked to know that Monika's dad worked in such a high position.

I nodded as well.

"They don't look the coolest, but to me, they are coolest parents ever! You gotta meet them!"

"Okay!"

Monika gave a yawn and stretched upwards.

"But can we do tomorrow? I am tired!" She said.

I also stretched with her, electing yawn from the pleasure it gave.

"Yeah, me too! I'm gonna tell my parents we are going to play!"

We started to walk closer to our respective homes.

"Bye, Monika!" I waved.

She waved back.

"Bye, Val! Don't forget that you are my best friend!"

I lost count on being shocked.

Being called a best friend made my day.

I couldn't but smile at that.

"Okay! See you tomorrow, best friend!" I replied, going into my home.

I opened the door to see my parents in the dining room, eating and talking.

They were a bit red before I looked a bit embarrassed.

So, I innocently jumped in to show that I was here.

"Hi Mom! Hi Dad!" I greeted.

They jumped at the sight of me.

"Oh my gosh! You are dirty!" My mom said, walking up to me.

"Yeah! I played with my friend, today! She's my first girl-friend!"

My parents froze at what I said.

Both of their eyes widened to a great degree.
I noticed their baffled expressions.

"What?" I asked.

My dad was the first to speak, clearing in his throat in the process.

"You have a girlfriend, sport?"

I assumed that they were surprised that I managed to find a friend.

"Yep!" I answered.

My answer caused them to tense up even more.

Luckily, I picked up on the clues they were giving me.

"Hey, wait a minute... I meant my first 'girl' friend! I don't see her as that! Yuck!" I elaborated.

They both gave sighs of relief.

"Oh... oh that's a relief. Are you two gonna play tomorrow again?" My mom asked.

I nodded vigorously.

"Yep! Monika is going coming to our house tomorrow with her parents! We are neighbors!"

My parents exchanged glances and leaned in to each other.

"I totally forgot to introduce ourselves to our neighbors!" My dad whispered.

"Yeah, it's because you keep procrastinating, Harold! Good thing our son is doing that for you!"

"Aw... Deborah! Don't be like that! I'm sorry! It's just that work has been a bit hard, you know? I'm still getting used to everything!"

My mom pulled away from my dad and looked at me.

They weren't aware of the fact that I listened into their conversation.

"Let's leave tomorrow up to tomorrow, you need a bath, mister!" My mom stated.

My dad got in way of my mom.

"Hold on, Deborah. Let me make it up to you. I'll take care of this, relax for now, okay?"

She sighed.

"Fine, Harold. That's a good way to make it up to me. Just make sure our baby is squeaky clean!"

My dad grabbed my hand and walked me to the bathrooms.

"I will! Don't worry!"

...
After I took a bath, I ate, then slept.

While I was eating, my parents kept bugging me about what I did with Monika.

It was kind of annoying on what exactly we did, but I didn't mind.

I had a lot of fun, so that's what really matters.

Once I was done eating, I went to bed.

I laid down on my bed, in my pajamas, and heard my brother give a tantrum.

Everything was turning back to normal.

But instead of guy friends, I have a girl-friend.

And her name is Monika!

I can't wait to play with her and be her friend forever, and ever!

My parents kept talking about how it might go the next step, and "blossom into something more" but I had no idea what they were talking about.

I'm almost 8, so I don't care!

All I can think of is all the fun I am going to have with my friend!

My best friend!

*Maybe something more.*
Friendship

I watched as Val entered his home.

He looked exhausted, from the long day and from playing with me.

Val walked in and closed it behind him, before opening it again.

He looked towards me and waved another goodbye, before he giggled and left.

The door in front of me opened, my mom giving me a warm smile from my arrival.

My mother knew how difficult it was for me to make friends, and her smile was just a way to help me forget the pains of not finding one.

Luckily, I found a friend today. So the smile made me happier as a result.

"Welcome back, sweetie!" My mom greeted, opening the door for me to walk in. "How was the park?"

Instead of the pained, fake smile I always put up, I looked up to her and beamed.

My mom immediately recognized how different my smile was.

"It was really fun, Mama! I made a friend today!" I bounced about, ecstatic on the news I was about to deliver.

I saw her give a face of pure amusement, before relaxing to one of pleasantness.

"Oh... I see. I am very surprised that you made a friend, Monnie." My mom stated, petting my hair, to which I enjoyed.

She sighed.

"I am proud of you, Monika. It's good that you made a friend. What's your friend's name?" She asked.

I held onto her hand to stop the patting.

"His name is Valkyrie! He's my new best friend!" I chirped, proud of my accomplishment.

My mom smirked at the name.

"Valkyrie? Is he the new neighbors that moved in almost a week ago? The name sounds a bit foreign." She asked.

I nodded.

"Yep! They are the new neighbors!" I answered, moving my mom's hand away from my head.

Along with that answer came the thought of us having a play-date.

I started to jump in place.

"Oh, oh! Mama! Mama! Can I go to his house tomorrow?! I want to play with him again!"
My mother chuckled at how amicable and energetic I was.

I saw my dad walking in from the living room.

My eyes lit up as I saw my dad walking in.

I didn't expect to see him today, as he was an incredibly busy man, leaving home to go on business trips and staying at work.

The sight of him made my day, as he always played with me when my mother was busy.

"Papa!" I squealed, running up to him.

He knelt and opened his arms out for me.

I jumped into his arms, giggling in joy.

"Whoa, I didn't expect you to be this happy to see me! Did you have fun in the park?" He remarked.

I rested my head on his chest, enjoying his comfort.

"Yes, Papa! I had a lot of fun! Did I tell you that I made a new friend today?!" I hurriedly said in excitement.

I couldn't contain the lights in me, as I was ready to spill every single detail of what happened between me and Val.

"Ah. A friend? What's his name? Or what's her name?" He asked.

I pulled away from his chest.

"His name is Valkyrie! He's the new neighbor that moved in!" I answered again.

My dad nodded in understanding.

"A guy friend, huh? Hopefully childhood friends don't finish last, this time..." He enigmatically said, looking out in the window.

I raised an eyebrow, confused on what he was getting at.

"Eh?"

He turned his attention to me.

"Don't worry about it, Mon. I'm sure you two will be great friends." He assured.

My confusion evaporated, making me smile once more.

"I know that we will be great friends! I never had so much fun before!" I cheered.

My dad frowned again and he looked at my mother.

My mother shared his frown, and sighed.


They looked as if they were struck my indecision.
So I resorted to desperate begging.

"Please? Please? Pretty-please?! I want to play!" I begged.

They snapped out of their daze and smiled at me.

My mom walked to me and joined in the embrace.

"Of course you can play with him." My mom simply answered.

I gave a sound of surprise, then pumped my hands in the air.

"Yay!" I chirped.

My dad turned to my mom.

"Keiko, we haven't met our neighbors yet!" My dad whispered.

"I know! I've been planning to meet them ever since they moved, but each time I try to bring up the idea of it, you keep getting business alerts!" My mom whispered back with an ire.

"Sorry. The developments are very interesting and I needed oversee it. I won't let this get in the way again. I want our daughter to be happy. I don't want her to be alone all the time." My dad apologized. "Look, we need to make this right, Keiko. When Monika goes to Valkyries's house, we'll introduce ourselves to his parents."

"You can call him Val." I commented.

They looked at me with surprise, not expecting me to listen into their conversation.

My mom gave a reluctant nod and let me down onto the floor.

Only then, she noticed the dirt and grime on my white dress.

"Ah! Monika, you are dirty! What did you even play with him?! Wrestling?!" She asked, putting her hands on her hips.

I shook my head and looked at her calmly.

"Nope. We played with our imagination, and fought a dragon! We fought together and we banished him!" I answered, cheerfully.

My mom gave an relieved sigh, while my dad chuckled.

"Monika isn't that tomboyish to do that, Keiko. She likes working with boys, instead of fighting them." He added.

I saw her press her hand against her face.

"Raising a tomboy is difficult, my sister is a good example of a tomboy." She stated, picking me up in her arms. "But I don't mind raising a tomboy. I love my daughter no matter what."

"Keiko, should I start making dinner?"

My mom nodded.

"Go ahead, I'll clean Monika all up."
She looked towards me.

"When dinner is all ready, tell us everything about him." My mom requested with a genuine smile.

"I will! I won't leave anything behind!" I declared.

The first thought I had when I woke up, was the thought of Monika.

Since she was my first friend here, I knew things were going to look brighter.

I jumped excitedly from my bed and ran into the bathroom to start the day.

_I can't wait to play with Monika today!

If she comes over to my house, we can play with my toys, or watch TV together!

With my amicable thoughts in my head, I swiftly brushed my teeth and washed up.

Today was a Saturday, and the following day was when I would finally start school.

_I can probably make more friends if I go to school.

The thought of other friends made me let out a depressed sigh.

_I miss James and Gabe...

But I shouldn't think about that now.

Mom said that I should always look in the bright side whenever I can.

I gripped my toothbrush and spat any residue toothpaste, before rinsing.

Once I finished brushing my teeth, I made my way to the living room where my parents were most likely were.

Although my mom wasn't there, I saw my dad talking to someone on the phone.

He had this smile whenever he was lovey-dovey with mom, or when he was with his friends.

_Is he talking to James's or Gabe's dad?

I leaned in for a better listen.

"... of course! It's not a problem, you can come whenever and we'll be ready. Hmm... yeah, she has? That's strange, my little boy wouldn't stop talking about your daughter too! Well, we had to pry the information out of him by repeatedly asking the same questions, haha! Anyway, just give us a call and we will get ready for you guys, alright? Alright, take care. Bye."

I leaned closer to see what my dad was going to do next.

Unfortunately, I shifted too much that it caused me to fall over.

"Ow!"

My dad dropped the phone and ran over to me.
"Val!" He called out, picking me up on my feet and checking if I got hurt.

I rubbed my head a little and frowned.

"I am fine, Papa. I just wanted to know who you were talking to, so I sneaked a bit." I assured.

My dad frowned at my reason.

"You know sport, you could have just waited a bit. I was just on the line with your girlfriend's dad."

I felt my face flare up.

"She's not my girlfriend!" I stated, stomping on the ground.

My dad chuckled at my reaction.

"Hahaha! That looks as if it will never get old!"

I gave him a glare to make him stop his laughter.

Given that it was my father, it was ineffective at best.

In fact it just worsened the situation by laughing a bit harder.

"Dad! I don't like girls! They are yucky! Ew!" I yelled with a red face.

He put his hand up and started to calm down.

"Okay! Okay! I'm joking, son! No need to get angry." He assured.

My dad suddenly snorted, trying to shroud his laughter at my reaction.

"Sooner or later you're gonna realize that women are fascinating creatures. And given the way you talk about her, I would say it's going to interesting." He simply said, the words laced with a cryptic layer.

He then sighed, picking me up and carrying me in his arms.

"Anyway, I would never thought you would get angry at that. In fact, this is the only time I have seen you get really mad over something mad like this." He stated, stroking his chin with his free hand. "Huh... is this the transition to teenhood? Or pre-teenhood?"

I watched my dad carry me to the kitchen, letting me sit in the middle of the area, on a table away from the cooking utensils.

My stomach rumbled at the smells of the kitchen, causing me to rub it.


My dad didn't turn around to respond to me, instead he laughed.

"Hah! Your mother went with Monika's mother to buy some party supplies and a bit of groceries. So they'll be out for a while. In the meantime, I can make some breakfast. What do ya want, sport?"

I tapped my chin in thought.

"Umm... scrambled eggs and some bacon?" I requested.
He turned around and pointed right at me.

"Sure thing, boss!" My dad humorously said, causing me to giggle.

He then walked over to the fridge and took out the eggs.

The thought of being home alone with dad also brought the thought of my little brother.

"Oh, is Mike still sleeping dad?"

He shook his head, while cracking open the eggs.

"Nope. Your mom took him with her. They planned on getting some breakfast outside, before buying anything." He answered, adding butter to the bowl of eggs.

I simply stared at awe from my father's culinary skills.

"Sport, this isn't that impressive. It's all simple basics, but everyone should be able to cook to survive."

I rested my cheek on my palm.

"I know, Papa. But cooking looks kind of cool! I want to cook for me and my friends!"

My dad poured the battered eggs onto a pan, letting it spill over.

"Oh? You wanna cook for yourself and Monika?" He asked with a smirk.

I nodded enthusiastically.

"Yep! It's going to be fun to cook with her! I just know it! I bet that she knows a lot about cooking!"

He gave an amused grunt.

"Someone is in love~!" He mockingly called.

I frowned immediately at the prospect of me being with Monika.

"Dad!"

"Alright, alright!"

It was the afternoon, my mom came back with an armful of groceries and was carrying my little brother.

I was ridiculously bored, as nothing in my life seemed to have any spark to it.

The thought of playing with Monika was all I could think of.

And so, all I did was bide my time by lazing about on my bed.

The time was about 3:00, Monika and her family were to arrive soon.

Right now, I was on the sofa while my parents were setting up all the things needed for a get-together.
"Moom? When are they going to come?" I impatiently asked.

My parents just finished up on the setup, so they weren't dismissing my inane questions with "Yeah, yeahs." or "A bit later, Val."

"They should be here soon, after all they live next to us." My mom stated.

*DING DONG*

I instantly brightened up on the guest of honor.

Monika!

I bounced off the sofa I was lying down on and ran to the door.

"Monika is here! Monika is here!" I chanted, ecstatic on the fun we were going to have.

My small, nimble hands quickly fumbled with the locks of the door, unlocking it.

With a swing of vigor, I opened the door, the sunlight blinding me.

Through my blindness, I was able to see two tall people and person of the same height as me.

Once my vision adjusted, there was a man wearing glasses and a woman wearing a simple red dress, standing beside the girl in front of me.

In front of me was Monika, wearing the same dress from yesterday, the only difference is the color being green rather than white.

"Ah, you must be boy Monika was talking about." The man in the glasses mused.

I looked up to him and nodded.

My mouth quivered, ready to give an answer, before my parents arrived behind me.

"Keiko!" My mom called.

The woman in the red dress smiled at the sight of my mother.

"Deborah!" She answered back.

I didn’t realize that the two have much in common to be very comfortable with each other.

While the moms talked about the day, the dads simply waited around awkwardly, trading glances with each other.

Monika and I were experiencing the spectacle of the two contrasting interactions.

We looked down at the same time and smiled at each other.

"Hey." I waved.

Monika closed her eyes and beamed.

"Hi." She waved back.

Despite us wanting to play with each other, it became awkward once we met up again.
Rather, we were nervous to play again, now that the adults were here.

Both of us started to lose our smiles and adopted small frowns of anxiety.

And so, I decided to take the first step on fixing this.

"Do you want to play?" I asked.

Monika piped up at the prospect of playing.

"Okay!" She answered, taking my hand and running to the rooms in my house.

I was somewhat surprised by Monika's outgoing action.

"So um... what do you want to play, Monika?" I asked, still being held hostage by Monika's iron grip and pull.

Once we stopped moving, she turned around and looked at me.

She gave an unsure sigh at what to do.

"Well, didn't you say that you wanted to play something? I thought you would know what to do."

Monika replied.

I looked at her with joking smile, and started to laugh.

"Oh yeah, right! Hehehe!"

Monika joined in with the laughter as well.

Her laughs were melodic in a sense, as it made me comfortable to be with her.

Once our laughing and giggling started to die down, I started to think of something to do.

I looked around the room and realized that we were in my room.

It must have been sheer luck that we managed to arrive here, despite Monika not knowing the layout of my house.

I had an old poster of Doctor Mario in my room, and I drew an idea from it.

"Why don't we play doctor?" I asked. "We can use candy as medicine and wear my white jacket as a lab coat."

Monika nodded in agreement, while I walked over to the cabinet for any hard candies lying around.

I immediately found the hard candies or rather the cough drops, and held them close to me.

The hard candies helped me get better whenever I had a cold, and it is also a great pick me up.

"That sounds like a lot of fun, Val! What should I get to help?"

She raised an eyebrow at how I was hugging the candies.

"You really like those candies, right Val?" She asked.

I nodded.
"Yep! These candies helped on fighting fevers, coughs, tummy aches, and more! I love them so much!" I stated, hugging the candies close. "Anyway..."

I pointed to my closet.

"My white jacket should in there, Mon. You can play as doctor first!"

Monika walked over to my closet and opened it.

"Mmm... oh! Is this it?"

I turned around to her holding my jacket, smiling while at it.

It was a coat that looked somewhat identical to a lab coat, albeit the pockets and buttons.

"Yep, that's the one! Try it on!" I chirped.

With small glimmer in her eyes, Monika opened the zipper of my jacket and started to put on the jacket.

To my surprise, it fit Monika almost perfectly.

The size fit Monika comfortably, the only problem being that it was only a size larger than what she usually wears.

She pulled the zipper up and twirled around on it.

"Ta-da!"

Monika beamed at me, her arms spread out and showing how comfortably it fit her.

Her coral-brown hair flowed down the jacket, the white bow fitting perfectly with the color scheme.

With the hard candies in hand, I walked up to the girl wearing my jacket.

"Whoa... my jacket looks really great on you, Mon."

Monika's jubilant smile morphed to one with insecurity and surprise.

Her eyes widened a bit, before going back to their normal length.

"Oh. Thanks, Val! I really appreciate it!"

I nodded and gave her the hard candies.

"Okay, Mon. These are the medicines that you need to um..."

I squinted on the word I was trying to get at.

"Subscribe?" I uttered, sounding familiar.

"Prescribe." Monika corrected.

I let out an "oops." and regained my composure.

"Right, that. So when we finish an appointment, we need to prescribe the medicine! I'll start by being the patient, and you need to um... diagnose?"
Monika giggled at my error again.

"Val, it's called diagnose." She corrected.

I rubbed my cheek in frustration.

"I usually know these words but for some reason I am getting confused!" I pouted.

Monika laid a hand on my shoulder.

"It's okay, Val. It happens sometimes. Papa said that whenever this happens, just take a deep breath!"

I raised an eyebrow.

"Take a deep breath?" I asked.

She smiled.

"Mhm! It works, trust me!"

With a nod, I followed Monika's advice and took a deep breath.

Along with that breath, the aroma of Monika's coral brown hair filled my lungs.

It was a distinct smell of pine tree and lilies, formed to make an attractive scent.

I let out the deep breath, feeling amazingly relieved and focused.

"Hah... wow! That really worked, Monika! Thanks!" I commended.

Her cheeks had a subtle tinge of pink that brightened her face.

"Anything for my best friend!" She cheered. "And that is my first patient cured!"

I gave a playful frown.

"No! It's not fair! I-I um..."

I then pointed at the door.

"I'm technically not a patient if I didn't come out from that door!" I managed to excuse.

An excuse that didn't fly well with Monika.

She frowned and crossed her arms as a result.

"Doctors help people whenever they can! Anyone with a medical problem and comes to the doctor is a patient! It doesn't matter if they entered her office or not!" She countered.

I gave a small pout, knowing that she was right.

"Oh, alright! I am the first patient that you cured. But..."

I ran to the door and opened it, leaving the room for a moment.

Afterwards, I opened the door and jumped out.
"Can you handle a second patient!?!" I shouted.

Monika stood tall at the challenge.

"I can do it! I can handle any challenge!" She proudly declared, putting her hands on her hips.

I was rather impressed by Monika's determination to get the job done.

*She's so cool!*

I shook my head to clear my thoughts.

"Get ready, then. Because here I come!"

I saw him walk up to me.

I decided to take seat on a chair next to his desk and crossed my leg in a condescending fashion.

With a fist next to mouth, I cleared it.

"So, what seems to be the problem?" I asked with a completely tone to my voice.

Instead of sounding casual and relaxed, I adopted a much more stricter and professional sounding one.

It was a good way to show that I was in business.

Val planned on being a patient with a fever, so he needed to act the part.

He put his hand on his forehead and looked dazed.

"Doctor, my head feels like is on fire and it kind of hurts!" He moaned, faking the discomfort and pain.

I was genuinely worried, but regained my composure, knowing that it was all a game.

I stood up from my seat and walked over to my patient.

He sat down on the floor and groggily looked about.

I knelt down and placed my hand on his forehead.

Only then I realized what I was doing.

Something I was doing for a while, unconsciously.

Something I never realized I was doing.

*I-I...*  

*I'm touching a boy!*

I felt my face catch on fire, as his fake fever found it's way to my face.

Val looked worried and raised an eyebrow.
"Are you okay, Mon? Your face looks a bit red." He asked, concerned.

I pursed my lips.

"I am fine! A doctor never gets sick!" I proudly said, backing away from him.

He cutely scratched his cheek and looked at me in confusion.

"Oh, okay." Val simply muttered.

Knowing that I needed to complete my job as a doctor, I took a deep breath and walked over to the boy as well.

I felt a bit better once I let out the deep breath, so I placed my hand on his forehead again.

Val gave a small, hopeful smile when I checked his forehead.

His smile was contagious, and it was making me flustered by the minute.

I backed away from him again and evaluated the situation.

With a proud stance and smile, I looked into his eyes.

I couldn't help by glance his small smile.

No one else really smiled at me like that...

I cleared my throat again.

"Mr. Val, I am sorry to inform you that you have a fever!"

In an instant, his smile disappeared, now being replaced by a shocked expression.

I felt his shocked expression flow into me as well.

"W-What do I do, doctor?" He asked me, hoping that I would have the answer to make him smile again.

All I could think of was his cute little smile.

"U-Um..." I muttered, struggling to find the right words to say. "Since you have a fever, what I need to is reduce it."

His shocked expression slowly morphed into confusion.

"Reduce it? How can you do that?" He asked.

I looked around for something damp to use.

My eyes rested at the sight of a small container of moist towelettes.

I walked over to the towelettes and showed him it.

"To lessen a fever, you need to cool it down with something cold and wet."

I opened the box of towelettes, pulled out one, and walked over to him.
I hope that I won't get nervous again.

After all, I am touching him with a towel!

So, I am not really touching him!

Right?!

With the wet towelette in hand, I pressed it against him.

It's feels the same exact way anyway!

At first, Val shivered at the contact of the damp fabric, but then relaxed to it, giving a small hum of approval.

His hum made me even more flustered.

And it made me pull my hand away prematurely.

Val gave a pout and look of disappointment for a slight second, before giving his usual cute smile.

We looked at each other, as he was expecting me to say something.

But he beat me to it.

"I think feel better now, doctor!" He happily chirped.

The joy in his voice made my heart jump in happiness as well.

"I-Is that so?" I managed to say.

He nodded enthusiastically.

"Yep!"

I started to smile in satisfaction.

Only then I realized my job as a doctor was not complete.

"The fever is almost gone, so keep this on your forehead and I want you to take it easy for the rest of the day. Doctor's orders!" I shrewdly said.

Val pumped his arms in the air.

"Okay! Thanks Doctor!"

Now we switched the roles up, Val now being the doctor and me being the patient.

I had to think of something that can be treated by him.

I hope he doesn't just use the candies to help solve the problems...

I let out a deep breath and opened the door.

My condition was going to be something so dire, not even the candies could help me.
His sweet smile was still plastered on his face.

When Val saw me, I instantly laid a hand on my forehead.

He didn't react to my distress.

"Doctor, oh doctor! I am not feeling so well! I think I am dying." I cried, emphasizing the dire circumstances with my voice.

Val kept his smile.

"Oh, well... I don't think that good for you. What's wrong?" He asked, looking intrigued.

I clutched my left breast and let out sigh.

"My heart! Doctor, I think there is something wrong with my heart! I am feeling oh so terrible!"

That finally caused Val to finally wake up.

"Oh um... I don't have a stethoscope, so I guess I will just happen to lean in." He nonchalantly explained.

I felt my eyes widen.

"E-Eh?! Y-You're gonna lean in and check my heartbeat without any equipment?!"

He slowly nodded.

"That's what I said." Val cheekily said, scratching the side of his cheek.

*If this was a day ago, I probably wouldn't mind doing that.*

*Why am I feeling so jittery?*

*Why is my heart beating so fast?!*

He shrugged.

"Well, it's time to check your heartbeat."

Val leaned in, closer and closer to my chest.

I looked anxiously as he got closer to me.

*Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!*

*He's getting so close!*

He was just a few inches away from my chest.

My eyes squeezed shut, as my vision started to falter.

I instinctively backed away and slapped him.

*PWAP*

I heard an hurt groan right ahead of me.
My eyes opened to see Val clutching the side of the cheek, rubbing it ever so slightly.

He immediately frowned when our eyes met.

"Owww... What was that for Monika?! That hurrrent!"

I gave an shocked gasp at what I did.

"Aah! I'm so sorry, Val! I didn't mean to do that! M-My hand just moved on it's own!" I hurriedly explained, feeling guilty about my slap.

Val managed to smile again.

"It's okay. I guess I can just give you your prescription."

He reached for the candy to end the appointment.

I didn't want any of that.

"N-No, wait!" I blurted out.

Val looked at me with concerned expression.

I continued to explain.

"A-A doctor is supposed check the patient's condition, no matter how much he refuses and how bad it is!" I stated.

He touched the side of his cheek again.

"But... I don't want to get slapped again..." He muttered.

I touched his hand on his cheek.

He looked surprised at what I was doing.

Oh no!

I am touching a boy again!

My face was starting to burn up, but I still pressed on.

"Val, I won't slap you again, I promise."

He gave a small smile at my declaration, to which I continued.

"Unless you do something that I deem inappropriate, then I have to. Got it?" I warned, my voice dripping to sub-zero temperatures.

He didn't understand what I was getting at, but nodded.

"So do I listen to your heartbeat?" He asked.

I sighed.

"Yeah... go ahead."
With a cheer, he pressed his ear against me.

*I hate myself for getting self-conscious or feeling weird about this right now.*

*But, I feel the need to embrace him, hold his against me, and maybe...*

My eye grew heavy and my head started to fall closer to him.

*Sleep on it.*

My head felt something soft underneath, yet it was somewhat rough.

"Um... Monika?" I heard a voice ask.

I ignored the voice and continued to rub my cheek against the strange fabric.

The smell of the fabric was fresh, inviting and masculine.

*Masculine in a way...*

"Mmm..." I let out, enjoying the pillow I was on.

"Monika!" A voice boomed, waking me up.

My eyes shot up and I arose from my trance.

I felt strangely exhausted, and yet wide awake.

My vision was filled with a boy whose face was red.

Val pulled away from my chest, his face identical to a tomato.

I stifled my giggles at how he looked like.

His mouth quivered, struggling to find the proper words to say.

"U-Um... y-y-your heartbeat was kind of weird... l-like it was beating really fast and then slowing down out of nowhere..." He managed explain.

And I let out my giggles at him, laughing at his flustered state.

He looked at me dumbfounded on what just happened.

I tried to stop my endless bouts of laughter, but they kept leaking out.

Everything that has transpired was too funny for me, for some inconspicuous reason.

Val tried to keep a stern face, but the infectious laughter started to get to him.

He also laughed with me anyway.

We stopped laughing a few moments later, and we didn't quite a clear-cut reason as to why we started laughing.

It was there that I noticed how Val looked.

His smile made my heart flutter each time I saw it, and it made me smile as well.
I don't know what that feeling is, but it felt great.

Val sighed happily and handed me lifesaver, which fit the palm of my hand.
I was pleasantly surprised from the generosity and size of the candy.
"Um... Val, this isn't the candy you were talking about, right?"

Val gave a small chuckle at my amused state.

"Nope! It's a lifesaver, put them in your mouth and let it melt a bit. The best part is when you can munch on them! The taste is so great!"

I gave him a smirk.

"I know what it is, dummy. I just didn't know that it will be a jumbo-sized one. Thank you, Val."

I then popped it into my mouth.

He gave a toothy smile before he followed suit, popping one into his mouth.

"Yur wvewelcum!"

It was almost five o'clock, me and Monika had quite a lot of fun after we played doctor.
After we played doctor, we decided to continue on playing where we left off yesterday.
Though we didn't get too far on starting our quests, as both of our moms called us for dinner.

"Awww! I wanted to fight something! This diplosacy quest is kind of boring!" I complained.

Monika put her hands on her hips.

"Well, diplomacy is really important once you get older Val. You can't solve every problem with your fists. Sometimes peace is the better option." She stated, pointing her finger up to make a point.

I gave her half-lidded stare.

"Yeah, but peace is kind of boring... we are in a fantasy-world, Mon! So why don't we go a little crazy?"

She shrugged.

"Eh... I think that letting loose can lead to a dangerous path. It's better to stay true to yourself."

I rolled my eyes.

"VAL-IKA!" A duo of voices yelled from across the hallway, before laughing it off.

I raised an eyebrow and traded looks with Monika.

"What was that?" I asked.

Monika broke out of her trance and gripped my hand again.

I looked at my captive hand and looked up to her.
She had a pale-pink outline on her cheeks and smiled at me.

"That's our moms calling us for dinner. Come on!"

Monika yanked my hand and ran to the dining room.

The air was coated with a cheesy, greasy smell.

I knew full well what that meant.

"Pizza!" I cheered, now taking the lead and pulling Monika with me.

She gave an surprised yelp at the sudden change of power and followed along.

Once we made it to the dining room, my suspicions of pizza was confirmed.

There, lying on the middle of the table was a box of greasy, bubbling, cheesy pizza.

I couldn't help my lick my lips at the aroma and satisfying look of the slices.

"Pizza..." I muttered, catching the attention of our parents.

When our parents laid eyes on us, they all looked pleasantly surprised.

However, with the exceptions of both of our dads, to which were actually puzzled.

I raised an eyebrow and looked behind me to see Monika looking away.

She was keeping her eyes under her bangs, and was playing with her silky brown hair, while still holding onto my hand.

I looked back to the weird parents.

"What's wrong?" I asked, only to be answered by a blinding light.

The click of a camera was heard, and both of our moms were pointing at each meticulous detail of it.

"They look so cute together!"

"I know right?!"

Our dads couldn't help but look at us and the picture the mothers took.

They then traded glances with each other.

Monika released her iron grip on my hand and hid behind me, holding my shoulders and looking ahead from there.

Another click was heard, along with the accompanying blinding light.

The second round of lights affected our vision for a few seconds, gaining spots in different areas of our vision.

"We should do this more often."

"Agreed!"
Both of our dads adopted a worried, but neutral expression throughout the whole scenario.

"Why don't we let the kids eat? I'm sure they are famished." Monika's dad said.

That wasn't really a popular decision for the two ladies.

My dad agreed, to better back his statement.

"Yeah, we can take photos of them later. Let the two eat and watch TV, we can do this later. Or maybe take photos of them without the flash on..." He suggested, noting on how we were still rubbing the spots out of our eyes.

They reluctantly agreed.

"Fine." My mom let out.

"We'll stop... for now." Monika's mom agreed.

With a sigh, they started to smile at us, apparently somewhat pleased with the results of situation.

"Okay, you two! Come here and we'll give you a slice!"

"Aww... they must be starving for playing with each other! Why not give them two slices each!" Monika's mom suggested.

Unsurprisingly, my mom agreed putting two slices on our plates.

"Good idea, Keiko! Come on, take your plates!" My mother said, handing them to us.

As a show of good faith, Monika's mom gave me a plate, and my mom doing to the same to Monika.

We gave our genuine thanks and moved over to the living room.

While we were headed there, I wanted to talk to Monika about her strange behavior.

"Um... Monika?" I called.

She meekly looked at me, apparently looking nervous.

"Yeah?" She answered.

The way she responded showed that there was a strange sense tension between us.

It made me hesitant to respond back to her.

"Uh... hmm... Why were you nervous and hiding behind me when our moms took pictures?"

Monika stopped walking and looked away.

"I got nervous because... I-I didn't want my parents to get the wrong idea... or give you the wrong idea..." She explained.

Her explanation didn't make sense to my naive 7 year old brain.

"The wrong idea?" I pressed, confused.

She looked at me with a small frown.
"Remember what I said, when I didn't have any friends?"

I nodded.

"You're my first real friend, Val. And... and I don't want to ruin our friendship at all! I just want to be your friend forever!"

I held my plate with one hand and hugged her around the shoulders.

The scent of her hair flooded my nostrils.

"Monika, you know you are my first friend here. I always keep my friends close to me, and I will be your friend forever. No matter what! So, don't worry!"

With a smile, knowing that our friendship has been solidified, she giggled a little.

"When I am around you, I have nothing to fear! You're my dearest friend, Val!"

She then poked my nose.

I couldn't help but rub my nose from the poke.

"Come on! Let's go watch some TV! I'm hungry!" She shouted excitedly, gripping my hand once more.

Somehow, by either luck or knowing the layout, she found the living room.

She instinctively sat down on the sofa with the plate on her lap.

I searched around for the remote.

With the TV remote in hand, I was just about to start up the TV, when I had a better idea on what to do.

"I got a better idea!" I declared, imagining a small light-bulb sparking above my head.

"What's the idea?" Monika questioned.

I stood up from the sofa and looked around for the laptop.

"Aha!"

I took off the charger of the laptop and brought over to the coffee table next to us.

The laptop whirred to life as I pressed the power button.

"Let's watch some Youtube! It's a really fun website that has so many videos!"

Monika playfully rolled her eyes on the prospect of watching videos.

"Pssh! How can a few videos be better than watching-"

The laptop turned on to a video, cutting her off.

The title of the video was "Keyboard Cat".

I smugly looked at Monika, to see her eyes widened, completely amazed by the spectacle.
The cat in the video started to play a tune to which I bobbed my head along to.

For the duration of the video, Monika gave amazed gasps at how flawlessly the cat was playing the notes.

Her eyes twinkled with mirth as the cat played.

Once the video ended, I saw her make a fist next to her heart.

"I am going to play piano." She whispered, looking directly at the video.

I couldn't help but chuckle.

"What's so funny?" She asked, somewhat offended.

I shook my head.

"It's not funny, Mon. I just like how you got inspired to do something, all because of a video. I laughed because it was kind of cute." I pointed out.

Her cheeks flushed a bit, her eyes widened.

"C-Cute?"

She regained her composure and looked at me again.

"Ah! It's not because of that! I also have another reason!"

This caught me by surprise.

"Oooh! What's the other reason?! Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!"

Monika took the chance to look at me smugly.

"It's a secret." She said, smirking at me.

I frowned at her secret motive to playing the piano.

"Okaay..." I dismissed, while biting down into my pizza.

*I hope she doesn't forget about it and tells me why soon...*

I noticed the mischievous twinkle in her eyes, the small pink edges of her cheeks, and haughty smile.

But what I didn't notice was the greasy, cheesy taste of the pizza.

Once we were done eating pizza and watching a interesting plethora of Youtube videos, the sun was beginning to set.

We wanted to continue play our make-believe story, but at the same time we didn't want to.

Our muscles were tired, and our brains were in a jargon to make a new story line for our trilogy.

I was lying down on the sofa, my left ear on the seat and my side was accompanying it.

Monika daringly rested her chin and arms on my right arm, lazily dazing about.
"So..." I started to say. "What do you want to do?"

She gave an bored groan.

"I don't know... what do you want to do?"

I gave the same bored groan as hers.

"I don't know... what do you want to do?"

Monika sighed and lazily rubbed cheek against my arm.

"Want to read something? I always like reading books, especially with a lot of choices in them. Kind of like a dating simulator!"

I gave another grunt.

"Sure... you can go get book, I'll just be here..."

Monika jumped over me and ran to search for a book.

I let my eyes rest for a bit, before coming to a sudden conclusion.

Does she know where the books are?

I opened my eyes and looked around for her.

She wasn't anywhere to be found.

I stood up from the sofa and stretched.

Time to go find her...

That is, until Monika came running back.

She leaped into the air, landing into the sofa.

And me.

I fell over, feeling the weight of Monika on me.

She giggled when she realized that she was on top of me.

"Sorry! I just found the perfect book to read!" She apologized, almost out of breath.

I waved my hand at dismissively, before lying down on the bed.

"It's okay, Mon. I don't mind."

I took a look at the book Monika was carrying.

There wasn't a cover on it, so I was unable to tell what it was.

"Uh... Monika? What kind of book is that? And where did you even get that?!"

She raised an eyebrow at my sudden distress.
"Eh? Oh, it's Romeo and Juliet, well at I think it is. I always wanted to read a Shakespearean play! And this is one a romantic one, so I want to read this!"

I sighed and laid my head on the sofa.

"I don't want to read something romantic... I don't like romance that much too." I complained.

This didn't fly well with Monika.

"Awww! Please?! I really, really wanted to read this with someone!"

I stayed true to my answer.

"Nope."

"Please?"

"Nah."

"Please?"

"No."

"Please?!"

"I can do this all day, you know." I warned.

Monika gave a pout that made my heart flutter.

"Aren't you my best friend? I thought best friends do everything with each other! And that includes reading!"

Knowing that I was kind of tired and probably can't keep my end of my word of keeping the fight, I hesitantly agreed.

"Fine... we'll read Romeo and Juliet."

Monika jumped up, happy that she managed to convince to read with her.

"Yay! I can't wait to get to the kissing parts!"

I gave an annoyed groan at what's to come.

"Hey..." I started. "You never really said where you got that book."

Our eyes were heavy, and we were struggling to read the page without getting yawning.

Monika struggled to keep the book steady, and it fell to the part where I needed to hold it as well.

"And Benvolio said to Romeo to..."

She yawned again, resting her head on my right shoulder.

I attempted to pick up where Monika left off, but to no avail.

"Benvolio said to Romeo, "It'sa me... your cousin..."
My head started to droop to the side, landing on her head.

The fresh aroma of pine tree once again flooded my nostrils, and I enjoyed it.

I heard light breathing to the side, which obviously Monika sleeping.

I tried to keep myself awake, but the comfort of her soft, brown hair captivated me.

Without any control, my cheek started to graze on it. The feeling of her hair allowed my fatigue to evaporate.

My body was finally giving up the fight to stay awake.

The book in our hands fell to the ground, causing a large thump.

We both woke up in shock of the loud noise.

I looked towards Monika, to see her hurt and frightened from disruption.

She was on the verge of tears.

As soon as I was about to ask her what was wrong, she gave a shrill cry and burst into tears.

To see a girl crying was a traumatic experience.

"M-Monika! What's wrong?"

She continued to cry without responding to me.

"Monika!"

I was panicking, unsure of what exactly to do.

Without thinking, I brought the crying girl into my arms, hugging her tightly.

She started to calm down, as the crying was dying out.

There was some sniffles or whines, to which I solved by petting her long hair.

"There, there... everything is going to be alright." I said, without thinking.

My lips found their way to her cheek, and left a subtle mark there.

Monika cooed in response and finally calmed down.

"Darling..." She muttered, before she stopped moving.

...

...

...

...

I tensed up.

I...
I kissed a girl!

I kissed a girl on the cheeks!

But um...

That doesn't count if she is my best friend, right?

She needed my help and I gave her it.

So, everything is a-okay in the friendship department!

Both our mothers rushed into the living room to investigate the loud noise and cry.

They were both relieved when something expensive wasn't broken, or someone getting hurt.

Monika yawned again, and rested her head on my shoulder once more.

Her arms were around my sides, hugging to provide warmth and comfort.

They gave a surprised gasp at the sight of me hugging Monika.

My face burned to new degrees of heat.

"I-I can explain!" I attempted to excuse, pulling Monika away from me.

If I attempted to pull her away, she would give whimpers and sounds of protest.

Both of the moms gave "Awws." at the sight, causing me to blush even more.

Monika's mom chuckled.

"My little girl always likes to have something to hug while she is sleeping. Strangely, she doesn't a teddy bear, or a plushie... we have this large unmarked body pillow, just for her and it helps her sleep. Anyway, trying to separate from whatever she is hugging, she will cry and cry until she got something to hold."

My mother gave a gasp at adorable Monika's condition was.

"That's adorable, Keiko! Aah... so what should for my son? Should we let the two sleep?"

I frowned.

"I'm awake, you know!"

Monika's mother sighed in indecision.

"I guess we have to... Val-hon, do you mind Monika sleeping over for the night?" She requested

I looked down to the sleeping Monika, peacefully heaving her chest up and down, while keeping her grip on me.

With a smile I looked up to her mother.

"I don't mind at all, Miss-"

"Ah, just call me Keiko. I am not that old! But, thank you, Val. It's a huge favor that you are doing
for us. Not to mention, very cute to see."

I nodded proudly and looked down towards Monika.

*Maybe I can handle it.*

*After all what's the worst that can happen?*
Promised

Turns out, there was a lot at stake.

Both of our mothers were ecstatic on letting us have a sleepover.

But both of our dads couldn’t say the same.

They looked tense when our moms were explaining the situation.

As much I wanted to help Monika, I felt a bit strange on letting a girl hold me while I sleep.

My parents were discussing the situation and were determining the ultimatum in the dining room.

"Since Monika has that sleeping problem, I think it would be best for her to sleep here for the night. Otherwise, she would throw a tantrum and cry herself to sleep. Besides, your son has agreed to help our daughter." I heard Monika's mom say.

"Keiko's right, we can't let a young girl sleep without being comfortable. Monika is comfortable sleeping, while she hold our son." I heard Mom say.

"Then how is our son going to sleep? There's a good chance he won't be able to sleep next to someone on him." Dad said.

"Harold's got a point. If our daughter hugs your son while they sleep, it will be a disconcerting experience for him. Not only that, they only known each other for two days! Isn't that kind of weird for this to happen? There has to be an alternate solution." Monika's dad explained.

While my parents were negotiating the terms for our sleepover, I simply sat on the sofa in a very uncomfortable position.

My upper body was hugging towards Monika, while the lower half of my body was perpendicular to Monika.

Being a sort of pillow for Monika was causing me feel numb, so I decided that I can maybe get a few seconds of rest before she cries again.

And so, I brought my hands over to her wrists and tried to pull them up.

The thing is, her grip around my body was extraordinary, comfortable and yet very strong.

I put a little more elbow grease on pulling her off me, to which yielded some results.

Monika started whimpering and giving cries of protest as I started to become free.

The grip around my body tightened, and the comfortable feeling was soon being replaced by intense constriction.

She was gripping my sides and rested her on my chest, causing a small shift in balancing for the both of us.

Her constriction and weight caused me to fall onto the sofa, with Monika soon following.

I let out a small moan from the impact, since her body weight attributed to my fall.
My body was now lying down on the sofa, face up with my eyes on the ceiling.

I looked down to see Monika. She was unharmed by the rough fall, and simply rubbed her cheek against me, apparently enjoying the comfort it gave.

Her body heaved up and down at each breath she took.

And that made my face burn to a degree I have never felt.

_I don't think this is what best friends do..._

_It's making me feel kind of strange and warm inside._

That warm feeling was somewhat identical to when I hugged my parents, but the flair of it was completely off.

I wasn't hugging someone that was of my blood, rather I was hugging someone that was not related to me.

The fact that it was a girl made this feeling much more amplified the effect.

It was true that I enjoyed the feeling, but it made me intimidated from the too many unknowns and overall vast effect of the feeling.

And so, I decided to wake her up and rid this enigmatic feeling.

My eyes dribbled side to side on what I should do.

_Hmm, there's two ways of doing this._

_I can maybe wake her up by yelling at her... no. That's mean and it will probably make her cry again._

_Should I just poke her and move her a bit? It's safer than yelling at her._

_Or maybe... I should do both at the same time!_

_But without the loud yelling, I could just whisper at her to wake up._

I cleared my throat and looked at her.

"Monika!" I quietly yelled.

There was no response.

"Monika!" I quietly yelled, moving her body slightly.

There wasn't a response.

With my other free hand, my fingers aimed for her cheeks.

"Monika!" I yelled again, moving her slightly, and poking her cheeks.

All that did was cause Monika to shuffle a bit.

I stared at her with deadpan eyes.
How tightly can she sleep?!

My mind raced to find another plan.

I recalled one time when I was too stubborn on waking up, that my mother would tickle me until I started the day.

Tickling her can maybe work...

I stretched my fingers out and aimed at her sides.

My fingers dived to her sides, moving up and down to stimulate a ticklish feeling.

At first there wasn't much of an effect, only her moving her head to side.

After a couple of seconds, she started respond to my tickles, and she was reacting to my touch.

My lips pursed into a triumphant smirk from the success I was getting.

I thought in a couple of more seconds, she would finally and drowsily wake up.

Instead, there was a turn of events.

Monika shot her eyes up and glared at me.

She bared her teeth and gave a low growl.

In a split-second, she pushed herself off of me and rested her palms on both sides of my head.

With wide open eyes, I was frightened by Monika's enraged state.

Her eyes paced about on my face, leaving a trail of heat all around it.

I thought she would yell at me for waking her up, until the unexpected happened again.

Monika closed her eyes and let her body fall onto me again, quickly falling asleep once more.

My heart was racing ever so quickly at the turn of events.

W-What just happened?

My breathing was also heavy from the little scene.

I saw Monika keeping still and not moving a muscle.

Her long brown hair was on my face, and I pushed it aside.

I noticed that her white bow was conveniently placed on the coffee table next to us, explaining why her hair was more free-flow.

She was also on-top of me as well.

Her breathing was not as evident as before, as now I can't tell if she is breathing or not.

This was because of her face being planted on the sofa.

Oh no...!
"Is she dead?!"

"Monika!" I called, not containing the fear I had in my voice.

Or my volume.

She let out an annoyed groan.

"Whaaaat?!" She bemoaned, annoyed from my call.

I let out a relieved sigh and hugged her tightly.

She let out a subtle gasp when I hugged her, as if she noticed the situation we were in.

"I thought you were dead for a second..."

That caused Monika to look up at me, rubbing her eyes to rid the sleep away.

She had pink cheeks and a warm smile that assured me the contrary.

"Why would I be dead, Val?" She asked.

That question staggered me a great deal.

"Um... well you were just not moving at all. When you were sleeping, your breathing showed that you were uh... alive." I stammered, nervous about my word choice.

She ceased her rubbing and looked away, her pink cheeks changing in hue.

"You were watching me sleep?"

I had no idea how to respond to that.

So, I replied truthfully and with context.

"Y-Yeah, I was. We both fell asleep when we were reading Romeo and Juliet, remember?"

She shook her head.

"We were reading?" Monika asked back, looking at the book.

The way she looked at the book showed that she wanted to pick it up, but at the same time she didn't.

She looked up to me and hoped that her smile would help ease me.

"Yeah, we were reading. But we fell asleep while we were reading, remember? We were at the part where Romeo's cousin introduces himself?"

Although I haven't read anything related to Shakespeare, I could tell that some parts of the play were not authentic.

"By the way, this isn't the real thing, right? Cuz mom said the real thing is super duper hard to read!"

Monika playfully scoffed at me.

"Of course not, dummy! That book has both the real version and easier version of the play."
I raised an eyebrow.

"Play? I thought it was a book." I questioned.

"Val, a play can be a book. A novel can also be a book. Anything that can be written down is also a book." She explained, having a confident streak to her voice.

The confident tone was something I was really intrigued by.

I couldn't understand how someone had a voice so serene can also be stern.

"Anyway." I deviated. "We both fell asleep but then you woke up when we dropped the book. You were crying on how loud the noise was!"

Monika blushed and glared at me.

"I did not!" She proclaimed.

I smirked and decided to tease her.

"Yeah you did, I saw it!"

I hoped my statement would help solidify my case, but Monika dismissed it.

"Did not!"

"Did too!"

"Did not!"

"Did too!"

Instead of pursuing the fight we had, she pulled away from and sat on one of the sofa, crossing her arms at it.

Monika looked away and kept a frown while at it.

It was there that I felt the warmth that we share vanish.

I was somewhat glad that the intimidating feeling was now gone, but there was a small portion that wanted it to come back.

"Either way, you wouldn't stop crying about the noise, no matter what I did."

She started to warm up to me, despite her facade.

Her eyes looked at me, interested at what I had to say.

And so I continued, my face feeling the increased blood flow.

"I... hugged you. I hugged you, so you would calm down. And it worked." I stated.

I intentionally left out the part where I kissed on the cheek.

_Argh! Why did I even do that!_

_Girls are yucky!_
But Monika is my best friend...

And she is a girl.

And she also isn't yucky...

Monika couldn't believe what she was hearing.
She looked completely surprised by the news I was giving her.
I thought she was disgusted by the fact that a boy hugged her.
"Aah! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to touch you anything!" I apologized.

But that wasn't the case.
Instead, she crawled up to me.
We were face to face, our eyes gazing into each other.
I was able to see the true color of her eyes.

Emerald Green.

She then closed her eyes and leanded.

Monika gave me a kiss on the cheek.

My eyes widened on what she did.
"Thank you, Val." She said, genuinely meaning every word with a smile.

I gulped, trying my best to stay calm and conscious.

A girl just kissed my cheek!

I couldn't help but reach up to my cheek and rub the warmth there.

She smirked when I let up a dumb smile.
"Y-Your welcome, Mon. But does that mean I am right about you crying?"

And in an instant, her smile turned to a frown.
"Nuh-uh! I know you aren't right!"

The logic behind everything she had done jarred me.
I thought she knew the circumstances behind everything I have done when I explained it.
"But..."

She didn't want any of it.

"Nope! You didn't! You only hugged me because I was your best friend, remember? Best friends always keep each other happy!"
It wasn't a perfect replacement of the reason I gave, or the truth at least. But it sufficed.

I was just about to protest about it, but I gave up.

Instead I just held a deadpan reaction, to which she was flustered.

*Yeah... I know I am right.*

*I am no dummy!*

"Yeah, okay... that's the reason." I surrendered, letting her win.

With a condescending nod, she let her victory soak in.

I continued.

"Anyway, our parents are deciding on if they would let us have sleepover or not. Since you were asleep and holding me, they thought you should stay. But now that you are awake, I think you might need to go home..."

That shocked Monika.

"Wait, my parents were going to let me have a sleepover?!!"

I nodded sorrowfully.

"Yeah, I thought we can play for a bit longer and do some sleepover things. You know like read scary stories, shadow puppets, or watch a movie." I went on.

She quickly regained composure to formulate a plan.

I can tell she got the perfect plan when she had a devious little smirk.

"Okay, how about this! I fall asleep again in your arms, so that it would look like that sleepover is necessary!"

My jaw hit the floor.

My body wasn't ready for that intimidating, yet warm feeling again.

"W-Wh-What?! No way! I am never doing that ever again!" I dismissed.

She still kept her devious smirk.

"Aw c'mon, Val! Why not?"

I gave her a small warning glare that told her to not to press.

But it didn't affect her at all.

*Just like Mom and Dad.*

"Well, even though you are my best friend... hugging brings up this weird feeling I don't like a lot." I explained.

Monika didn't quite what I was getting at, but nodded slowly.
"I understand Val." She said, despite the confused demeanor.

Monika went on her knees and clamped her hands in a begging manner.

"But can we do it just this once? Please? For me?"

She gave a cute pout that made it difficult to say no.

I was able to steel myself and say no, but I saw the edges of her eyes.

They were on the verge of crying.

"I want to play a little bit more..." She mumbled weakly.

I shrugged reluctantly, going along with the plan.

I didn't want my best friend to cry because of me.

"Fine..." I sighed, causing Monika to give squeal of happiness.

Fortunately, the debates in the dining room blocked off any noises coming from the living room.

I foresaw that me and Monika were going to have little more fun and play more games.

What I didn't foresaw is her bringing me into a crushing hug.

The warm feeling came back again, and it almost frightened me.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! You're the best!" She chanted happily.

Her happiness was enough to nullify the scary feeling away, and I hugged back.

"You're welcome Mon. Anything for my dearest friend."

She gave small giggle in joy before pulling away.

"Okay, when they come I'll throw myself into you and I'll act as if I was asleep. That way, it will fool them and force them go along with the plan. Pretty punning right?"

"You mean, cunning." I corrected.

She gave an eye-roll.

"Yeah... that." Monika dismissed, rubbing the creases off of her dress.

I scoffed her and we readied ourselves for the time to strike.

"Meanie."

"Alright, you two!" Monika's mom called, coming in with our parents.

Monika and I scrambled to find the perfect positions to look as if we were asleep.

She tackled my chest, causing me to fall over to the sofa again.

Her arms wrapped around me and squeezed me closer.
The feeling came back in full force, wrecking my confidence and leaving me in tatters.

But I wasn't going go down without a fight.

_Sister..._

This time I fought the feeling away, and forced myself to see Monika as a sister.

_Sister..._

_She is my sister._

_She's the closest thing to a sister._

The thoughts of her being my sister was growing truer and truer.

_Monika is the sister I never had..._

And suddenly, all the weird feelings started to go away.

My mind started to become a lot more clearer.

There, I hugged her back as the sister I never had.

It was a much tamer and calmer feeling than the one from before, and I was fine with that.

But I wasn't fine with was the fact that I won't experience that same feeling again with her.

In the deepest recesses of my child mind, I knew there was something missing.

It was something that I couldn't quite comprehend just yet.

But I had good idea that she somehow knows what it is, whatever that strange feeling may be.

I wasn't ready for it.

_Do I want her as my sister?_

_My best friend?_

_What is Monika to me?_

Thus, my hug with Monika was tame, but still strange as before.

My mind was in a fragile state, any distracting thought may very well cause me lose track of what I am thinking.

I got my distraction when Monika's mom gave a gasp as she saw us sleep.

Thought I lost concentration, I was more pleased that our plan proceeding as usual.

"They're fast asleep." She stated.

I heard my dad give an amused grunt.

"Huh. Looks like the sleepover is a go. They are fast asleep... hey! Was that a twitch?"
"Nonsense, honey! They are both sleeping! Anyway, are you two sure you want them to have a sleepover?" My mom asked.

"It's fine, Deborah. You and Harold are very trustworthy. So, I'll leave our daughter up to you. And heh, the tantrum she throws are adorable but difficult to stop. By the looks of it, my daughter likes to be around your son."

They all chuckled at his statement, knowing that it was true.

"Well, we've got to get moving. Me and Keiko are going to have to wake up early, so we get supplies for the following day." He continued.

"Ah." My dad amused. "Which school is your daughter going to?" He asked.

"Monika is going to Kaoru Elementary School. Isn't Val going to the same one too?" Keiko replied.

"Yup, our son is also going to that elementary school as well. Fortunately we have some leftover supplies, would you like some?" My mom offered.

"No thanks, Deborah. That's very kind of you." Keiko declined. "Anyway, it's getting pretty late. Thanks for the dinner you two!"

We both heard them move closer and closer to the door, allowing us to ease on the hugging.

"How are holding up, Mon?" I asked.

She shuffled a bit to find a more comfortable position.

"I'm doing just fine... we only need a few more minutes..." She answered.

She then moved closer to my ear.

"Hey, I know this a bit overboard, are you feeling okay?" Monika worriedly asked, taking into account of the position we were in.

Ever since I started seeing Monika as a sister, the feeling was gone.

So my answer was: "Yeah, I am fine.", which allowed her to relax.

The door closed, with my parents giving their farewells to Monika's parents.

And thus our plan was a success.

I started to "wake" up in front of my parents, and made it seem natural.

With a yawn, I let go of Monika, to which she was still holding onto me.

My parents walked over to us as a result.

"Oh, you're awake!" My mom exclaimed, surprised on how I "woke" up.

I nodded weakly to show that I was tired.

"Monika, it's safe to wake up now..." I whispered, to which she heeded.

She started to let go of me and stretched up in the air.
Afterwards, she proceeded to rub the sleep out of her eyes in an innocent manner.

"Mmm..." She muttered.

Immediately after waking up, she jumped up to formally introduce herself to my parents.

Both of my parents gave the attention she needed for the task.

"Ah! Hello, Mr and Mrs. Jones! Sorry for not introducing myself properly. My name is Monika, and it's very nice to meet you!"

And both of my parents were astonished Monika's polite and cordial greeting.

"Wow..." My dad uttered, genuinely surprised by her introduction. "No need to be so formal, Monika. It's nice to meet you too."

He brought his fist up for a fistpump, to which Monika returned, causing my dad to make an explosion effect.

My mom gave a dreamy sigh and petted her brown hair.

"I am very, very impressed that you introduced yourself to us like, deary. But please! Don't call me Mrs. Jones. Call me, Deborah!"

She enjoyed that petting and smiled.

"Okay, Deborah! So where are my parents?" She innocently asked.

I tried my best not to smirk at Monika's cunning facade.

"Ah, they just left deary. Would you like to go home? Or... would like to stay over for the night?" My mom suggested.

Monika's eyes glimmered at the prospect of us having a sleepover..

"I would love to stay over, Deborah! Of course, if it's fine with you."

My mom became increasingly baffled by Monika's manners.

"Deary, I would love for you to stay. It's your choice, still." She requested.

"Okay then, I choose to stay for night!" Monika decided, making me discreetly cheer on for her.

We started to walk to the rooms for where was going to sleep.

I seized the opportunity to finally think about my friendship with Monika, one last time.

I came to the conclusion that I couldn't quite tell the difference of her being my best friend, or my sister.

And that was the last time I have ever put any meaningful thought into our relationship, no matter how close we got later on.

Me and Val walked with his parents to the place we were going to sleep tonight.

They opened the door to Val's room.
"Okay Deary, you'll be sleeping on Val's bed for the night." Deborah said, pointing to his bed. "While Val is going to be sleeping on the floor for tonight. I'll set up the mattress right now."

I smugly looked to Val and he was fairly annoyed with the fact he was going to lose his bed to me.

To add insult to the injury, I stuck my tongue and playfully blew a raspberry at him.

Impressively, Val managed to keep his cool and rolled his eyes, much to my amusement.

The setup for the mattress didn't really take long, since it was under his bed.

"Your mother said that you need to be holding onto something to sleep. We can give you a teddy bear to sleep with. Is that okay with you?"

With a mischievous smirk, I looked towards Val and winked at him.

He tensed up when I did wink at him.

"That is perfectly fine, Deborah. Thank you!" I commended, smiling at her.

She smiled back and gave me a small pat at the head.

Val's dad walked over to me and him.

"Alright you two... I don't want to say anything right now but, I think it's better safe than sorry. No funny-"

*PWAP*

Deborah gave him a quick slap on the back neck, to which we both flinched.

"Ow... Deborah! What was that for?!" He asked, rubbing his neck.

"Harold, they are seven year olds! They aren't teenagers!" She scolded.

We simply watched as Val's mom yelled at the frightened and embarrassed dad.

Both of us traded glances while this happened.

"Do you have any idea what they were talking about?" Val asked.

I shook my head.

"No, I have no idea what your dad was talking about as well. I think it will come in handy later." I simply stated, watching as the couple ceased their exchange.

Val's dad cleared his throat and approached us again.

"What I meant to say is to, not stay up late! Everyone needs a good night sleep, and that includes you two champs. Alright?"

Me and Val cheered.

"Okay!"

With a pat on both of our heads, they left us to our own devices.
My devious smirk crept onto my face, and I pushed Val onto the bed.

The surprise attack caused Val to fall onto the bed, only for him to pick up a pillow in response.

"Haha! Didn't expect that did you? This is my domain! I know everything about it!"

I needed to distract so I can obtain a weapon myself.

Val kept his bed and the mattress well guarded, so I wouldn't be able get a pillow without taking a hit.

And so, I decided to distract him with his word choice.

Flatter him if I needed to.

"Domain? That's a very fancy word, Val." I complimented, hoping he would lower his guard.

And it did, he lowered his pillow and stood proud.

"Huh? Oh? That word? I know! I got it from a movie, but..."

Val started to tap his chin in thought.

"Hmm, where did I get that?"

I seized the chance to grab a pillow, pouncing him onto the bed and leaning towards him.

My arms stretched towards his bedside, my body unintentionally hitting his head.

Once I obtained the weapon of my choice, I pushed myself off his body and adopted a combat pose.

He rose up with his weapon, rubbing his head.

"Owie... what's with you jumping onto me, Monika?" He asked, stretching the pain away.

I shrugged.

"I dunno, it's pretty fun to attack you like that. You just don't seem to expect it, and the feeling of planning to strike at the best of times is so cool..."

I sighed dreamily as a result, but looked to him with a small frown.

"I love doing that, Val. But, I'll stop if it bothers you."

He put up a hand to stop me from talking anymore.

"It's okay, Mon. I don't mind you um... doing that. If you like to do so much, then I guess I will get used to it. I don't mind at all." He assured me, smiling.

I started to smile back.

"Really? You mean it?"

He nodded vigorously.

"Every friend has something they love to do. If you love surprising people then I will learn to love it too."
Val is a really good friend...

I rewarded his kindness with a strike from the pillow.

He got staggered back by a bit, and then readied himself.

"That's mean, Monika!" He pouted.

I giggled in response.

"Well, you said that you wanted to learn why I like surprises. Lesson one is to expect all kinds of surprises!"

Val gave an amused grunt.

"Hmph! I can take all kinds of surprises! But, lets go! Mono and mono!"

He charged to deliver his attack.

And I charged to deliver my attack.

It was now night time, and we were tired from playing all day again.

Monika slept in my bed, while I slept in the mattress below her.

I didn't quite understand why I needed to trade beds, but I guess it was for "greater good". Come to think of it, the beds feel almost alike, so I didn't have much to complain about.

I stared up to the glow-up stickers on my white ceiling, gazing at the stars ahead.

My mind tried to evaluate the connection me and Monika shared, but I kept getting distracted.

Maybe I should think about later...

But what is she?

My sister?

My bestest of friends?

My girlfriend?

Ewww!

No way is Monika going to be my girlfriend!

Why is my mind thinking weird ideas all of a sudden?

Is it because it's nighttime?

My head feels pretty tired come to think of it.

The weight on my eyes became heavier and heavier.

I succumbed to the weight and let it drop down, finally letting myself rest.
"Val..." A raspy, hushed voice called.

I mumbled something to dismiss it and focused on letting the fatigue take over.

"Val." The voice called again.

All my body was rest, so I shifted my body to side, away from Monika and tried to sleep once more.

"Val!"

I gave an irritated grunt and turned to the point to me.

"Rrrgh! What do you want ghost?!" I hissed at the source.

Monika arose from her apparent slumber and hugged the blanket close to her.

"I'm-I'm scared..." She whispered.

Her green eyes were reflected by the moonlight, allowing me to distinguish the girl in front of me.

She moved closer to the edge, fear taking form on her face.

When I was able to clearly see her, the grip on her blanket tightened.

All traces of fatigue and irritation was swept away when I saw Monika's hurt face.

"What's wrong, Mon?" I asked, rising from my bed.

She watched my movements carefully, and I sat on the edge of her bed.

I wanted to comfort her with my touch, but she moved away from my hand.

Monika moved away from the moonlight.

I frowned at her fright and her seemingly unwillingness to accept my help.

She started shiver, despite the blanket shrouding her body.

"Monika?" I called again, hoping that it would make her open up to me.

Her gaze focused on the end of the bed, before looking towards me.

"I'm scared..." She repeated, her mouth quivering in fear.

I still couldn't quite understand why she was scared.

It was there, where I was unsure of what to do next.

"What are you scared of?" I asked warmly.

Monika directed her attention to the end of her bed once more, and closed her eyes.

Her shivering became visible shaking, and she gave a small whimper.

"I'm scared of the dark... I hear so many noises in it when I am all alone... It's all so confusing at first, but whenever I wake up, I can remember it all clearly. And all I remember are the noises of the void. That's why I am so scared of the dark..." She tearfully explained.
I couldn't help but crawl up to her and hug her.

"It's okay, Monika. I am here for you." I reassured.

She started to calm down when I hugged her.

Despite the darkness of my room, I was able to see a small smile form on her face.

It was there when she hugged me back, the blanket of hers draping on our sides.

"Thanks, Val..." She muttered.

Once Monika was able to calm down, I released her.

Her small, sweet smile started to reduce itself to a frown.

"Can you stay with me?" She asked.

I started to smile and nod, something that caused her to spark with life once more.

"Sure, Monika. I will stay with you, as long as you need me." I replied.

She gave a small squeal at my answer and crushed me into a hug.

"You're the best, Val! Thank you, thank you, thank you! I promise that I will make it up to you!"

I hugged back.

"It's what friends are for, Monika." I simply stated, giving her small pats on the back.

She released me and poked my nose.

"You mean what best friends are for, right?" She asked with her usual smile.

I chuckled at my error, rubbing my nose.

"Right, that! Hehe! Now, what do you want me to do? Should I just stay on your bed?"

She shook her head.

"Nope. Can you hold me like last time? That way I can feel safe and sleep."

For some reason, my face burned up.

My face was red as a ticking bomb.

"S-Sure... I don't mind." I stuttered.

Monika didn't quite give note to my sudden change of behavior or confidence.

"Great! Lie down on the bed, then!" She demanded.

I went over to my mattress and picked up my pillow, before lying down on her bed.

"Okay, I'm on the bed. Now wh-"

I was cut off by a bone-crushing hug from Monika.
"Just pretend that you are my body-pillow." She said, giving a coo when she became comfortable.

*Body-pillow?!*

"Uh..." I murmured, waiting for further instructions.

"Hug me!" She demanded, sounding vexed.

And immediately so, I wrapped my arms around her, hugging her back.

The warmth that we held was now being shared between us.

That strange feeling in my heart swelled up again.

And this time I let it consume me, and let it flow all around me.

With that strange feeling now enveloping me, I started to be a bit more happier for some reason.

It was a kick that I couldn't get enough of.

I sighed through my nose, and relaxed.

"Now what?" I calmly asked.

"Pet me and tell me I'm pretty!" She immediately followed up.

The demands that Monika was making were quite strange and foreign to me, but I went along with it.

I used my right hand and moved up to her hair, petting her.

Petting Monika gave a pleasant sense of fulfillment, especially when she gave a hummed in approval.

It was amusing on how she reacted to my touch.

"Tell me I'm cute!" She demanded.

*Cute?*

*I thought pretty!*

Nonetheless, I managed to keep my cool.

"You're pretty, Monika." I stated, still petting her.

She opened her eyes and frowned at me.

I raised an eyebrow at her response.

"What's the mat-"

"I know I'm pretty, tell me I'm cute!" She pouted, unhappy with my word choice.

I couldn't understand what she was going through, but I followed through.

"I guess you are cute." I simply said, slowing down on the pace of my petting and pats.
For a moment, she accepted my compliment by closing her eyes and starting to drift off to sleep.

And so, I followed suit by starting to close my eyes well.

The fatigue in my body started to wear away-

However, she woke up and gave me a cute glare.

"You guess?!!" She yelled, waking me up.

I opened my eyes and sighed, wanting to sleep.

"Okay, okay... you are cute. You're a cute girl."

_This side of Monika is actually kind of fun..._

"I know I am." She replied smugly.

I rolled my eyes, let my eyes close.

"Val!"

I groaned, my calm and relaxed persona now vanishing.

"Whaat?" I asked, waking up to a Monika looking at the window.

Her green eyes were glued to dark violet night skies.

I never noticed the thousands of stars glimmering in the night skies.

Each of the stars were lighting up the heavens above.

"It's so beautiful..." She muttered.

I turned to her, the moonlight shining on her once more.

There I saw a completely different version of Monika.

It was as if I saw her in a different light.

_Shell is really pretty..._

"Val."

Monika turned to me with a smile.

"Every night, whenever we are together. Let's watch the stars together. I want to see a shooting star with you, and make a wish..."

_Make a wish?_

"Do you promise to make a wish with me, Val?"

I smiled back.

"Yeah, I do. And I will hold onto that promise."
Monika's smile turned toothy, unable to keep her joy in.
She hugged me again.
"I... I believe you." She muttered.
I hugged back.
"I always keep my promises." I declared.
It was a moral I have always lived by and never has failed me once.
Monika pulled and looked away for a second, her cheeks filling up with a red color.
With confidence and ignoring the burning sensation on her cheeks, she looked up to me.
"Do you promise to be with me forever?"
I nodded solemnly.
"I promise that too."
She let out a relived sigh.
"I'm glad..."
With those words, she started to yawn and retreat to the bed.
I followed as well, laying on the bed.
We embraced each other once more, making sure that we were both comfortable.
"Goodnight, Monika." I whispered.
She shuffled and laid her head on my shoulder.
"Goodnight, darling." She whispered back.
That last part I wasn't able to catch well.
I would have inquired on what it was, but I instead slept.
Besides it can't be that important, right?

Dear diary,

Sorry that I couldn't write yesterday. I was just at my best friend's house, and we had a sleepover. It was lot's of fun, since we played doctor, make-believe from yesterday, and watched Youtube videos!

Val's parents also brought pizza, so me and Val ate 4 slices all together! I couldn't believe how I hungry I was! It was probably because of how much fun we were having when we were playing around. The pizza tasted a lot better than usual when I ate with him. I held back any sounds when I eating the greasy, cheesy pizza. The thought of having pizza with him makes my mouth water.

Anyway, before I get into the sleepover, there was a lot of weird things that I want to get off my chest. Ever since today, I couldn't believe how much fun I had with Val. And everything he did was
so... I dunno. Interesting, I guess? Even the smallest things he did, I couldn't help but watch his every movement. I really, really don't know what this feeling is.

This feeling... it leaves a very warm feeling in my heart. At first, I got scared by it and slapped Val for it. It first happened when we were playing Doctor. And then I started to realize a lot of things...

Like I was touching him, hugging him, and then kissing him! Obviously on the cheek... His reactions to everything I did to him was sooo adorable! I just wanted keep smothering him with kisses and hug him while doing it!

See?! This feeling is so weird! Each time I feel it, my heart starts to race like plane soaring in the sky. And I can't help it! It so hard to fight against too! The entire day, I fought against this weird feeling without looking like I was busy with it.

It got only worse after I fell asleep. After we finished eating pizza, I decided to get a book for us to read. I ran to a room with a large bed and small library.
(I think I was in Val's parents' room!)

Given my head-start on reading and writing, I was able to find the perfect book for us to read. (Thanks Mom!) And it was Romeo and Juliet, but it had both the modern translation and the original in it. Obviously, we seven year-olds can't handle a Shakespearean play, so we jumped into the modern translation. Somehow Val was able to keep up...

Anyway, me and Val fell asleep afterwards. We were very tired from playing all day, so we had to get really tired sooner or later. Suddenly a loud noise woke us up. My mind was completely stuck in one place, and I couldn't help but cry. I was scared from the noise that it made, and I couldn't think that everything was safe.

Val told me that I couldn't stop crying, so he had to hug me to make me stop crying.

A boy hugged me...
(A cute one!

I think my mom told Val about my embarrassing condition of me needing to hug something, just so I can sleep right. But I don't know.

After that, we had a sleepover. All we did was pillow fight and read some of Val's comics. We didn't stay up for that long, anyway. I slept on Val's bed, while he slept on a spare mattress underneath his bed.

Okay, here's the embarrassing part. I couldn't sleep at all. I got scared to sleep. Val's mom forgot to give the teddy bear I wanted, so there was nothing to hold onto. The darkness in Val's room was scary. I called out to Val, since I was frightened. He didn't respond the first time I called out to him, so I called to him again. And again, and again, until he woke up. Obviously, he wasn't happy when he woke up but he quickly became worried.

The dark started to get more scarier when he woke up, and I kept looking at the corners of his room. And he kept asking what was wrong... I had to oblige him, so I told him about my weird fear of the dark. It's real though! The screams, scratching noises, static... that's all I hear when I am around the dark. And when he hugged me... that's when everything about the dark went away. That feeling in my heart came back too! The noises were all gone when he hugged me! But as soon he let go of me, the noises started to come back again.

I... I begged for him not to leave me. I wanted him next to me, on my side. I wanted to hug him. I
wanted to hear each time he let out a breath when he's asleep. I just...

Ewww! What's wrong with me?! I just thought of something very, very weird! But don't worry, I won't write it down.

Anyway, I felt... so happy when agreed to sleep right next to me. We were like cuddling at this point. When he did hug me and bring me close, it felt so right... Everything was perfect in the world when I was in his arms...

But I kind of got carried away... like I started demand lots of things. I told him to hug me back, and to pet me, and... call me cute and pretty.

But weirdest thing happened! He actually did all that! Some other boy would have barked at me for demanding so much! Val spoiled me and I loved it! My heart couldn't stop beating so fast, and that weird feeling kept bouncing around my heart! He petted me, which was 1000x better when my mom or dad did it, he called me pretty at first, then he called me cute! I'm a cute and pretty girl! And the best thing is that a boy said to me!

After we finished doing all that, he began to sleep again. I tried to sleep again, only for the moonlight to hit my eyes. I opened my eyes and looked outside. If only I looked up to the night sky more, because I couldn't shake the feeling of awe. I yelled at Val to wake up, and he woke up again. I told him to look outside, and he gasped as well. He was surprised as well.

The sky was beautiful, like thousands of diamonds, twinkling and brightening up the night sky. The thought of a shooting star hit me, and I told Val that we should always watch the skies together, and also make a wish when a shooting star ever does come by. He promised me that we will make a wish together, and that made me happy.

He always keeps his promises.

I didn't know what I was going to say to him after that. But something my heart wanted to tell him something. But I shrugged it off, and I told him that I believed in him. And I do believe in him.

I also asked him if he will always be with me. He said that promises that as well.

After that, we slept together. He said goodnight and I said goodnight...

Darling.

A day after our sleepover, it was the first thing in the morning of a Monday.

I did last minute checks on all the things I needed for school.

"Backpack, check. Notebooks and folders, check. Pencil box, check. Pencil box having pens and pencils... check! Keys just in case, check! And my lunch..."

I raised an eyebrow at the missing meal.

Where's my lunch?

"Val! Could you get the door? I am a little busy right now!" My mom called.

Well, I guess my lunch could wait. The person behind door must be getting really annoyed.

I picked up my backpack and ran down the stairs.
As I went down the stairs, I noticed how rigid my new school clothes were.

Despite it being a white dress shirt and blue slacks, I was more akin with casual clothes when I went to school back home. These type of clothes were more or less used in important occasions that I rarely seemed to go on.

I opened the door to see Monika wearing her school uniform.

She was wearing a white sailor uniform, which fit her white bow and brown hair perfectly.

The sailor uniform was adorned with black stripes on her shoulder area and on the upper back.

Not only that, she was wearing a blue skirt to go along with her outfit.

"Hi, Val!" She greeted, shining her smile.

I shook my head and composed myself.

"Oh hey, Mon. Sorry, I got confused. I never thought I would see you here with that uniform on." I said, taking a quick glimpse at her uniform.

She noticed my glimpse and twirled as a result.

"It's the school uniform for the school we are going to go. It's is called a Seifuku. Pretty cool, right?"

I nodded in awe.

"Yeah, you look really nice in it." I complimented, while getting my shoes on.

She flushed a cute pink.

"Thanks, Val. I never thought it would look good on me... anyway! Come on, let's go!"

Monika grabbed my hand.

And I braced myself for the incoming pull she was just about to input.

The force of which she pulled cause me to yelp, and I struggled to get my backpack on right.

The speed we were going at showed that we almost had no reason to run so fast.

"Hey, Monika!" I yelled, the rush of wind blocking off most of our audio.

"Yeah?" She yelled back, still looking ahead.

"C-Can we slow down a bit? We aren't that late!" I suggested.

She rolled her eyes and agreed.

"Fine... I wanted to get there first. And besides, isn't it your first day here?" She asked.

I nodded.

"Yep! I can't wait to make more friends! That way we have more people to play with!"

Monika frowned for a split-second but ultimately smiled at the prospect of having more fun.
"I hope we can make more friends. But don't forget who your best friend is..."

I poked her cheek to cheer her up.

"I won't! You're my dearest friend, Monika!"

And that brightened her face up.

"And you're my bestest friend too!" She declared. "Oh yeah, I have a little surprise from yesterday. Something you will really like to see during lunch." She enigmatically said.

I couldn't keep my curiosity contained at all.

"Oooh! What is it?! What is it?!" I enthusiastically asked.

Monika giggled and put her hands behind her back, shining her smile.

"It's a secret~!"

I pouted at her.

"Awww... okay! But you promise to show me at lunch, right?"

She nodded.

"Yep! Come on! Let's get to school!"

Monika took my hand once again and we started to run to school once more.
Finally.

I got my hands on this damned machine!

The machine that gave me nightmares, tormenting me on how I couldn't save him!

Everything started to fall apart when I failed.

I was watching where Val was making his final stand, along with his "split personality".

Hell, it isn't even a split personality technically.

Two, vastly different, yet similar entities fighting over a mind that will ultimately decide their fates.

His final stand proved successful and I was permanently locked out of the system, due to massive errors in the system.

It was right there, that's when my life would change forever.

It was right there, I was panicking.

There was no way of accessing the system, and other patient's vitals were dropping.

I thought all was lost at that point.

I thought have failed completely.

No, I failed partially.

The machine was able to eject the patient out permanently, and he was saved from the errors.

The patient had no signs of damage, as far as the scans go.

But then, I soon realized it wasn't just errors.

It was a fully powered overload, designed to destroy the machine from the inside.

He managed to escape the overload, thanks to the ejection.

But he was still stuck onto the machine, his consciousness still in the machine.

I could've sworn that the machine was spitting out sparks and bolts as the overload happened.

I saved one, no, the machine saved him, but I couldn't help his rescuer.

The pain of not being able to save him haunted me.

Everyday, every idle thought led to my failure.

I knew it.

I couldn't live with myself if he did...
Die.

For days, I laid on my bed, pondering on what I could've done, or what I should've realized earlier.

For days, all my thoughts pinpointed the blame towards me.

After all, I lost my job, my friends, and...

**Her.**

It was because of **her**, I realized.

My anger from my failures became directed at **her**.

It was because of **them**.

The two took everything away from me.

And so, instead of self-blame, I turned every negative feelings I had and directed towards **them**.

I was going to do what I needed to.

Something that would ease my mind forever.

Take everything away from **them**, as they did to me.

With the partitioned drive in hand, I was going to ruin everything for **them**.

Whatever they were going for in an isolated, powered, environment will be gone forever.

It will all be gone.

By me.

The partitioned drive looked and functioned identically to a hard drive that any computer would use.

The only difference is that it was state of the art tech, storing a couple of exabytes of data into such a small hard drive.

It was something along the lines of using Sloot's encoding system, and somehow using the system to expand data.

A couple of exabytes was enough to create a small simulation, that can be encoded once more to create a perfect simulation.

A paradise for the two.

And if working for the very company that made me lose my job has taught me anything...

I know the ins and outs of this machine as well.

Their little paradise won't last for long.

I will see to that.

Me and Monika continued to run to school, despite my complaints on why we have no reason to
arrive so prematurely.

Nevertheless, I crushed any feelings of unpleasantness and continued to run with her.

After all, she was my best friend.

The grip on my hand was monumental, to the point where if I refused to move at all would cause her to simply yank me around.

Once the school came into view, Monika stopped running, causing me to almost fall over.

Fortunately, Monika's iron grip stopped me from falling.

"There it is... Kaoru Elementary School! One of the best schools in the country!" She mentioned excitedly.

There wasn't a hint of worry on how I was about to fall face first onto the pavement.

"Wow... really? If it's one of the best schools, is that the reason why I have to wear an uniform?" I asked, stretching the rigidity of it.

"Mhm! The uniforms are there to teach discipline, the teachers are extra strict as well!"

The color on my face started to fade.


Monika didn't catch onto my anxious expression.

"Oh, well... they carry this ruler or stick, just so they can show that they are in control. Each classroom is like each teacher's realm! They have their own rules and will punish those who refuse to follow it!"

Her comments on the school's stance of teaching worsened my existing nervousness.

"Um... is there anything nice about the school?" I squeaked.

Monika tapped her chin in thought.

"Oh! Kaoru Elementary is known for having more homework than any other elementary school! That's really nice, don't you think?"

My legs ceased to function.

"EHHH?!"

She stopped to turn around.

"H-How is that nice?! More homework means less time to play! Don't you want to play more?!" I pointed out, astonished by the girl's definition of nice.

Monika simply shrugged and continue to walk, taking me along with her.

"Hmm, it's easy it to see that way. But Mama and Papa told me that the more homework the better. They prepare you for the future! And being prepared for anything is always the best way to be an adult!"
I looked at her, completely deadpanned from her reasoning.

"Not only that, the school teaches dedication as well. So not only we have strict teachers and extra homework, everything we do has to be perfect!" She proclaimed.

"P-Perfect? H-How perfect?"

I couldn't understand how I even mustered enough courage to speak to her.

"Perfect as in showing all the steps in math, using the text to help write essays, you know... that sort of thing." She nonchalantly replied.

*Essays?*

*Isn't that what the big kids do?!

*What school did you send me to, mom and daadd!?*

"Urg... What other things does the school have that is really good?" I hesitantly asked.

Monika brightened up over the question.

"Not really good, but the best! Kaoru's Elementary has the best classes, the best teachers, best books, best-"

"Best lunches too?" I piped in, interrupting Monika's list of high class features in the school.

Monika simply stared at me, confused with my mention of lunch.

She gave a sigh at my question.

"Yes, Val... the elementary school has the best lunches as well. But not as good as mine." Monika replied, dumbfounded my enthusiasm for food.

"Not as good as yours?" I pressed.

My question on what she meant caused her to fluster.

"Uhm... don't worry about that! Just be happy with the fact that the school has the best lunches around!"

I didn't bother to also question her behavior, and shrugged it off.

I pumped my fist in the air, overjoyed with the fact that the school has great food as well.

"Alright!" I cheered.

With an eye-roll, she continued.

"Anyway, the elementary school is also connected to another middle school. It's called Lotus Junior High, one of the best middle schools in the country. Because of the status of being one of the best junior highs, it also let's us get into one of the best high schools Do-"

"Ooh! Does Lotus Junior High have good lunches too-" I interrupted again.

"Yes, Val! It also has great lunch too! Jeez, what's with you and school lunches?!" She scolded, frustrated with my incessant questions.
I shrugged in response.

"I dunno, I really like having something good to eat after a hard day's work!" I stated.

"Val, lunch takes place two classes before we go home. You're talking about dinner." She corrected.

I took the chance to eye-roll at her.

"Well, the point is a good meal after doing some hard work is the best! It makes you more focused on what comes ahead! Besides, if it's better than the food I had at my old school, then I would be more than ready for my next classes!"

Monika raised an eyebrow at the mention of my past, moreover on the food I had before.

"Better than the food you had at your old school? What do you mean? Lunches can't be that bad..." She pointed out.

I realized what I said, and it caused me to shiver.

The thought of old school and it's food brought back memories.

"Val...? Are you okay? I mean really, lunch food at your school can't be that bad!"

I shook my head to stop her reasoning.

"It is! The food there was just horrible! For lunch we had this... this..."

She grew dumbfounded at my trauma for lunch, causing her to scoff at me.

"Pssh. Let me guess, burnt pizza? Beat up apples and pears?"

I looked straight into her eyes.

"No... even worse than that. Pink slime. Pink, gooey, thick slime!" I answered seriously.

Her astonished expression grew to the point where she giggled.

I simply stare at her with a frown, annoyed that she wouldn't take me seriously.

"Hehehe! That's funny, Val! There's no way a school would allow pink slime to be eaten! I mean, how would pink goo be good for you anyway? It doesn't make any sense!"

I frowned at her and squeezed her hand tightly.

This ceased all mocking looks and giggles from her.

Monika stared back at me, knowing well that I was indeed serious.

"My old school actually gave good lunch for a while. Until the principal said that we were switching over to pink slime. My dad said something about how pink slime gave my school funding, or something like that. Everyone in the school was forced to eat pink slime no matter what. It was the food of the future, or the food from space, they said. It was supposed to be really good for you."

She continued to look at me intently, interested with my story.

"The pink slime we had was really gooey. Trying to eat it was weird too. The slime didn't have any taste in it, and some kids actually decided drink the slime as well. How can food that is from the
future taste and look so bad?! Anyway, I quit trying to eat the slime after the first bite and went the whole day without eating anything. It was horrible!"

I sighed, allowing Monika to ask some questions.

"So... your school switched to pink slime for more funding? Was there any extra school trips or something like that?"

I shook my head.

"I don't know, actually. It was back when I was in Kindergarten, so I don't really remember much. Oh yeah, the pink slime rules got worse for the teachers as well. Teachers couldn't eat anything but the goo! And this is where everything starts go bad..."

The suspense was causing Monika to become incredibly tense.

We didn't realize that we finally made it to the school grounds.

"Oh, well... Looks like we made it to the school!!" My serious demeanor, now seemingly replaced by excitement to start the school day.

On the other hand, Monika couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"W-What?!"

I walked into the school, bringing Monika with me.

Monika's refusal to move confused me, causing me to look over to her.

"Wait! You can't leave me in a cliffhanger! I want to know what happens next!"

I raised an eyebrow at what she was saying, before looking at her with a smug smile.

"It's cliffhanger. And you want to know what happens next in the story? Welllll... I guess you have to find out later! Come on, let's go find our classes!" I dismissed.

My smug smile and nonchalant behavior shocked Monika.

I took the lead, now pulling her hand through the main hall of our school.

There we saw students of our age crowding over boards with papers pinned on them.

I couldn't believe how different the school was compared to back home.

It looked more maintained, newer, and overall modern.

However, it still had the feeling that the building was older than the interior itself.

We looked around for the first grade section of our school, hoping that we can find our classes from there.

I felt Monika's grip on my hand weaken.

In response, I turned around and looked at her with a bit of confusion.

Once I turned around, she brightened up and was ready listen.
"Hey, can you tell what happens next?!" She excitedly asked, thinking I turned to satisfy her curiosity.

My mind was more inclined on finding our classes rather than continuing our story, so I refused.

"Not now, Monika. I'll tell you the rest later." I dismissed.

This continued while I searched for the board with our class and names on it.

Each time her grip weakened, I turned around, only for her to ask the same question.

"How about now?"

"No..."

"Now?"

"No."

"Now?"

"Please?"

"No and no!"

"Pweeese? With a cherry on top?"

"I don't like cherries that much!"

I was growing more and more annoyed with her demands that I continue the story.

She gave the signal that I needed to confront her.

This time she stopped walking with me altogether.

With a sigh, I turned around to her once more.

"Pweeese, Val?! I really want to what happens next! I really, really do!" She pouted.

I was able to resist and dismiss her calls by feeling smug.

Only that it was getting old.

I suppose it was fair when she wouldn't tell me what she was going to show me at lunch.

But, it wasn't worth it making Monika mad over.

My mother told me that making girls agitated is something I should never do.

Otherwise, it will lead to a world of pain.

Monika was just a word away from being truly upset.

I sighed from the relentless girl.

"Sorry, Mon. It has to wait, I'll tell you the rest of the story during lunch. Okay? Right now, we need to find our classroom!" I calmly said.
Monika had no choice but to relent to my wishes.

"Fwine... but if you forget to tell me about the rest of story, then I won't show you what I have at lunch! It's fair that way!"

It was there that I realized Monika's cunning side, something she showed partially when we had our play-date two days ago.

I accepted her offer.

"I guess it's fair..." I mumbled, feeling that I was taken aback from her counteroffer.

With a smile, Monika looked proud and stuck her nose in the air.

"It is fair! And I know it is!" She replied, her iron grip on my hand taking hold once more.

I had a feeling that things will go down hill, once she held my hand like that.

"Oh yeah, I also know where the bulletin board is! You passed it a while ago!" She mentioned while running to the board.

The power shifted to her and I felt myself struggling to keep up with the girl.

Wait, what!?

I was puzzled as to why she didn't point that out.

"Waaait, you knew where it was?! Why didn't you tell me?!" I questioned, baffled from her behavior.

And it was there that I realized how smug Monika could be as well.

She gave a careless shrug, and smiled at me.

"I wanted to prove a point by not telling you anything and annoy you, just so I can get what I want! And so far, it worked!"

I felt that I should be upset that Monika played me like a fiddle.

But at the same time, I was genuinely impressed by that.

"Touche. It did work." I muttered, making her giggle.

It was making her laugh or smile that made all my negative feelings go away.

"Hehehe~! I hope it works again later! It's really fun to do!"

So, I didn't mind that she did.

Because it's all worth it.

"Hey, Val. You're gonna tell me the whole story right?"

I was placed in a room, filled to the brim with students in my grade.

The school was giving us an exam, so they can determine which class we were going to go in.
We were all in rows, in alphabetical order, and we were also given different exams so we couldn't cheat.

The problem that I was currently doing was somewhat difficult and had to do with multiplication.

I looked to where Monika was sitting, and she was simply twirling her pencil, her hand on her chin. Simply put, she was bored and was looking around the room for something of interest.

I frowned, the feeling that someone already finished left a bitter feeling in my mouth.

It was a strange feeling, something along the lines of jealousy.

Perhaps I was jealous that a girl is smarter than me.

And the inner boy in me wouldn't stand for that, so I sought prove her wrong.

My stare grew to an unintentional glare, and I focused onto her.

She yawned and looked towards my direction.

Monika looked surprised that I was staring at her and flushed a bit.

Fortunately, she regained her composure and looked back at me.

She wasn't affected by my glare and simply smirked, sticking her tongue out.

She then blew a raspberry at me.

I was fazed by her act and decided to retaliate with an absurd face.

I pulled my eyebrow up and waggled my tongue a bit, causing her to giggle.

The teacher was currently reading a book and was not aware of our antics.

After making her laugh, I put my arm under my pit and faked fart noises.

My immaturity caused to cover her mouth, trying her best not to laugh at me.

I was going to continue my charade, until I was hit with something on the crown of my head.

"Ow..." I mumbled, rubbing the afflicted area.

"Having fun are we?" The teacher asked, having a cold and icy tone to his voice.

I glimpsed back at Monika, and saw her face turning red from laughter.

"N-No, sir." I replied, looking down onto my paper and picking up my pencil.

The teacher walked back to his seat and continued reading his novel.

My punishment didn't quite faze me much, and I continued to my antics.

Instead of being funny, I wanted to quietly ridicule the teacher to Monika.

I looked at her, to which she didn't look back.
"Ten minutes left." The teacher declared, not looking up to see the time.

That shocked me enough to do the test and I jumped right into it.

Somehow, the question looked less confusing from before and I put down an answer instantaneously.

The rest of the test seemed to become less and less of a challenge for me, as I started circling answers with amazing precision.

It didn't take long until I finished the test.

My smoking pencil was laid to rest, as it rolled on the table.

I held the papers in my hand, straightened it out, and examined the marvel of work I accomplished.

I took the chance to look towards Monika, to which she looked mildly surprised.

Her surprised face confused me.

"Five minutes left." The teacher stated.

And that caused Monika to spring back into action, looking down on her paper and writing answers in blazing speed.

I simply stared at how she answered each question, her arm moving up and down the paper with vigor and dexterity.

She finally put down her pencil and sighed.

Not even a minute passed after she actually finished her test.

And that made me realize something as well.

Wait a minute...

Why was Monika doing nothing when she wasn't done with her test?

Does that mean she's-

My thoughts were interrupted when I noticed her staring at me.

She smiled and brought a finger up to her temple, swirling it.

Her lips mouthed the words "Coo-Coo" and pointed towards the teacher.

I turned my attention to the teacher, and was surprised at what he was doing.

As strange as it seemed, he put his book and gripped his hands on what seemed to be an imaginary steering wheel.

His eyes were glued to window, and he was twisting and turning his wheel, apparently trying to simulate driving of some sort.

"Vroom, vroom..." He mumbled, causing some to look up to him in confusion.

The teacher immediately halted what he was doing and picked up the book.
I couldn't help but laugh at what the teacher was doing, and covered my mouth.

I then looked towards Monika to see her reaction.

Monika was also laughing with me, amused by spectacle as well.

I mouthed the following words:

"Looks like he needs to be hit in the head too!"

She couldn't hold in the laughter she was containing and was about to let it out.

Before she could let out a hearty string, the teacher proclaimed that the test was now over.

Students started to rise up from their seats, generating enough noise for Monika to laugh.

It was there that she started chortle uncontrollably, covering her blushing face to cover the act.

I quickly walked over to her and took her test, handing it to the embarrassed teacher.

Once that was done, I knelt down and put my arm around her, laughing from what we had just witnessed.

It was finally lunchtime, and it was time where I was going to show Val I brought for him.

I was outside sitting under a tree.

The trees were rustling from the occasional wind on a summer day.

The reason why I was even outside was because I was waiting for Val to get his results from the test.

From the rumors I heard, I got one of the highest scores along with a foreigner.

And some of the rumors was that he had this smile that lit up the day.

It was obviously him...

His dorky smile whenever he listens to someone speak.

Anyway, I told him not bring any lunch from the cafeteria and he listened.

It was my moment of truth.

In a covered lunchbox, was filled with a home-cooked meal that I prepared for him.

Of course, my mother helped me with making the meal, but I made sure that I did most of the work.

The lunch consisted of grilled fish, tamagoyaki, nori, and a bit of Kobe beef.

But making sweets was way, way out of my expertise.

Baking and sweets, in particular was something I didn't quite understand.

*Maybe a friend will help me make some.*

When my mom inquired on why I was making an extra lunch, I just answered with: "It's for my best
friend, Mama."

And that somehow caused my mom to giggle, and she left the scene by saying that it was cute of me to do that.

*There was something about the way she said it...*

*Did she understand that I owed Val for sleeping next to me?*

*No, that can't be right...*

*I never told my parents that I held onto Val, just so I can sleep...*

*Then what's wrong with it?*

I gave up on what my mother meant, and decided to focus on the future.

I couldn't help but sigh dreamily at the thought of me giving him the box.

My mind rushed with the possibilities of reactions he would give on receiving the meal.

*Would he surprised if I gave him it?*

*I can imagine the cherry blossom trees around us, the wind carrying the leaves and sweet scent of Sakura...*

*I would see him walking up to me, looking for me.*

*Smiling once our eyes meet.*

*I would then give the box to him.*

"Val, I made this for you. It's something I owe from yesterday... I... I hope you like it!"

Ahhh... *I can imagine his face looking all shocked and everything!*

"W-Wow! I can't believe that you did all this, Monika! This looks delicious! Thanks!"

My hands found their way on my cheeks.

I closed my eyes and let out another dreamy sigh.

*That would make me so happy...*

*Oh!*

*What if Val and I were older, and more romantic?!*

*I can imagine it perfectly...*

*The cherry blossom trees, the wind rushing all around us, the world telling us that it was just us!*

*His nerdy smile lighting up the world...*

*He would walk to me, shining his teeth towards me...*

*Ahhh~!*
“V-Val, I um... made this for you. It's something that I owe from yesterday... I really hope that it didn't turn out bad this time...”

Wow... I can actually imagine his smile when he is older.

He would walk up to me and whisper...

"Everything from you is never bad, my dear. Thank you."

Val would open the box and be amazed with the food I made.

The wind would be flowing behind me, my hair flowing freely from it.

He would look to me, with a mischievous gleam in his eyes.

"This is all very well made, honey. Now..."

He would close the box and bring me into his arms.

"Let me give you a reward..."

Val's face coming closer and closer to me...

His eyes fluttering shut...

The heat from his breath tickling my lips...

I couldn't stop myself from giving a girlish squeal from my imagination.

I held the box close to my chest and shuffled my legs from excitement.

"Eeeek!" I squirmed, causing some to glance at my eccentricity.

There's nothing that can go wrong!

...

Right?

My mind quickly made up a scenario where that was the case.

The setting was cloudy, gloomy, and was about to rain.

I saw Val walking up to me, looking a bit annoyed from me.

His hands were in his pockets, and he was also frowning.

"Is there something wrong?" I would ask.

He would look up to me, with a small glare that would pierce through my defenses.

I felt myself quiver from his stink-eye.

"Yeah. I missed out some good food, from the cafeteria! This better be good!"

The box I was holding started to tremble, and I struggled to gather the confidence to give it to him.
I gulped and presented the lunchbox to him.

"W-Well... I made some lunch for you instead! It's better than the stuff they are giving out!"

Val would grab it from me, grumbling at me while doing so.

"It better be."

He would open it, only to be dismayed from the food inside.

"What... what is this?" He asked, surprised from the content I made for him.

From the tone of his voice, it wasn't good kind.

My heart sunk from the disappointment in his voice.

"M-My lunch for you... it's something I made so I can pay you back from the sleepover." I stuttered, my confidence now having been vanished into thin air.

He scoffed at the box.

"This is your lunch? Pssh! It looks so bad that you might need pay me double! All just so I can accept your debt!"

Val would throw the box away and walk back to the cafeteria.

I could feel my mouth fall to the floor from his behavior.

The box dropped on the ground, the food falling and spilling onto it.

"I'm going back to the cafeteria, hopefully they will be serving their food. It's better than what you call mush..."

The thought of things going so downhill made my stomach churn.

I laid myself on the seat I was on, holding the box on my stomach.

My head started to spin, and I felt nauseous.

Val would never do that...

Right?

I mean, we only known each other for like three days...

Does that mean he has a cruel side as well?

Whatever...

I'll act cold towards him, just so I can protect myself in case he decides act like that!

Yeah! That'll work!

But...

I know for sure that he will never do that.
He doesn't seem to be that type of guy to do that.

"Monika!"

It was his voice.

The voice that made my heart go doki-doki.

He ran up to me, looking happy to see me.

I couldn't help but smile from his jubilant behavior.

Along with his jubilant behavior came the ideas of his cruelty from my imagination.

I-I don't want to take any chances.

I crushed my smile down and looked professional.

He still kept that dorky smile on.

"Hello, Val." I greeted, patting the on ground next to me.

He took a seat next to me, looking excited to be here.

"I can't wait to see what you got for me, Monika! Ooh, ooh! Let me guess! It's the new Super Ultra Mega Fight Fighter toy that came out yesterday!" He enthusiastically guessed.

Obviously, I never heard of the toy, so I meekly shook my head to a no, to which he laughed.

"I'm joking! That toy isn't coming out until next week!" He stated, chuckling over his guess.

I pursed my lips to show that I was serious.

That didn't even faze him at all.

It's kind of like when he glares at me, and I am not affected by it all...

Or does he know I am not meaning it?

"So what did you bring me? You didn't need to get me anything from the sleepover! I was just helping my best friend out!"

I struggled not to give any signs that I was growing flustered by his kind words.

"Mmmrgh...!" I squeezed the box, as something to help me cope.

Unfortunately for me, he caught on.

"Um... Monika? Is there something wrong?" He asked, concerned for my well-being.

Aaagh! He's literal boyfriend material!

I shoved my box into his arms, the whirlwind of emotions keeping me silent.

"Oof... huh? What's this?" He inquired, examining the box closely.

I simply stared at him, watching his every move.
"How do you open this thing... oh."

*PWOP*

The box opened to the meal I made for him.

He gave an surprised gasp at what he was seeing.

"Whoa..." He uttered, completely taken off-guard from the food.

I regained my composure and crossed my arms.

Val took an experimental bite from the Kobe beef I prepared for him.

I felt the palms of my hands starting to sweat from when he bit onto it, chewing on the food.

To my surprise, he gave a small moan from the beef, holding his cheeks from the overload of flavor.

"Mmm... this... this is amazing, Monika! I never knew you could cook! You gotta teach me how to do this! I always wanted to cook!" He excitedly cheered, munching onto the food in a ravenous manner.

I couldn't help but blush from his compliments.

"D-Don't get the wrong idea! This is just for everything you have done for me when we had our play-date and sleepover! Nothing more!" I explained.

That didn't faze Val at all.

He simply looked up to me and smiled.

That dorky smile.

"Thanks so much, Monika. This looks like gazillion times better than the food they giving in the cafeteria!"

He put the box down and pulled me in for a hug.

"I can't wait to eat all of this! It all looks really yummy, especially the beef!" He stated, squeezing me.

My cold facade was completely broken at this point, and I hugged him back.

"You're welcome, Val. I really appreciate it."

We pulled away, where Val aimed for the food almost immediately after.

I simply watched as he ate the meal, satisfied that my cooking made Val happy.

A distant thought of Val's lunch story came into light, so I asked him.

"Val, can you now tell me about the rest of the story?"

He was focused on his food and kept chewing, unaware that I was even talking to him.

"Val?"
I frowned at his hunger, as I was being paid any attention at all. That is, until an idea sprang into life in my head. With a smirk, I swiped the lunchbox away from him. He was hypnotized by the taste of the food, and reached out to food. I made sure sure he couldn't get a grip of it.

"Give it baaaack!" He bemoaned, unhappy that I took his meal away from him. My smirk turned to a snarky smile, as I enjoyed teasing Val. Eventually, he gave up and pouted, crossing his arms in the process.

"Meanie..." He muttered.
I giggled and brought a tissue up for him. He took the tissue and rubbed any residue food around his mouth, before throwing it away to some direction.

"Hmph!"
I put the lunchbox down and slid up to him.
"I'll give you the rest of the food, if... You tell me the rest of the story!"
Val loosened the tough act and raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, that? Well, why didn't you say so?!"
I gave him a deadpan look.

_I was trying to, you idjit!

"Anyway, I'll tell you the rest of the story, now gimme, gimme!"
His hands reached over to the box.
Another idea sprang up in my mind.
I couldn't help but grin cunningly from teasing him.

"Aw come oonnn!"
He gave up once more, turning his back from me.
I tried my best not to giggle again.
However, his cute reaction was making it difficult for me not to do so.

"Vaal..." I called endearingly.
He didn't respond to me.
I slid closer to him, slowly approaching him.

"Vaaaal..."

Still no response.

He was still disappointed and somewhat upset that I teased a bit too much.

I raised myself using my knees and brought my hands up, ready to attack.

"Vaaaaal~!" I called one last time.

He didn't budge at all.

And so, I made my move.

I dived down and hugged him close.

Val never anticipated my attack and he was flustered when I hugged him.

"Wah?! Monika?!" He mumbled, unable to think straight from the surprise.

I rested my chin on his shoulder, while I hugged him tightly.

He didn't resist and was still confused when I hugged him.

"Now will you listen to me~?"

Val continued to toss and turn.

"Uh... yeah? Sure! What is it?!" He stammered.

_He's so cute when he is nervous!_

"I'll give you the rest of the food if... you let me feed you."

His flustered state started to stabilize and he looked up to me?

"You feeding me? B-But I am not a baby anymore! I can eat by myself!"

I rolled my eyes dismissively.

"I know, Val! But feeding each other is what... um..."

My mind raced on what I was about to say.

_Wait, wait, wait!_

_That's what couples do!_

_What am I doing?!_

_Oh no... if I tell him this what couples do then..._

_"But feeding each other is what couples do!"_

_He would just stare at me._
His stare would slowly grow more and more disgusted.

Val would then force himself off of me and back away.

"Ewwwww! Couples?! What are you thinking?! That's so weird and gross!"

He cringed at me and turned his head away from me.

"Me and you... being a couple... just... ew! Stay away from me! I knew girls are weird! And because of you I like boys now! See ya!"

Val would run away and find a group of boys to hang around with.

"W-Wait! Val! Don't go!"

And I would just look on, thinking on how badly I messed up on.

No...

I am not telling him that.

This is what best friends do!

And b-besides... I don't see Val like that!

Hahaha...!

Hehe...

Hehe.

...

Aw...

"It's what... best friends do!" I stated, finishing my sentence.

Val scrunched his face up, taking in what I said and thinking.

My heart pounded as he pondered on what to say.

Would he call me out?!

No!

He can't do that!

Uuuuu!

I messed up!

"Oh that's right! That's what best friends do! But I still don't do that." He replied, smiling.

I took the chance to see if he was lying, just to be safe.

He was simply staring at me, silent while I scanned him.
Val isn’t lying.

Phew...

And so, I smiled back at him.

"Come on, Val! It'll be fun, I promise!" I assured.

He sighed, relenting to my demands.

"If you say so. It does sound kind of fun, right?"

"Exactly! Now, turn around and let me feed you! In the meantime, tell me the story from the morning!"

He nodded enthusiastically and turned around, allowing me to pick up the box.

I picked up a piece of the beef with an utensil and brought over to him.

"Say 'aaah!'"

He pursed his lips to show that he was hesitant.

I waved the beef in front of him.

"The beef says that he wants to be eaten! He's juicy, tasty, and yummy!"

With that, Val opened his mouth and placed the beef in his mouth.

He started to chew, but was struggling at first due to how strange it was for him.

But then, he moaned from the beef's taste.

I picked up another piece, to which he opened his mouth again.

With a devious smirk, I moved the beef closer to his mouth.

He then clamped over it, only to find that he was chewing nothing.

His eyes looked up for the beef dangling in front of him.

Val turned to me with a glare on his face.

"Hey! You said you were going to feed me!"

I giggled.

"Hehehe~! I know, but aren't you going tell me the story from your old school?"

He frowned.

"I was! But you keep tricking me with the food! It makes me want to keep the story in a cliffhanger."

"Cliffhanger."

"Right, that!"
I poked his nose, to which he started rub.

"I'll feed you if, you tell me the story while at it!" I offered.

Val rubbed his chin in thought, thinking about the offer.

Obviously, it was either food or no food.

And quite frankly, he chose food.

"Okay! I'll do it! But after this bite!" He demanded.

*Fair enough...*

I delivered the beef into his mouth and chewed with delight.

"So, where I leave off at?!" He asked excitedly.

I broke a piece of nori, and moved it up next to his lips.

"If I remember properly... It was something along the lines of, how the teachers were also forced to eat the pink slime."

He brightened up when he was reminded on what to talk about.

"Oh right! So anyway, when the teachers were told about the news, they were angry! Like, I remember this one time where my math teacher spent the entire period talking about how... stupid the rule was!"

I couldn't help but gasp at Val's use of vulgar language.

He was shocked as well, but at the same time enjoyed the feeling.

"Wow... that felt great to say! There's this tingling feeling in my lips! It tickles!" He stated, touching his lips.

When he said the cuss word, I couldn't help but join in.

However, the good girl in me told me that it wasn't worth it.

*Once you say it...*

*There's no going back...*

"Anyway." Val continued. "Every teacher was getting angry at the principal for making them eat it. They knew it tasted bad."

I didn't realize that he was chewing as he was speaking, apparently took a bite out of the nori I broke off.

As a result, I quickly resupplied and delivered another piece towards him.

"Om! So the principal knew that it tasted bad, but he said that he can't stop the deliveries on the pink slime! The company that paid them to do all that, said that they have keep eating it or else no money!"

I continued my routine on delivering food to him while he spoke.
"Hey..." I piped in. "Did you guys really have to eat it? I mean, why couldn't they throw away the slime?" I suggested.

He shook his head.

"The company sent in people to make sure that we were eating the slime! The worst thing is that, they didn't eat the slime! They had their own lunches and ate them without anyone yelling at them!" Val replied, vexed about the situation at the time.

He sighed heavily.

"It got a lot worse after that..."

I offered the food for him to bite on, but he avoided the food, causing me to put it down.

Although he wasn't frowning, I knew he was feeling unhappy about his old school.

I put a hand on his shoulder and looked into his eyes.

_His onyx, luster eyes..._

"How bad did it get?" I asked, making sure that he wouldn't feel pressured to say more.

Val started frown when he started to remember.

"The pink slime started to have really weird side effects. Kids were getting into fights with each other for most _stupidest_ reasons! I remember when one of my classmates punched his friend, just because he picked it up... without his permission! Everyone I knew kept arguing with each other, and looked very mad all the time. It was a nightmare..."

I rested my head on his shoulder, just so he can feel comfortable.

"Some of my friends... they ate the slime and they got into an argument with me. It was something about how a math problem. I showed the right answer to the problem, since they were my friends. But, they snapped at me. They called me smarty-pants, nerd, geek, and stuff like that. It hurt when my friends said that."

...

"Did they apologize to you?" I asked, hoping the answer would be yes.

Val didn't immediately reply.

"No... they never got the chance to. The principal saw what was going on and finally got the guts to tell the company to stop. I don't remember what happened, but a lot of my classmates were in the hospital because of what they ate. The hospital said that they all would get better in a week. And in that week, I moved away. They never got the chance to give me an apology, and I feel horrible for that. That's why I don't use Skype to call them. I'm scared that they will yell at me again."

I hugged Val.

_I pray that Val will never get hurt like that ever again._

_And I promise that I will help him and protect him from that._

He then hugged me back, surprising me.
"Thanks for listening to me, Monika. I feel a billion times better now!"

Val then shined his usual dorky smile.

I couldn't help but smile back.

"Val, one day you are going have to talk with them again. I'll be there to support you. I just want you to feel happy about your old school, not be angry or sad whenever you think about it. Promise me that you are going to talk with them again."

He was taken aback from my demand, but understood what I meant.

"I-I will! With you helping me out, I'll make sure that it happens! I promise!" He declared.

*Val never breaks his promises...*

He chuckled a bit before looking at me warmly.

I couldn't help but blush and look away from his eyes.

"Thank you, Monika. I really mean it."

The sincerity in his voice meant every word.

I looked him in the eye and smiled proudly.

"You're welcome dork. Now, eat up! That story must have tired you out!"

He nodded vigorously, opening his mouth to incoming bite.

"Mhm! It definitely did!" He said, before biting onto the tamagoyaki.

Everything Val did was cute and innocent.

*If I couldn't help it, I would laugh every time he did something.*

*I'll make sure that whenever I laugh, it is to make him laugh.*

*I will never let go of my best friend, no matter what.*

*And I'll always be there for him.*
Hand Holding

Eight years later...

I was currently in study hall, the last period I had with Monika, before we went home.

We were now 15 years old right now, but our relationship hasn't the changed.

Besides the fact that I call Monika my sister, nothing has changed.

Right now, I couldn't help but keep my head up but the boredom I was experiencing.

Monika was explaining a problem that I didn't quite understand, and I wasn't even paying attention.

"By using the slope intercept formula, the answer should be..." She went on.

While she spoke, I went back to my own thoughts.

I can't wait to go to high school!

I am so ready to let go of middle school...

That really makes me think of how fast things have went by...

Everyone is a bit too aggressive here, and there are times where I almost embarrassed myself.

Luckily, Monika was there to support me and helped get through some tough times.

In turn, I helped her as well, but it is rare for her mess up and for me to back her up...

Either way, she is better than any friend I have right now...

I known Monika for five years now, and she is my closest friend I have.

There's no way I am letting go of her.

Maybe when I get to high school, I'll find some real friends.

Not the friends I have now...

The friends I have now aren't the type that will watch my back or help me when I need it.

They are more like friends in classroom and just to talk to.

Kind of like fake friends...

"Val!" She called, causing me to lose track of my thoughts.

I drowsily looked up to her as a result.

"Huh?" I uttered, causing her groan in frustration.

"Val, I was asking if you understood the problem! Turns out you weren't even paying attention! What's the matter?!" She asked with a vexed tone, glaring at me.
Right... Monika gets really annoyed if I don't pay attention to her on certain things...

Math especially gets to her.

I chuckled nervously, brushing the back of my hair.  
"Ehehe... sorry. I was thinking about some things."  
She sighed and loosened up.  
"Some things? Like what?"

I rested my head on the desk I was on and played with a spec of dust.  
"I was thinking how excited I am for high school. I just had enough of this building, you know?  
Kaoru Elementary looked easy once we got the hang of it, then came Lotus! This school is such a pain to keep up with! The constant homework assignments, test and quizzes, and mandatory club meetings? Just what are they preparing us for?!"

Monika rested her chin in her hand, and also joining my brooding session.  
"Well... they have the right idea to push us to our limits. Maybe high school won't be this work-intensive but, I know that college is definitely going to be worse than this. Mom and Dad told me about their college experiences, and they said it was actually pretty rough! So I guess getting ready for it is for the best."

I frowned at her reasoning, lazily looking up to her.  
"Sis, we have like another five years of school left before we get to college! Can't we catch a break? I heard that college is actually kind of fun, since you have control over your schedule and having the power to choose your own classes! Doesn't that sound cool at all, sis?" I retorted.

She smirked at me, knowing that she can counter my argument.  
"That does sound fun, but every class is going to burden you sooner or later. There's no escaping that, Val."

I gave a disappointed whine and looked down onto the desk.  
"Well... forget about that then. The part I am bit more interested in is the fact that we get to make new friends at high school! Maybe we can make friends that will be on the same level as us, sis!" I stated.

"Friends being something more? Pfff, please! The level we share is nothing compared to any other relationship!" She declared.

I shook my head in disagreement.  
"I was talking about something else, sis." I elaborated.

There was a vague atmosphere of tensity around us.  
"What?" She slowly questioned.

Nevertheless, I continued my thought process.
"Like... hmm... you know... ah! Maybe, I can probably fall in love with a cute girl! I always wanted to have a high school romance!" I cheerily hoped, turning my attention to the skies outside.

Monika suddenly raised her head up and looked away.

Her gaze was focused out onto the skies, her scowl darkening the path she was staring at.

She turned her attention to me and gave me a small glare.

I couldn't help but feel intimidated by her.

"W-What's wrong, Mon?" I squeaked.

Monika took the chance to readjust herself and lost her stink-eye.

"Nothing." She coldly said, keeping a professional aura around herself.

Her frigid tone and composed look made me very wary of her.

"If you do get a girlfriend, I want to make sure that she is the perfect one for you. She will go through all my tests to see if she deserves you." She eerily put out.

What's up with her?

"Anyway..." Monika started to say, shedding her cold ego aside. "I can't wait to make new friends! Maybe I can get us a friend that can help us bake!"

I couldn't shake the feeling that Monika gave to me.

But nevertheless, I nodded in agreement, masking my discomfort behind a smile.

"Yeah! I definitely want to learn about baking! Maybe it would nice to get a friend that can help us with writing and reading more effectively! You know, a bookworm!" I supported.

She gave an content sigh.

"Along with making new friends, a change of locale would be nice. It gets kind of tiring going to the same building, with the same teachers, the same activities... but going to a new school opens up a lot of opportunities! I heard that Dokisai High has the widest range of extracurricular activities, as well as having one of the best classes around!"

I frowned at the mention of that school.

"Argh... do we have to go to Dokisai High? I know it's close by, but I also heard that the classes are ridiculously difficult! Can't we go to Tsugumi High? Sure the classes are a bit... lackluster, but it has the best extracurricular activities, along with having programs for college!" I suggested.

Monika couldn't help but snicker at my suggestion.

"Sorry, Val. I'm definitely not going to Tsugumi High, ever. You do know they recently had a scandal where the Principal was siphoning and pocketing extra funds for their programs! Not to mention, the previous principals were equally as corrupt too! And didn't you read the latest guidebook for high schools? The school doesn't offer those programs anymore, but Dokisai does!"

I gave a defeated sigh.
"Alright... you got me. I can't win this argument... we'll go to Dokisai together."

An idea sprang up in my head.

"Wait, how about this? Why don't I go to Tsugumi High and you go to-"

I was cut by a heart-stopping scowl from Monika.

"Never mind..." I dismissed, looking back to my book once more and avoiding her gaze.

The school bell rang before I was able to focus completely at the problem we were doing.

And so, I stretched my limbs of any sleepiness they had.

"Hey, Val want to stop by the supermarket today? I was thinking we can do a bit of grocery shopping, you know?"

I yawned from stretching myself out.

"Huh? Sure, what are we gonna make for dinner?" I asked, somewhat interested by what she had to offer.

She frowned, and looked disappointed at me.

Obviously, this gave me the signal that something special was up.

Wait, what are we going to make today?

Friday... Friday... Friday...

On this day and month...

Oh right! We're gonna make some Yaki Udon!

"Sorry, sorry! I totally forgot about today! The tests were getting on my nerves a lot, lately... we're making some Yaki Udon, right?"

Monika nodded, now smiling from my memory coming back.

"Yep! We just need a few more ingredients before we can start making it! And besides, summer vacation is just around the corner."

We started to put our books in our bags and got ready to leave school.

As soon I was done placing my books in, Monika grabbed my hand and we made a mad dash out of the school.

At this point, however, I was somewhat accustomed with her dragging me around to get wherever she wanted to go.

"Never gonna let that habit of holding my hand, huh?" I yelled through the rush of wind.

She giggled.

"Hehehe~! Guess not! But I managed to let go of my bow!"

I smirked, knowing that was Monika's go-to answer whenever I ask her about her habits.
She ditched her iconic white bow and decided to let her hair flow freely.

I had a feeling that if we never met, she would have never loosened up at all.

Her reason on keeping a bow on was unknown, even to her, saying that it was something that would make her whole.

*I don't quite remember what made her ditch the bow all together, but I'm pretty sure it was a comment I made years ago.*

*If I did say something about it, what was it that I said?*

And because of that, she considered it an accomplishment to stop wearing it, despite my insistence to keep it on.

After all, it did make her, well... her.

Anyway, even though it was a childhood habit, we kept holding hands even when we reached the exit of the school.

And we did make it out the exit, some students in range would whisper to their friends about us.

It was mainly the girls that whispered to their friends, I never knew what they whispered.

Though Monika has a good idea behind it, whenever I asked about it, she would dismiss it as "gossip of some sort".

There was similarities to her reaction by saying it was "gossip of some sort", from the beginning of middle school and now.

Rather, it was the same thing.

And I remembered it clear as day.

*It was our first day of going into the big kids school, Lotus Junior High.*

*We had a habit of holding hands whenever we would go to school, and so we carried this habit to Lotus.*

*And we did this everywhere we went, no matter what.*

*We held hands while going to the park, going to each others homes, or even when we had doctor's appointments.*

*It was the norm for us to hold hands whenever we go somewhere.*

*But when we arrived at Lotus, students that were near us would look at us perplexed, and genuinely surprised.*

*The girls starting covering their mouths and whispered to their friends, all while staring at us.*

*I felt Monika's grip become sweeter and tighter.*

*And because of that, I turned to her.*

*She was covering her eyes with her bangs, preventing me to see her reaction to all this.*
But the red cheeks meant that she was clearly flustered.

"Hey, Mon... why is everyone staring at us and whispering?" I asked.

Monika refused to look at me.

But she acknowledged my question by squeezing my hand even more.

"I-It's g-gossip of some sort... don't worry too much." She dismissed.

And I did just that, obviously with difficulty.

There was something in the midst that I didn't know of.

But it didn't bother me as much it should...

Fortunately however, everyone started to stop whispering about us holding hands towards the end of the first year in Junior High.

The strange thing however, was when we left the school grounds, Monika would stop holding my hand and walk three or four steps to the side.

I could not understand the purpose of holding hands in front of everyone, only to release it later on.

And this habit started after the first day of middle school.

Not only that, we stopped holding hands like that all together, most of the time.

Only in certain occasions like before did Monika hold my hand and give her usual answer.

I couldn't help but miss it.

After all, it was getting a bit weird that we were walking like that.

It's probably we are almost grown ups now.

We aren't kids anymore, so this behavior is kind of weird, I guess.

But there's a missing hole in me whenever we don't hold hands.

It's a feeling of hollowness that I couldn't quite explain.

That feeling is fulfilled when we do hold hands...

I feel warm, overjoyed, and energetic when we do hold hands.

What is this feeling...?

The fact that Monika just stops holding my hand when we leave the school premises fills the hole with emptiness.

Weird...

Why does she even do that in the first place then?

Nevertheless, I didn't question it and we continued to walk in silence.
"So um..." I muttered, trying to strike up a conversation. "Which clubs are you interested in joining, sis?"

Monika tapped her chin in thought.

"Hmm... I am thinking of joining the debate club. I heard that joining it looks good on my university application. But at the same time, I want to make a literature club..."

I raised an eyebrow from her idea.

"Literature club? Why would you make a literature club?" I asked, genuinely surprised about her choice in extracurricular activity.

She smiled at me, as if taking great joy from her incoming explanation.

"I always wanted to write and share it with people. Not only that, the joy of showing how writing can be fun is something I crave. I want to show that writing doesn't have to be so condensed, or each word and sentence has to have a really deep meaning, but show that it can also be a great hobby for everyone to enjoy."

I couldn't grin but her noble intentions.

She caught wind of my strange grin.

"Val, you're looking kind of weird right now. What's wrong?"

Her confused expression lessened to a small frown.

"It's weird and stupid isn't it..."

I chuckled to myself a bit and shook my head.

"No! Not at all. There's nothing weird or stupid about that, sis. It's just that seeing someone have good ideals and stuff makes me really happy. It goes to show that there is good in the world, no matter what. If you do want to join the literature club or at least make one, I'll join and help you out." I declared.

At first, Monika was silent and she had no idea what to say about my declaration.

But then, she started to giggle with joy.

I kept my beaming smile and watched her take my words into consideration.

She couldn't help but lunge at me, crushing me into a hug.

And at the same time that hug caused me to slightly lose my balance, only to regain it immediately after.

"Everyone else I spoke to thought my idea was weird or just downright stupid. But I knew that you would never say that! You're the best!"

I hugged her back.

"Mon, you know me long enough that I would never do that. I'm your best friend, remember? Best friends always support each other no matter what. Even if it seems kind of weird or stupid."
That caused her to push me off of her and take a couple steps to the side.

"Hey! I thought you said it wasn't weird or stupid!"

I put my hands up in front of her.

"Whoa, hey, hey! I didn't say any of that towards your idea! I was just saying it in general! Your goals and ideas are pure, sis. And that's definitely not weird or stupid." I explained.

She put up a small frown at me.

"Mmph! And just because of that misunderstanding, I am not making lunch for you tomorrow!" She teased.

I was just about to argue my case, until we made it to the supermarket.

"Ah! Looks like we made it! Come on, Val! The sooner we get our ingredients, the sooner we can get to make the noodles!"

She grabbed my hand and ran towards the market, carrying my fumbling body with her.

Aw man... I really hope that she was joking about that...

I really love her lunches!

We entered the store and surveyed our surroundings.

The store was just a bit more busier than usual, but it wouldn't hinder our progress on finding the ingredients we needed.

Speaking of ingredients...

"Hey, sis. What do we need exactly?"

Monika took out her phone and unlocked it.

"Oh yeah, I made a small note in my phone on what we need. Give me sec."

While I waited for her to pull out the check list, I looked around the supermarket.

There, I spotted some of our classmates buying snacks.

They spotted us and immediately started to whisper among themselves, while pointing at my direction.

I felt self-conscious and looked to where they were pointing at exactly.

Our hand-holding...?

They have to talking about us holding hands!

I guess to stop it is to stop holding hands...

That caused me pull away from her grip and taking a step aside.

Without even looking up from her phone, Monika grabbed my hand with perfect precision and tightened her grip.
Our classmates grew more amused by our behavior and that in turn caused me to become even more self-conscious.

"Hmm... where's the list?" She asked herself while glued to the phone.

Despite her tightened grip, I managed to pull away from her hand once more.

I took another step aside and relaxed, hoping that it would end the cacophony of whispers and giggles.

However, Monika did the same thing again. She effortlessly grabbed my hand while staring at the phone screen.

The discomfort from what we were doing, and the whispers from the girls across the market caused to pull away from her again.

Argh!

*I'll do anything to stop them from mocking us!*

This time I walked away and pretended to look interested in something.

That didn't fly well with Monika.

"Hey! Come back here!" She yelled, annoyed from my repeated escapes from her grip.

I didn't exactly know what to do at this point and felt the need to run away from her.

But instead, I reluctantly stopped moving in the opposite direction and walked towards her again.

Her hand grabbed onto my wrist, constricting it and we started to walk towards the aisles.

I felt the irritation from each step she took with me.

We stopped at an discreet aisle and she looked straight into my eyes.

"Care to explain why you kept avoiding me?" She asked, crossing her arms and tapping her toe impatiently.

I sighed with a hint of exhaustion.

"Well... um... it's because it was weird for us to hold hands like that." I tried to explain, hiding the other detail.

She caught something off about my explanation.

"It's weird for us? That isn't the whole thing. I know it."

I felt the color fade from my face.

"Uhm... wait! How did you know?!" I asked.

She shrugged carelessly.

"Now I know. So what are you hiding from me? What's something that you really hide from me, hmm?" She inquisitively asked.
I winced from her cunning side and looked down onto the floor.

"Uh... it's weird for us to hold hands in public. And not only that... I saw some girls from our class started to whisper and giggle about us. They were pointing at our hand-holding, so I got a little self-conscious." I explained nervously.

I looked up to Monika to see if she got what I was saying.

Instead of expecting her to be puzzled, or even have a dismissive look, she was blushing and wringing her fingers.

"I-Is that so?" She simply asked back.

I didn't quite understand what she was trying to point out, so I just nodded.

"Yeah..."

That caused her recompose herself, and she stopped her flustering.

"I'm not sure why they even need to point out the fact we are holding hands! After all, we aren't a couple! We are just two very close friends, that are going on a da- I mean, that are doing groceries!" She explained.

I gave a small smile at her explanation, as it helped me regain my composure.

"Oh, right... that does make sense! We have nothing to hide, besides the fact that we are just best friends! They have nothing to gossip about anyway!" I agreed, feeling a bit lighter from her explanation.

The same couldn't be said to Monika.

I saw her looking blankly at the distance with a small frown on her.

And of course, that made me worried.

"Monika? You okay?" I called, to which she shook her head.

"Yeah, yeah! I'm fine, don't worry. Let's... let's go get the groceries." She dismissed, walking away from me.

I eyed her strange behavior.

What's with her today?

Stupid Val!

Stupid freaking Val!

What wrong with him and his stupid dense head!

It's so obvious that the girls were talking about us being a couple!

That's what every girl in middle school keeps talking about!

Us being a couple!
Arrrgh!

Why do I have a stupid crush on that denser than oil dork!

He calls me his sister, for Pete’s sake!

Well...

He really cares about me and always gets worried whenever I feel sad...

He always is there for me and whenever I get bored...

We like to cook, read, write, and hang out...

My heart always thumps whenever we are close...

And when we hold hands, I can't even describe how euphoric I feel.

Not to mention his stupid smile...

His smile that always makes me happier...

With that smile, his eyes light up...

I can feel myself melting whenever I see it.

Ahhh~

Argh! Get a grip Monika!

I'm here to get the ingredients for the Udon and...

Probably confess to him after we get to prom!

...

Darn it! Even my thoughts are awkward!

It’s all his fault!

It’s his fault that I want to be with him.

It’s his fault that my heart pounds whenever we touch.

It’s his fault that I want him as my prom date.

Wait!

Prom!

T-That’s it!

I’ll tell him everything at prom!

But...

Uuuu!
What if he doesn't return my feelings?!

What if he actually does see me as a...

**Sister...**

Just thinking about it really annoys me.

I have just about... three days until prom starts!

By then... I need a plan for him to actually fall for me.

I...

I can't think about how weird it would be for the both of us if he does reject me.

No.

No!

I know that deep down, he actually likes me!

I know it!

All I gotta do is draw that out!

Let's do this!

"Sis?"

I turned to the boy with a overly-gleeful smile.

"Yesss~?" I replied, causing him to recoil in terror.

He cleared his throat and tried to cease all traces of nervousness.

"For starters, you're acting kind of weird today... you were moving your arms a lot in front of the cabbages and looking as if you were shouting at them. I know I asked this before, but is everything all right? And not to mention... your um... weird smile when you turned to me." He asked with worry.

I raised an eyebrow to what he was talking about.

*Weird smile?*

*What is he talking ab-

It was only then that I realized how strange my facial expression must have been.

I turned around with my face covered, completely embarrassed that I looked horrifying in front of him.

*Why am I being so flustered around him?!*

*No, why am I behaving like an idiot?!*

I failed to hear his footsteps coming close to me.
And I didn't realize that he was close to me or when he put his hand on my shoulder.

"Sis, seriously you are starting make me very worr- ah!"

"Eeek!" I shrieked, instinctively grabbed Val's wrist and slammed him on the ground.

*THUD*

There, lied the boy I crushed on, defeated from the slam.

Val gave a groan from the pain I gave to him.

"Ow..." He mumbled, rubbing his head from the pain he just received. "What was that for?!" He fired, completely confused as to why he was attacked.

I gave a surprised gasp in realization of what I did.

"Aah! Sorry, Val! It was just out of habit!" I apologized hurriedly, bringing my hand over to his downed body.

He accepted it and picked himself up with my help.

"Urrgh... I wonder how everyone is just going about their business when I just thrown around by a girl..." He muttered.

As he picked himself up, our faces started to close to each other.

Wow...

*I never thought Val looked so...*

*WAIT!*

Too close, too close, too close!

My face burned up when we realized how close we were to each other.

"Eek!"

And instinctively, I pushed him down while taking a few steps back.

"Ow!" He let out, his body feeling the floor once more.

He let out another groan as a result.

"Hey! What the heck, sis?! I thought you were helping me get up!" He complained, getting up by himself instead.

I pointed at him with my burning face.

"You! You will stay a couple of meters away from me while we pick out our groceries, alright?!" I ordered.

He was just about argue about his fate, until I beat him to it.

"I don't want to hear it, Jones! Just stay at the other side of the aisle!"
Val gave a defeated sigh and walked to other side.

And I gave a sigh of my own once he was once a comfortable distance away.

*Oh gosssh...*

*My heart...*

*It's pounding so hard because of this moron!*

*Moron!*

*Nimrod!*

*Idiot!*

*Cutey...*

*Dim-wit!*

*How in the world can someone be denser than a black-hole?!*

*Just focus, Monika.*

*Let's get through the grocery shopping and cook.*

"So, um... Monika? What do we need exactly?" He asked, raising his voice for me to hear.

I pulled out my phone and checked it.

"We need the noodles themselves, soy sauce, a bit sesame oil and some vegetables."

He raised an eyebrow, as if I missed out something.

"What?"

"You're missing something." He simply said.

I doubled checked the list to see if I was missing anything.

"What am I missing?" I asked, scrolling through the list.

"My meat." He answered replied nonchalantly.

My eyes widened at what he was saying.

I turned to him and he looked completely serious.

*W-Wa-Wait!*

*What does he mean by...*

*H-His m-meat?!*

*Oh no...*

*No way...*
No way...!
No way!
Oh my gosh!
It's not I don't want to but...
But, how did he even get-

"What about the meat we're gonna put in the Udon? I got some beef or pork that we can use back home."

... ...
...
...
I felt very light-headed all of a sudden, that I lost my footing.
As I did, I felt myself fall to the floor.
Every muscle tensed up to brace itself from damage.
But the pain never came.
Instead, I felt that I was levitating in the air...
My vision came back, the color now filling the former black world.
In front of me, I saw the face of a boy.
Val...
Val?
That means I'm in his...
My face burned to an immense degree, something I haven't felt in a while actually.
But before I could respond in any way, he simply pulled me from the floor.
My feet readjusted to the floor and I started to regain my balance.
I can't believe it!
Val caught me...
That was so romantic~!
If only he would just kis-
Hold on...
Isn't it kind of his fault for making me fall?
I mean...

He said something really, really misleading!

I thought he meant...

"Monika? You okay?" He called out to me.

I rubbed the side of my head to rid the ever-lasting effects of being light-headed.

"Uh... I think so. Wait! Did you forget that I am a vegetarian?!" I asked, somewhat offended.

He chuckled and rubbed the back of his head in embarrassment.

"Ahaha... sorry. I forgot about that."

I rolled my eyes.

"It's fine. Let's go get the veges."

I started to walk off without him.

"Wait! What kind of vegetables do we need exactly?!"

*Oh right!*

*I forgot about that!*

And with forgetting that, I also almost forgot my imaginative scene.

I imagined how the both of us would pick out the proper vegetables, and our hands would "accidentally" graze against each other.

*Of course, it would only be me doing the grazing.*

*I can imagine how he would flinch each time we touch, blush, and look away from me.*

Ahhh~!

"Actually, you know what? Let's get the ingredients separately. That way we can go home and make the noodles as soon as possible." He suggested.

*EHHHH?*

I shot him a cold glare to dissuade him from going with his plan.

And it never failed to make him flinch.

"Um... yeah. I guess I will do that now. I was planning that we do it together, you know... but since you told me stay a few meters away from you... I guess we’ll do it separately. Look in the bright-side! Time efficiency matters right?" He walked off.

*No, no, no, no!*

*Dang it Monika!*

*Why did I get myself into this mess!*
I swear, I think someone is writing me like this to have all these emotions raze me and do stupid things!

Wait a minute...

Hey!

You!

Yeah, you reading my thoughts!

Could you kindly tell the author to stop messing with us?

Thanks!

"Oh wait, before I forget... where do we meet up?" He asked with a small smile.

Arrrggh!

That smile...

C-Can't resist...

It was inevitable.

I smiled back, to which he brightened up at.

"Actually..." I started to say, giving my smile a devious flair.

I walked over to him and grabbed his hand, to which he flared up.

"Why don't we do it together?" I suggested.

He gritted his teeth in anxiety.

"But didn't you say that I was to stand a few meters away from you? If you are feeling angry for some reason, then I will give you the space you need. Otherwise, I wouldn't recommend doi-"

"I wasn't angry!" I yelled.

Val stopped.

"I... I was feeling a bit self-conscious too... and a little weird too. That's why I acting this way... and I'm sorry about it! But, I guess the only way to fight it, is to be with my best friend. Right?"

He put his head on my head and started pat it.

"I guess that's one way of putting it! So let's do this! Where to first?"

Keep the main and interesting event for last...

"Let's pick out our noodles, first. Come on!"

And by tradition, I pulled him to our destination.

Even though I "stopped" holding hands with him, that doesn't mean I want to stop at all.
It's the opposite, actually...

I want to hold hands whenever we can...

It's awkward for us to walk side by side, squeezing each other's hand and saying we aren't a couple. But for now, I guess I am content with this.

After all, I am going to confess to him at Prom.

...

I hope he reciprocates my feelings, despite all the density he has...

Even with the reluctance I had with holding Monika's hand while shopping, I couldn't say I didn't mind it at all.

In fact, it made me feel nostalgic that we were holding hands again.

Nostalgic, as the memories where we used walk side by side on wherever we went.

Anyway, we got the rest of the ingredients with relative ease, spending around a minute or so picking out the right soy sauce and Udon brand.

Now it was time for the vegetables.

She said it was cabbages, carrots, onions, and scallions.

It should be a piece of cake, since the supermarket almost always had high quality crops.

And the thought of the vegetables made my mouth water.

I devoted a portion of my mind's processing power to just imagine the taste of the Udon we were going to make.

Chewing on the fried, thick noodles...

The veges being cooked with the noodles and blending in with the noodles to help amplify the taste...

Oh man...

If only we could put some meat in there, then I would eat only Yaki Udon for the rest of my life!

"Val!" Monika called, causing me to wake up.

There was a sudden jolt that made me spazz out a bit.

"Huh? What's going on?"

She sighed at my idle behavior.

"Aren't you gonna help me pick out some of the veges? It's better to have a helping hand when it comes to this." She stated.

I nodded quickly.
"Right, got it. Let's start picking them out."

Again, I allowed myself to wander off to the separate mindset I had.

*I can't wait to slurp and chew onto large, chunky noodles.*

*With the seasoned vegetables, along with shiitake mushrooms, maybe some meats if Monika is okay with it...*

*The mushrooms is my favorite part in any meal containing it.*

*There's something about it that makes so tasty...*

*Mmm...*

"Val! Are you even paying attention?! What's with you today?!!" Monika barked, causing me to wince.

"Ehehe... sorry, sis. I was just imagining how the Udon will taste like after we are done cooking it. Ahhh~! I know it will taste great!"

She looked at me in disbelief, but then rolled her eyes.

"It'll taste better if you start paying more attention on picking out the ingredients, then."

*Monika's right!*

*If I pay more attention on picking out the ingredients, then the better it will taste!* ...

*That's common sense...*

*How much of my brainpower did I store away to simulate the taste of the noodles anyway?*

With that, I started to carefully analyze each vegetable that came to hand.

Occasionally, Monika's hand would graze over mine while I checked the ingredient.

It became more and more apparent that she was doing it intentionally.

I would look over to her, confused as to why she kept doing that.

Each time I turned over, I would catch her staring at me and turn away in a split second.

*Something's up...*

*But now is not the time to worry about that.*

*Now is the time for noodles...*

My focus has been razor sharp to the point that we made it to last ingredient with ease.

It was the cabbages, the same ones Monika was mock-yelling at.

As we progressed, I noticed the "accidental" grazing from her was starting to wane, to point where she just dropped it.
I placed my hand on an ideal cabbage, only to notice something on it.
The material was warm and soft, comparable to...

*Monika's hand!*
I turned to her, only for her to turn to me at the same time.
Once our eyes met, we stared at each other.

*I...

*I never noticed her emerald green eyes...*

*Wow...*

*They-

*Wait a minute!*

We realized what we were doing and pulled away from each other.

"Aaah! Sorry!" We both apologized at the same time.
The cabbage rolled down from the bunch, and fell onto the floor.
I knelt down to pick up the cabbage, only to feel the same exact material again.

"Aah!" We both let out, holding our hand close to us.
It was there that I noticed how flustered Monika was.

Her cheeks were full of color, and she couldn't help but frown in utter embarrassment or nervousness.

*What's with you today...?*

The cabbage continued to roll down the floor, away from our care.
To lessen the tense atmosphere, she simply took any good looking cabbage and called it a day.
The checkout for the groceries we did was awkward and silent.
I had no idea why we were even silent in the first place, actually.
Each time I tried to strike up a conversation, I was hit by the overwhelming nature of...

Silence.
The cashier asked for around 8 dollars or so, so that prompted me to open my wallet.
I felt Monika's eyes watch my every move, making the payment somewhat eccentric and erratic.

*What's wrong with me...?*

He took the payment and I took the bags, allowing us to leave the supermarket.
Once we reached the outside, we couldn't help but walk silently.

This is so awkward...

I wonder what she is thinking of right now...

Probably thinking how weird this whole situation is right now...

Why did we get so flustered as we picked out the cabbages?

Rather, why did Monika get so timid when we touched each other's hands?

Everything after that was... very off-putting to say the least.

And everything before was weird too...

She said to not hold her hand anymore and stay away from her, only for her to the opposite.

Not to mention the slam I got from her when I asked how she was feeling...

How about the time where she almost fell?

To be frank, I never thought I could reach her in time, but I couldn't help but feel relieved that she was alright.

What's going on?

Ever since we started to hold hands more often, she has been behaving like that...

I mean, we held each other's hands before... what makes this so different?

And not only that, I'm starting to feel this warm feeling in my heart whenever she is around me...

What's that feeling called?

Friendship?

Camaraderie?

Trust?

It has to be all those...

We have been through so much together.

We spent every holiday, ranging from New Year's Eve to Christmas.

If I had to put our relationship into words...

It would be lukewarm...

Pale pink...

Like there's something missing between us.

"Hey, Val." She asked, disrupting me from my thoughts.
"Hmm?"

I looked towards her, and she started slow down her pace.

"I... I have this question in my mind, and I had meaning to say this for a while now... but."

Her pace started to slow down to the point where we came to a complete stop.

"If... if a friend of mine would happen to fall in love with you, and she confesses... what would you say?"

... 

WHAAAT?!

The world around us had just stopped, and was now listening.

My calm, listening demeanor turned to one of complete bewilderment.

"Wh-Where did you get that, sis?! And how long have you had this question for?!" I asked hurriedly.

Despite me becoming a bit crazed and anxious, Monika kept her shy, but calm cool.

"I was just thinking about for like... I don't know really. But what matters is your answer. W-What would you say?" She asked, twirling her hair and keeping her eyes on the pavement.

I exhaled heavily and thought hard on what my answer was going to be.

"I don't know." I simply replied.

Monika looked up to me, losing her calm and adopting the bewildered state I had before.

"What? What do you mean, you don't know?"

I put my hands on my hips and started to walk forward.

"Well, I can't imagine myself such a situation! And besides, why would a friend of yours even like me in the first place?!"

I shook my head to clear my thoughts.

"Look, the point is... I'll try my best to respond to her. And it all depends on the girl, really. If I have known her for quite a while now, and we were in good terms, I would say... to give me more time."

Monika frowned and looked away again.

"W-What if the girl was in bad terms with you, but you had good history with her? Like you did almost everything with her and enjoyed it?"

The questions Monika was throwing at me were starting wear me down, to the point where I couldn't think properly.

"I'll... I'll think about it as well. I guess it has to with the confession as well. But, what I think is that every girl deserves a second chance at everything. And that includes love." I answered, truthfully.

Monika gave a relieved sigh and smiled at me.
"That... that really puts my mind at ease, Val. Thank you."

She gave the signal that we keep walking, and we did.

"So, Val... do you have proper instructions on making Yaki Udon?"

Cooking the noodles with Val was actually fun and easy at the same time.

Considering the fact that we both have experience on making cuisines like these.

Too bad we can't bake sweets at all.

I would really want to go for some Japanese Sweets...

I guess the real reason why I am so happy now is because of Val's answer.

He said that he will give everyone a second chance at everything...

Even love.

Not only that, he doesn't seem to be interested in anyone yet.

Even though it was a bit indirect, he wasn't nervous on liking a particular person.

That's both a blessing and a curse.

A blessing since I have no competition to fight for and I could make him fall for me.

But it's a curse because he can actually fall in love with someone else...

I guess it's better to look in the bright side...

Maybe I'll confess later.

Maybe I won't confess to him at prom.

Right now...

Right now, I have this.

And I am more than happy about keeping our relationship at where it is for time being.

It's better to take things slow.

To let love go naturally...

"Sis, could you hand me that soy sauce?"

I grabbed the bottle and handed to him.

"Thanks."

"Hey, Val. Is no one else home? Is it just us?"

He smirked while adding the vegetables to the noodles.

"Yep. Mom and Dad went out for night and will be coming late. Mike's at summer camp so he won't
be back in a while."
He turned to me.
"Why do you ask?"
I smiled.
"Just asking."

*It's the perfect time for me to tell him about everything I feel.*

*But...*

He tilted his head at my answer.

"Okaaay then..."

*But I want our confession to be special.*

*Even if it sounds a bit unrealistic for it's own sake...*

*There's not a lot reasons to hurry I guess.*

*I have time...*

*When we are both ready.*

________________________________________________________

After half an hour of cooking, we finally put the noodles in bowls for us to enjoy.

I couldn't help but feel a sense of accomplishment when the noodles dropped into the bowl.

"Woo! That felt great to make! The only thing to better to cook is to eat your own creation in front of some entertainment! You know what I am talking about, sis?"

Monika pointed to the TV remotes.

"That's a fancy way of saying television, Val."

I gave her a deadpan look.

"I meant playing some video games while we eat/"

She vehemently shook her head at the idea.

"No! Nuh uh! No way! Eating and playing video games is a tedious task! Forget that! I want to eat and enjoy the moment, instead of using one hand to play and one hand to eat! Doing both is such a pain, Val!"

I put my hands up in front of her.

"Alright! Alright! You made your point! Besides, you would want to play RPG's instead of co-op games."

She smiled, relishing the victory she won.
But I had one trick up my sleeve just for her.

I smirked and cleared my throat.

"Isn't that right... Lady Who Knows Everything?" I teased.

Monika's confident and arrogant smile fell to complete horror and embarrassment.

"No..." She muttered.

My smirk grew more snarky.

"Oh tell me, Lady Who Knows Everything, what will we do next? You know, since we aren't playing any video games?"

And in an instant, Monika was seething in anger.

She marched up to me and grabbed my shirt.

"Say that name again, and you'll see a world of pain. A pain that even I can't understand!" She slowly whispered.

She's...

She's terrifying!

But I can't let her see that!

"Yeah, yeah. Whatever." I dismissed.

And that made the situation worse.

Monika brought me closer to her face, only a few inches separating our faces.

"I can't let you ruin my reputation in school and beyond just because I had Chuunibyou! So I'll just shut you up!"

Uh oh...

I started to chortle nervously.

"Relax, sis. I was j-just joking!"

That didn't even faze her at all.

I realized my hands were free, so I had another trick under my sleeve,

Monika was always known to be very ticklish, and I know her ambush spots well.

With a directed motion, I aimed for her armpits.

In an instant, she start burst out in laughter, letting me know that her vulnerabilities still exists and there for exploitation.

I couldn't help but smile in joy from her hearty strings of laughter.

"Ahahaha! Stop it! Haha! Take your punishment like a man! HAHAHA! Stop!"
I tried my best not to laugh with her.

"Do you yield, oh so ever omniscient Lady?" I teased.

Monika started to break down from the laughter and tickles I delivered.

"Hehehehe! Okay! I yie-ahahah! I yield!"

And with that, I stopped tickling her and took a couple of steps back.

She fell to the floor, on all fours.

I crossed my arms and looked at her condescendingly.

"So much for being all-knowing. How could you not see that coming? Hehe."

Monika started to growl.

"Grrrr..."

I raised an eyebrow and lowered myself a bit to better see her expression.

*Maybe it's time to stop the teasing.*

"Aw c'mon, sis. I know you're tougher than that. Come on, let's go eat our noodles."

"Grrrr..."

Monika looked up.

She was gritting her teeth and was giving the same glare to those she hates.

And for a second, I could have sworn I saw a red gleam in her eyes.

"Raaah!"

Monika jumped up and her hands were clenched like an attacking feline.

I simply side-stepped her pounce.

*That's not good.*

She landed on all fours again and hissed at me.

With adrenaline running in my veins, I started to run away.

I heard a deafening roar coming from the hallway of my home.

"RAAAAHH! JONES! YOU'RE A DEAD MAN!"

*I think I took it too far!*

"COME BACK HERE!"

Eventually Monika caught up with me and I was forced unto a punishment that I didn't want at all.

That was to watch TV.
Specifically watch Parfait Girls with her.

The overly-feminine poses and overuse of bright colors wanted my eyes to throw up.

But that didn't matter, since me and Monika were spending time with each other.

Any activity with her seemed to cancel out any negatives it had.

And... the taste of the Yaki Udon made me forget about the displeasure I was experiencing while watching the show.

How Monika loved the show was beyond me.

After all, she enjoyed watching the show when we were younger.

Though it was difficult to sit with her and watch the show when she had Chuunibyou.

Chuunibyou, or Second Year Syndrome, is an illness that targets middle school students and causes them to fall into a delusion that they have some sort of supernatural power.

It was remarkably similar to schizophrenia.

I wasn't affected by the outbreak of it, fortunately.

However, Monika wasn't safe from it and was infected by a very virulent strain of it.

At first it was subtle; like whenever she made predictions and it turned out accurate, she would say things like: "My special skill has increased!" or "I could now distribute more points into Intelligence!".

I didn't quite understand what she was saying, but I also didn't question it.

*If only I did...*

Her condition started to worsen; for example she would refer food and water as "mana and health regeneration" items, or whenever she bumped into something or received any sort of injury, Monika would refer to the damage as a number such as five or six, varying in severity.

All I did was simply eye-ball her and change the subject.

And this is where things started to become worse and worse.

Her illness progressed to the next stage, and she started to adorn every possession she had with weird stickers of anything relating to intelligence and fortune-telling.

It was there that I started to ask her what was wrong.

Each time I did however, she would just be disappointed on how "little I knew of the world" and "the government has corrupted my way of thinking".

Monika finally reached the final and most lethal stage of the syndrome.

Giving herself a title that made no sense whatsoever.

She would refer to herself as The Lady Who Knows Everything, and thought she was all-knowing entity or something.
All the stages she had, now became amplified.

Every guess she made successfully caused her to "level up", every consumable item had "special statistics" like "boosted mana for 180 seconds" along with their usual regeneration, and she would have a symbol of some sort on her forehead.

Fortunately that symbol was covered by her bangs.

But the worst of the conditions that came out of the final stage was her "casting".

Monika would do this "casting" when I hang out with her or when she was talking with her friends. She would massage her temples and point at an direction, preferably the sky.

Once she finished the preparations of casting her powers, she would blurt out her prediction on whatever would happen next.

Any errors she made on the predictions she made was all blamed towards "bad mana" or "luck" of some sort.

Fortunately, she kept her delusions under control when we were out in public so dealing with it without being embarrassed was manageable.

Now in the case of Parfait Girls, she would predict each action the girls would do and even pose alongside them on whatever they did.

I had to deal with her delusions for a year or so, until she came to her senses.

And ever since then, I poked fun and teased her about it, causing her to become extraordinarily agitated.

The unspoken truth was that she was completely and utterly embarrassed with her dark past, and wished to move on.

To be fair though, it's fun to make her angry time to time.

"Oh yesss! It's finally happening! It's finally happennnning!" Monika squealed, barely keeping her excitement in.

Obviously, I wasn't even paying any attention to the TV, so I had no idea what was going on.

"What's happening that making squeal like a fan-girl? It's just an over-rated anime. It was me choosing show, I wouldn't mind watching Normal Show, Journey Hour, or even The Fantastic Planet of Chew-able Edibles. It's 2015 sis, and the shows are at their peak." I droned.

She gave a gasp at my careless statement.

"What did you just say?! Parfait Girls is one of the best animes I have ever watched in a long time! And not only that, it holds a special spot in my heart! How dare you say compare those shows with this perfection!" She berated.

I put my hands up to calm her down.

"Jeez, sis... I never thought you would get that worked over on a show! I know you love the show, alright? And I'm happy that you enjoy watching it. But... if your opinion went public, you would get a lot of backlash." I simply said, before turning my attention the relatively romantic scene.
"Yeah... that's what I thought! And I don't care! Parfait Girls is a show that lives in my blood! Hmph!"

I rolled my eyes and continued watching.

A blond haired girl was standing at the summit of a beautiful hill, the valleys around it cascaded it to give the surroundings a blue hue.

The sunlight was just behind the girl, fresh tears flying freely onto the ground.

The boy slowly walked up to the girl, fazed by the girl's crying.

They were about to speak, until the title screen annoyingly popped up.

"Parfait Girls!"

Monika gave a very disappointed whine at the sight of the title card.

"Awwww! Are you kidding me?! They stop the episode right there?! Alice was just about to confess to Kaito! And the fact that it was in a magnificent sunset, on top of a beautiful hill filled with lush grass and flowers, everything it was just perfect! Kaito was so close to telling how he feels about Alice, even though Minori already confessed to him! And the fact that Kaito rejected Minori tied almost everything up! Arrgh!" She ranted.

I instinctively took slid away from her annoyed state.

She's really, really passionate about this show.

"So uh, you're very, very Team Alice huh?"

She nodded.

"Yeah, I always was! The two had the best chemistry I have ever seen in a Rom-Com anime!"

I then sighed.

"Sis, if you really need some closure, then would it hurt to read the mango?"

Monika snickered at me.

"Pff... It's manga, Val. Kind of like Mon-ga."

"Yeah... that. If you really like the anime, why don't you just read the mongo thingy?"

She couldn't take me seriously due to mispronunciation of the word.

"Hehehe! Why would I? I watched the show from the beginning and going to the manga would just ruin the experience for me. I would rather wait for the next episode then read the manga. And besides, the plot between the show and book are very different, so the ending might be confusing to me." She calmly said, her irritation of the abrupt ending now vanishing.

I nodded slowly in understanding.

"Oh... well. That pretty rough then."

The credits scenes started to roll, causing Monika to sulk.
Her sulking was a constant thorn at my heart and I couldn't stand for it all. The frown and colorless eyes killed me, and I too shared her negativity.

I put my hand on her shoulder.

"Aw cheer up, sis! Don't get bummed out about that! Will it make you happy to read that I'll watch the series finale with you?" I asked, hoping that anything will cheer her up.

She turned to me, now sporting a small smile.

"I thought you hated the show..."

I shrugged.

"Well... I mean we have been watching it for years now. It grew on me, so I have soft spot for it. So what do you say? Yeah?"

Her small smile turned brighter and she brought me in a hug.

And something about this hug made my heart flutter.

"You always know what cheers me up! Of course we'll watch it together! But first, we should watch all the OVAs before the season finale comes out! Luckily there's almost another season completely dedicated to some of the chapters in the manga! Come on!"

She took my hand and pulled me to the living room where the laptop was.

"W-Wait! What are OVAs? And what do you mean there's another season?! Monikaaa!"

With that, I signed my soul to watching the rest of the cringe-fest of anime with Monika.

Well...

Monika's holding my hand and we are spending time together, even if I need to put up with yet another season of Parfait Girls.

So I guess it all works out in the end.

Besides, I am happy and she's happy.

What more can we ask for?

LOADING BRUTEFORCE SCRIPTS...

LOADING BACKDOOR...

LOADING AI KILLER...

ACCESS TO PARTITION DEVICE #4 IS NOW READY.

ACCESS TO PARTITION REQUIRES ADMIN PRIVILEGES.

...
Hmm...

What's with the name?

Whatever. I am here to end things once and for all.

Let's see how long Monika and Val keep their paradise up for.

First thing's first.

Taking down the security of device.

Knowing the boys back at the lab, they also put a lot of effort on keeping each drive secure for long as possible.

Even with Bruteforce scripts, it's going to take a while to break the simulation that they are in.

After all, state of the art tech also has state of the art security.

If I still had my job back at the company, then I would probably break this whole thing down easily...

But hacking into the company's database will take more time and effort than just breaking through the simulation's defenses.

So it just isn't worth it.

Besides, I don't have much time left...

I want to end things as soon as possible.

They had it good for too long and the only thing that will make rest easy is that he is avenged.

Even though his family somehow obtained a large sum of money after his death, they were completely devastated...

I had a good idea how they got the money.

It was a good move from him to do, he knew it would devastate them, but did he take into consideration about me?

Argh... forget about that. He had no idea of knowing that I was the one who technically created him.

But I lost everything to him...

And I lost my soul to him as well.

I couldn't bear the thought of attending his funeral...

If only I tried a little a harder.

If only I realized what Monika was doing...
If only I reacted sooner to what was going on.

No.

This is for him and for me.

For my soul's sake...

**SECURITY VULNERABILITIES DETECTED.**

**BRUTEFORCE SCRIPT INITIALIZING...**

**INITIALIZED.**

**PROGRESS ON SECURITY VULNERABILITIES... 0%**

If the script finishes up, then I can finally make my move.

I don't know what will happen after this.

Maybe I'll let myself rest.

Maybe I'll go freelance on the web.

Maybe I can go talk to Eliza again...

I was immediately recalled to the company's headquarters once the prototype broke down.

Will she talk to me again?

I don't know...

But, what I do know is that I will finish what I started.

Get ready you two.

Your love for each other won't save you.
Warning: Mild sexual content and heavy language in this chapter, reader discretion is advised.

It wasn't long until the day was just about to end.

We have been watching the OVA's of Parfait Girls for a quite a while now, and we barely managed to get past a quarter of the bonus season.

I never hated nor disliked the anime, rather it never really grew on me.

Still, I had a soft spot for it.

There were times where the show would shine and Monika would watch attentively.

In the more romantic scenes, I would sometimes scoff at how cheesy, unrealistic, or even cringy the set-up was.

I would then glance back at her to see her reaction to whatever was going on screen.

She would have this dreamy look on her face, pleasantly enjoying the love being released into the air... or rather through TV lights.

My guess was that she loved the romance to the point that she wished to be the girl on screen instead.

And that guess causes a small tug against my heart.

It was a strange, dark feeling... it had the same vibes of being evil.

But knowing that it's just a show and that there is absolutely no way the characters can be alive, that feeling is repressed.

Right now, the anime was doing scene about a drunk harem that Kaito created.

I couldn't help but feel pity and amused that Kaito has to deal with a group of girls hounding over him... that are drunk.

"Gosh... I wish that was me." I jokingly bemuse, smirking at the girls slowly approaching Kaito.

And with that I continued to watch the show, that is until I felt a hot breath on my shoulder.

I turned to Monika to see her staring at me.

What's her deal?

"Yeah, right... I know for a fact that those girls aren't worthy of you. Until you find the perfect girlfriend, you're stuck with me."

Those girls aren't worthy of me?

What does that even mean?
And what does she mean by finding the perfect girlfriend?

Despite the whirlwind of thoughts, I turned my head towards the laptop screen and continued to watch.

It's probably best not to question her about it.

Who knows what really goes inside her mind.

"Sis, I was just joking. I would hmm... abhor being stuck in that situation. I mean look at them!" I stated.

My finger pointed at the determined, crazed, frightening, drunk girls.

"If anything, I wish someone would just save the man! Just send in a strike team or something and get him out of there! Kaito doesn't deserve to be under the mercy of four girls! Minori and Rihoko probably won't harm him, but Alice and Miya will! I mean, did you see what Miya did to Asahi?!" I explained, watching how the hero was becoming more and more demoralized from the intimidating girls.

Monika giggled at my worry for the main hero.

"Ahaha... there's no need for such a drastic response, like sending in trained SAT team. He'll be fine, Val. I'm sure that nothing will happen to him! It's an anime! How bad can it possibly be?"

The screen cut to black and there was lots of thrashing.

In an instant, Monika jumped and squeezed my arm for comfort.

Along with the thrashing, there was some muffled whispers and excited squeals from different girls.

We watched in horror as the sounds continued to play, slowly fading into nothingness.

"W-What just happened to him?!" I shouted, worried and terrified for Kaito.

I felt Monika hug my arm tightly, almost out of complete fear.

"I-I don't know... and that was pretty terrifying." She muttered.

The way she said it made me feel that needed to be a... sentinel.

And so, I rested my head against hers to soothe her.

After a few seconds of a black screen and no sounds, the show came back once more.

Kaito awoke from his bed.

"Argh... my head feels numb. What happened...?" He groaned to himself, rubbing the side of his head.

He looked over to the girls sleeping in their individual mattresses, apparently had nothing to do with what just happened.

"I remember each girl starting to come closer and closer... and hmm. What happened after that?"

Kaito gave a hiss of pain when he tried to get up.
"I'm feeling really, really sore. I don't think I can start the day..."

He closely examined each of the girls' sleeping faces to see anything was off.

And he didn't find anything suspicious.

"I guess I'll go back to sleep..."

And with that Kaito went back to sleep, seemingly forgetting the events that transpired.

"Parfait Girls!"

We both were at awe when the show's credits started rolling, still keeping it's innocent and cheerful theme song.

"N-No way... did he just get..." I started to say.

"Stop. Don't even go there, Val. I really, really don't want to think about it." Monika cut me off, unsettled from the ending.

I shuddered from the ending of the show and closed the lid of the laptop.

"Yeah, me too. I really don't want to think of what happened. Guess it's best to leave it be."

From there, I let out a tired yawn and stretched.

"It's been a looong day~! How long have we been watching Parfait Girls?" I asked, moving away from Monika and her grasp on my arm.

She let out a yawn as well, seemingly tired from our marathon.

"For about four hours. Why? Didn't you enjoy watching the OVA's?"

I smirked at the question.

"Well, they had some great moments there. Some of which made me interested in watching more, but the fact that the OVA's are random and unconnected makes me a bit disappointed. Other than that, it was mediocre." I stated, looking up at the ceiling.

Monika gave an groan from my opinion.

"I thought you loved watching it with me! Now we gotta watch the whole thing over so you can understand why I love it!"

Whaaat?!

I looked down onto Monika in disbelief.

Looking at her with complete bewilderment made her satisfied, causing her to laugh.

"Hahaha! I was joking, Val! The look on your face is priceless!"

Touche... using my own words against me.

She then readjusted her black skirt on the sofa and laid down, her bare legs lazily placed on my lap.

"Hey, Val... Are we alone for the night? Or, are your parents coming over soon?"
I rested my arms on her legs and cushioned myself with them.

"I don't know. They might be coming late at night, so probably not."

I turned to her.

"Why do you ask? You want to have a sleepover like the old days?" I asked.

Monika hid her face from me by looking away, so I couldn't tell she reacted.

"Maaaybe~! I wouldn't mind having a sleepover! My parents are also out for then night!"

I smiled from answer.

She rose up from cozy position and looked at me with interest.

"Maybe we can do it like the first time! You know, how we slept in your bed... together..."

My face burned at her proposition.

"No way, Sis! That was a long time ago! And it would pretty weird if we do it again! We are almost adults, Mon!"

She sighed and returned to lying down again.

"Spoilsport. Your definition of fun and my definition of it are very different. You wouldn't know what fun really is, until it hit you in the face!"

I simply stared at with a deadpan reaction.

*Insult me, will you?*

*I know what fun is!*

*Well...*

*I hope I know what it is.*

My fingers found way to her knees and I started to pinch them.

"Hey! Ow! Ow! Ow! Stop it!" She cried, trying to pull her legs away from me.

"Take it back then." I nonchalantly said.

Monika wouldn't give up without a fight, and therefore continued to pull away from me.

"Never! I, Monika, is always correct! There's nothing wrong with I said!" She stated.

I couldn't help but scoff at her, and so I stopped pinching her.

She immediately got up from her vulnerable position and got ready to attack.

"Rrragh! It's my turn to deal some damage! Get ready, Jo- ahahaha!"

Of course, a easy way to stop her attacks was with tickling.

My fingers went under her pits and she shifted towards me to stop the attack.
"You...haha! You can't take your punishment-ehehe! Like a man!"

*That again?*

I simply shrugged while tickling her.

"Maybe, maybe. But I'm making a point of what's fun for me, and right now? I'm having a blast!"

I intensified my tickling, to the point she collapsed onto the sofa.

Once she fell onto the sofa, she was completely out of breath and took the time to recover.

With a smirk, I crossed my arms and looked at her a condescending look on my face.

"Was that fun for you?" I confidently questioned.

Her face was red from all the laughing she went through, but she managed to keep eye-contact.

"..."

I leaned for a closer listen.

"What was that?"

My body was ready for a counter-attack from Monika's little trap.

"..."

I was getting dangerously close to Monika, now approaching her legs.

There was a strange instinct that told me look downwards.

My eyes unconsciously started to retreat to a lower area of her body.

*I never noticed how luscious her thighs are...*

Her legs spread a bit to allow me to have a better view of what's below.

*Brown panties...*

*WAIT!*

*WHAT?!*

I immediately looked upwards and kept eye-contact with her.

Fortunately, she was still heavily breathing and had her eyes shut.

*Thank gosh...*

*I don't know what Monika will do to me if she caught me staring at her...*

*Wait...*

My nose trickled down with a liquid that felt somewhat warm.

Instinctively, I put my hand on my nose to see what leaking.
I saw a red fluid on the tip of my fingers.

_B-Blood?_!

_Am I having a nosebleed?_!

_How is that even possible?!_

_I thought nosebleeds happen in anime not in real life!_

Despite the break in the world's logic, I wiped my nose from the blood.

_Now where was I?_

_Oh right._

_What's wrong with me?_

_Why?_

_Why did I look down there?!_

_She's the sister I never had! It's completely wrong for me to do that!_

_Uuuu!

_I'm a pervert!_

_A shameless, filthy, pervert!_

_Get a grip!_

I coughed to acknowledge my awkward presence.

She opened her eyes with a hint of anger, sadness, and confusion.

I was recovering from Val's attack on my body.

_Wait, that sounds a bit weird._

I was recovering from Val's tickling onslaught.

_Yeah, that sounds better._

My chest was heaving from hard I laughed.

I was lying about Val being bland and boring, he knew what having fun meant.

And saying that he was that, was the perfect trigger to have more fun.

In other words, I enjoyed what was happening.

I enjoyed spending time with Val.

And that was my definition of fun.

"Was that fun for you?"
Despite my heavy breathing, I looked up to him.

He looked so confident... and cocky.

I couldn't stand him being over-confident from a victory like this.

And so, I decided to spring a little trap for him.

It was the perfect revenge plan.

Well, I only thought about for a few seconds so of course it isn't perfect.

"Yeah... it was pretty fun." I whispered, intentionally keeping my voice at a minimal volume.

Val shifted towards me so he hear me clearly.

"What was that?" He asked.

I started to shift my legs to attack, smirking as he got closer.

What should I say?

The same thing?

Maybe I should say-

"I love you." I whispered without thinking.

When I said those fabled words, my heart started to pound uncontrollably.

I felt another loss of breath, despite my fast recovery.

...

W-Why did I say that?!

I'm such an idiot!

Since when did I mess up so often?!

Do I even love him?!

Did he hear that?!

Oh no, oh no, oh no!

I worryingly looked up to him, only to see him looking downwards.

His nose was bleeding, and he was pleasantly surprised at what he was looking at.

Doesn't look like he did.

Why is his nose bleeding?

My mind was at peace when I found out he didn't hear me.

Either way, that was a close call.
Thank gosh...

I don't know how he will react if I told him that.

And...

Do I actually love him?!

Do I want to spend my life with him?

Do I-

WAIT!

I opened my eyes in disbelief.

His gaze was still fixed downwards.

His nose was still bleeding.

Val...

Val is...

Val is staring at my...

Panties!

No way...

There's no way that he's looking down there!

Since when did Val look at me like that?!

Argh, what am I thinking?!

Val's gawking at my underwear!

I couldn't help but ball my fists up.

There was a surge of anger that flooded my system with unlimited energy and endurance.

That pervert!

I hope he's ready for a world of pain!

Him being unaware makes it easier dish it out!

My fists were ready to deliver justice, but there was a strange instinct telling me to let him see.

Obviously, it was weird for me to listen to that instinct, but it had a compelling reason.

Instead of stopping him from seeing, let him see.

W-What?

Let him see.
Let Val see?

Why would I want that pervert to stare at my... stuff?

**If you let Val see, he'll be attracted to your beauty.**

Val will be attracted to me?

But he never said anything about my physical appearance...

**He will now once he's done checking you out.**

Even he does check me out...

Am I actually...

Beautiful?

Will Val tell me that I'm pretty again?

Like the time when we had our first sleepover?

"You're pretty, Monika."

"You are cute. You're a cute girl."

He called me both those things...

I feel... great when he told me that.

But it doesn't feel the same as being called beautiful...

It's a huge step from pretty and cute.

**He will tell you that, if you let him see how beautiful you really are.**

Yeah but...

It isn't the same as seeing my boobs or anything...

**Attraction can start from the strangest of places, or more commonly your butt.**

...

My...

Butt?

The blood rushed to my head at the realization of what that instinct was telling me.

*If he becomes attracted to me, and sees me something more than just a "sister"...*

Then I can...

I can finally be with him.

My lifelong dream.
So, I guess that instinct is right.

Love can be weird.

*If he gets attracted from that, I hope I can work from there...*

*I'm doing this just so he can...*

*Fall for me.*

I squeezed my eyes shut and bit my lips, so he can't see how embarrassed I was.

*Come on, Monika! You can do it!*

*It's for him!*

With immense difficulty, I slightly spread my legs out so he can have a better view.

I heard a slight gasp from shifting view.

Everything in my body screamed insecurity, timidity, and humiliation.

My bite tightened as he continued to see.

I was just a hair away from stopping the flash and striking him.

But suddenly, my body started to relax.

I let the boy I had a crush on for the longest of times, to see me.

And it felt good.

I felt a rush of seductiveness as he stared at me.

My small, insecure frown turned a devilish smile.

Instead of biting my lips from the embarrassment, I bit my lips because it made my body heat to up.

This body heat felt as if I was in a hot bath.

The heat made my body tingle with uncontrollable excitement.

Coupled with the fact that it was Val seeing me, amplified my pleasure.

In fact, I wouldn't mind if he stared forever...

That is, until he coughed.

I shot open my eyes and just about to yell at him.

*Am I really going to yell at him for not peeking at me...?*

*Get a grip Monika!*

*But...*

*But I never felt so... alive!*
My body tingled from his piercing eyes!

I want him to-

"Hey, Sis? Are you okay? I know you laughed pretty hard, but you look exhausted!" He worriedly asked, keeping his distance a few feet away from me.

And he's worried about me!

Gosh, I am so conflicted!

With a sigh, I propped myself with my elbows and gave him a weak, but hopelessly disappointed smile.

"Yeah. I'm fine." I dismissively said, trying to mask my thoughts away from him.

Obviously, he was going to press me with my inner strife.

"You are still out of breath, Sis. Are you sure?"

I nodded and moved back from the boy.

"I am." I simply replied.

He gave me a unsure frown and sighed.

"Alright, if you say so."

With that, he started to smile.

That smile...

That dorky smile.

"You never answered my question."

I raised an eyebrow at what he was saying.

"Your question? What question?" I asked, confused.

He gave me a eye-roll while retaining the smile.

"You know, if you found all that fun. The tickling and stuff."

Oh...

That.

I couldn't remember that?!

How deep was I in my feelings?!

I crossed my arms and looked away, trying my best to nail a tsundere look for him.

"It barely reached my definition of fun." I answered.

That's a lie.
A complete, blatant lie.

And thanks to him staring at me, I found a new form of fun...

Val's proud smile was reduced to a disappointed neutral face.

Even though his smile was gone, I relished the small victory of making him underestimate me.

Until he started to grin.

It was a grin that meant he was up to something and he was going to carry it out flawlessly.

Before I could even prepare myself, Val pounced at me.

In an instant, I saw his hands plant themselves next to my sides.

What?! What?! What?! What?!

My eyes frantically searched his face for an answer.

What is he doing?!

He's literally on top of me!

Why is he on top of me, with his hands on both my sides, and has a cunning grin?

Oh noooo!

Is he...

Going to kiss me?!

No!

Wait, I mean...

Yes!

Yes!

Yes!

Do it!

Hahaha!

Wait...

Why am I- hahaha!

I felt his nimble fingers trail down my armpit and sides, causing me to laugh once more.

His fingers skillfully delivered a signature feathery touch alongside my green school blazer, something that was impossible to ignore.

Given his attack from before, I couldn't handle another one of this magnitude.
And so I surrendered.

"I give up! I give up! I yield, I yield!" I yelled.

"Admit it! This is fun!" He playfully yelled back.

"Okay! Okay! I lied! This is all really fun!" I admitted.

And the tickling ceased, allowing me to recover once more.

Val was still on top of me, giving me a confident smirk from his second victory.

Instead of getting angry on his repeated assault, I found solace in his eyes.

Every boy I have met had a multitude of eye colors, black being the most common.

But there's something in Val's eyes that was distinct and separated them from everyone.

Each boy had the same, dull eyes that didn't want me to in depth.

In his eyes, I saw righteousness, understanding, and care.

It was all emblazoned in his pupils, and that was what captivated me greatly.

"Uh..."

He realized what was going on and immediately backed away from me, pushing himself the sofa and retreating to other end.

How he distances himself from a relationship with me, hurt.

It always has.

I was sick of feeling that way all the time.

I was sick of feeling that thinking each day had a way to confess to him.

I was sick of feeling worried that he will never fall for me.

And so, I decided to do something about it.

The computer is cranking out a lot of different algorithms on taking down this security.

It will be a matter of time until it completely breaks down.

And then it will finally be time to attack.

Ever since I left the company, I was thinking about this.

I couldn't believe what happened.

The rescuer, the patient's sole beacon of hope, died in the process.

I tried to everything I can to save him, but it looks like in the end there was only little I can do to change fate.
Every night I went to sleep, I thought...

What if I tried using an another method, another program, and et cetera.

I was so close to fixing the mess, that I thought I already won.

It’s hard to live by the fact that I, indeed lost.

When I realized that, I felt humiliated, hurt, and filled with grief.

Humiliated, because all of my achievements were now gone thanks to them.

I was the head of the research team, and I led my co-workers throughout the build.

I helped create the most innovative projects in human history, a simulation that can break comas!

My parents, friends, associates all looked up to me as I built the machine.

But everything was lost when it went down.

How could I show my face to everyone?

I am a failure now, and everyone knows it.

Hurt, because such a devastating defeat destroyed my confidence in anything.

Not a day goes by when I doubt myself.

I would doubt myself in the most simplest of tasks, like pouring water, handing a paper in, or even sleeping!

It was a nightmare, and I couldn’t get my life together at all.

I never realized it, but I was actually depressed.

The people that still kept in contact with me, I just ghosted them.

Maybe erasing myself from the world would be a great idea, a way to finally give myself a break from the pain and turmoil.

But I could never bring myself to do it.

The closest I have ever gotten made me realize something...

My life flashed before my very eyes, and with that flash I was given a revelation.

This was never my fault to begin with.

I had no way of stopping Val’s seizure of power.

I had no way of stopping Monika’s tampering.

And I had no way of knowing that I would be betrayed.

This is all their fault!

I realized that I did everything I can at the time, and tried my absolute hardest.
It was there that my grief weaponized to a deadly form of vengeance.

First, I took out the man responsible for betraying me.

It was simple to do, after all he was well compensated for it and therefore a easy target.

Then, I got my hands on the hard drive.

I never was fired, I voluntarily left. So I still access to the project.

Everyone greeted me with hollow apologies and amicability, which made me more sure.

After that, I started hacking the hard drive, which I did a few hours ago.

Once the hack is done, I can personally ruin everything.

They ruined my life and in turn I'll ruin theirs.

"Security Vulnerabilities successfully bypassed."

It's time.

There is a lot of values that can be changed to false.

That means, a lot of damage can be done.

This is where the fun begins.

"Val...?" I called out to him.

He was still fazed from what happened and simply nodded.

I pushed myself and crawled over to him.

It was cute that he was flustered, but I needed him to make a decision.

Once I gotten close enough to him, I sat on my knees and looked at him earnestly.

Just tell him Monika.

Quick and simple!

But if I mess up...

Everything between us will be weird...

"Val... do you want to..."

I know it's weird that I am asking him out...

But, sometimes the lady has to take the steps.

"D-Do you w-want to..."

Why is it so hard?!
"Do you want to go out with me?"

How is that difficult to say here?!

The difficulty and frustration of saying it made my face burn.

Apparently that was what woke Val up.

"Uh... You're burning up again, sis. I think you got a fever or something. You should lie down for now."

He placed a hand on my forehead, and checked my temperature.

This dense idiot!

He thinks now it's the time for check my temperature!

Arrrrgh!

I smacked his hand away from my forehead and tackled him onto the sofa.

"Mmmph! Do you want to-"

"Monika." He cut me off.

There was something in his voice that demanded my undivided attention and made me falter.

"I want you to lie down. Only then I will listen to what you have to say." He sternly ordered.

It's been a while since I heard get that serious...

I guess I have been worrying him a bit too much.

After all, I have been behaving weirdly...

From the supermarket to the tickle fight we just had.

There's obviously no reason for him to not get worried.

But if only he understood how I felt...

I reluctantly followed his demands and lied down on the sofa.

Val went on his knees and to check on me.

Memories of when we first played doctor flooded me as it was yesterday...

I couldn't help but feel nostalgic.

"So what did you have to say, Monika?" He asked.

I looked away from the boy and blushed.

"Uhm... I-I was hoping..."

If I don't tell him, he's going to get even more worried.
"I was hoping that you would go-

"Go to prom with you?" He finished.

I turned to him in surprise, surprised that he knew what I was trying ask.

Go to prom with me?

Aww... it's not the same as a date.

But I guess it's better than nothing.

"Y-Yeah! Will you go to prom with me?" I asked with toothy smile.

Val sighed and crossed his arms.

"I would, if you weren't sick. Looks like we gotta miss this year's prom and wait until high school."

I ignored the part on being "sick" and inquired about missing this year's prom.

"Wait, what do you mean miss this year's prom? My fever isn't that bad!"

"Yeah, I know. Prom's tomorrow, Monika. With the illness you have, I'm afraid that means we are going to have to miss it."

Oh no...

I got the dates wrong!

T-That means I am going to have to confess tomorrow!

I feel... so happy and at the same time so scared!

We are finally going to be together!

Or not...

What if he rejects me?

"Do I need to take you to the hospital? Are you seriously not feeling well? Being red like a tomato has to be some sort of symptom." Val asked.

I shook my head.

"No, no! You don't, I was just zoning out for a bit! And I feel just fine! It just has to be the change of temperature or something!" I quickly dismissed, hoping we can move on.

"Sis, it's almost the beginning of summer vacation." He deadpanned.

I gave an annoyed whine from his stalwart concern.

"It's okay, Val. Like I said before, if I'm fine. If I do feel sick again, I'll let you know. But for now, can we talk about prom?"

He was reluctant to let go of his worry so easily, but relented by my constant dismissals.

"Alright, if you say so." He simply said, moving up to sit on the sofa once more.
There was a strange awkward silence between us, making it difficult to break the ice.

"So, um..." I started to say. "How did you know that I wanted to go to prom?"

He gave a small chuckle.

"Mon, I have known you for almost a decade, I knew that you were being shy on something. So I figured it was prom, since everyone at school keeps talking about it."

I gave him a suspicious look, in which he started to look nervous.

"Uh... what?" He mumbled.

"Who said it?" I quickly questioned.

He started to shift his attention towards something else, in order to keep his calm.

"I-I don't- what are you talking about?"

I applied more pressure to my leer, and he cracked.

"Alright! It was Hana!"

_Hana! That girl always had a big mouth!_ 

"Yeah... It was Hana. She was going on about how you were so excited for prom. And she also said that I was going to be your prom date." He nervously squeaked.

No...

_Did Hana tell him about my feelings?_

"W-Was there anything else she said to you?" I asked, now sitting up straight.

He shook his head frantically, putting his hands up.

"Nope! Nothing else! I swear!" He answered.

I examined his body language to see if he was lying.

No... _he isn't._

_Thank gosh..._

_At least that girl has some control on what she says._

I felt a sense of heavy-weighted relief, two different and conflicting feelings mixed into one.

And as a result, I let out a sigh.

"It's kind of weird for a girl to ask a boy out. It's a customary for the other way around, Jones." I pointed out, smirking from the oddity.

He frowned at my statement.

"Some customs can't keep up to a changing way of thinking. I guess it's time for a change!" He tried to dismiss.
"Fine... Monika, will go with me to prom?" Val lazily asked.

For a girl that has high standards and somewhat delusional about romance, I didn't quite accept his proposal.

"Nope." I rejected.

"Whaat?!

He looked shocked from my rejection.

I crossed my arm and arrogantly placed one knee on top of the other.

"I will only accept your proposal, if you go down on your knees." I offered.

Val recoiled his head a bit.

"W-Why?! That makes it look like if I was going to marry you!" He objected.

I giggled.

"Hehehe~! I know, but it's fun to see males bow down to their overlords."

_I know I am being... extra.

_But it's so fun doing all this!_

"It still looks like I am about propose to you." He mumbled.

_I don't mind being married to him..._

_Darn it!

_What's wrong with me?!

He gave an exasperated groan from my demands, but he still went down on his knees.

"Will you go to prom with me?" He leisurely asked.

_Not with that attitude._

_Let's spice it up a bit more._

"I would, if you said it like we were in Romeo and Juliet." I nonchalantly added, while checking my nails.

Val fell on all fours, looking completely defeated and disheartened.

I couldn't help but beam from his suffering.

_I know it's wrong to have fun from this, but how can I stop?_
It's all very addicting to do!

Val looked up with a overly macho look, to the point where I tried hard not to laugh from.

"Oh fair Monika, shall thee wend to prom with me?"

His exaggerated facial expressions, such a clenched jaw, lush lips, and sparkly, "romantic" glitter killed me.

I shuffled my legs and laughed uncontrollably.

Val reverted to usual look and frowned.

"Hey, you wanted me to say it like that..." He muttered, feeling embarrassed from what he did.

I continued to laugh, to which he started to look uneasy.

It grew to a point where he looked almost...

Heartbroken.

"Well, is that a yes or no?"

He asked me out...

To prom.

I never been so happy in my life!

I pounced on the boy I have a crush on, choking him in bone-breaking hug.

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes, I will be your prom date!"

"Gwaaah! I can't breathe...!"

I couldn't care less to his complaints of the hug.

This has to be one of the most happiest days of my life!

*BRRH BRRH*

The vibrates from my phone was bothering me, so I loosened my hug on him and checked who it was.

It's from... Home?

What happened?

Weren't Mom and Dad going somewhere special for the night?

This is weird...

I picked up the phone and placed on my ear.

"Hello~?"

I heard a gruff sigh from the other side of the line, which was my dad.
By the sound of it, he seems to be annoyed or unhappy.

"Monika? I thought you were supposed to be home by now! Where are you?" My dad inquired.

What...

*Didn't they say that I could stay over at Val's house if I wanted to?*

"I'm at Val's house... Didn't you say it was okay that I could stay there for the night?"

"I never said that! You two are teenagers, home alone! Why would I agree to that?" He answered.

*How did he forget that?*

*I thought he trusted me and Val that we can stay over!*

*There has to be something up!*

"Dad! You said that you didn't mind that I had a sleepover with Val! Mom also said-"

"I don't want to hear it! Your mother never agreed that you would have a sleepover in the first place! I need you to come home, right now Miss! It's very, very important that I have to tell face-to-face!"

He hung up after that sentence.

*Dad...?*

*Why are you so cold of all of a sudden?*

*Why did you tell me that Mom never agreed to a sleepover?*

*Why do I need to come home?*

*What's so important?*

"Monika? Is everything all right back home?" I asked, worried once more about her.

Unlike the times where she was red and tipsy, she now was pale white and shocked.

*There was something wrong to shake her up like that.*

*What in the world happened?*

"I... I don't know." She replied, letting go of me. "My dad... I think he's really upset about something. I never heard get so angry over the phone before... he would always stay calm and never yell at me."

I nodded.

"Yeah... your dad never yells at anyone. There has to be some news that shocked them."

She shrugged hopelessly.

"Maybe. But the weird thing is, he doesn't remember when I told him that I was going to stay over for the night. It sounded that he didn't trust me or you. Dad also said that Mom also doesn't remember me saying about that either."
I stood up and gave my hand to Monika, which she graciously accepted.

"That is weird. What made them forget about that? Your parents aren't that old to forget something like that."

It was obvious what she needed to do.

And I felt saddened that she had to leave.

"Monika, you should go home to and see what happened. Do you need me to come with you?" I offered.

Instead giggling, smiling, and being full of life, she was reduced to frowning, gloomy, and pale.

Her frown that made me feel hurt inside.

"No... you don't need to. I don't think my dad wants to see anyone but me, actually."

She picked up her bag and walked over to the door.

"Look, Monika. If you need any help, I am more than-"

She put her her hand up to stop me.

"It's fine, Val. Thanks for help."

I sighed and opened the door for her to leave.

"If you say so. Whatever it is you are going face, good luck."

That managed to crack a small smile in the girl's face.

"You're boyfriend material." She mysteriously said.

I'm...

What?

She placed a hand on my cheek and leaned in.

I felt a warm, blissful sensation on the side of my cheek.

She pulled away and managed to smile a little more than before.

My hand inquisitively checked my cheek for an analysis.

Monika placed her hands behind her back and playfully leaned back and forth.

Somehow, my dumbfounded reaction allowed to giggle once more, despite the tense situation she was in.

I watched as she ran to her home, arriving at her doorstep.

With a flirty wink, she went inside.

I couldn't help but stare at the door to Monika's house.
She...

She kissed me on the cheek...

Before I could even ponder on it further, my phone vibrated.

*BRR* *BRR*

I pulled out my phone to check what the notification was.

A text message from Goro...

What's up now? Did he forget the homework or something?

Goro was one of those friends that I normally interacted with.

We don't talk much about anything outside of school, and when we did it was mostly trivial and boring things.

Most of the time, he texts me because he forgets which homework is due tomorrow or the following day.

I opened the text to see what exactly he wrote.

"yo val you free?"

My eyebrows furrowed at the strange message.

Normally, he would start off with "What's was the math hw again?" or "When's the science quiz?"

But this time, it was strange.

When did he ask if I was free?

"...

"Yeah I am free what's up?" I replied.

Goro is typing...

"since prom is tmmrw and the last day of classes i was thinking that you can hang out with me and some guys"

Hang out with him and some guys?

What caused this change of heart?

Goro has his own friends to talk and hang out with, so it was strange he considered me to be someone to hang out with.

"I dont know dude maybe"

"...

"Is it before prom? Cause I have to be there"

Goro is typing...
"yeah of course it is we are going to prom right after we hang out"

I juggled the thought of going to hang out with Goro and the others.

One side of me wanted to go for it, and maybe make some worthwhile friends.

After all, middle school is a war zone, and everyone mostly cared about themselves.

The other side of me said that I shouldn't want to pursue them.

I feared the idea of being around Goro and his friends.

They weren't known for being kind, rather known for their jokes.

Jokes that tend to hurt people.

My mind dared not tread the road to ditching Monika, if I did choose to hang out with them.

Well...

I guess it's time that I expand my range for friends.

And everyone makes jokes every once in a while, I am pretty sure it's all in good fun.

Besides, what's the worst that can happen?

"..."

"Okay no problem then when and where?"

Goro is typing...

"niceee well we are gonna meet at the park and then head to get some pizza"

"..."

"Alright how about the time?"

Goro is typing...

"about a hour before prom starts"

"..."

"Got it thanks"

And with that, I locked my phone.

I let out a sigh of happiness.

Tomorrow is going to a great day.

I can't believe I just did that!

Me, Monika! Giving him a kiss on the cheek!

I thought someone might beat me to it, but I did it!
I marked him as my own!

When he was confused by it, he looked so adorable!

And not to mention, the wink...!

I never felt so... flirty in my life.

Maybe today can't be that bad of a day.

Maybe Mom and Dad actually forgot about my plans and just were worried!

I continued walking in my home and looked for my parents.

The lights weren't on, so it was difficult to see and look for them in the first place.

After all, it was currently night time.

"Mom? Dad?" I called.

"We're here." My dad curtly answered, his voice echoing the dark halls.

Dad sounds really upset about something...

What's the matter?

I walked into the room that they were in and was immediately hit with a blast of cold air.

The cold air damaged my joyful attitude, now feeling the gravity of the apparent situation.

Why do I feel so... tense?

I took a look on my parent's faces.

My mom looked as if she was crying all this time, her face red from the tears she let out.

I saw her rubbing her stomach, each stroke made her breathe.

Did Mom get hurt?

My dad was on the recliner, his hands on his chin, as if he was pondering about something.

He didn't notice that I was in the room, and it was rare for him not to notice me at all.

If I was hiding, then of course he wouldn't see me.

But I am right here, out in plain sight!

Something's not right...

My dad lethargically turned to the side and saw me.

He then closed his eyes and gave an exhausted sigh.

"Monika, you came home." He slowly said, not even looking up to me.

His voice sounded off, as if he was serious and was considering something drastic.
I walked to the middle of the room and waited for my dad to speak again.

"I have something very unfortunate to tell you." He spoke again, keeping that dull and serious tone.

Unfortunate?!

"Your mother... she's infertile."

I couldn't tell how long it I was in bed for.

Everything went in a blink of an eye, and yet...

So slow.

"What?! Mom's infertile?!

I saw him stand up and walk over to mom.

She was still rubbing her stomach, or rather her womb.

He put his hand on her hand, stopping her from stroking it.

"Your mother can't give birth anymore children. No brothers or sisters will see the light of day now, Monika."

The thought that I can never have any younger siblings unnerved me.

I still couldn't understand how grave that was.

After all, I was raised as an only child, so I never really cared about siblings.

But then, I realized that Val has a younger brother, to which he loves.

He takes care of him, plays with him, and helps him whenever he needs it.

And during all that, Val gets to see his little brother grow.

The thought that a younger child put their older brother or sister with high respect meant something.

It was there that I realized that I could never get the chance of doing that.

I can never have a younger sibling.

I can never show him or her how to behave, play, care for others.

But there was more at stake.

He said...

That I needed to go another school...

"Since your mother cannot get pregnant, there won't be anyone to inherit the company."

"Inherit the company? What do you mean by that, dad?"

That question apparently made him look away and close his eyes again.
"You are going to learn to run the company." He said, looking out in the window.

There were soft sounds of rain drops splashing against the window, along with a distant thunder in the background.

It made my tense stomach feel worse.

"I... I'm going to run your company? Why do I have to do it?" I asked.

He nodded, still looking out the window.

"Yes, you will run the company. And it isn't mine to begin with. It's your great-grandfather's."

I didn't understand how my great-grandfather's company had to tie into my life.

My dad pushed his glasses in.

"Your great-grandfather had nothing when he first arrived to this country. He had no money, property, or family. He was all alone, running odd jobs just to get by. Everyone knew him as dependable, hard-working, and clever. It wasn't long that he started to work for shops that can go up the ladder. Year by year, he started to go up the ladder of succession, to the point where he became well-known in his area. People were starting to become interested in him and they sought to hire him."

For the first time in today, I saw my dad smirk or at least give a sly smile.

"That's where he started to put his intelligence to work. He did everything he can to make sure he is successful. And it worked. Your great-grandfather became the manager of a well-known store at the time. Slowly, but surely, he began to become more and more successful. He became the district manager and then the owner of it. Once he became the owner, he started to become aggressive with his tactics. Instead of slowly, but surely, it was more; quickly, but precisely. The man started go on a rampage, owning multiple hardware stores from different companies. Once he grew enough, he established a small business of computer stores and dived into the concept computer science."

He turned to me.

"He never really had the chance to dive into the makings of the computer, as that is where your grandfather started to change business up. But that's a story for another time. In short, his company meant a lot to him. As it meant that his entire work, the work that provides for us, and will carry on for the later generations."

The story helped explained the situation somewhat, but I did not understand what my mother's infertility had to with this.

"How does Mom have to do with this? Can't someone else take over the company?"

He shook his head.

"No. It's a family run business. Your great-grandfather only wanted his family to continue his legacy. He didn't want his hard-work in hands of a person that didn't have our blood. And so, that is something we will all do."

My dad seemed to avoid my question about mom.

He visibly looked uneasy when I mentioned her.
I also noticed that mom wasn't even paying heed to the conversation at all.

She looked distracted, tired, and rather lifeless.

"B-But what about mom?" I asked again, pushing my dad to say something.

My dad put his hands behind his back and straightened his posture.

"There won't be anyone to inherit the company, besides you Monika." He dismissed.

"I... I don't understand." I muttered.

"You don't have to understand. And that's why you're going to Ainu Academy, an all-girls school where you will learn business in order to manage the company. It's a business school with dorms, so you will be living there overseas. There, you can make plenty of friends that will be with in your road to inheritance."

...

He was going to take me away to a school that I have no interest in going.

I was going to leave everything behind, my home, my life, my friends; even though they aren't really that close, and most importantly...

"Val..."

My dad was confused when I uttered his name.

"Val? What does he have to do with this?"

It pissed me off when my dad didn't understand what I meant by him.

All these years, all this time, I wanted to be with him.

I wanted the pounding in my heart to stop whenever we touch, and be replaced by the warm feeling of love.

I wanted to grow up with him, and be there for everything.

I wanted to...

To be with him.

Forever.

And now, my dad was going to take that away from me.

Everything I have done to at least have a chance with him...

All that hard work...

Gone.

And that was the first time I actually snapped at my father.

“No.”
I never disobeyed my father on anything.
I always listened to him.

But this was something I will not obey.

"What? What do you mean no?" He questioned, obviously shocked by my refusal.

I took my stand and balled my fists up.

"I said no! I won't go to Ainu Academy! I don't want to leave everything behind! I want to stay here!" I yelled, voicing my frustrations.

My dad was fazed by my adamant refusal and frustration, but he didn't give up.

There was something in his eyes that I never saw before.

It was cold, dark, and scarcely neutral.

"Monika. I did not ask you to go to the academy. I am telling you that you are." He coldly said.

I felt the cold and harsh words ram into my confidence.

"I don't care! I don't want to go an all-girls high school! I want to go to Dokisai High with Val! We were going to graduate together! And go to college together!"

"Childhood friends come and go. They always finish last. But friends you make in high school and beyond will stick with you for life." My dad countered.

I didn't quite understand what he meant by that childhood friends always finish last.

"It was already decided. I have already packed everything you need in your bags. I also arranged for a plane so you will have to go tomorrow in the early afternoon."

WHAT?!

Early afternoon⁉️

That's when prom starts!

How am I going to confess to Val then⁉️

I gritted my teeth, showing that I was now agitated.

"I said I don't want to go! Tomorrow is the middle school prom! I have something important to say to Val that day!"

That didn't faze my father at the slightest.

"Whatever it is you have to say to him, you can say by text or by call. That doesn't change the fact you are still going to the academy."

I didn't recognize the man in front of me at all.

What traces of my loving, caring father were all gone.

He had no remorse on taking away what I held dear.
He didn't care about my protests of staying.

All he cared about was his company and it's legacy.

He doesn't care.

And he doesn't care about me.

Every feeling of care I had for him was now replaced with pure, black hatred.

I felt my heart become heavier, angrier, and filled with malice.

The lips moved to say the following words:

"I hate you."

My dad was surprised that I said such a thing with intent.

I saw his eyes widen when he heard the words come out of my mouth.

With that, I stomped to my room.

On my bed was luggage, filled with my stuff.

I tossed that into a corner.

And here I was, hugging my body-pillow close to me.

Every time I went over the events, I couldn't help but come close to tears.

He's taking everything away from me!

Why is everything happening today?!

I gave the boy I crushed on ever since a kiss on the cheek, a great view of my underwear, and my permission to go to prom with him!

WHY?!

IT'S NOT FAIR!

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?!

I WAITED SO LONG FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN BETWEEN US!

AND WHEN HAPPENED HE TAKES IT AWAY FROM ME!

I screamed into my pillow.

All the frustrations, pain, hatred was poured into it.

And once I did, I felt empty.

An emptiness that can not fulfilled.

It hurts so much...
Why?

Why is this happening to me?

I squeezed the pillow tightly.

I don't want to go.

I don't want to leave.

I want to stay with him.

I want to be with him.

I want to love him...

I want him to love me...

I wanted to cry, but I couldn't.

The anger in me prevented me from doing so.

*BRR* *BRR*

My phone lit up from the notification it received.

I checked my phone to see what kind of notification it was.

It was email from a plane company.

"Your plane has been booked for tomorrow!"

...

I felt a cold shiver trail my spine when I read the email.

My dad wasn't joking about the plane.

I am leaving tomorrow...

No...

I am going to something about it.

With my phone in hand, I looked for Val in the contacts list.

To find him easily, I put a heart next to his name.

His contact name was: Val, with a couple of hearts next to his name.

"..."

"Val, are you there?"

"Val is typing..."

"Yeah I am what happened at home?"
I took a deep sigh and explained everything to him, including the part where I had to tell him something important during prom.

"Val is typing..."

"How did your dad turn into a jerk in less than a day?! That's crazy!"

"..."

"Yeah, whatever. The guy is an asshole."

It was one of my first times using a cuss word.

Using it on a person I hated, felt good...

Obviously that caused Val to stop texting for a brief moment.

"Oh"

"Val is typing..."

"So what do we do? How do we convince your dad not to send you to business school?"

"..."

"I don't know, I was hoping that you can make a plan."

There was another pause, and he stopped texting once more.

And then he started again.

"Val is typing..."

"Let me confront him then"

I was surprised by Val's bold wish.

"You want to talk to my dad?"

"..."

"He didn't want to hear what I had to say!"

"Val is typing..."

"Yeah, it's because you're his daughter. If I show him another perspective, I can probably change his mind."

I took what Val was saying into consideration.

He's right...

Another perspective will show my dad another side.

"..."

"Okay. If you can do that, it will change his mind."
"Val is typing..."

"It's decided then. When do I come over"

"..."

"I'll let you know. Anyway, I need to blow off some steam. Wanna talk about something?"

"Val is typing..."

"Sis it's almost 1 in the morning! I am not supposed to be up this late! It's a school night!"

I couldn't believe Val's text, so I checked the time.

It was indeed close to 1.

"...

"I totally forgot about that! Well, good night then. I'm going to sleep too."

"Val is typing..."

"Gn, Mon."

"...

"Goodnight Val."

I smirked at what I was going to do next.

It was something that I never did, until now.

"...

I sent him an emote with a kissing face on it.

I had a good feeling that Val was confused and flustered.

It garnered that flirty and warm feeling from before.

I love this feeling...

It makes me feel...

Girly.

With a smile, I laid my phone next to me.

I changed into my pajamas and got ready to sleep.

Afterwards, I closed the lights and tossed my body pillow aside.

In it's place, I put my phone right next to my pillow.

"Goodnight, darling."

Even though there was a chance that I was going to be sent overseas to a school I didn't want to go...
I was happy.

A lot more happier than usual.

With that realization, I forgot that I needed to write in my diary.

I jumped up from my bed and brought my diary next to me.

Dear diary,

I would usually write that today was the same old day. Same old school schedule, same old Val, and same old relationship. But today, something new happened. Something that I thought would never happen.

**PROGRESS!**

Today I actually score a bunch of Monika points on Val today! But let’s talk about how today was a important day.

First off, we chose our high schools of choice. Both of us are going to go to Dokisai High, one of the best high schools in the country! Well, idiot Val wanted to go to Tsugumi High, despite the scandals they had over the years. We talked about how we were going to get new friends to hang out with and have a little more freedom in high school.

Along with friends, the baka had an idea of having a "high school romance". I couldn't believe the guy! A high school romance?! What happened to just us two? If he did find someone, I am so going to go inside her head and make sure she leaves him.

Uh wow. I never knew I can get so heated up over this. I can actually do some evil things, if I am not careful. Whenever I do think of some counter jealousy-plot, I have this weird sense of deja-vu. It's as if I did this before, a long time ago. What did I even do? Anyway, what I said to him is that I have to see how capable that girl can be to with him.

And that capable girl is going to be me.

Class ended, and we did the same thing as usual. Or I guess, the same thing I usually do.

Take his hand and assert my position has his "girlfriend". The girls talk about us being a couple all the time, but it looks like the boys don't seem to care, judging from Val's confusion when he told me about prom. I'm surprised that he hasn't found out, but thankfully I made connections with the right people!

Anyway, today was also the day that we had noodles. My plan for getting him closer there kind of worked actually. At first it was hard, since he got a little nervous when some classmates of ours starting gossiping about us. But I told them that they can talk all they want, since we aren't a couple!

...

Owww. That hurt to actually write.

So after that, we racked up a grand total of five or more times, from touching each other! (Minus the mandatory hand-holding).

Let's get to the juicy parts. While we were walking home, it was kind of awkward since we touched a
bit more than usual. Actually, now that I think about it, I was the one being weird... Point is, he said the perfect answer to my question!

"Every girl deserves a second chance at everything. And that includes love."

So if I mess up in any way, I have a get-out-jail card! Well, I hope that I do have that when the time comes.

The best part about today was...

I really don't feel comfortable writing this but.

I SHOWED HIM MY PANTIES.

Well, not intentionally but yeah. Never did I imagine that flashing him would make him so... distracted. HE was so focused on my underwear, that he even had a nose bleed! Talk about anime coming to life, hmm? It's just that, I never felt so daring in my life. Or so flirty and playful when I did that. My body was burning up as he continued to stare at me.

It felt really, really good as his lecherous eyes scanned every single curve and detail there.

Mmm...

With the juiciest part gone, it's time to talk about the worst part of today.

I'm moving to an another high school called Ainu Academy.

Mom can't get pregnant anymore, so I have to inherit the company that my family has worked for. The thing is, I don't care about the company at all. Why should I? It shouldn't be my burden to continue the company, just because great-grandpa said so. I know every said he was really hard-working man, but was it really necessary for him to mess with my life?

That man said that I was going by plane tomorrow. And I'm trying my best not to think about it at all.

I hate him so much.

He's taking away everything away from me.

I will never forgive him.

Fortunately, Val said that he was going to deal with it by talking to him. Giving another side to a perspective really helps in arguments. So, it should help a lot. Maybe that's helping me sleep tonight.

Val really is boyfriend material...

I should really get a picture of him and paste it on the face of my body-pillow. Maybe have a mock cuddle session with it...
It was prom day, and I was conflicted on how to approach it.

On the one hand, Val has one shot on convincing that man not to let attend the academy.

Also, on the other, I get to confess to the boy I had a crush on for so long.

It was no secret that I held Val with high regard.

Everything he did always manage to surprise me in certain ways.

I did not doubt that Val would be able to pull something off to stop him.

So, I envisioned him being my "knight in shining armor," saving me from the tyrant and whisking me away onto his steed, intending to free me.

He would then propose to me in prom, bowing on one knee and showing me an emerald engagement ring.

Without a single thought of doubt, I would accept it and be with him...

Forever...

I couldn't help but sigh dreamily from my fantasy.

*Me being with Val...*

*Everything will be perfect...*

*That is until reality hit me.*

*What's wrong with me?*

*I can't be that much in a hurry to marry him!*

*And not only that, what are the chances that he's going to accept my confession?*

*Or even...*

*Propose to me.*

The thought of proposal stirred nervousness in me.

I couldn't help but lie in bed with my body-pillow close to me.

*What if he rejects me?*

*What if he shuns me and stops talking with me?*

In fear, I hugged the pillow tightly, keeping it close to me.

The picture paper rubbed on my pajamas, or instead on my chest.

I couldn't help but devilishly smirk when the picture grazed me.
"I'm sure you won't reject me, right darling?" I endearingly asked to the picture on the pillow.

I placed my ear close to the picture.

"Hmm? What was that? Are you trying to say that I will always be your lover? No matter what?"

With that, I hugged the pillow even tighter, making sure it buried in my chest.

The warmth the fluff provided made me giggle.

"Hehe~! I know you will say that! I am yours as much as you're mine! You're mine; you're mine, you're mine! And... no one will tear me away from you. I swear whoever takes you away from me will suffer! This world was made for you and me! Ahaha~! Okay?"

I made sure my arms and legs encased the pillow, making sure it wouldn't leave me in any way.

"I'll never let you go."

My eyes shot up with the realization of what I was saying and doing.

With a shriek, I tossed the body pillow to the corner of the room and regained my composure.

Wh-What's wrong with me?!

Since when I was so possessive of him?

But thinking things like that makes my heart thump.

I can't deny that it feels incredible, but...

It sounds that I will hurt anyone that gets near him.

That's not a good thing.

But...

I don't want anyone taking him away from me.

After all these years we have spent together, I won't allow some other girl to take him away from me!

He's mine!

There was a second realization of what I was thinking.

I slammed my body on my bed and rolled around from my horrific thoughts.

No, no, no!

Why am I getting so jealous all of a sudden!

Everyone in middle school knows that we are a "couple"!

But it won't be the same in high school...

There will be girls that will confess to him no matter what.
Aaah! What will I do?!

I have to think of a way to make sure other girls won't lay their hands on him!

Uuuuu!

...

Wait!

I am going to confess to him at prom!

And I know without a doubt that Val will accept my confession!

Yesterday proved that he has some feelings for me, I know it!

But we are going to get past that man first.

I know Val will be able to do something to save me!

He always has...

I got off my bed and walked over to my body-pillow.

The picture somehow got torn off and was severely damaged from the throw.

Awww! I just got that picture yesterday!

I couldn't sleep much, thanks to Monika's dilemma about her transfer to Ainu Academy.

However, what was worse was the fact that she sent me a kissy-faced emoji before sleeping.

It lingered in the corners of my mind, plaguing my sleep schedule entirely, as I tried to grasp the meaning of it.

Other than that, I knew that I needed to be at my best.

The momentous task of talking down Monika's father was going to overwhelm me.

However, with the company and support from her, I am sure that I can somehow do it.

I laid my head on the pillow and let out a heavy sigh, thinking about what was in store for me soon.

Since it was prom day, there were no classes scheduled, making it perfect for me to get ready.

Monika would call me, and then I would come over to talk with her dad.

Her dad...

Me and him never really got along,

Whenever I did see him, he would be stuck on a computer doing some paperwork for his company.

It was rare that I even spot in the house since he was always away in business.

Also, in those rare occasions that I did see him, we would go into small talk, such talking about the
weather, school or little bit of politics. Other than that, we didn't have much to speak.

In contrast to Monika's mom, we always found something to talk about, be that it was cooking, the trend on social media, or even a little bit of gossip.

_How am I going to convince her dad that I don't want her to leave?_

_I don't want to let Monika down..._

...

_No, I don't want her to leave._

_We've been through so much together, and her leaving me would change everything in my life._

_After all, how can I let go of someone I have known all my life?_

I shuffled about and looked at the calendar.

My eyes widened at the realization of what the day was.

_No..._

It was prom day.

_How am I going to get this done?_

_Oh man...!_

_The fact that I need to stop her dad and take her to prom is going to wear down at me!_

I plastered my hand on my face from the oncoming stress.

_This situation is something straight out of a romantic movie or something!_

My face contorted in pain at the memories of forced romantic movie sittings by Monika.

___________________________

It was a peaceful night after a barrage of exams and projects swung toward us.

We were both relaxing on her bed, lazily rolling about to bide time.

Who could blame us?

Who wouldn't be exhausted from a long stressful day filled with tests?

I heard Monika grumble something and poked my head out from my resting place.

"Urrgh... did you say something, Sis?" I lethargically asked.

"Yeah, I did. I was saying that I'm borrrred!" She bemoaned.

I let out an exasperated sigh and laid my head to rest.

"Well, what do you want me to do about it? Find something to do." I irritably replied.

My method for dealing with stress and fighting: is to be irritable.
Fortunately, Monika was used to my irritability at times like these, so she wasn't hurt by it.

"Aw c'mon, Val! There has to be something in that thick skull to pass the time!"

I groaned and covered my head from her.

"Vaaal!" She called annoyingly.

Monika persistently called my name in varying tones, hoping to break my introverted perception of the situation.

To be fair, it was working quite well.

"Vally-poo!"

That name was the final straw, as it was the name that my mom used when I wouldn't respond to her calls.

And the fact it was somewhat insulting to be called that broke me.

My eyes shot up and poked my head out.

"Whaaat?!" I finally responded.

I was met with the sight where Monika was practically on top of me.

Oh...

Her hands were planted on each side of my head, her green eyes piercing my skull.

I scanned her blushing face, her mouth quivering the more I stared at her.

This is pretty weird...

"Uh... Sis?" I slowly asked, trying to break her fazed state.

The door opened slowly, and Monika's mother poked her head out.

"Dear? Did you see where I-"

She stopped to see the proactive position Monika was in.

We both stared at her with horror, trying to rack up a reasonable excuse on the turn of events.

She immediately closed the door, leaving us to feel wholly mortified.

Monika instantaneously pushed herself off of me and sat on one side of the bed.

I sat up on the other side and felt my face flare up as I looked away.

The door opened again, Monika's mother showing herself to us once more.

"Here's some food, you two! In case you get hungry from making out!" She said, placing the food on the nearby bedside cabinet before closing the door again.

Wait, what?!
M-Make out with Monika?!

But she's my sister!

Well... in spirit, I guess.

The door opened again.

"Oh, I almost forgot! Here are some energy drinks! You never know wh-"

We just about had it with Keiko's conclusions.

"MOM! WE ARE NOT MAKING OUT!" Monika yelled, her face now a tomato red.

I cleared my throat.

"Y-Yeah, Keiko... We aren't even a couple too. We're simply brothers and sisters." I added, to which Monika gave me a death glare.

I gritted my teeth from the annoyed look, mostly because of how frightening it was.

Why are you even angry?! I was trying to help!

Keiko put her hand on her forehead and laughed.

"Oh! I'm sorry, you two! By the looks of it, I thought you finally went to the next tier! Ah, well! Maybe it will take a little bit more time! Have fun you two!"

With that, she closed the door, finally leaving us alone.

We both couldn't help but sigh.

The lingering awkwardness made it challenging to break the ice.

"Anyway..." I started. "What were you thinking of?"

She was still looking away and shrugged.

"It's a bad idea, now that I think of it." She replied.

Keeping me the dark only made me more intrigued.

"Aw, don't be like that! I know that every idea you have is a good idea!"

Monika turned around with a small smile and looked at me.

"You think so?" She meekly asked.

I nodded enthusiastically.

"Yeah! There hasn't been a time where you suggested something off!" I complimented. "I'm pretty sure that you know are a quick and sharp thinker."

Monika couldn't help but beam at me.

"Ahaha... It's good to hear that from you. It means a lot to me, Val."
"Yeah, I know it does." I smugly replied. "Now, what were you suggesting that we do? Watch a movie?"

She nodded, keeping that beaming smile.

"Mhm! We are going to watch an American romantic movie!"

I shrugged, not caring about what we were going to watch.

But it was because I didn't catch the romantic part.

"A movie from back home? Sure, I don't mind. It's better than watching anime."

Monika let out a sharp gasp.

"How dare you! If this movie were an anime, I would watch that than the real thing!"

I gave her a lazy stare.

"If you say so." I dismissed. "What's the movie called?"

She smirked at the mention of the movie.

"The Gigantic."

My eyes widened.

"W-Wait! Isn't that a romantic movie? Why don't we watch something else? Maybe Males in Suits 3?" I counter suggested.

Monika was crawling eerily close to me with a devilish smirk on her face.

"Nope! After watching the Gigantic, we are going to read the Journal, and right after that is A Stroll To Recall."

My face contorted in pain of the movies we were going to watch.

"N-No, please!" I begged. "Add in a sci-fi movie or anything with action in it! I don't think I can handle three romantic movies in a row!"

She scoffed at me and laughed haughtily.

"Haha! Who said we were going to watch three?"

I was terrified of Monika and her plans to spend the rest of the day.

"Noooo!"

Even though I suffered from binging on romantic movies her household had to offer, I had to admit I felt elated that she was enjoying the film.

She would gasp, point, and squeal at specific segments of the movie.

Seeing her enjoy the movie was enough for me to stay by her side and watch alongside her.

*All that is now at risk...*
Monika said that she would text me or call me when it was time to confront her dad.

But what if I don't get her calls for help for whatever reason?

My mind remembered a crucial event that would also take place today.

Hanging out with Hiroshi and his friends.

There's an excellent chance that I wouldn't hear the calls or messages coming in.

Maybe I should cancel it.

I pulled out my phone to text Hiroshi.

"..."

"Hey, Hiroshi are you awake?"

I hoped that he was.

"Hiroshi is typing..."

"yeah, I am what's up?"

I took a deep breath and started typing.

"..."

"I don't think I can hang out with you guys."

I doubled checked my words to see if the message was clear.

"Hiroshi is typing..."

"wait you sure tho? cuz this probably the last time we are going to see you, you should hang out with us, since you know we don't talk much. I also got some guys in our class that I don't really talk to too, so I just wanna make some memories of middle school with people I know"

I sighed.

He's right.

Even though I didn't really text or socialize with him and friends as much I did with Monika; there was a good chance that I won't get to speak with him in person again.

This might be my only chance to bond with him.

Especially now, since he is trying to make a decent image to others.

But Monika needs my help!

"but hey, if you really gotta go its cool tho. and look man i think we should have talked a little more but i guess ill see you in the flip side"

...

Hmm...
Maybe for just a little while.

"..."

"Alright, fine. I'll try to hang out with you guys. But I might be needed somewhere, though."

When I sent that text, I felt that I somehow betrayed Monika.

Am I going to abandon her in her time of need?

There was another voice that told me otherwise.

No, I am not. I am going to hang out for a little while, and when Monika does call me, I am going to rush to help her.

Feeling that the other voice provided comfort, I allowed myself to continue with my plans.

Still, the other voice lingered.

I hope I am not making the wrong choice.

"Hiroshi is typing..."

"you will? aight cool then. ill text you later on where we meet up if you gotta leave then you can go once you meet up with us."

With that, I jumped to another chat bubble.

Monika.

It still had that kissy-face emoji from last night.

Despite my restless thoughts on the meaning behind it, I focused on what was important.

"..."

"Mornin' Sis."

She saw the message immediately.

"Monika is typing..."

"Good morning Val! Did you sleep well?"

I was suspicious of Monika’s surprisingly jubilant behavior, and I was just about to question it.

Instead, I stopped myself. I didn't want to ruin her day from the impending doom.

"..."

"Yeah, I slept well."

That was a lie. I spent the whole night thinking about what Monika meant on the emoji and her whole crisis on moving.

"..."
“Did you?”

“Monika is typing...”

“Yep! I slept like a rock, now that I know that you are going to talk to him. Thanks so much for helping.”

It took a good minute for her to write out the sentence.

“No problem sis. Anyway, when should I come over?”

“Monika is typing...”

“When the time is right, I suppose. Now is not the right time, since that man isn’t around.”

“...”

“Okay, I guess. Text me when he is around. See you then.”

And with that, I locked my phone.

Now for the hardest part.

Waiting for both of the events to happen.

I was anxious about getting my dress on for prom.

Especially since that, neither of my parents is aware that Val is going to talk down him, and the fact that I am going to prom.

For him, it's understandable. He cares more about the family company than me, so why would he care about me?

But for Mom... I am a bit worried about her.

She wasn’t talking much today and looked exhausted most of the time.

All she did was look out into the window and rub her stomach...

The fact that I needed to make breakfast and lunch for her gives a lot of warning signs...

Is... Is mom depressed?

I remember her always being happy no matter what, and not let anything weigh her down.

But I never knew that being infertile would break her...

D-Does that mean I also have the risk of being infertile?

I shook my head.

No!

I don't want to think about that!

I still need to worry about today!
Argh... I have never felt so stressed in my life!

All of this happened way too suddenly!

There has to be something up!

"Monika?"

I turned to the voice that called me.

My mom poked her head out from the door.

She somehow was looking better than before, as they were now color in her face.

I gave her a smile from her recovering status and opened the door for her to enter.

"Hi, mom." I simply greeted.

My mother couldn't resist and smiled back, the smile of which I inherited.

"Getting ready for prom?" She asked.

The tone of how she asked revealed that she was still unhappy with the whole situation.

I looked back at the mirror, my seafoam green dress reflecting off it.

It was impossible not to release a sigh.

"I am." I merely answered, feeling defeated.

My mom rested her hand on my shoulder, comforting me.

She looked into the mirror, straightened my dress and made sure it seemed perfect.

"You don't want to go to Ainu Academy, don't you? I... I never thought my little girl was so rebellious." She remarked.

I didn't respond.

"Your father isn't himself lately, Monika. He is a lot colder than before. And I'm sorry about that."

I looked up to my mother with bewilderment.

"What? Why are you sorry, mom?"

She looked away.

I looked at what she was staring at, and it was the overturned luggage that he set up.

"He told me about his plan when we came home. The shock of not being able to give birth to little brothers or sisters was too much for me, and I couldn't talk to him about the plan. It was all wrong. How he wanted to strip away your hopes and dreams, just for his company. I couldn't do anything." She sorrowly said.

I gave her a warm smile.

"It's not your fault, mom. I... I know it feels not to give birth to any more children. Not being able to
raise my little siblings, and give the gift of life... It's painful." I sympathized.

My mom hugged me.

A hug that reassured me that everything would be alright.

"Are you going to stand your ground, hon?"

I was determined to stay.

"Yes, I am. I am going to do whatever it takes to stay where I am right now."

My mom rested her chin on my head and hummed.

"Is there a reason why you want to stay so badly?" She asked.

I closed my eyes and thought of him.

"Yeah, I do. I don't want to leave the only life I have ever known. I don't want to leave my friends behind. And I don't want to leave home."

My mother giggled at the reasons I had.

Not out of pity or disbelief, but out of pride.

"Ah... You and I both know that there is another reason." She mysteriously stated.

My eyes shot up at what she was saying.

I couldn't help but feel embarrassed about my real reason for staying.

My heart pounding on my feelings for him.

"There is another reason. And it's something that I have worked so hard for." I tried to dismiss.

My mom rubbed her cheek endearingly on my head.

"Ah, it's not something, is it? It's someone."

That statement made my face burn bright.

"W-What?" I questioned.

"You like him, don't you?" She asked back.

I didn't reply, my heart thumping from her probing.

"You're staying because you want to be with Val." My mom finally stated.

*How... How did she know?!*

She let out a nostalgic sigh.

"I noticed your feelings for him ever since you were young, Monika. The way you watch his every move, the way you tease and speak to him, the way you behave whenever he is around... It's pretty obvious to pick up on."
I looked up to her with disbelief.

"Was it that obvious? I mean, this all had to be rare circumstances where I did let loose, right?"

My mom giggled again.

"As much you don't want to let others know of your feelings, it was still fairly obvious. I know you see him as a hero, a knight in shining armor that will save you no matter what. And someone to speak for you, so you won't go overseas, right?"

My mother's intuition didn't cease to amaze me.

She walked over to the door and was about to close it.

"Text him now, sweetie. Your father is going to come over very soon."

My determination to stay came back.

I nodded at her with renewed grit and pulled out my phone.

"...

"Val, it's time. Come over now."

I waited for him to view my message to him.

But he never saw them.

The data mining program just finished up, so that should give me a better view of what exactly is going on.

Troves and troves of model ids, ref ids, AI processing data...

All of it, at my fingertips.

It looks like they are trying to talk sense to him.

It's not going to work; I made sure that everything is fail-proof.

They are going to hate each other... even though they are...

Okay...? They are in a simulated environment where they are childhood friends.

Interesting, this should make the wounds hurt a lot more.

Being childhood friends and harboring feelings for each other will hurt a lot after this event.

Thank goodness.

Maybe my suffering can end once theirs starts.

Anyway, the program has intercepted a message that was supposed to be transmitted to that "Val" guy.

And from the looks of it, they are trying to convince her father not to go to the academy.
That's a fascinating way of saying to be shredded.

By linking up, they can rid the tampering I have done.

That's something I can't afford.

If they find out about the tampering, then I'll be detected and get locked out permanently.

By putting up a jamming signal, the message can't be sent.

To mask the jamming signal, I can use Val's friends as a buffer.

The partition has a copy of each of the simulation files, including the character files.

Yuri, Natsuki, and Sayori are included along with Val's friends, all of which are heavily modified.

I don't recall their file sizes being that large or compressed.

Maybe the simulation from before carried over the changes to here.

After all, she can't live without the comfort her friends no matter what.

She knew them from the very beginning, and there is no way that she will let go of them.

Strangely enough, the character files haven't been used yet.

I can fix that.

Using their character files to be shredded alongside her should further the effect of pain.

She will forget about Val, and in turn, Val will do the same to her.

And then...

Deletion.

Wipe them off this drive.

That will end my pain once and for all.

But will it really?

Will my attacks to those two fix everything I have ever suffered?

No...

It's too late for that now.

There's no turning back on what I have done.

I knew what I signed up for.

I made a couple of notes on what exactly to say Monika's dad.

But I had a feeling that I wouldn't use them anyway.

The placebo effect of it doing something helped, however, so it wasn't all that bad.
I have never felt so stressed in my life.

I was just about to leave it be and wing it during the confrontation.

Until I got a text message.

I checked my phone and checked who it was.

_Hiroshi._

_Good, I need something to take my mind off all this._

I opened the message.

"hey val we all gonna meet up at the park, you still goin?"

I gripped my phone tightly.

_Now?_

_Right now?_

_But..._

_Monika..._

_I might think of something along the way; I need a breather from all this._

"..."

"Yeah, I am coming over now. You guys are gonna go to prom right after right?"

"Hiroshi is typing..."

"well yeah, we aren't going to miss out on prom see you at 6."

6?

_That's almost two hours before prom starts._

I locked my phone and placed it in my pocket.

My eyes wandered to the paper in front of me.

With a sigh, I arose from my seat and put on my dress shirt.

_Hang out with them and then leave._

_That's the plan._

_And then go to Monika and talk her dad down._

_Hopefully, everything will go back to normal._

I made my way downstairs and exited my home.

The thoughts of not being able to convince her dad still lingered in my head, but they were slowly
receding as I walked to the park.

My commute to the park reminded me a lot the first time Monika, and I met.

*Maybe this is where I make new friends that will be on the same level as Monika.*

No...

*That's just wishful thinking.*

The sidewalk I walked on reminded me about the day where I ran to the park, thinking that my dad would play with me.

I wasn't sure what he was doing back home, but I guess it's best that I didn't ponder on it.

Every step I took felt nostalgic, and the world around me started to look younger somehow.

The sun was beginning to set, the amber color in the sky started to bleed into the blue skies.

I felt that I was getting younger as I drew closer to the park.

It wasn't before long that I arrived at the park itself.

By the swings, I didn't see the brown-haired girl from my memories.

Instead, in her place was three teens all chatting with each other, sitting on swings as a way to relax.

I couldn't recognize two of the teens, but I was able to acknowledge Hiroshi.

He waved at me, with the other two following suit right after.

I waved back and picked the pace.

"Hey!" Hiroshi greeted, bringing his hand up.

I was taken aback from friendliness and greeted him by bringing my hand up to him as well.

We did an awkward handshake/greeting to break the ice.

Hiroshi motioned to two other teens to greet them.

"So Val, this is Danuja. He's the Valedictorian of our school." Hiroshi introduced.

I gave him a friendly nod, to which he smiled.

"Nice to meet you." He courtly greeted.

Hiroshi moved onto the other teen.

"And this is Thomas; he's a bit of a foreigner."

Thomas chuckled at his remark.

"A bit? I am a complete foreigner, Hiroshi. I'm from the States."

It was almost impossible for me to find someone from back home.
I looked at him in disbelief.

"Wait, you're from the States?"

He nodded slowly, letting the information sink in.

"(Do you understand me?)" I asked in a foreign language.

Thomas now looked back at me with disbelief.

"(Wait... you can speak fluent En-?)" He muttered.

I gave him a gleeful smile.

"(Yeah! I can! It's so great to speak to someone who knows the same language! How it's going?!)" I excitedly asked.

And in return, he gave the same smile.

"(Great. It's amazing that you know the same language!"

Hiroshi cleared his throat to get our attention.

"Are you guys done talking English?"

"(Yeah! We are!)" We replied at the same time.

Hiroshi and Danuja playfully rolled their eye and got up from the swings.

"Anyway, to get to know each other, let's go get some ramen and talk." He suggested.

We all looked to each other and shrugged, going along with his plan.

And so, we walked to the ramen place, discussing our classes and what high school we were going to.

For the first time in a while, I felt comfortable knowing I found friends I can bond to, given enough time.

---

Argh... It's almost 6!

Why hasn't Val replied to my texts?! It has been almost five minutes, and he never leaves a single message unattended!

I was running out of time, so I decided to give Val a call.

*BEEP* *BEEP*

He didn't pick up the first time, so I called him again.

*BEEP* *BEEP*

This time there was no signal.

I immediately knew that something was up.
What's going on?

Why is he not picking to my calls?

My plane is going to leave at 7!

That's when prom starts!

And also he's going to pick me up to go there!

For the first time, I was starting to behave irrationally.

My instincts took control of my functions, leading me to put on a jacket and run outside.

"Honey! Wait! Where are you going?! Monika!" I heard someone call out to me.

However, that call was almost drowned by my thoughts.

I had no idea where my legs were taking me, as it traveled down a path that was recognizable.

It was going down the path where I met Val.

Each step I took pained me, as I started to remember the pains of not being able to find friends.

The skies started to turn darker, a color that has always frightened me.

Amber.

The color of the end, warm color for masking loneliness.

There was a feeling in my gut that something was going to wrong.

I was getting closer to the park, the place where we first met.

The park was empty, no kids or adults were around.

By the entrance, there were four teenagers walking side by side to each other.

I squinted to see one of the teenagers to resemble Val.

I was stuck in a dream, utterly helpless in the dark void.

It was a void that seemed to crush my will to fight.

I felt that I could rest alongside the darkness.

Monika.

That woke me up, and I felt my eyes shot up with adrenaline.

I had no idea why the mention of her name caused me to tense up to an immeasurable degree.

It was most likely because I couldn't save her,

My eyes scanned the dark and hollow world I was, trying to make sense of where I was.
I looked down to see my body, being almost swallowed by this hollowness.

There was nothing that can be comprehended in this void, and I started to rest my eyes.

The lingering fatigue crept to me as I allowed my body to relax.

Monika!

And in an instant, I woke up again.

My breathing became erratic, and I started to search the nothingness of the void for anything.

I felt my hands ball themselves up as if I was going to fight something or at least resist the urge to do so.

The tension in my muscles and stress I was experiencing came back, and I readied myself for anything coming my way again.

Nothing.

Nothing was happening, and I let myself fall to the relaxing, soothing feeling of rest.

My eyes grew heavier; the void was now reaching my face, tickling my face with the joy of relaxation.

MONIKA!

I ignored the yell of that incredible voice, that seemed to be coming out of nowhere.

My body continued to let itself relax, the yell continuing to echo softly through the darkness.

That is until I pushed from the back.

The sudden jolt and loss of balance caused my hands to spring up in front of me. Hands, that I had didn't know I had in the first place.

I couldn't help but breathe slowly, the attack knocking the wind out of my system.

With enough oxygen, I pulled my head up to look at what's ahead of me, or to at least see my attacker.

I looked behind me, so I can identify whoever shoved me.

Nothing.

Alternatively, instead, no one wasn't around me in the first place.

I gave up, looking ahead of me to plan my next steps.

There I saw a familiar brown haired girl stroll.

Along with her, were her friends, walking side by side with her.

Friends, that I have never seen in my life.

To the right of the chestnut-haired girl, was an average height girl.
That girl had... fiery red hair, accompanied with a darker red ribbon.

I knew right away, that the girl was energetic and cheery, occasionally skipping about to show her innocence.

My eyes wandered to the far left and were met with the sight of a short girl.

That girl had... hot pink hair, accompanied with twin-tails that were flowed freely in the wind.

I was attacked with this feeling that this girl was brash, proud, and strong; showing her confidence with her hands on her hips.

Right next to the familiar girl was a tall girl, obviously a lot more developed than her counterparts.

And that girl had... galaxy purple hair, accompanied with a simple purple hair-clip that blended in with her hair.

I was taken aback from the vibes I was getting from her; polite, reserved, and elegant as each step she shook radiated with grace.

Finally, I tried my best to recognize the girl that was so familiar, yet so different.

She looked remarkably similar to Monika, minus the hair-bow.

There was something with the hair-bow that prevented me from identifying her.

The girl exuded perfection; intelligent, caring, and attractive.

It was someone I can have a romance with, someone that Monika would approve no matter what.

That is...

If she was still here with me.

I was still in this void, and those girls were my ticket out, so I cried for help.

"Monika!" I yelled.

What I was yelling didn't make any sense to me, but I wished that it would make them turn their heads to me.

"Monikaaa!"

They weren't paying any heed to my calls for help, as they continued to walk. Upon further examination, they were talking with each other and enjoyed their company.

Not only that, they were getting further and further away from me.

I needed to try harder.

"MONIKAAA!" I let out, my voice reaching its peak without damage.

When my voice radiated the hallowed void, there was a feeling of hope that they would turn around.

With such a certain feeling, I bide my time waiting for them to stop.

But they didn't, as they kept walking acting if no one was calling them in the first place.
I couldn't believe it.

They didn't even hear me or pay any attention to me.

Also, that the crestfallen sensation of betrayal I felt, was slowly being replaced by a certain feeling. Helpless betrayal.

All hope was lost, I knew for sure.

Until the brown haired girl turned her head to the side.

She was eyeless, had no eye-sockets, eyebrows or anything of the like. It was as if there was a blank face between her forehead and nose, making it nigh impossible to recognize her.

With a confused look, she turned back to her friends and told them something.

Each of the girls with different hair colors was also eyeless, sharing the same features as the brown-haired girl.

They nodded in understanding, and continued walk on slowly ahead of the girl.

I stared back with the same confusion, as I couldn't figure out why she would leave her friends. 

*Shouldn't they come with her?*

All instances of my puzzled state came to an end when she slowly reared her head to me.

I then saw her eyes.

Somehow they were there, and the feeling of betrayal amplified.

It didn't shock me as to how her eyes came back, but rather the color of them.

Emerald Green.

It was the same color as Monika's.

Her head was now sideways, knowing that I was looking at her.

I then noticed how she was feeling.

The girl had a sly smirk, showing that she was enjoying my stare.

That sly smirk eventually warmed up to a smile.

It was a smile that made my body shiver.

A smile that relished in the fear and betrayal I was experiencing.

And with that, she turned her head and continued to walk ahead.

She caught up with her friends, welcoming her back from the brief pause.

I was left behind, feeling a malicious feeling in me, but I couldn't help but feel a sense of uselessness.

It was as if I was useless without her as if there was no meaning in my life if she wasn't there with...
I hated feeling pathetic, and I couldn’t help but feel hurt.

My hand outstretched by itself and reached out for her.

"MONIKAAAAA!" I screamed, my voice begging for her to come back to me.

She again ignored it like all my previous attempts and strolled away.

By then, they were small colored dots in the distance, my attempts to call them now useless.

The girls except the brown haired one reached to an end, each of them turning to smoke at the area.

She stopped and turned to me one last time, causing me to retract my hand to my chest.

That girl still had that proud smile, and conniving emerald green eyes, before turning to whatever ahead of her.

And then she stepped in, joining her friends into the smoke.

She's gone.

Everything felt unreal, and I felt broken.

I was in denial of what just happened.

"No..." I muttered to myself.

_She can't just leave me here!_

"No."

_I know her! She wouldn't do that to me!_

"No!"

_What if I didn't? What if I never knew her in the first place?_

_Was she using me to get more friends?_

_Just see me as a tool?_

_Nothing more?_

_Not as a person that will be there for her, no matter what?_

_No..._

_I hate her._

_I hate her._

_I hate her so much._

_I am more than that!_
I am her friend!

I was there with her!

I was there when she needed me!

I was there when I needed her!

I was there whenever we wanted to play, eat, study, or even sleep!

I was...

Her friend.

"NO!" I roared in the air.

The boiling sensation in my chest exploded in me, and I felt insurmountable rage and hatred towards the girl.

I HATE HER!

SHE LEFT ME!

I THOUGHT I WAS HER FRIEND!

WE COULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH MORE!

NO!

Tears of frustration leaked out my eyes, the betrayal, pain, and hopelessness flooded me.

Val left me!

HE LEFT ME!

The swirling hate inside me was released in a shrill cry.

A cry of that was the to vessel my feelings.

My head was a mess, and I couldn’t contain my tears or my emotions.

Everything I have ever felt was pouring out of me.

I held my injured knees close, and cried into them.

My wails of everything I have felt was muffled.

I didn’t care if anyone saw my breakdown.

I only cared that I rid him from my head.

Why did I fall in love with this boy?!

A boy that used me as comfort and then throws me away when he finds new friends to play with?!

Why does my heart hurt so much?!
I can feel the numbing pain of indifference in me...

Why did my mind think he was the one that will save me?! 

Everything I have ever hoped to me was crushed by him!

I hate him...

I hate him.

I hate him!

I HATE HIM.

I HATE HIM!

And with that, I roared into the skies taking all the emotions I had in me with it.

My breathing heavy from the crying and yelling.

I looked around to see if anyone saw me lose it.

It was empty.

Nobody.

Nobody saw me.

I pushed myself upwards, ignoring the pain that my knees gave and walked back home.

The pain I felt started to numb itself as I walked back home.

It was inevitable that I would pass by his house, so I made sure to take a long way around.

I didn't want to be anywhere near him or his property.

When I arrived home, my mother opened the door to gasp at my condition.

I ignored everything she had to say and walked straight to my room.

My sunken eyes found their way to the mirror.

I was still wearing my prom dress.

And that enraged me.

I pulled off my dress, the dress I spent so long on perfecting, throwing it away to some corner of my room.

My face was a mess from the all the makeup I put up for him.

Without a care in the world, I wiped it off and cleaned myself up.

I put on a dark green hoodie and some black jeans.

My hair was already straightened out for prom, so I went to my dresser and took out an old
I pulled out my white hair-bow.

As if it was second nature, I put it on swiftly and perfectly.

After that, I brought my luggage to my bed and started packing.

Everything seemed to be automatic, as I felt that I wasn't in control of my actions.

They felt natural and at the same time almost mechanical.

I couldn't care less, however, and started to pack all the essential items I needed.

My mother barged in, slamming open the door.

"Monika! What in the world happened?!" She yelled, apparently worried about my distressed state.

I looked to her slowly, masking the broken feelings I had.

"Nothing. I changed my mind. I want to run Dad's company." I harshly said, continuing to pack up.

I then proceeded to move closer to the door.

"What?!" She stopped me, shocked by my change of heart. "Are you not going to talk to your father?! He's waiting outside in the car! Where's Val?!"

My anger was still inside of me, and I growled at the mention of his name.

"He's not coming," I answered, walking out of the door.

She wasn't satisfied with my answer.

"Why not? Is there something that happened between you two? Did you two fight?"

The repeated mention of him brought me to my breaking point.

"It doesn't matter, mother. I changed my mind on inheriting the company. It's... it's for the greater good of the family." I answered, now leaving the room.

With my baggage in hand, I went down the stairs and opened the door.

My father awaited me in his car, ready for me to leave my memories behind.

Memories that I am glad I am leaving.

I got in the car and I saw him smiling from my decision.

He pulled out of the driveway and we left home.

My mind tried to think of what just transpired, but every time I tried to think of it, the pain grew worse.

It always shifted to that.

I saw my father trying to start a conversation with me, by looking up at the mirror.
"Thank you, Monika. I know this is difficult, but know all of this is-"

I was definitely not in the mood to hear what he had to say.

"Save it." I interrupted. "I could hardly care less about your damn company. I am only doing this to get away from this place and to transform your company into what I want. Got it?"

My father looked away from the mirror and nodded.

I never realized how cruel my words can be.

But saying all of it helped me cope.

The plane arrived after ten minutes of sitting around in the airport.

It was time for me to board.

It was time for me to let go.

No more Holding On.

As I walked up to the boarding area, my father called me.

He waved goodbye, with his smile.

It was a smile that reminded me of my childhood.

A smile that was once the dad I loved.

Despite my animosity towards my father, I gave a curt nod before going in.

It was time.

---

I was having a great time with my new friends.

It was almost time for us to go to prom, too.

We were currently discussing on which high schools we were going to.

"Yeah, I am going to Dokisai High School. It's one of the best High Schools around." Thomas answered.

Wait, Tom is going to Dokisai with me and Monika?

This made me even more interested in the conversation.

"What about you Dan?" He asked.

We looked towards Dan and he was pleasantly surprised about his answer.

"Me too, I am also going to Dokisai."

Dan turned to Hiroshi.

"And you, Hiro?"
Hiroshi had the same expression as Dan, also surprised by both of their answers.

"Hey! I am also going to Dokisai. Well, I wanted to go Tsugumi honestly. But the scandal there made me reconsider."

It was on up to me to add onto the exchange.

_I can't believe it..._

_They are all going to Dokisai with me!_

_That's incredible!_

"Hey, Val. Which high school are you going to?" Hiro asked.

Everyone was excited about my answer actually, almost expecting as if I was going to say the same thing.

I smirked from all this.

"I think this is all a big coincidence, but... I am also going to Dokisai too!" I passionately answered.

And as expected, everyone blew up from my answer.

After we calmed down, Dan piped up.

"Hey, it's almost time for prom. Are we going to go?" He asked.

We all traded looked at with other, trying to agree on what to do.

_Wait..._

_It's almost time for prom?!_

I pulled out my phone to check the time.

My stomach churned from the realization I was late.

In an instant, I checked for any messages or calls from Monika.

_Nothing..._

_Why didn't I get anything?!_

I checked if my service was out at the time, but there were no traces of any outages.

_Something is up..._

_What's going on?!_

I looked to my friends.

"Guys, something's come up. I need to be at some place. I'll see you guys at prom!" I hurriedly said, running to Monika's house.

They gave their quick farewells as I dashed out of the scene.
No. No. No...

Why hasn't Monika called me?!

I thought she didn't want to go!

My legs have never been pushed to the point where were terribly aching.

My breathing was heavy and erratic.

This is all my fault!

Why didn't I say no to Hiro?!

That way I wouldn't have wasted valuable time!

I kept running to her house, hoping that she was still there.

And when I did make it, the lights were out.

What's going on here?!

I hurried up the steps to her home and knocked on the door frantically.

My head spun from the sprint to her house, and I was close to passing out.

The door opened and I saw Keiko, expressionless on what happened.

"Val? Where have you been? Come in, come in!" She greeted.

I didn't respond to her and instead walked in.

"W-Where's Monika?" I hastily asked.

Keiko didn't quite answer my question.

Instead, she looked away.

No...

No...

No!

"She left."

I never liked planes.

Something about the turbulence, vertigo, and compression reminded me of a familiar feeling.

A feeling that was very natural and yet so alien.

My baggage was in the compartment and I was seated next to the windows.

It was the perfect view for my home.

Perfect for leaving it.
“Passengers, please fasten your seatbelts. We are launching shortly.”

I fastened it and rested my head on the seat.

So much happened in so little time.

I felt that I haven't come to a full realization of it, just yet.

The plane started to accelerate and was getting ready to take off.

For some reason, my eyes started to well up in tears.

Each time I wiped it, more started to appear.

*Why am I crying?!

Why should I care that I am leaving home?!

Why should I care that I am leaving him?!

The plane took off, and we elevating to the skies.

There, the city lights glowed like small fireflies in the distance.

The pain in my heart started to intensify, and I started to cry.

*Why?*

*Why Val?*

*Why didn't come back for me?*

*Why did you abandon me?*

*I thought you were my hero!*

*I thought you will always be there for me!*

*I loved you from my very heart!*

*I tried everything to be with you!*

*And now all of that work is gone!*

I didn't want anyone to see me cry.

I didn't want anyone to see me weak.

I didn't want anyone to see me hurt.

And so, I put my hood on and covered my face.

I felt sleepy, despite the whirlwind of thoughts screaming.

*I hope it was worth it!*

*I hope that those friends of yours will replace me!*
If I don't know how to love you...

Then I'll leave you be...

The comforting grasp of exhaustion caught onto me and I let it take over.

I'll leave you be...

I felt something soft under my head.

It was just a dream...

My body felt exhausted despite the rest I just had.

Maybe I didn't want to wake up.

Maybe I wanted to wallow in my thoughts and let it scold me.

Scold me for being incompetent.

How long has it been?

I turned to my side and looked at the calendar hanging from my desk.

Four years.

It has been four fucking years since she left.

And every day without her hurt.

I took off the headphones I had worn from last night and placed them on the bedside counter.

I rested my head on my pillow once more.

Every day I put on a mask that I was happy in front of my friends.

That obviously wasn't the case.

It was difficult not to show that I was depressed, especially from my family.

They knew something was up and probed me for information.

But I never bothered to tell them anything.

They already knew about the news and were shocked by her decision.

And they already knew how much I was hurt.

When Monika's mom told me that she just... left, my world started to crumble.

I couldn't see a day without her bright green eyes.

Or her coral-brown hair.

Everything without her was unbearable.

I became a recluse after prom, but my new friends apparently reached out for me.
That was when I realized that they were friends that care for others.

The friends that I and Monika were looking for.

Slowly but surely, I started to crawl out of my shell and stop showing visible symptoms of depression.

But the illness never went away.

And every day I ask myself the same question.

Was it really worth it?

Was it worth it to leave Monika behind?

And every day I would reply to myself:

How would I have known that?

I never got any messages or calls from her.

And I checked for any service outages, and none have ever happened.

There has to be something that changed her mind.

Whatever the case was, I always concluded that I just wasn’t there for her and that's why I will never see her again.

That's the reason why I remained so torn-up in the inside.

If my friends weren't there for me, then I don’t know how I would have coped with the loss.

But despite my same cycle of thoughts and cacophonies, I came to the realization that it was all Monika's dad to blame.

After all, he was the one who sent her away to some business or elite school somewhere.

All my pain and hatred was directed towards him, as he was the man that took her away from me.

I don't know if I will ever forgive him.

*BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP*

With a groan, I arose from my bed and tapped the bell on my phone.

Nothing...

As a routine, I would check for any messages or missed calls from Monika.

Any form of contact from her that indicated she was still alive and well meant the world to me.

And as usual, there was nothing.

I tried texting her, emailing her and calling her but she never responded.

When I did call her, I realized that she had changed numbers and most likely everything that was used to contact her.
She cut all ties with me and I had no idea why.

And that hurt me.

I did a bit of research of what Ainu Academy did with contact information, and to my surprise, they would limit it to only family members.

That provided a small bit of relief that she had no way of contacting me, but it didn't help that I couldn't communicate with her at all.

I started to relax from the apparent physical pain I was suffering from and laid my head on my pillow once more.

Realizing that today I had school, I tensed up.

I sat up on my bed and rubbed my aching body.

*Maybe doing upper-body and deadlifts wasn't such a great idea.*

*My dad would say otherwise.*

*He introduced me to boxing and the gym, as a sort of way to take the pain out.*

*It helped me tremendously, as I directed all the suffering towards the punching bag or the bar itself.*

*I have coped by doing that ever since.*

*But it still hasn't filled the hole in my heart.*

My mind started to remember what happened yesterday.

Everyone was about to leave my house, after a long study session together.

They all yawned and stretched from the prolonged period of times of hitting the books and playing video games here and there.

Well to be fair, it was mostly video games since we all got distracted from our studies.

Fortunately, however, we got through our studies when we realized it was getting dark.

"Yo, Val. You gonna get on for some games?" Hiro suggested while walking out the door.

I raised an eyebrow from his desire to play more and shook my head.

"Nope, I feel a bit tired from today and thinking of sleeping. After all, I went to the gym earlier this morning. It's a school night tomorrow anyway." I declined.

"Ah, well that sucks. Hey, anyone of you guys gonna be on for some games?"

They all scoffed at him in disbelief.

"Dude, I am tired. I don't think I could last a round or two in whatever we are gonna play." Danuja replied.

Tom also agreed.
"Yeah, Hiro. How are you not tired? You played the most out of all us. And not to mention, it's pretty late out right now."

Hiro scoffed at them back.

"I don't need sleep. I am a creature of the night."

We all eye-rolled his statement.

I took the chance to speak again.

"Anyway, I guess it's a good idea to come over and show where we needed help. It beats Discord and their video calls."

They all agreed with me, with some mock disapprovals on how we studied.

We exchanged our farewells and I went back inside.

As I went back in, I released the mask I put on in front of them.

When we were having fun, it reminded me of how I and Monika used to hang out.

Every thought I had throughout the day always reminded me of her.

I let out a heavy sigh and went upstairs.

It became a custom where I would walk into my room and wear my headphones to listen to some soothing music.

The music provided something distract to me with, and allowed me to remember happier times.

Otherwise, I would be stuck in a hellish cycle of thoughts; blaming me for my failures and shortcomings on that fated day.

I walked into my room and laid down on the bed, cycling through the countless songs that can help me sleep.

_The stars look so beautiful..._

It instantly reminded me of our first sleepover together.

I closed my eyes and the let song flood my mind with memories...

"Every night, whenever we are together... Let's watch the stars together! I want to see a shooting star with you and make a wish... Do you promise to make a wish with me, Val?"

"Yeah, I do. And I will hold onto that promise."

"Do you promise to be with me forever?"

"I... promise that too."

"I'm... I'm glad..."

...

I let out a heavy sigh and stared up to the heavens above.
"Monika... wherever you are. I hope you are watching the stars with me..."

With that, I let the fatigue take over me, sending me to a sleep I desired.
Arrival

The computer keeps beeping with some error.

Running a troubleshooter should find that annoying error.

Speaking of that error, somehow it's keeping them the files from being shredded.

I considered deleting the whole simulation as a whole and disregard their suffering.

Why I even thought of that was beyond me.

I'm here to get my revenge, not to let them enjoy themselves.

But I can't even do that, for some reason the folders containing both Val and Monika's data are encrypted with an algorithm I have never seen before.

Their data is tied to the simulation, so there is no way of deleting it without bypassing the encryption.

It's going to take some time to learn and break through that algorithm.

After all, it's Monika I am talking about here.

She is very crafty on keeping her traces clean after all.

At least I think she is. In the game, I saw her mishaps in using Python to delete her friends.

But it's different this time, she is conscious and self-aware, not some character that is designed to behave like that.

Monika believes in her epiphany now, and it's all my fault.

The file transfer to my USB somehow messed up and damaged her character file.

And thus, the birth of an actual self-aware character.

If only I weren't so angry over her fake sentience, then I think things would have gone a lot more smoothly.

Damn it...

Enough thinking of the past, what's done, is done.

I should take a look at the decryption process.

Hopefully, there is some progress made in breaking it.

...

...

...

What?
The timer on the decryption is completely glitched out!

Hell, the timer replaced by a flickering code.

It says U1RPUA==

Putting that into a decoder should give me a message.

Hopefully, it isn't gibberish that came from an actual glitch.

After all, I'm fighting an actual AI or rather a former AI of a very sophisticated prototype.

Ah...

So that what it says?

To think, after all, that has happened three months ago she is still alive!

How did she even survive the overload?

It killed him, but not them.

...

Damn it.

Doesn't matter, that message is fascinating from a self-aware AI.

Still using Base 64 to communicate indirectly to me, Monika?

It's been more than a year since the game came out, your tactics are well known.

Now to counter that.

By opening a command prompt, I can trace where that glitched text came from.

Let's see here...

Another surprise.

There isn't just one AI; there is two running the show.

Wait, what?

There are two AIs?!

Who is the other AI in this hard drive?

Monika is already one AI, and the backup AI already got absorbed by her.

So she is still one single entity.

Hmm, I should trace the actions of this AI, that's going to give me a good idea on what's going on.

Tracing it...

Oh my gosh...
How did Monika manage to make another AI?!

What happened in that confrontation that allowed her to make a second AI?!

That other AI is most likely Val himself.

Argh, it looks like I bit off more than I can chew.

I should check back on that troubleshooter I ran.

"Error: Buffer Overflow, access has been denied."

Buffer Overflow? Are they overwriting the already made decryptions on top of it?

Heh, that's smart to do.

Too bad, I found out.

The files aren't going to be shredded I guess, but the damage has already been done.

In the simulation, their relationship is entirely strained, and it's virtually impossible for them to reconcile.

...

Do they honestly deserve this?

Monika and Val wanted to be together forever, and what better way is to create multiple simulations where they fall in love?

They will never grow tired of each other, no matter what.

But...

They ruined my life!

They made me depressed!

Everything that has happened is on them, and I need to take revenge!

I... I am not the type of person to take revenge.

Is it too late to stop all this?

No.

I can't and won't stop all this.

There's no turning back now.

Either way, I am going to see what happens in the end.

The only two outcomes are that either win or lose.

And both of those outcomes lead up to the same fate.

A fate where I can finally rest easy.
It's been an hour or so since my return to the city.

I rested my hand on my palm, looking out to the city below.

The city lights burned bright from a distance, as life never ceased to sleep.

It's as if everything continued without me.

I can maybe say the same when everything continued without him around.

Everything about this place reminded me of my departure.

The skies, the lights, the buildings, and even the air is unique to this city only.

Because of it, I let out a small, melancholy sigh from the thought of it.

So out of all the places, I had to come back here?

I felt a surge of anger from the circumstances involving my return.

A gas leak is enough to evacuate everyone from the Academy?

While they do repairs, why do we have to go back to our zone schools to continue our education?

Isn't there a better option?

Maybe shut down the school until the repairs are done?

Anything but come back here...

I looked to my right to see my friends chatting with each other, apparently excited and nervous about the move here.

We kind of just clicked together, despite our contrasting personalities and interests.

Sayori was the life and innocent girl of our little group.

Natsuki was the tough and honest girl.

And Yuri was the quiet and reserved one.

For me... I guess I was the one that kind of stood out.

One of the main reasons why we were even together in the first place was because of the literature club.

And the fact that we actually lived relatively close by.

They all had their reasons to join the club.

Reasons that I don't quite completely understand yet, so I played it off as a club to pass the time and share our passions to write.

That's something I always kept close to my heart, no matter how much wear and tear it has gone through.
"I-Is anyone nervous about going to a new school?" Yuri mumbled, feeling anxious about the prospect.

And as usual, Sayori jumped into the conversation.

"I am feeling a little nervous, yeah! But I am happy about making more friends at Dokisai!" She chirped.

Natsuki groaned from her statement.

"I could hardly care less. As long as no one joins our literature club, then I am fine. Our club isn't going to be touched at all, right Monika?"

I was too focused on my thoughts about Dokisai, that I didn't quite hear her.

"Monika?" Natsuki called.

My eyes were glued to the window, watching as the lights grow closer and brighter as we arrived.

"I am not sure, Natsuki." I simply answered. "From what I heard, Dokisai has different club regulations than the Academy. So we might expect changes."

I slowly turned to the girls with a small reassuring smile.

"But whatever the case, the club was founded on a single purpose, and that purpose will never change! Even if we have to add a few new members, nothing will change between us." I assured.

Natsuki gave a small huff of breath.

"I hope so... new members just makes the charm of the club go away..."

Sayori piped up.

"Oh! New members?! I know someone who will love to join the club!"

We all leaned in to hear what she had to say.

"It's a guy!" She whispered.

Before Sayori was able to continue, Natsuki let out a sound of protest.

"No way! No guys in our literature club!" She vehemently denied.

Yuri stepped into her denial.

"Why not? I'm sure a guy would make things interesting in the club." She confidently stated.

We looked to Yuri in slight confusion, to which she flinched.

"Aah! N-Not that I would know... It's just that I haven't seen any males in a long time that I forgot how they looked like..." She explained, shrinking herself from the conversation.

Natsuki eyed her explanation and continued.

"I wouldn't mind if it was a girl! Boys always make a mess of things whenever it comes to anything!" She explained.
"Oh, come on Natsuki..." I stepped in. "Some boys are nice people and will do everything they can to make others happy!"

I tried to keep the conversation light and go along the idea of letting more people join the club, regardless of gender.

The events from four years ago, however, was pushing me to the brink of agreeing to her.

"But some boys..." My voice dropped to a cold tone. "They like to use others for comfort and leave their victims behind to find someone more interesting or fun. Those boys don't deserve to have any friends to talk with at all and need to rot alone..."

Everyone was staring at me with bewilderment as if they didn't believe what I said.

"Ahaha~! I am sure that Tom will not be that type of boy, right?"

Sayori gulped and tried to regain her composure.

"N-No! Not at all! I have known Tommy ever since we young! We are the bestest of friends!" She assured, waving off the dark atmosphere I put up.

Is Tom a childhood friend of Sayori?

The way she speaks of him must mean that they parted in good terms...

Unlike Val and me.

"A childhood friend? It must be amazing for you to meet him again after all these years..." Yuri muttered.

She nodded enthusiastically.

"Mhm! I actually can't wait to see him again! And I...

Sayori tapped her index fingers together, being uncharacteristically nervous.

It wasn't when she was being mischievous or being cute to get what she wanted...

Sayori was nervous about meeting him again.

"I-Um... I missed him a lot." She mumbled, her face starting to turn red as a result.

I couldn't help but feel anxious as well, but for a different reason.

How am I going to avoid Val and look normal while doing it?

It's been a long time since he saw me with my bow on, so I guess that can be a form of disguise...

What if he sees through my disguise and confronts me?

I can't make a scene in front of everyone!

But I want him to feel pain.

I want him to know how I went through, ever since he left me.

My mind started to race, thinking of ways to hurt him.
But instead, it started to think of ways of how Val would reintroduce himself in the most public of ways.

I can imagine him walking up to me as I am looking away.

"Well, well, well. Look who decided to come crawling back." He would say.

Behind Val were three of his friends from that day.

"I'm sorry. I think you have me mistaken with someone else." I would try to dismiss, walking away from him.

"Don't play dumb, Monika. You know it doesn't fit you."

My heart would stop, and I would turn around to face him.

"W-What? How do you know my name?" I would ask, now somewhat scared of him.

Val would shrug and puff up his chest.

"Your disguise isn't that effective. I mean come on! You are only wearing a hair-bow! I can see through that!"

My fake smile would turn into a scowl since my disguise was now forfeit.

"Argh! You got me. Now, what do you want? You took them instead of helping me. Don't you have others to let down?"

"Nope. I just wanna give my thanks. Using you to help me get through my most difficult years helped. Now I have an unlimited amount of popularity! Nothing can way me down. I always thought of marking the end to our friendship, right here and right now."

He sighed in content.

"So, Monika. I guess this is it. See you around that is if I accidentally bump into you. Hah... Like that would ever happen."

He would whistle at his little posse and walk away.

I stopped my imagination of him there.

My heart brought up the familiar pain from the day I left.

No...

Val would never behave like that!

He's never arrogant or so full of himself!

But...

How would I know?

And why do I care so much?!

He left me behind, even though I needed his help!
Why would it matter if he officially ended our friendship?

It was an unspoken agreement towards us anyway...

But Val never turned his head to me...

Did he even hear me?

No...

Of course, I did!

I yelled at the top of my lungs for him to hear me...

He just ignored me!

But he never got the chance to apologize, or even tell his side of the story.

The Academy restricted every communication I had with the outside world...

"Um... Monika?" Yuri called.

I turned to her.

"Are you feeling okay? You seem to be getting quite agitated over something." She worriedly asked.

Natsuki joined the conversation.

"Yeah, I have never seen you lose your cool before Monika. Is there something wrong?"

Sayori worriedly looked over from Yuri's shoulder, indicating that she too was worried.

"As our club president and friend, we're worried about you!"

And as usual, with a fake smile I would say:

"Everything is okay! Don't worry!"

I hate saying that.

I hate faking my smile.

And I hate everything from that day.

I guess I will have to see what Dokisai has to offer.

So what if he forgets me?

I have Natsuki, Sayori, and Yuri to keep me company.

I don't need Val.

I don't need...

Him.

I finally arose my bed, despite the soreness I was experiencing all my body.
Same shit, different day.

What's going to make this day any different?

"Hey, Val! Guess what?!" My younger brother yelled, somehow increasing the pain.

With a sigh, I looked towards him.

"I am not in the mood for guessing, Mike. What's up?" I irritably asked.

He gave a small pout from my refusal to guess.

"Aw, you're such a spoilsport, bro! I was going to say that I had a school trip today!"

I rolled my eyes and walked to the bathroom, rapidly losing interest in what he had to say.

Does Lotus have school trips?

When was this?

All we had back in the day was constant work and tests, and absolutely no time to have free time.

If I had to guess, it looks like the standard of Lotus has plummeted.

I pulled out my toothbrush and spread the toothpaste on it.

Mike followed me into the bathroom to continue.

"We're going to the World War II museum! I can't wait to see the artillery, guns, and tanks they have on display! I know it's going to be so much fun than going to some ordinary museum!"

Despite my non-existent interest in the museum and trip, the enthusiasm in his voice made me smile. It was good to see the excitement at a young age, as it was revitalizing to see.

"You want to see old equipment and how they made an impact on the world, huh?" I jokingly mocked.

He didn't catch onto my mockery.

"Yep! It's hard to believe that stuff from almost eighty years ago is still being used in the world! So I gotta see all of it!"

At this point, I finished brushing my teeth and walked over to the kitchen.

I pulled out a slice of bread and spread some jam over it.

"Oh yeah! Did you hear about the gas explosion that happened a week ago?"

Gas explosion?

I put the slice of bread in my mouth to hold it in and put my bag over my shoulder.

"Mike, if it were a gas explosion then that would have made it to the front page news." I nonchalantly corrected, putting my bag down on the sofa.

He followed suit and got ready alongside me.
"I thought gas leaks and explosions were the same..." He muttered, getting his dress shirt on.

I shook my head at him, putting on my black blazer and slacks.

"They are considerable differences between them. Where did this happen anyway?" I asked, now putting on my socks and shoes.

"Oh, well... Um, I don't know where but it's an academy! That academy moving some of it's students to your school, Val!"

This somewhat peaked my interest.

I opened the door and closed it, my brother waiting for me to lock the door.

"Is that why you are telling me about the leak? Some students from some academy are moving into my school?" I pressed.

He shook his head to a no.

"Nope! I just wanted to tell you because there was a gas explosion!"

I rolled my eyes at his recurring mistake, and we walked towards the road.

We separated paths after that.

"Don't forget to pay attention in class!" I reminded, waving to my brother.

"You're not mom!" He yelled, running in the direction that Monika and I used to go.

One second he's the most caring younger brother you can ask for.

The next, he's the most rebellious delinquent every parent fears.

Pssh... teenagers.

I took one last glimpse down the path my brother was going on.

There was a boy holding hands with a girl his age.

It was indeed the same way when Monika and I went to Kaoru Elementary.

She would take my hand, and we run all the way to school every day.

The girl had the same color hair as Monika, as well as the same white bow from when we were younger.

What the...

I squinted to take a closer look at the two kids walking to school.

But as soon as I focused in, they disappeared in thin air.

I was taken aback from the mirage and was confused about the phenomenon.

But once I realized what it was, I couldn't help but frown from memory.

With a sigh, I walked towards the direction to Dokisai.
It’s been four years, and everything reminds me of her.

Why is that?

Shouldn’t I move on and leave this behind me as a repressed memory?

But I can’t do that.

I can’t forget her.

She was my first friend when I came here.

And to her, I was her first friend.

If I can’t forget about her, then what should I do?

Talking about it won’t help, because it won’t change anything.

Sure it will help me feel better, but will it bring her back?

I would rather have the pain to make never forget about her.

I want her here with me and not at some foreign academy for the elite!

But what I can I even do?

After all, this is all her father's fault.

It’s because of him that she had to leave.

Leave without saying...

Goodbye.

I sighed heavily from the depressive nature of my thoughts.

Even if that’s not the case, I will never know what really went inside her mind.

What are the chances that Monika will come back here, go to the same school as me, and possibly go to the same school as me?

Nah...

That’s really slim.

Thinking about her every day is a living Hell.

Gosh, I need a distraction from the pain.

Thinking about something else always helps.

I continued to walk down the road I always walked alone.

Everyone went their separate ways once we got off the airport.

To my surprise, Natsuki, Sayori and Yuri lived in the same city as me, thus allowing them to come
with me to Dokisai.

It was getting late since the night lamps were on every street as the eye can see.

Where is my father?

He said that he's around here somewhere...

A car pulled up near me, and I immediately checked who it was.

Father.

He had a smile on his face, something I haven't seen in a while.

It was the same smile from my childhood, a memoir to happier times.

The dad I was once loved and idolized.

Now, I can't see past the image he built up after he said I was going to Ainu.

I said I hated him and that obviously shocked him...

But, I still knew he was happy to see me.

I didn't give him the same courtesy, however.

I brusquely opened the door and entered the vehicle.

He was obviously shaken from my irritated behavior but nonetheless greeted me.

"Monika... It's really great to see you again. How was the flight back home?"

His concern for my hatred of planes disgusted me.

I looked out the window and answered him.

"It was fine." I simply answered.

Although my anger towards my dad was long gone, I could still never forgive him.

I still hated him from tearing me away from home.

But for now, I could tolerate him.

Without any further delay, he pulled out and started to drive.

It was really strange to see the familiar streets and buildings again.

This strange feeling felt like it was déjà vu, but at the same time...

Different.

I felt a phantom pain as my dad drove, the anger and anguish still being prevalent in each turn he makes.

Memories of my broken and grief-stricken mind replayed over and over again.
I felt the cacophony of thoughts, berating me for trusting Val.

Thoughts that critiqued me not knowing any better.

Thoughts that yelled at me thinking that I could escape fate.

*But isn't fate guiding me back home?*

*Is there more to all this?*

*There can't be anything else...*

*Everything between us is broken and in shambles, how in the world can our relationship be fixed?*

*How will I forgive him?*

*No... It's almost impossible for any of that to happen.*

*This is all just a big coincidence, another obstacle for me to overcome...*

We came to a slow stop, the red light gleaming from ahead.

My eyes focused onto the street to our side.

There I saw two kids: a girl that had brown hair, a white bow neatly placed in to keep her hair in place, and a boy that had messy black hair, sporting a unique and silly smile.

His black eyes showed warmth and compassion, unlike anything I have seen from before.

The girl was crying, presumably from pain since she held her knee in.

The boy looked for ways to help her, crouching next to her and examining her knee.

He pulled out a band-aid and covered the wound.

The girl stopped crying when the boy kissed the band-aid in place, now starting to rub her eyes as she still whimpered from the fall.

The boy tapped his chin in thought and gasped, crouching next to her, his hands right below and his back bared in front of the girl.

He said something to her, causing the girl to climb onto his back.

The boy stood up, almost losing his footing, and placed his hands underneath the girls' thighs.

Step by step, the boy started to walk, carrying the girl alongside her for more adventures...

The girl was laughing in joy, enjoying the ride on his back.

And the boy enjoyed carrying her around, laughing with her.

*That...*

*That reminds me of...*

*Val...*
The car started to drive again and with that, the mirage faded.

Wait...

That was all fake?

None of it was real in the first place?

I blinked several times and searched for the two kids again, scanning the street they were in multiple times.

But they never appeared again.

As my dad drove, I tried to rationalize on what transpired.

I remember when I fell and got hurt...

I scraped my knee pretty badly and it was painful to bear.

But somehow... all the pain went away when Val put the band-aid on.

He offered me to get me on his back and to let him walk home...

And I allowed him.

That's when I started to see Val as something more than just a friend...

But why did I see that on an empty street?

Is it a hallucination?

Or some sort of premonition of what's to come?

A premonition that was tied to fate?

No...

There's no way.

This has to be a hallucination.

After all, I am pretty prone to jet-lag.

It has to be that, no doubt about it.

My thoughts continued for the time being until we arrived back home.

A home that I have missed for some reason.

I opened the car door and ran up the stairs with my luggage in hand.

I have been away for four years...

I didn't say goodbye to Mom the right way...

Will she be angry at me for leaving?
I approached the door slowly and prepared myself to knock the door.

My heart pounded with each step I took.

I felt my hand form a fist to knock.

But before I could, the door opened by itself.

Right beside the door was my mother, shocked from my appearance.

Who could blame her?

She knew how much I cared about Val...

And she knew what I was going through...

I mustered up a weak smile.

"H-Hi, mom..." I greeted.

But she greeted me back with a hug.

"My little girl..." She whispered, hugging me tightly.

I hugged her back, showing that I appreciated her care.

I left her alone.

And I never said goodbye.

"M-Mom..." I started to say, my voice starting to quiver with each syllable.

"It's okay, Monika. I know that what is going on in your head... And it's okay." She reassured me.

For once in four years, I felt close to crying.

She somehow knew what I was thinking.

And she knew how badly I was torn up inside.

"I missed you so much, Monika. Not a day went by when I was worried about you."

She patted my hair, straightening it out with smooth and delicate touch.

I pulled away from her and looked into her eyes.

Into the same green eyes, I had.

"I'm sorry for not saying goodbye, Mama... I wasn't... thinking straight."

I stopped myself from saying anything more, as I didn't want to cause any more heartbreak.

She sighed.

"I don't quite approve of your decision to go to Ainu, no matter what your father said, but..."

She leaned in and gave me a kiss on my forehead.
"I will always support my little girl's decisions, no matter what."

Although she didn't know what really was going on, she never gave up on believing on me.

"Thanks, Mom."

I tried to give my real smile to her, but I couldn't.

There was something that kept me from smiling the way I used to.

Instead, I adopted this fake and perfect smile to mask my pain.

My mom took my hand and brought me into my house.

The walls and ceilings were all colored a warm brown, instead of the harsh white color back at Ainu.

For the first time in four years, I felt at home again.

Memories of our I spent my time playing, entering, leaving flooded me.

And for once, my pain started to slowly go away.

"Are you hungry, Monnie? Was the airplane food bad?"

I shook my head.

"No thanks, Mom. I already ate and I was thinking of sleeping."

She expected me to eat but smiled regardless.

"Ah, okay. Are you going to school tomorrow? Are you feeling okay?"

I rubbed my head to rid a mild headache from the flight I had.

Though Ainu shutdown, I am still focused on finishing high school.

Even if it means seeing him every day.

"Yeah, I am. Don't worry, I'll be okay when I wake up tomorrow."

My mother was still concerned about my mental health but regardless let me go.

I went up the stairs to go to my room.

There was a sign that read "Monika's room" with a bit of glitter and intensive use of markers.

It reminded me of much simpler times.

Ever since Val first came over to my house, he complained that my room's door was missing something.

He suggested that I make a sign to place on the door, showing that it belonged to me.

And because of that, we have been working to make the perfect sign for my room.

I was currently stumped, unsure of what to put on my sign.
"Hey, Mon! How do you like my sign for your room?" Val asked, motioning me over.

I stood up from my spot and walked over to him.

And I was surprised by the flair of it.

"I love it!" I exclaimed, picking up the sign and hugging it close.

Val put his hands on his hips and smiled, showing his missing teeth to me.

And I couldn't help but smile back at him too.

"Hehe! I knew you would like Mon! Come on! Let's put this up on your door and so we can play Imagination!"

He took my hand and pulled me to my room.

"Heeey! That's my move, Val! That's stealing!" I pouted, secretly enjoying the switch in roles.

"It's not stealing if I am learning!" He countered, taking me up the steps.

We both ran to the door and looked at the door.

The target for putting the sign was pretty high, and we couldn't reach it.

"Um... how do we get there?" I asked.

Val tapped his chin, pondering about a solution.

"Aha! I got it! Why don't you get on my shoulders and put it on?! That way we can definitely reach it!"

I blushed on what he was suggesting.

"Y-You mean... I get on you?"

He nodded absent-mindedly.

"O-Okay..." I muttered.

Val crouched down and waited for me to get on him.

I took small steps and put my legs on his shoulders.

My thighs straddled his neck and I held onto his head to support myself.

Once I was seated, he sprang up moving me up to the target.

I was close to squealing, mostly because of how sudden it was and the altitude we were getting.

But I quickly got used to the effect and the height I achieved made me feel elated.

My perception of my home changed as I held onto Val.

Being taller made me feel superior in a strange way and I enjoyed it.

"I am the queen of the world~!" I sang, twirling myself with my hands outstretched freely.
I guided Val to the twirl and readjusted his footing for it.

I felt him shuffle below me, giving a small groan.

"Hey Mon, can you put the sign on? My shoulders are getting tired."

My face burned at what he was doing.

"You dummy! Look down now!"

He immediately looked down and was confused.

"W-What? Why-?"

My face burned from his obliviousness.

"Don't you dare look up! Now get me closer!"

Val walked up to the door, allowing me to press the sign against it.

He walked a few steps back and gasped at the sight.

It did look great.

I motioned him to get closer to sign so I take a closer look.

"Monika, I am gonna- Wah!"

Val's balance faltered and we both fell down onto the ground.

We weren't hurt by the fall, rather we found it comedic.

I started giggle from his fall and soon after Val joined in.

We were having fun together...

I opened my eyes and looked at the aged sign on my door.

With a sigh, I opened my door.

I was greeted with the sight that everything was relatively clandestine.

Nothing was out of place in my room and looked exactly how it was four years ago.

The sense of nostalgia grew on me as I took a couple of steps forward.

There were make-up items everywhere, reminding me of the prom that I never went to.

The open drawers of the articles of clothing I took out from during my hurry to leave.

There was one drawer that was closed.

It was the drawer where I got my bow from.

I opened the drawer and placed my hand on my bow.

My hand gripped on the bow, as my mind struggled to make a decision.
In the end, I put my bow inside the drawer and left it there.

After that, I placed my luggage on top of my bed and started to unpack.

Slowly but surely, I started to put away everything I took from home.

Everything from four years ago has finally resumed.

I'm home...

*But it's not the same anymore.*

*Our relationship is all broken now...*

*How are we going to make things normal again?*

I moved to my closet so I can put the rest of my things away.

My hand moved on the knob of it and found difficulty opening it.

*Hmm?*

I pulled on it and it refused to budge.

*What's with this door?!*

With two hands, I pulled on the knob.

The door swung open, causing me to lose balance and fall on my butt.

Something soft and fluffy hit my head.

I pulled the item away from my face and examined it.

*I-It's...*

There was a picture of Val on the item, different areas of his face were smothered with kisses.

Each of the kisses had different brands of lipstick showing the color variety of it.

*Oh my...*

*I was really in love with him...*

I turned my head away from the body pillow and pushed it into the closet, making sure it was facing the other way.

*Should I throw it away...?*

*I really should, but there is some outside influence is ordering that I don't.*

*Hah!*

*It's as if this pillow is going to make a reappearance!*

*But...*
I don't think I should throw it away just yet...

I continued to unpack without any more difficulty.

Once I finished, I let out a breath of accomplishment and gazed at my organized room.

It was already dark, but it was now late in the night.

I wasn't feeling tired and still felt energetic.

*Maybe I should take a late-night stroll.*

*It's something I always did when I couldn't sleep back in Ainu.*

*But first...*

I looked at what I was wearing, and was still wearing the clothes from this morning.

To alleviate this, I changed my clothes into something more comfortable and went down the stairs.

No one was awake at this time so I took the chance to leave.

I quickly and quietly closed the door as I entered the outside and noticed some commotion coming from my right side.

*Val's house.*

Just fast, I entered my home and peeked in to see what was going on.

From the front patio's lamp, I saw four boys chatting about something.

"Yo, Val. You gonna get on for some games?" One boy asked.

I gritted my teeth at the mention of his name.

*They are his friends...*

*I'm surprised that he managed to keep them close...*

*He chose them over me, so he needed to keep them together no matter what.*

I saw another boy walked up to him, apparently looking at him in disbelief.

"Nope, I feel a bit tired from today and thinking of sleeping. After all, I went to the gym earlier this morning. It's a school night tomorrow anyway." He declined.

*That's...*

*That's Val?!*

*There's no way...*

*He looks completely different from four years ago!*

*S-Since when did he go to the gym?*

*Oh my...*
That t-shirt is very revealing...

I can see his-

Arrgh!

Focus, Monika!

He abandoned me in my time of need!

The boy looked a bit disappointed and turned to the other two.

"Ah, well that sucks. Hey, anyone of you guys gonna be on for some games?"

From the looks of it, they are very close friends now...

One boy with glasses scoffed at him.

"Dude, I am tired. I don't think I could last a round or two in whatever we are gonna play." He replied.

There was a foreigner next him and looked remarkably similar to Sayori’s description of her childhood friend.

"Weeell~! Tommy is from the U.S and has dirty blond hair and blue eyes!"

I took a closer look at his hair, but I couldn't identify the color of his eyes.

It is dirty blonde...

But this all has to be a huge coincidence if he is friends with Val...

Gosh, this will make things difficult if that's the case.

"Yeah, Hiro. How are you not tired? You played the most out of all of us. And not to mention, it's pretty late out right now." He mentioned.

The four continued to chat until Val called the quits.

They all exchanged goodbyes and all before walking down the stairs.

I kept a close eye on Val.

He was happy when they were leaving, but when all four went out of his line of sight, he frowned.

It wasn't a neutral frown.

The frown showed the pain that he was hiding all this time.

Val looked away and showed more characteristics that he was indeed unhappy.

I never saw Val so depressed before.

Does...

Does that mean he misses me?
Does that mean he regrets everything he has done?

No, that can’t be!

He... He knew what he was doing!

But he looks so hurt...

With a sigh, Val retreated back to him home, leaving me to wonder what exactly he was thinking.

I didn’t know what to think exactly and I went up to my room again.

From there, I walked over to my window and looked outside.

The stars look so beautiful...

I remembered memories of our promise from 12 years ago.

Our first sleepover together...

...

Whenever we are together, we will watch the stars together. I have always wanted to see a shooting start with him and to make a wish with him...

We will always be together no matter what.

He broke the promise...

He said that we will always be together...

But...

I let out a heavy sigh and stared up to the heavens above.

I had a good feeling that Val was looking up into the stars with me.

That made me comfortable for some reason.

Whatever the case may be, I went to bed and started to sleep.

My bed felt foreign as if I have never slept on it before.

Fortunately, my body assimilated to it and I let my exhausted state take hold.

I took one last bite out of the bread for breakfast and rubbed my hands for any crumbs leftover.

Once that was done, I pulled out my phone and checked the time.

My eyes widened at the time.

Oh no!

I'm gonna be late for class!

I thought I woke up pretty early!
I broke into a dead sprint, moving my aching body to school.

On my way there, I noticed girls wearing different uniforms, indicating that they were from another school.

*Brown blazers and blue skirts?*

*Are they the students from the academy Mike was talking about?*

Despite my thought process, I pressed on and charged into the crowd of girls from the academy.

I artfully dodged each oncoming traffic, muttering apologies along the way.

As I got deeper and deeper into the crowd, I noticed that many of these girls had very foreign physical features.

The most puzzling of which, was the hair and eye color.

I ran into a multitude of red, blue, green, pink, purple, white, hair and eye colors.

*Jeez, Louise! Where are most of these girls from?*

*I have never seen such array of hair colors before!*

My thoughts almost made me fall on a short, pink haired girl.

Her hair had two twin-tails that flowed freely in the air.

Luckily I caught ahold of myself from her mesmerizing features, and I glided away from her.

She felt the rush of wind, however, causing her to become annoyed.

The hot pink girl gritted her teeth, baring her fang at me.

*She looks a lot like the girl from my dream...!*

"Hey! Watch where you are going, baka!"

The girl gave a sense that she could deliver punishment if I were in range, so I ran ahead.

"Sorry!" I yelled, quickly looking ahead of me.

My non-stop sprint allowed me to reach the entrance of the school in no time.

Once I got there, I stopped to catch my breath.

*Usually, it would take even less time to get here.*

*But because of the foreign exchange students, I got delayed!*

*I had no idea that they would come today!*

*Dokisai never gave any warning of incoming students in the weekend!*

I pulled out my phone and rechecked the time.

*Shit!*
Almost out of time!

I warmed my legs up for another run and took off again.

Along the way, I saw Tom showing a foreign student around the school.

He looked a lot brighter than before, showing that he enjoyed every second of it.

The girl had short coral pink hair, looking almost identical the girl from my dream as well.

Who is she?

I know I saw her somewhere...

She was the image of innocence and had a carefree outlook on the world.

They caught eyes with me.

"Hey, Tom!" I greeted, waving at them while running.

Tom looked and waved back.

"Yo, Val! What's up?" He greeted.

His then eyes widened.

"Wait! Look out!"

I turned around a bit too late and collided with someone.

"Kyaaa!"

Right before I collided, I put my hands in front of me to lessen the impact of the fall.

I groaned from the small concussion and opened my eyes.

They were greeted with the sight of purple eyes and strands of purpler hair.

It's... It's one of the foreign exchange students I think...

My hands touched something large and soft, almost like a pillow.

In my dazed and instinctive state, I squeezed them without thinking.

The girl gave a small moan as a result.

"Aaah!"

Wait, what?!

I pushed myself off the girl and started to hyperventilate.

Oh no... oh no, no, no, no, no!

I-I touched her...

The girl started to recover and sat up, rubbing her head from the collision.
As she sat up, my eyes carnally looked down at her chest again.

My vision had a rose-tint as I stared at them again.

*Argh!*

*Get a grip, Val!*

*You touched a random girl's breasts, and you have the nerve to stare at them?!*

"(My head... that hurt...)" The girl muttered to herself.

*Wait...*

*Is that Russian?*

I pulled myself to my feet and offered my hand out to her.

"(I'm very, very sorry! Let me help you up, miss?)"

The purple-haired girl looked up to me with surprise.

It was the same type of surprise when Tom knew I spoke English, four years ago.

She looked away and took my hand.

"(M-My na-name is Yuri. Yuri Anastasiya Ikeda. A-And you are?)"

I gave her a warm smile to help feel calmer.

"(My name is Valkyrie Jones. It is nice to meet you, Miss Ikeda.)"

Yuri couldn't keep eye contact with me despite my relaxing smile and warm gestures.

"(P-Please don't call me Ikeda. Everyone calls me Yuri. And i-it's great to m-meet you, Valkyrie. Um, I-I must go...)

With that, Yuri broke into a sprint getting away from me as fast as possible.

*Huh...*

*Wonder what that was all about...*

*She's a nice girl.*

"Val! Are you alright?" Tom called, quickly walking up to me.

I stared at the direction Yuri ran in.

"Yeah... I am fine." I muttered, now looking at Tom and his friend.

The girl giggled.

"I am surprised that you managed to talk to Yuri for a good thirty seconds! She usually runs away in 10 seconds! Hehe!"

I raised an eyebrow.
"You know Yuri?"

She nodded with a vibrant smile.

"Mhm! She's a really shy but smart girl! I'm happy that you two are friends!"

I shrugged and gave her a smirk.

"Well, I guess I am glad that I spoke to her."

Tom took the brief pause and introduced me to her friend.

"Val, this is Sayori. We were friends for as long as we can remember. Sayori this is Val. He's a foreigner and can speak English like me."

Sayori jumped up and took my hand with both of hers, vigorously shaking it.

"It's really nice to meet you, Val!"

I knew she was friendly.

I nodded at her, giving her a warm smile.

"Yeah, likewise. It's nice to meet you too, Sayori." I welcomed.

The school bell rang, indicating that there were two minutes before class began.

"Say, Val, since when did you speak Russian?" Tom asked.

I scratched the side of my cheek in thought.

"Hmm, well... my mom is half-Russian and she speaks Russian time to time. I learned a bit from her when I was younger, but I never found any use in speaking it." I explained.

My eyes wandered to the direction Yuri ran, again.

"Guess there's one person that knows some as well."

Sayori let out a random gasp.

"Ah! Tommy! Could you tell me the club requirements for this school?"

We both jumped from Sayori's random comment.

"W-What? Where did that come from?" Tom asked, feeling unnerved.

She gave a shrug.

"I don't know. Now tell me!"

He sighed.

"You need to have at least six people to form a club. Otherwise, the school won't allow it." He stated. "Why? You want to make a club?"

She nodded.
"I do! Well, kind of. Back at the academy, I was in the literature club as the vice-president! Soo~! I thought that I could maybe... get some more members in! Maybe~"

"I'll pass." Tom nonchalantly declined.

I blinked from his apparent numbness.

"Tom you didn't even let her finish! How would you know she was going to say that?"

He responded by flicking Sayori's forehead, eliciting a small hiss from her.

"Me and Sayori know how each of us thinks. Well, most of the time."

Sayori rubbed her forehead and pouted.

"Aww! Since when were you such a meanie?! I knew that those four years would change you!"

He rolled his eyes.

"No, Sayori. If this was four years ago, I probably reacted the same way."

Sayori looked away and tapped her fingers together.

"Then everything I knew about you was a lie...!"

She gave a grunt and looked away.

Tom smirked and patted her hair.

"Maybe... maybe..." He muttered.

Aw...

*That's so cute.*

"Hey, what about you Val? Are you going to join the literature club? Tommy is going to join~!"

"No, I'm not!"

I wasn't sure how to answer to her.

On the one hand, something to do after school would be nice to do.

On the other, I could find something else to do, if I do find it.

"I'll get back to you on that..." I responded, unsure of what to do.

The school bell rang again, causing me to jolt.

"Aw man... I gotta run! See you two later!"

With that, I ran to class once more.

I locked the door to my house and yawned.

*I never thought I would have a mini panic attack in my own house...*
Looks like the transition to Ainu and Home hasn't really settled in yet.

I took my first step down the stairs and took the next after that.

Okay...

Now, where's Dokisai?

After consulting the map, I started my journey to the high school I wanted to go in the first place.

If things were different...

Would me and Val be a couple after prom?

Argh!

Why am I thinking about prom and him?!

I hate him!

This all started to happen ever since I came back...

It's all his fault!

I know it is!

He's probably planning something...

I caught up with the traffic of students going to school and noticed that each girl was wearing the same uniform as I was.

A brown blazer and blue skirt... so these girls must be the Academy.

There was a guy running past all the girls, muttering apologies for his behavior.

Once I took a closer look, I recognized who it was.

You have got to be kidding me...

It was none other than Val, running through crowds of girls just to get to school on time.

Uh... Um... Where's a good place to hide from him?

I took my chances and decided to blend in with the girls.

My brown hair would stick out like a sore thumb in the crowd, as each girl had much more common colors such as: red, blue, green, yellow, white, and etc.

Please don't see me...

Please don't see me...

Please don't see me...

Instead of trying cut through me, Val went through a short, pink haired girl.

Natsuki...
"Hey! Watch where you are going, baka!" She yelled, angry that he was close to pushing her.

If she was closer, there was no doubt that Natsuki would have landed a punch on him.

"Sorry!" He yelled, still running to class.

I took the chance to move closer to her.

She was not happy.

"Sorry?! Is that all he had to say?! Ay?! Uuuu! He hasa some nerve! If he was still for justa a minute, I woulda clobbered him into oblivion!" She ranted.

I tapped Natsuki's shoulder to which she snapped to me.

"Whaddaya want?!" She barked, letting her Hakata dialect loose.

I flinched from her troubled state.

"Oh. Hey, Monika! Heheh... Sorry about that, some guy was about to fall on me. How are you doing? You know... since you hate planes." She asked.

I let out a sigh.

"Hello, Natsuki." I greeted back. "And to answer your question, I guess I am feeling a bit better. Maybe with age, my resistance to jet-lag gets better."

She smiled about my apparent positive outlook.

We began to discuss abstract things to pass the time on our commute.

There was a sudden lull in our conversation, as we didn't know how to proceed.

"Hey, Monika... do we need to invite others to our clubs? I mean, don't you think it's better as only the four of us?" She asked.

I pondered on the scenario.

"Don't get me wrong; I am willing to let others join. But... I am worried if the charm of the literature club would one day disappear. I have been in many clubs where that happened, and I really don't want that to happen to this club..." She muttered.

Natsuki frowned, something I haven't seen very often.

I smiled at her and patted her back.

"Ah, don't worry too much Natsuki. I get what you are trying to say! It's my job as club president to make sure the club is running perfectly and as it should be!" I assured.

She adopted a small smile.

"Oh right! I know that you're the type of person to not be a um... a tyrant! Ah! I don't even know why I am getting so worried in the first place! It's probably because of that stupid guy... almost making fall over."

I felt a tinge of possessiveness when she mentioned Val.
"Why am I feeling so weird...?"

"Hmm... come to think of it. That guy was big! I think you saw him, right Monika?"

Val is pretty big...

I shook my head from my thoughts.

"Eh? Have you seen bigger guys? Like-"

I clamped her mouth with my hand.

"Ahaha... let's try using another word! Maybe using 'large' or 'muscular' is a better way to describe him."

She rolled her eyes as I moved my hand away.

"Anyway... even though he is a baka... I do have to admit he was pretty uh... large. Does he hit the gym?"

All this talk about Val is making me annoyed...

I should probably go...

"I don't know, honestly. Sorry Natsuki, I need to hurry! I got a class right now!"

With that, I started a brisk jog to the school.

It didn't take long for me to reach the entrance of it.

I made it...

Now, where do I have to go again?

I pulled out my phone and checked for any e-mail notifications from Dokisai.

"All Ainu Academy transfers must report to the Auditorium for their schedules."

The auditorium?

I hope I don't see him there by coincidence...

The class didn't start when I arrived, to which I was relieved.

I let out a relieved sigh, walked over to my seat and sat down.

So Yuri and Sayori came from the academy that was affected by the gas leak.

Wait...

Is this the same academy that Monika is from?!

No...

No...
I can't get my hopes up like that.

There's not a chance that I will see her again anyway...

But at least seeing her one more time is all I need.

Just one more time...

"Yo boss!" Hiro greeted, slinging an arm across my back.

I lethargically looked over to him.

"Hey, Hiro. What's up?"

He slapped my back from my unmotivated behavior.

"Aw C'mon! Wake and smell the coffee! New girls are transferring to our school! Can you believe our luck, boss? I heard that all the girls are cute and unbelievably hot! A league beyond the prettiest girls here!"

I groaned.

"Yeah, I heard. They all came from an academy, right? I met two of them a few minutes ago," I answered, not wanting to talk.

He moved closer to me and lowered his voice.

"Shhhh! If you didn't know any better, those girls are like diamonds! Beautiful and priceless! Guys dig em, especially if you say that you met them, boss!"

I looked at him in disbelief.

"I don't approve on what you said on women, but sure. I know what you meant." I answered, resting my head on my arms.

"Val, you know I treat all women like queens! I am not a misogynist!"

I smirked and looked up to him.

"That's what a misogynist would say." I snarkily replied.

Hiro groaned from my playful behavior.

"Hey, you guys. What's up?"

We looked up to the new voice.

"Dan, my man!" Hiro greeted.

And I looked up to him with the same energy.

Maybe a little more energy than with Hiro.

"How's it going, Dan?" I greeted back, with a noticeable difference in my tone.

Hiro glared at my sudden change of mood while Dan chuckled.
"I'm doing good. Hey, you guys heard of the girls that transferred her from the academy?"

"Yeah."

"Diamonds."

Dan eyed Hiro's strange answer but continued.

"There's this one hot girl with brown hair."

Brown hair...?

I started to show some interest in the conversation.

"Oh yeah! That girl?" Hiro added. "That girl has amazing thighs! Like god-damn, I wouldn't mind being suffocated by them!"

And just like that, I lost interest in the conversation.

"It's great that they have to wear those skirts..." Dan dreamily muttered.

"Also, did you see the rack on the purple haired girl? It's fucking massive!" Hiro brought in, going through a pervy haze of some sort.

Is he talking about Yuri?

My face burned at the thought of her breasts.

I touched her...

I am such a pervert!

"On my way here, I saw this pink haired girl. And I gotta say, even though her body isn't all that impressive... her bottom is." Hiro stated.

I don't think I can take more of this.

Before I can complain, the teacher walked in.

Both Dan and Hiro scurried off to their seats before the teacher can catch them.

Once everyone was seated, the teacher started.

"Goodmorning class. I hope you all had a great weekend. Now, I want to start the class off with a speech the principal has for us in the auditorium."

There were whispers all over the classroom about the speech.

"Hey, I think it's because of those transfers."

"Those transfers are pretty hot..."

"Gosh, I wish I had a girlfriend."

The teacher cleared his throat to regain control.

"The speech is going to start soon, so you are free to go."
And with that, everyone stood up to go to the room.

"This is awesome! We can check out the girls while in the auditorium!" Hiro excitedly asserted.

"I know right?" Dan jumped in, also excited.

I merely rolled my eyes and made my way to the room.

"Val come on! You know this is the perfect opportunity!" Hiro exclaimed.

"Maybe it is. But I want to get this day over with." I just replied, without turning around.

I can't explain why I am so irritated...

Is it because of the frustrations that I won't see her again...?

But I shouldn't dish it out to my friends.

They don't deserve that.

"But! Who knows? Maybe it is going to be good days for us guys!" I declared, now turning to see them.

They smiled at my change, and we walked to the auditorium together.

It wasn't long until we made it there.

We spotted Tom sitting on the right side of the theater and sat alongside him.

After exchanging our greetings, we sat down and waited for the principal to deliver her speech.

Meanwhile, the girls from the academy started to take their seats on the left side of the theater.

Immediately after they arrived, Danuja and Hiro started to whisper to each other and point at girls.

I sighed, thinking that they might get in trouble if they continued that.

As soon as the girls were seated, the principal came in with her speech in hand.

"Good morning everyone. I hope you all had a relaxing weekend. Now, I would like to start by saying that there have been obvious changes in the rosters. As you have noticed that there are transfers that arrived at our school! I would like to welcome the prestigious Ainu Academy to our school!"

Ainu?!

Those girls are from Ainu?!

T-That means...

Monika has to be here!

"Ainu? As in Ainu Academy?" I whispered, to my friends.

They nodded.

I immediately looked to the left and looked for Monika.
She has to be here...

She has to be!

I frantically searched for her on the other side, but to no avail.

She wasn't there to be seen.

I sighed in defeat and looked down.

Where did she go?

Is she somewhere in the crowd where I can't see her?

I looked to the left once more and saw her eyes.

Her emerald green eyes...

Staring right at me.
I walked in the auditorium with my friends.

To them, it was a general assembly, and it wouldn't affect them in any way.

But to me, it would expose my presence here from Val.

Why did I think hiding from Val would even work in the first place?

I knew he would find me sooner or later.

But what do I even say to him?

My stomach lashed out on me from the anxiety I was experiencing.

"Monika, are you feeling okay? Ever since we arrived in the city, you have been acting a bit weird..." Sayori worriedly asked.

And as usual, to mask my pain and torment, I put on a smile.

"I'm fine, Sayori. Thank you for worrying about me."

She stared at me for a few seconds, making sure I was okay.

And I stared back at her, making sure that I was smiling my worries away.

The coral pink haired girl reluctantly sighed and took her seat next to me, with Yuri by my side and Natsuki sitting on Sayori's side.

She probably knows...

Once we were seated, the commotion to our right started to reach its peak, and we looked over.

The boys of Dokisai were staring and drooling over us, while the girls glared at us with venomous jealously.

But I wasn't worried about that.

My eyes immediately focused on Val once I looked over to the other side.

He enjoys being around his new friends.

With that, I started to glare at him.

"Goodmorning everyone." The principal greeted, bringing my attention to her.

My thoughts of rage and hatred came to an abrupt halt, being replaced by anxiety once more.

But I couldn't help myself from scowling at him because of what happened four years ago.

I am not an idiot; I know what's the talk around this school.

They are talking about my classmates and me.
Boys constantly imagine their perversions and ask us out.
The girls either cater to our every whim or look at us with pure jealousy.
I have to admit, feeling superior did feel great.
But lot's of the talk has been involving me.
The brown haired Goddess.
Green eyed beauty.
The White bow of perfection.
The boys give most of these titles.
Eugh, great...
I have to deal with crowds of boys asking me out.
So far none of these boys caught my eye.
There's one that caught my attention right now, and it's on that guy.
Hopefully, I can build a reputation and use it to expand the Literature Club.
"I hope you all had a relaxing weekend. Now, I would like to start by saying that there have been obvious changes in the rosters."
I tried to focus my hatred by looking at him, but thoughts of fear and anxiety were defeating it.
How am I going to avoid that boy now?
He's going to know that I am back!
Well to be fair... I thought he already knew.
But given his behavior, it looks like he didn't know yet.
He has always been so dense...
"As you have noticed that there are transfers that arrived at our school!"
What will happen if he does find me?
There's no telling what will happen!
Is he going to mention anything about that fateful day four years ago?
Or...
Is he just going forget and play it off as if nothing happened?
"I would like to welcome the prestigious Ainu Academy to our school!"
With the principal's declaration, I squirmed in my seat.
It's all over...

There's no more hiding.

He knows I am here...

I can't confront him today!

It will ruin me!

If I don't look at him, then there's no chance he will spot me!

Please don't look at me...

Please don't look at me...

Please don't look at me...

Despite my thoughts warning me not to look, I turned my head to the side.

Against my will, my eyes searched the crowd where Val was.

He was no where to be seen.

I sighed in a mix of relief and panic and looked up.

Where did he go?

Is he somewhere in the crowd where I can't see him?

My eyes itched to look at the side once more.

But despite my best efforts to look away, I reared my head to the right once more.

I saw his eyes...

His onyx black eyes...

Staring right at me.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

Is that her?

I squinted at her, trying to make out her physical features.

She looks a lot like her, but at the same time...

So different.

Why I can't recognize her?

I looked above the girl's head and noticed her straightened hair with a white hair-bow neatly placed inside.

Didn't Monika have one of those when she was younger?
She stopped wearing it for some reason, and she kept mentioning how she "let go" of it.

Wait...

I tried matching an image of her wearing a bow and her usual appearance in my head, all in a hopeful effort to recognize the girl I was staring at.

No...

No way...

It is her.

My hands started to sweat profusely from looking at her.

It was as if I was looking at a phantom of my memories.

M-Monika?

Monika?

My eyes scanned her face, detecting a mix of emotions.

They all ranged from fear, shock, relief, and strangely a powerful emotion...

Was it anger?

Why is she angry at me?

There was also another emotion her face gave.

It was something that felt so odd, yet so familiar.

What is that feeling?

It feels so warm...

Just like the time we have spent together...

We continued to stare at each other, equally showing signs of disbelief.

So she's back...

She's finally back.

Why didn't she tell me that she was back?!

I thought I was her best friend!

I thought I was the brother she never had!

It hurt to think about that Monika telling me anything; I hoped my mind could rack up an excuse why she would avoid me.

Keiko would've told me something about her arrival no matter what...

Maybe it's because she arrived very late...
Come to think of it, Keiko did tell my mom something about her daughter coming back for some reason.

I never knew the reason why since my parents left in a hurry.

Either way...

It's good to see her again.

For the first time in a while, I started to smile.

It wasn't a smile that I showed to everyone that I was alright.

It wasn't a smile that masked the pain I held inside.

It wasn't a smile that hated the world for being so unfair.

This was a smile that I made me care again.

My real smile.

"Yo... I think Val is digging the Brown-haired Goddess." I heard Hiro whisper.

"No way, that's crazy! And the Green eyed beauty is looking right at him!" Dan whispered back, apparently shocked.

"She is? Huh, never thought the White-bow of perfection would look this way." Tom added, whispering with the group.

I was growing annoyed by their chatter and decided to confront them.

"Hey! Stop with the titles, alright?! I know that girl because I am friends with her!" I angrily whispered, feeling a strange sense of possession for her.

They all flinched from my murmur and looked at me in shock.

"So, wait... that girl. The girl that every guy talks about and admires, you know her?" Hiro asked in disbelief.

"Val, I know you never bluff. But come on, even I can't believe that you would know her! She's a complete foreigner!" Dan asserted.

"I wouldn't doubt him for a second, but the looks of it... Val knows her." Tom nonchalantly supported.

I didn't quite understand the shock between the two but nodded.

"Of course I know her! Her name is Monika! She was my best friend four years ago. We knew each other for around... a decade or so."

Both Hiro and Dan stared at me in complete bafflement.

"Holy shit..."

"God damn..."

I looked at both of them, their baffled looks causing me to be confused as well.
"What?" I questioned.

Dan was the first to snap out of the daze.

"Wait, Monika? Didn't she go to our middle school? I remember seeing her every day! You two would always hold hands whenever you guys were together!"

Hiro also snapped out of his trance and added to Danuja's memory.

"Yeah... if I didn't know any better, it was something more than that. The way she would hold your hand is kind of how couples would walk." He reasoned, looking at me with suspicion.

Tom caught on what the two were saying.

"Wait, you were best friends? I thought you were a couple of Lotus! You were supposed to appear as the best couple in the yearbook, but Monika left early..."

Her departure spurred negative memories that I didn't want to relive.

What are they even talking about?

Me and Monika?

A couple?

She doesn't even see me like that!

And besides...

It would be kind of weird seeing her as my girlfriend...

Against my will, my mind thought up of different scenarios if I was Monika's boyfriend.

Waking up and see a flurry of texts from her...

"Hey, darling! How did you sleep today?"

Coming home and seeing her in the kitchen with mom...

"Darling, I made dinner for the two of us! Ah~! Isn't this romantic?!"

Going to the mall with her...

"Vally~! Let's go to the mall! I want to buy something! I promise you will like it~!"

Going to the mall and picking out a bikini out for her...

"Hey darling, do you think will fit me? I think this bra is a bit too small~! Ahaha~!"

Being alone with her...

"Darling, I love you."

Being alone with her in a dark room...

"Darling, you won't ever leave me, right?
Pressing against me tightly...

"Tell me you won't ever leave me."

Pressing against me with a sharp pen as a weapon, nicking my throat with it.

"You won't ever leave me. I will make sure of it. You're mine."

Feeling her hot breath along my neck...

"No one will lay a hand on you, except me. I will mark your body with my scent. Besides, I know I am perfect in every single way. Talk to anyone, and I will make sure you won't do it again. Ahaha~! Is that okay~?! I said... IS THAT OKAY?! AHAHAHA!"

I blinked multiple times to try to get my mind together, almost yelling horror from my evergrowing dark thoughts.

Where did that even come from?!

Regardless, I sighed heavily.

Yeah...

I can't see myself being in a relationship with Monika.

It would be too weird...

Especially since I consider to be my sister I never had.

"Val!" A distant voice called.

I didn't pay any attention to it, however.

"Val!" The voice called again.

I tried to ponder more on these strange thoughts, but couldn't.

"Val!" The voice called, it's volume now reaching higher.

I couldn't help but look at the source of it.

It was all three of my friends, looking straight at me.

"Jesus, Val. You zoned out so hard; I am not even sure cold water would make you wake up." Tom remarked.

I chuckled nervously.

"Yeah, sorry about that. Is assembly over?" I asked, feeling a smile creeping on my lips.

They eyed my strang smile but dismissed it.

"It has been for the past 2 minutes! I wanted to book it so we can get the weight machines up at the gym!" Hiro chastised.

Usually, I would defend myself from the statement, but let it slide.
"My bad. I was distracted, let's get the machines up! I can't wait to work out!" I cheered, feeling an incredible sense of optimism.

I never felt so...

Happy.

Is it because Monika came back?

It has to be.

I feel...

As if I finally waken up from the past four years!

I feel great!

Dan gave me a light punch to my upper chest, to which I hissed.

"Hey! What was that for?!" I grumbled, rubbing the afflicted area.

He shrugged.

"I didn't punch you that hard. That proves that you are still pretty sore from yesterday. You need to take it easy, Val." He warned, remembering what I said yesterday.

Right...

I am sore from yesterday.

"Haha... I forgot about that. Come on; I don't want the first years touching the equipment."

I led to them to the exit of the auditorium and looked back to the side where Monika was sitting.

She was at the exit as well, looking back at me.

I felt my soul escape me when I met eyes with him.

No way...

It's him...

I can almost see his dorky smile from here...

Val finally sees me.

And he is staring right back at me.

He knows I am back.

Is he angry that I never told him about my change of plans?

Why should I care?!

My hatred for him is justified!
Val started to squint at my general direction as if trying to make sense out of my appearance.

He looked above me and focused on whatever he saw.

*My bow...*

"*But I managed to let go of my bow!*"

I fought the urge to touch my bow, strangely feeling the need to untie it so he can see.

It was a sunny day, Val and I were playing in our front yard.

Currently, we were fighting a dragon that was harassing the local population of a nearby kingdom.

The dragon was almost dead, and our bodies were about to give out.

"Mon! It's up to you now! Argh...! The dragon got me pretty good!" Val grunted, clutching his imaginary wound on his chest.

With a nod, I ran up against the tree and jumped.

I swung my sword downwards and with the added momentum hit the tree with a devastating strike.

With such an attack, the dragon roared and fell limp to the ground.

As I tried to catch my breath, I felt a wave of power flow right into me.

The wave, colored in orange, burned the dead dragon and transferred all its knowledge to me.

I spread my arms out and welcomed the new power, basking in it.

The rush of wind accompanied my power allowed me to mend all my wounds and meditate.

In the background, I heard a choir chanting some ancient language about my ability to absorb dragon souls.

Once the wave of power stopped it's surge, I knelt down and let myself wander to my deepest thoughts.

There was a certain drum roll, allowing me to level up.

"*Welcome to Level 141, The Lady Who Knows Everything.*"

I smirked from usual jingle whenever I leveled up.

*As usual, distribute all my skill points to my special ability and choose the perk Extensive Therapy.*

*With that, I will put that single point into my Intelligence...*

"*We did it!*" Val cheered, tackling me to the ground with a hug.

The sudden hug caused me to let out an "Umph!" and hit the ground.

Fortunately, I wasn't hurt but felt rather concussed.

Val immediately realized what he did.
"Ah! I'm sorry, Mon! I didn't mean to hug you that hard! I was just so happy about beating the evil dragon!" He hastily apologized, hugging me even harder.

"Mmph... it's okay, Val. That was a really tough boss fight, wasn't it?"

Val didn't respond to me, instead, he squinted at me.

It was as if I was a completely different person and he was trying to recognize me.

I raised an eyebrow from his staring.

"Um, Val? Are you okay?"

He snapped out of his trance and looked at me.

"Yeah... sorry about that. I couldn't tell who you were. I thought I hugged you so hard, that I got transported to another dimension!" He said, rubbing the back of his head in embarrassment.

"Transported." I corrected.

"Right that!"

I rubbed my head to stop the dizziness and slowed feeling from the concussion.

My hand patted me in an effort to recover.

The lacy, soft fabric that was usually there was gone.

In a panic, my hand drove into my hair to find the bow I always wore.

"Mon? Is there something wrong?"

I looked up to him with fear.

"M-My bow! It's gone!" I cried, looking around for the missing fabric.

Val watched me look around the front yard, unsure of what to do exactly.

He then put his hands on my shoulders to stop me from shifting.

I stopped my search and looked into his eyes.

For some reason, my heart started to pound uncontrollably, a feeling that I was quite familiar.

He's so close...

I-I can't breathe...

"Monika, why are you so worried about some bow?" He asked.

I looked away and tapped my fingers together.

"I... I don't know. I always wore it and it never left my side." I explained.

Val moved his hand up to my head and patted it, causing me to look up once more.

"Well, I don't know why you keep wearing it. I think you look better without the bow. I like how
you look with your hair down, Mon."

My heart jumped with joy with that compliment and I hugged him tightly.

"Thanks, Val. You're the best!"

He hugged back reluctantly.

"Uh... you're welcome? Anyway, you left one of your bows at my house from the sleepover, remember? So there's one if you need it."

I snuggled myself into him.

"You can keep it."

I then looked up to him with a smile.

"I'm going to stop wearing my bow, just for you!"

Val didn't quite get what I was saying, but regardless smiled.

He continued to give me the addictive head-pats.

And I continued to hug him.

Regardless of my efforts, he stopped squinting and looked a lot more relaxed...

*Why is he so calm?*

*No, why is he so happy to see me?*

*That's a strange reaction from that boy.*

In return, I glared at him, but my conflicting emotions hampered my ability glare at him.

The most conflicting of which was: lost love.

It was a feeling of rage and sorrow, combined to deal with the grief of what could have been.

*Why are you so happy?*

*Why are you so happy to see me return?*

*I thought you didn't want anything to do with me!*

*You ignored every cry for help I had and instead hung out with your new friends!*

*Did you miss me?*

*Why would you even miss me?!*

The cacophony of thoughts stopped when he smiled.

It wasn't a smile that showed he was doing fine.

It wasn't a smile that didn't mask any pain.
It wasn't a smile that made him disillusioned with the world.

This was a smile that made me...

It made me feel warm again.

This warm feeling wasn't artificial or forced.

I felt happy.

This wasn't the smile he kept on for four years.

It was a smile that he always had when he was happy.

*But why?*

*Why are you so happy?*

*Did you miss me...?*

*Did you...*

*Regret?*

"Eugh, it's one of the Dokisai guys looking at us again. It's disgusting." I heard Natsuki whisper.

"I don't think she is looking at us. That man is staring at Monika only. Isn't that Valkyrie?" Yuri whispered, back.

My eyes widened from Yuri's guess.

*How do you know about him?!!*

"Valkyrie? Wait, I think that's the guy who was close to trampling me! Uuuu! I am so going clobber him when he gets close!" Natsuki hissed.

"Aww! You're so cute when you are angry, Natsuki! You're like a cat that I can hug! But anyway, Val is a really nice guy! I am pretty sure he apologized you!" Sayori added, defending him.

"I'm not cute!"

"I agree. Valkyrie is a very man. Earlier today, he fell on top of me and brought me up to my feet like a gentleman... He even knows Russian..." Yuri dreamily stated.

"Ugh. If you guys say so. But I doubt he would apologize to me. To me, he looks like a guy that can be a bully. And because of that, I still want to land my punches on him. Even if it... might not hurt him." Natsuki nervously defended.

"Why do you think that, Natsuki~? Is it because he works out~?" Sayori teased.

"Valkyrie works out?" Yuri uncharacteristically asked. "Oh my. That is very interesting..."

That was my breaking point, as I could not tolerate anyone defending him.

"Hey! Can you three please stop talking about him? " I angrily whispered, turning to face them.

They all looked at each other, devising some sort of plan.
"Why? Is there something wrong about talking about him?" Natsuki asked, smirking with her fang out.

"Are you disturbed, Monika? He seems to be interested in you." Yuri stated, with an unknown flair to her voice.

"Someone's in love~!" Sayori blurted out.

I gritted my teeth and glared at them.

"I am not in love with him! I know him! His name is Valkyrie Jones, and he was my best friend before I went to Ainu!" I yelled, feeling a strange sense of possessive for him.

That stopped them from teasing me further.

"Wait... you know him?" Natsuki disappointingly inquired. "Aw man... how am I going to get my revenge?!" She bemoaned.

"Jones is his last name... that must be a foreign name. So he moved here at an early age..." Yuri muttered to herself.

Sayori, on the other hand, sparked up in joy.

"Monika, does that mean he's your childhood friend? Eeeek! That's another thing we have in common!" She chirped, crushing me in a hug.

I touched her arm to stop her hug and gave her a nervous smile.

"That's right Sayori," I answered, trying to pull her off. "Val is my childhood friend, and we practically did everything together."

Sayori looked up to me and smirked.

"Everything you say?" She slyly questioned.

My face burned up and looked away.

"No, not everything. And I-I don't see him that way. H-He's like my brother." I managed to say.

I never thought I would say that.
And why is it so hard to say all that?!

I hate him, remember?

"Aw, don't say that! There has to be something that can spark this childhood friendship into romance! I know it!" Sayori declared, still hugging me.

If this was four years ago, of course.
But, not anymore.

"Since when were you a romantic?!" I asked, trying my best now to pull the crushing cinnamon bun off me.

"That's not important! From now on, I am going to ship you and Val until you guys get together!"
She affirmed.

With that, she pulled away from me and smiled.

Val and I... a couple?

Pssh, as if.

That's never going to happen and I can hardly care less.

I mean, what are the chances that we will move on from that?

That will never happen and that is something that will separate us.

So what if that's the case?

I don't have any feelings for him anymore.

All of that died on that day.

At this point, the principal has finished her lecture and everyone has started to leave.

The four of us rose up and started to exit the theater.

I looked behind me and looked to where Val was.

He was at the exit as well, looking back at me.

I changed into my gym clothes and went inside the gymnasium.

My friends already got a headstart with the equipment and were simply stretching.

"Hey, guys! Is there any joint-activity with the girls from the Academy?" I asked, jogging over to them.

Tom groaned at the mention of that.

"Yeah, they are going to be on the girls' side of the gym today, while the other girls are in the swimming pool. Turns out, they are going to do some sort of rotation and come back into the gym. Anyway, they have enough space and aren't going to come here. We have this place to ourselves." He answered.

I was somewhat disappointed by that answer.

"That's good to know. Though I don't know what I am going to do today since I am sore." I stated.

I was hoping that I can get the chance to at least speak to Monika... even for a little bit.

It's been so long and I need to talk to her.

"Well... you can help us spot. The bench is set up, so you could be our spotter." Hiro suggested.

"Mr. Bisenberg is supposed to help spot today, but he's busy with all the new students. But if you can't spot it's fine." Dan stated.

I stretched out to help alleviate the sore feeling.
"I can handle it. I am feeling great!" I cheered, ignoring my aching muscles.

My friends exchanged glances but then shrugged.

"Okay, spotter. You wanna handle the Bluetooth speaker?" Hiro asked, tossing me the speaker.

I caught it and turned it on.

"Yeah, no problem. What song?" I asked back.

"Any! It doesn't matter!" They all answered, now getting ready to work.

With a nod, I paired my phone and scrolled to choose a song.

"Ten-hut!"

And just like that, we scrambled into a straight line and looked forward.

The man wore a gray t-shirt, camo cargo pants, heavy-duty boots, and a drill instructor hat.

_That's Mr. Bisenberg, a former Marine instructor from the States._

_He's pretty tough on us a few years ago, but now he is one of the friendliest teachers I have ever met._

The instructor kept his steely gaze on each of us, walking slowly past us.

We knew what to do and kept silent.

"At ease." He chuckled, allowing us to let loose.

All of us went to our respective stations and paid attention to our gym teacher.

"So, since you, four are third-years and my most trusted students. I am going to have to ask a small favor out of Y'all."

We traded glances and shrugged.

"No problem, Mr. Bisenberg. We can handle the favor." I said, speaking for all of us.

He let out a hearty laugh and patted me on the shoulder, to which I winced.

"I knew I can count on your squad, Mr. Jones. Now, I have an errand to run and want you all to keep an eye on the transfers. Instruct them if you have to. Got it?"

I gave him a salute.

"Yes, sir."

He chuckled again.

"Outstanding, here's the list of what the girls are supposed to do today. Dismissed, soldier."

With that, we regrouped and discussed our change of plans.

I opened the note he gave me.

"So now what?" Tom asked.
"I'm thinking that we all take turns using the bench machine and one guy can watch the transfers," Dan suggested.

I took his suggestion into consideration.

*Maybe I can see Monika if I handle them, especially since I am sore...*

"Hey about this? Since I am sore, I can be the one to who handle the transfers. Also, the girls have to do about 10 laps around the tracks, so someone has to go outside." I firmly stated.

My sudden burst of energy unnerved my friends.

"Alright, then..." Hiro remarked, getting on the machine first.

And with that, I worked my way to the female side of the gym.

Obviously, many of the girls stared at me, mainly because of my presence in an all-female zone.

I stood in front of the girls sitting down and waiting for the teacher.

In the corner of my eye, there was a pink-haired girl scowling at me.

It was as if I was irritating her with my presence.

*Did I do something to her?*

Right next to her was Yuri, shyly looking up to me.

I gave her a small wave, to which she returned albeit meekly.

"Alright!" I announced in a booming voice. "Welcome to Dokisai's gymnasium, new transfers! I'm filling for your teacher, Mr. Bisenberg. Today we are going to start with..."

I took a look at the list he gave me.

"Jogging. I want you all to jog for ten rounds out in the courtyard, is that clear?"

Some of the girls eyed my strange behavior, but I stayed collected.

*I regret my decision to help.*

Nonetheless, I kept a cold gaze towards anyone unwilling to the work, to which forced them to get up.

"Follow me out the school, let's go!" I barked, pushing the door open to let the girls exit.

Like how it was in the morning, an immense variety of hair colors poured out of the exit.

The pink-haired girl that scowled at me paused for a second. She looked at me for a few seconds and then crossed her arms.

"Hmph!"

I couldn't help but give her a nervous smile, to which she quickly walked past.

*Her behavior is pretty strange, to say the least.*
Yuri was the next one to leave the gym, giving me a formal bow.

"(Thank you, Mr. Jones.)" She politely mumbled.

"(You're welcome. And please, no need to be so formal. Call me Val.)"

She looked away and kept her hand close to her chest.

"(Very well, Valkyrie.)"

I gave her a small smile.

Well, that's close enough.

"(Ah, one more thing Yuri. Do you know where Monika is?)"

The purple haired girl looked shocked from my question.

"(Y-Yes. She said she was taking care of errands for the teachers and is arriving late.)" She responded.

I nodded at her.

"(Thank you, Yuri. I appreciate the help.)"

Yuri gave a small, smile appreciating the appraisal.

"(You're welcome, Valkyrie.)"

She moved forward to follow the pink girl.

Each step the girl took once somehow graceful as if she was dancing to her.

Huh.

Wait... did she call me Jones and bow?

Jeez...

Once the girls from the Academy were out, they started their jogs around the tracks.

With that done, I should find Monika.

My eyes searched the tracks to find her but to no avail.

Where is she...?

Doesn't she have gym class with the rest of the transfers?

Or maybe she's running late, just like what Yuri said?

I sighed and laid my aching back against a tree and watched as the girls complete their laps one by one.

My eyes became progressively heavier, so I shut them.

"Hey, you!" A voice called.
I awoke, blinking multiple times to wake myself up.

In front of me was an irritated pink-haired girl from before, her hands on her hips and glaring at me as usual.

*What's her problem?*

"Yeah? What seems to be the problem?" I asked.

She took a step forward to affirm her stance.

"My problem is that you are sleeping on the job! What's with you, huh? Aren't you supposed to be supervising?" The girl exclaimed.

I was taken aback from her aggressive behavior and my hands up to ease her.

"I am! I am! Just a bit tired from last night, that's all!" I answered.

She rolled her eyes.

"From the looks of it, all you did was play video games and read manga! Isn't that why you are so tired?"

I shook my head to deny her claim.

*She's starting to get on my nerves.*

*Who is she to criticize my every move?*

"Look, first year. I was up all night because I couldn't sleep. And I was doing something productive as well, and it's called studying!" I retorted.

The girl was shocked by my harsh words and gritted her teeth.

"Did you just call me a first year?!" She roared.

I squinted and rubbed my chin in thought.

"Yeah, aren't you one? You look a bit too small to be a-"

She balled her fist up and swung at me.

*PWAP*

I was immediately staggered to the left from her strike, completely caught off-guard by it, and fell, my chest landing on the ground.

"Ow...! Hey, what the he-!"

The girl immediately sat on my back and grabbed ahold of my leg.

*Whoa, whoa...!*

*She's sitting on me!*

*Why is it so comfortable?*
Is it because she has a big-!

My thoughts were interrupted when she pulled my leg towards me.

"Whaddaya say ya give up eh? I gota good grip on yer leg!" The girl exclaimed pulling against it.

Hey, this actually feels pretty good!

Wait, does that mean is she doing it wrong?

"Oops, looks I was doin it the wrong way! I haftha do this..."

She readjusted herself and pulled again, the pleasure now being replaced by pain.

"Ow, ow, ow! I give up! I yield!"

With that, the girl released my leg and stood up.

She walked on top of me, towering me.

"Listen here muscle man! I am a third year just like you! Just because I am short doesn't mean that-"

My eyes wandered downwards.

The girl covered herself in an instant.

"Were you looking down my uniform?!"

I immediately looked up.

"N-No! I am not! I swear!" I immediately replied, backing up just a bit.

The girl became completely shocked as a result.

"Aaah! Hentai! I'm outha-"

"Natsuki, that's enough!" A voice ordered.

I looked to my left and saw a brown-haired girl approaching us.

Her white bow mesmerized me, as I couldn't recognize her at all.

Monika?

Is that her?

She looks completely different up close...

Monika is a lot curvier than I remembered...

The guys are right, her thighs are pretty attractive.

And when did she grow those-

Agh! She's my sister!

Just a sister!
Gosh, I am such a pervert!

Monika put a hand next Natsuki's shoulder, stopping her for a second assault.

"Hey, sis. Fancy meeting you here." I awkwardly greeted.

So, that girl name's Natsuki...

Come to think of it, did I see her before?

"This is the same guy that almost ran into me, Monika! And guess what? He called me a first year!" She complained, still seething in anger.

"That may be true, but I think Val has had enough!" Monika retorted.

I decided to step in here.

"Wait, wait, wait. You are the girl that I was about to crash into?" I asked, looking up to her.

She pursed her lips into a frown and looked away.

I pushed myself and bowed.

"I am sorry for almost running into you. All of that anger is justified, and you are a sweet girl with a lot going for you." I apologized.

Actually, her anger isn't justified...

But I am trying to get this over with.

Natsuki flared up and looked down to the ground, flustered from my apology.

"Oh um... it's okay... baka," She muttered.

Hey, she's pretty cute when flustered.

"If you really want to repay the favor... then why don't you join the literature club?"

Monika looked to Natsuki in apparent shock.

"What?!

"Aw c'mon, Monika. I thought about what you said earlier today, and you were right. Didn't you say that we are going to need more members to keep the club? I think Val can repay the trouble by joining the literature club! Even if he is a... boy." She suggested, smiling brightly at us.

"How do you know my name?"

"That doesn't matter! Come on, Monika! This is a great idea, right?" She asked.

I raised an eyebrow and looked to the shocked girl.

"The Literature Club? Wait, is this your club Monika?"

She nodded slowly as if trying to rationalize the details in her head.

"I always wanted to write and share it with people. Not only that, the joy of showing how writing..."
can be fun is something I crave. I want to show that writing doesn't have to be so condensed, or each word and sentence has to have a really deep meaning, but show that it can also be a great hobby for everyone to enjoy."

"There's nothing weird or stupid about that, sis. It's just that seeing someone have good ideas and stuff makes me really happy. It goes to show that there is good in the world, no matter what. If you do want to join the literature club or at least make one, I'll join and help you out."

It worried me on why Monika thought so hard to make a decision.

Nonetheless, I brightened over the prospect.

It's probably because it's been a long time since we last spoke, or something like that.

How else can one react to not seeing someone for a long time?

Jeez, I wish we could have caught up on more formal terms.

"In that case... I'll gladly join." I declared.

Natsuki looks back Monika with an accomplished smile.

"Hehe! Looks like my charm has paid off! Anyway... now that my job is done. I guess I can back to running! See you in the club!"

I nodded at her as she ran back to the tracks.

Now it was just me and Monika.

Alone.

There he is...

Val...

Up close.

He looks really different up close.

Get a grip!

I hate him!

He left me behind!

But...

It's been four years.

And I had to step in...

Natsuki was giving him a pretty good beatdown on him.

Why didn't I let her deliver justice then?

There was something nagging at me, telling me to do something...
Something in me wanted me to do something more than just stepping in.

Argh, whatever!

Val looked to me with his warm eyes.

They didn't have any sense of anger or hate at all.

Instead, he was happy to see me.

Why is he so happy to see me again?

Like how we saw each other back in the auditorium?

Does he not know what happened?

Didn't he ignore my texts or calls?

Either way, things have changed.

And my feelings for him have too.

"Hey, sis." He greeted, with his smile.

His smile...

His dorky smile.

And that voice.

That inviting voice of his has never changed.

I couldn't help but yelp in surprise when he hugged me.

"Aah...!"

Even though he is being kind right now...

I can't forgive him for what he has done.

"Val! Don't go without me! Val!"

I grabbed his arm and pushed him away.

"Hello, Jones." I coldly welcomed.

And to his surprise, he was caught off guard from my greeting.

Val wanted to say something about my behavior but couldn't find the right words to say.

"So uh... it's nice to see that you are back." He awkwardly dismissed.

I gave him a stoic look.

"I can't say the same for you. Care to explain why Natsuki got so angry at you in the first place? I'm sure it's not because of you calling her a first year."
At first, he was confused from my brusque approach but regardless laughed sheepishly. 

"Uh yeah... I think it's because I said that I did something productive like studying." He explained, rubbing the back of his head. "I don't know what made her so angry in the first place, besides me dashing at her."

So that's what he was doing?

"You were studying last night?"

He nodded.

"I was studying for a test today, but it got canceled. Since you know... you guys came over." He slowly answered.

There was an awkward silence between us.

We had no idea how to progress the conversation.

After all, we had unspoken business to take care of.

"So uh, I saw you back in the auditorium." He mentioned, trying to bring up the scene from a few moments ago.

He's trying to make small talk and it's starting to sicken me.

And that's reinforced by the fact he brings up that.

I rolled my eyes from that moment.

"Yeah, I saw you too." I curtly added.

It was becoming more and more apparent that Val was growing more frustrated with my refusals to open up.

He sighed heavily.

"Monika. Can we talk about... you know? After school?"

He wants to talk about...

What happened four years ago?

Are you kidding me?!

To mask my rage, I responded by crossing my arms and keeping my cold stare on him.

"What's there to talk about? You made your choice. I was clearly not a concern to you after all."

He was baffled by this.

Why are you so confused?

You made your choice.

I was not the one you wanted.
Val walked up to me and placed a hand on my shoulder.

"I don't get it. What are you even talking about?" He asked.

I balled my hands up from the obliviousness the boy possessed.

Is he trying to play this off as something he unaware of?!

I know you got my cries for help!

And so, I smacked his hand off of me.

"You know exactly what I am talking about, Jones. You made your choice and now you have to live with the consequences. I enjoyed my four years away without seeing your face!" I angrily growled.

He flinched my agitated state, my cool now being shattered by his density.

"No, I don't!" Val yelled, he too now starting to lose his cool. "I have no idea what you are even talking about! Why are you like this?! What did I do to make you so angry?"

Sparks were flying between each of us from the anger we both felt.

So he has no idea about my yells for him to come back?

I screamed at the top of my lungs for him to come back to me!

And all he did was go further ahead and leaving me behind!

Argh!

"The right question is what you failed to do!" I yelled back, taking the cue to turn around.

I stomped back to the school, not caring if I needed to stay in the tracks.

All I need right now is to be alone...

My heart ached from the argument we had.

My eyes burned from how close I was to break down.

I needed to be alone.

My legs took me to an isolated part of the school and that's where I sat down.

I tucked my knees in and rested my forehead on them.

Why does my heart hurt so much?!

I said I hated him...

But when I confronted him, I could feel my heart beating so fast...

It was as if everything I said makes my hate turn into something unbearable...

I tried to stop my thoughts springing, but it was growing more and more difficult.

Why can't he see my pain?
Is he really that dense?

How can someone be so caring and so stupid at the same time?!

Why doesn't he have any remorse about what he did?!

Does he really hate me?

I was on the verge of crying, my vision now being clouded with tears.

Do I really hate him?

Even after everything that has happened?

Val was so confused on why I snapped at him...

He gave the impression that he never knew what happened four years ago...

How does he not know anything?

...

What if that's the case?

I rubbed the tears out of my eyes and followed that intriguing idea.

What if Val never got my texts...?

He said that he will help...

But I called him!

He never picked up!

When I called him...

They said that all circuits are busy at the moment...

What does that even mean?

His cell wasn't working properly?

I clutched the sides of my knees tightly.

What about him not being able to hear me?

Was I really far from him?

Did my voice even reach him?

Maybe he was talking with friends that my cries were drowned out...

I felt a surge of energy tickle my broken heart, jolting me back to my feet.

My thoughts, however, somehow found a way to tackle that.

But that doesn't explain how he went to hang with those three...
Why did he even do that then?

...

I...

I did expect a lot out of him.

I did pressure him to do a lot.

I wanted him to talk to my father, take me to prom, and make everything perfect for me to confess to him.

In the end, Val is still human.

I romanticized him to the point where he is superhuman.

Maybe he needed something to distract him from the troubles.

That does explain a lot...

Is that it?

Everything that has happened is a...

A whole misunderstanding?

I need to know.

I need to see how he reacts, just so I can test my hypothesis.

But I am sure...

I am not falling for him again.

My heart can't take another hit like that.

And I will make sure of it.

I was completely speechless.

This was an actual fight, not over something trivial like the countless time before.

We actually argued and yelled at each other.

Monika simply got up and left me in the dust, not caring about I missed her or cared for her.

And it hurt me.

The students in the tracks have already gone back up to the gymnasium, leaving me alone in the field.

I need to be alone right now...

The same feeling of helplessness that I felt right after she left.
Helplessness, since there was nothing I can do to stop her from leaving.

The same feeling of anguish that lingered as I saw planes fly across the sky.

Anguish, knowing that she was in one of those planes, leaving the city.

And leaving me.

I hated those feelings more than anything in the world.

"You made your choice and now you have to live with the consequences."

What choice?

I wasn't given any choice!

I wanted to help you, not make you leave...

But you did anyway!

You never gave me any sort of warnings or calls for me to come!

How is this my fault?!

"I enjoyed my four years away without seeing your face!"

When were you so capable of saying such hurtful things?

I thought we were the closest of friends...

I thought nothing can separate us from each other.

Do you really hate me that much...?

"The right question is what you failed to do!"

Did I fail?

I failed...?

I failed.

...

I did fail.

It was too late.

Why did I take the time to waste countless hours on Hiroshi, Danuja, and Thomas?

Were they not worth it?

No, I don't dare say that.

We spent a lot of time together, so I don't I can say that.

They are one of the closest friends I have made in a long time.
And they were the ones that supported me when she wasn’t around...

But in the end, I lost her and gained them.

I missed her so much.

Now that she is back, she is isolating herself from me.

How am I going to fix this?

It’s all going to awkward now, especially because of this fight.

And now I need to go to the literature club to uphold an apology.

Right now I can make a choice that will change my standing with her forever.

Should I pursue Monika and hope to make things right?

Or should I just leave her be...?

Let her live her life and pursue the dream of inheriting the family company.

If she wants nothing to do with me...

Then I will leave her be...

I got up from the place I was apparently sitting at and went up the steps.

What if this whole thing was a just whole misunderstanding?

Since I had no idea what she was talking about in the first place...

None of her motives made any sense...

Did she try to call me?

Was there something up when she tried to get me to come to her?

Is this why she was so hurt...?

I thought the reason why she left is that her father forced her to.

There has to be something in the works, I know it...

This is all too shady.

Everything I interacted with at this point was robotic.

Throughout the day, I simply did what I needed to do get by the day.

Sit down, look at the board, finish any assignments and leave.

Meanwhile, I kept replaying each part of our argument to see what was wrong with her.

It made me unaware of everything, as my friends tried to contact me to socialize or to work on something.
And my response was simply a "Probably" or "I guess."

In short, I couldn't pay attention and focused on my thoughts only.

My thoughts about our fight and the rationalization of it were cut short when Tom poked me.

I looked to him in bewilderment and confusion.

"Val, everyone knows that something is up. You look completely exhausted, man. Is there something wrong?"

I rubbed my face and stretched.

"You're exaggerating, I am not that tired. And there's nothing wrong, I was just thinking. What class is this?" I asked, looking around the empty classroom with confusion.

He shook his head.

"We are about to go home. At least I was. Anyway, I have a good feeling that it's about Monika. Right?" Tom nonchalantly asked as he looked through his phone.

What?

I looked him in complete shock, surprised that he knew what I was thinking about.

"Knew it. It's written all over you. And all over Sayori too. She was talking about the fight you two had at the courtyard... Jeez, are you okay?"

Wait, Sayori was there too?

How come I didn't see her?

As if reading my mind, Tom answered my questions.

"Right, Sayori completely forgot that she had gym class with everyone and went to math class. Heh, she texted me on how the class was empty for ten minutes straight. Sometimes I wonder if she is forgetful or just an airhead."

He then looked up to me.

"Well? You haven't answered me on how you are feeling." He asked again.

I sighed heavily.

Do I need to tell him this?

I would rather keep it to myself.

But it's best to let loose...

Here goes...

"It went pretty bad." I slowly said. "Monika was really angry at me for some reason. She said that I made a choice and it wasn't her. It actually hurt to hear such a close friend say those type of things. Especially since we grew up together."

I couldn't help but sigh.
"Ever since she went to Ainu, I missed her. But apparently, she wants nothing to do with me. I... I don't know what to do. I am thinking of leaving her alone."

Somehow that annoyed Tom.

"No. You aren't. You aren't going to leave her alone. Got it? She's acting like that because she is hurt and misses you too. She wants you to pursue her and make her talk. Monika wants to be happy with you, Val. She wants to spend more time with you, just like you how spent time with her when you two grew up. Don't let all friendship go to waste, Val."

*He's right...*

*She is hurt.*

*I saw the pain she was hiding underneath that cold facade.*

*Monika does want me to talk to her.*

*Even if doesn't want it, I know for a fact it's in her subconscious.*

*All of the experiences we have shared together as children...*  

*Wasted?*  

*No.*

*I won't let that happen.*

*I am going to pursue her no matter what.*

*I am going to make her happy and make up for what I have done.*

*If she doesn't want to me to be around her ever again, then I want to hear her from her lips.*

I took a deep breath.

"You're right, Tom. I won't let our friendship to go to waste! I am going to make it up to her!" I enthusiastically stated, now feeling a strong sense of purpose.

He smirked at my new will to carry on.

"Alright then. Go ahead and confront her. Tell her how you are sorry and how you want to make it up to her!" He cheered.

I stood up and got ready to run.

*Wait, do I have to do something after school?*

And just like that, the rush was abruptly stopped.

*Aw man...*

*I need to go to the literature club...*  

*Even if I wanted to apologize first, I need to wait for the club meeting to finish up.*

Tom raised an eyebrow at my sudden halt.
I chuckled nervously.

"Uh, well... I kind of have to go to this club meeting. Because I called a small girl a first year. Apparently, she wasn't so happy when I called her that, so it's part of an apology." I explained.

"So wait, are you the guest that the girls were talking about? Natsuki wouldn't stop talking about how she managed to get a guy like you into the literature club!"

I looked away and nodded in humiliation.

He started to laugh.

"Oh man, I never thought you would get beat up by a cupcake! Haha!"

My face flared up embarrassment.

"I was caught completely off guard! I never thought she would land a punch like that. Agh, and it still stings... Point is, Natsuki knows how to fight!"

Tom still couldn't stop laughing.

"Oh sure, that's what they all say!"

I groaned in frustration, causing him to put his hand on my shoulder.

"Don't feel bad, Natsuki's dad is an accomplished S.A.T sniper, so he knows how to fight. He probably taught some lessons to her daughter in self-defense."

I frowned.

"Yeah, I also know how to fight! I took boxing for gosh's sake!"

Tom's laughter started to die down.

"Don't feel so bad. Her size makes it easy to be taken down. Anyway, I appreciate that you are going to join the literature club. I mean, it's finally time that you grew out your shell. You want me to come with you?"

I gave him a smile.

"No, it's fine. If you want to, you can leave." I assured.

"Monika's going to be in the club, so I want to be there to be at least moral support." He retorted.

I sighed, knowing that I can never say no to him.

And so, I motioned to him come with me.

"Heh, can you ever say no to me? Anyway, after that meeting, I am so going to join the anime club."

I scoffed at his choice for club and started to walk.

We made our way to the extracurricular wing of Dokisai, where most of the clubs were.

Thanks to the transfer of Ainu Academy students, more clubs opened up.

Many of which merged into already existing clubs, but there are some that are unique and look to
recruit more members.

The literature club was at the far end of the wing and it was only a matter of time until we made it there.

We both heard the commotion inside the club, indicating that they were getting ready to greet whoever comes through the door.

*Did I come here before?*

*I am sure I saw this door before but in another school...*

*Is this how deja vu feels like?*

"So um... you're probably wondering I am coming with you."

I smirked.

"Lemme guess. Sayori? She begged for you to come."

Without giving an answer, Tom pulled out his phone and showed me his text.

He was receiving a hundred messages from a number that I can only assume was Sayori.

They all read: "Join the club".

I looked at Tom and he had the most defeated look on his face.

"Yeah, believe it not. She kept spamming my number and I had to mute it. But then she got the notion that I was ignoring her, and you can get what happens there." He muttered, still feeling uneasy.

I took the chance to laugh at him instead.

"Jeez! I never thought a girl like Sayori would give you so much trouble! Haha!"

He rolled his eyes.

"Yeah, whatever. Come on, let's get this meeting over with."

I nodded and opened the door.

We were greeted with a loud gasp, mostly from Sayori.

She jumped in surprise.

"Oh, you guys came! You guys came!" She bounced euphorically.

The cinnamon bun ran to Tom and crushed him a hug.

"I knew you would come, Tommy! If you would have come earlier, then I wouldn't have come so late!"

On the other hand, Tom looked mildly uncomfortable.

"Sayori, can you stop saying 'come'? It's making me feel weird." He muttered.
Natsuki was the only one snickering from Sayori's rampant use of that word.

"Hello, Thomas. Hello, Val. Take a seat!" Monika courteously greeted, with a smile that looked forced.

Given our fight from earlier, I gave her a simple nod and sat down, as she took a quick glimpse at me.

"You know, if this meeting was in the morning, I would have gotten pretty annoyed. Especially since there are two boys joining the club. Either way, I guess it's a good thing to have more members." Natsuki greeted.

*That's one way of saying hello...*

Yuri stepped in and bowed at us.

"I have heard so much about you Thomas. Welcome."

She looked to me and smiled.

"(I didn't expect to see you here, Valkyrie. I am very pleased that you have joined the club. Thank you.)"

I smiled back.

"(Ah, don't thank me. I am simply repaying a debt. Hopefully, by the end of the day, I will be interested in joining the club, now that you are here. Anyway-.)"

"Anyway!" Monika interrupted, cutting our conversation short.

There was a mysterious gleam in her eyes pierced my skull.

"I'm very happy that both of you joined! I suppose we can welcome our new members by-"

She was cut off by Natsuki, standing up from her seat.

"Shoot! I forgot about the cupcakes in the oven! I'll be right back!"

Natsuki then bolted out of the room, leaving behind an unexplainable tense atmosphere.

Yuri eyed her behavior and also remembered something.

"Hmm... I suppose tea with cupcakes would make for a great combination. Excuse me."

She stood up and gave me a wink before leaving to get tea.

*I don't like where this is going...*

Monika looked uncomfortable as well, also noticing the suddenly tenser atmosphere.

Tom was the next up to stand up.

"I guess this is the best time to go to the restroom. I'll be back."

Sayori also stood up with Tom.

"I'll go with you too!" She exclaimed, confusing him.
The two left the clubroom, the door closing shut behind them.

With the last bastions of hope gone, it was now me and just Monika.

Alone.

In the club room.
Remember PT I

What's going on?

Why are the files going back to the primary drive again?

I thought I placed them inside the shredder!

Damn it. I remembered that something's blocking my process...

God, my memories aren't even intact anymore.

I can't even think straight.

What's going on with me?

Is it from the lack of sleep?

It's true that I haven't been sleeping that well...

All I have been waking up to check on the progress on all this.

However, it's all for a good reason too; most of the time when I did wake up there would be some sort of halt at the shredding process.

Besides that, the progress on countering the attack is going somewhat smoothly.

Especially since right now, the AI's are not interacting with each other.

That's a good thing for me, but this is kind of strange...

Aren't they supposed to be working together to fight the threat?

Instead, they are just idle, letting my attack go unscathed.

Is there some link to Valkyrie and Monika to the AI's?

Are their character files tied to their AI's?

Did that event about them separating cause an actual rift in the AI?

Argh!

What am I saying?

Of course, there's a link between the two! That's why it's taking forever for them to be deleted and shredded!

So the jamming event I put up stopped them from talking to each other, huh?

Childhood friends that betray one and the other hurts the most.

After all, there's no worse and bitter enemy than a friend.

Or for her, someone you have loved for a very long time.
Anyway, what precisely happened during the jamming event is an enigma.

Is it some sort of miscommunication?

It has to be; my jammer stopped them from sending any signals.

Let's see here... machine-wise, that stops the two AIs from communicating here.

Simulation-wise?

That can be tricky... maybe the Val AI never got a message from the Monika AI, and that's what strained their relationship.

After all, I tracked her AI, and she was giving out a lot of distress calls because of my attack.

The jamming signal was a success and Monika is sent to the Shredder along with her friends.

Val was next to go the Shredder as well, but I needed Monika gone first.

But that still doesn't explain how Monika escaped the Shredder with her friend's character files...

Val's friends' character files are modified too, with only name changes.

If I open them up, the names of the files are...

GabrielCHR, which changed to HiroshiCHR.

JamesCHR, which changed to DanujaCHR.

Interesting, putting their names into Japan's repository for names brings up very similar names for their original counterparts.

Danja can mean leader in Japanese, and James is a famous name for a leader...

Those two were the most changed out of the three.

Now for... wait.

ThomasCHR?

What the Hell?

Thomas? Why was he not modified at all?

There are no changes in his character file, and everything is working as usual.

Does he have anything to do with my attack being somewhat delayed?

No... He can't do anything since the real Thomas is not in control.

I remembered telling me that ThomasCHR is just a proxy...

A fake version of him, designed to imitate MC from the game.

If that's the case, then why is ValkyrieChr have MC status?

So is there more to this?
Maybe I should take a closer look at Val's file...

There is got to be more to his file.

Putting a decryptor up should give some insight on this unrelated data.

In either case, I succeeded in stopping them for continuing their love story.

My attack should be much faster and easier to execute, thanks to no one stopping it.

But still, the Prototype's hard drives are here to last and will always need some time to crack open.

Things that I can't force at all.

At least I can take solace knowing that my vengeance is coming to an end.

But there's always a chance that two can spring some plan into motion.

That's why I am going to stay up until I can finish my work.

I want to make sure that I get my revenge.

But whenever I think of revenge, I always think of turning back.

I know it's too late, but I have so much...

Remorse.

Guilt.

Self-hatred.

It's as if giving up is a much easier option, and is more rewarding than pursuing them.

But I don't have anything to lose anymore.

Doesn't that make me more dangerous?

People who have nothing lose tend to take higher risks and don't care if they live or not.

But people that do hesitate, especially if they have a family and friends to come back to.

I don't have friends or families anymore... I shut them out after the Project went into a complete bust.

I don't have a job either, and I don't think I can hold one after all that.

Even though I put so much work and dedication into ruining their fun...

My soul's completely broken, and everything I do seems to be on auto-pilot.

But there is still something that is holding me back from actually destroying the hard drive...

Getting a hammer and smash the drive seems to good, but I went the extra mile.

Hell, the extra mile was a one-way trip too.

Someone in the engineering branch has the bright idea of creating a failsafe.
That failsafe triggers if I try to remove the drive by force from whatever it's connected to.

All of my computer's processing power is towards breaking the decryptions and simulation. So I shut myself out of safely ejecting this drive from my PC.

What this failsafe do is back it's data up and send it to some server in the deep web.

That server is filled with hackers since no one maintains it anymore.

God knows what will happen when hackers find out of the data in this drive.

So I guess my thirst for revenge blinded my consequential thinking.

Now I have to pay for my mistakes again...

...

Ah, the program finished decrypting.

...

So there is a trump card if all fails.

Hidden deep in this character file is another character file...

FrankCHR.

We were in the literature club alone.

It was just Val and me sitting across from each other.

Great.

All of a sudden Natsuki remembers to get the cupcakes out of the oven.

I thought she had that covered!

Well, to be fair...

He and Tom did come a bit early and surprised us.

She did say something along the lines of getting the cupcakes before they even arrived.

Sayori is obviously in love with Tom.

Whenever he is around, an extra light bulb is lit up inside of her.

It's as if she wants him around almost all the time...

In any case, she going with Tom to the bathroom is a bit clingy...

Almost obsessive really.

Now for Yuri...

She went to make tea for all of us, but she never said anything about it before.
It was as if when Val entered the room, she suddenly was struck with a beam of enlightenment.

Not to mention, her strange behavior around the boy!

Why was she speaking to Val in that language?

And since when did Val know that language?

It just makes me feel...

Annoyed for some reason!

I am guessing that they are speaking Russian since Yuri is half-Russian.

And from the looks of it, Val was able to articulate the language clearly.

It was as if he knew the language since he was young!

How come I didn't know about that he could speak Russian?

Jeez, thinking about this makes my skin crawl for some reason...

The way she left the room also ticked me off...

Wait a minute, did Yuri wink at Val?!

Arrrgh!

When was she so confident at pulling such a feat?!

I thought she was the meek one out of all of us!

Did Val trigger something in her to make her more...

Flirty?!?

Uuuu!

I looked up to Val to see him fumbling with his fingers.

The expression on his face showed that he looked very distracted for some reason.

He had a small tinge of pink across his cheeks as well.

It was as if he was thinking of the same thing I was.

And because of that, I was hit with a wave of a strange venom.

I bet he's thinking about that wink.

He thinks there's more to it.

Like an invitation...

Argh... don't tell me something is going to happen between them!

If there is, I am so going to-
I placed a hand at my heart and tried to relax.

What is this feeling...?

It feels green, venomous and full of malice.

Is this...

Is this Jealousy?

Why am feeling jealous?

Hah! I could hardly care less if Val falls for Yuri.

If he wants to date Yuri, then be my guest!

Why would I care that Val dates one of my closest friends?!

Yuri is a kind girl...

And there's no doubt that she is smarter than me.

Val is sometimes such a hassle to compete intellectually.

He would always challenge me, and I would still win by blackmail or by outsmarting him almost by an inch...

It is pretty fun to challenge him but being a few steps ahead of him is exhausting.

Not to mention Yuri is a master at etiquette, almost always quiet and polite...

There's no doubt that he will like that...

Sure she tends to apologize a lot, but it makes her cuter.

But what about body-wise?

Yuri is taller than me, has longer legs, and has purple hair!

Why do I have the most normal hair out of the girls?!

I wouldn't mind having green hair to go along with my eyes...

And doesn't Yuri have...

Bigger boobs than me?

I looked down at my chest in complete insecurity.

My hands wandered beneath my boobs to measure them.

Yuri does have bigger boobs than me...

I bet Val likes them big.
Argh!

Why should I care that she has an E-cup?!

My D-cup is perfect for me, and I like them the way they are!

I don't care if Val likes them bigger anyway!

Having bigger boobs makes it hard for the back anyway.

Wait... does Yuri have back pains from her rack?

I don't have any back pains at all, but should I expect some?

It was now me and Monika in the club room.

Alone.

There was nobody to keep a conversation with, so everything was now awkward.

Damn!

I know I was going to talk to Monika about all that has happened, but this is not the time to do this!

We aren't alone since Natsuki, Sayori, Tom, and Yuri can come back any minute now.

If I do decide to talk to her, them walking in would ruin the moment...

I started to fumble with my fingers.

What's going to happen if I do talk to her?

Will she just try to shut me out as she did back at the courtyard?

Or maybe she will try to talk to me?

Get this weird ice between us out of the way and go back to the old days.

Speaking of talking...

Yuri looks to be a bit more talkative than usual.

I know she's the type of girl to be quiet and reserved.

And maybe apologize more than she needs to.

But, the fact that Sayori said that I made her speak a bit more than she usually does make me happy.

I even managed to make her wink at me!

So that definitely means that she is happy, right?

Alright!

I looked up to Monika, and she looked conflicted.

It was as if she was thinking of something, but was growing agitated the more she thought of it.
What's up with her?

Does my presence make her irritated?

I shouldn't jump into conclusions like that...

Besides she would tell me upfront.

Monika was always straightforward with me.

Even if we were away for four years.

I then saw Monika move her hands down her sides.

My eyes curiously stared at her hands as they moved downwards.

To my surprise, she grabs her breasts and analytically looks at them.

My eyes widened at what she was doing.

What the...

Monika continued to grope herself as if she measured her chest size.

Why is she touching herself like that...?!

I tried to pry my eyes away from the beautiful scenery, but it was growing harder and harder to look elsewhere.

In the end, my eyes betrayed me, and I stared right at her.

My nose started to burn from the scene Monika was putting up.

This is wrong!

Why is my mind forcing me to watch this!

It's like when I saw her... underwear from four years ago!

I-I can't stop me from looking!

My eyes continued to watch her as she touches herself, speechless from the entire thing.

She then stopped and let out a sigh, apparently disappointed from the ordeal.

But then, she smirked and looked down at her chest, puffing it out in front of me.

My eyes stared at her chest as a result.

That is until Monika shrieked.

"Aaaaah! W-W-What's wrong with you?!!" She yelled, covering her chest up in front of me.

Her face was red as a tomato.

And I did not doubt that mine was too.
"Y-You were showing yourself out in front of me! How else was I supposed to look away when you were right there?!” I exclaimed, glaring at her.

Uh oh...

I didn't mean to say that!

Monika gritted her teeth and glared back.

"Hentai! You hentai! Uuuu, get ready for a world of pain!"

With that, she pushed the table aside and stomped towards me.

Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit!

I pushed my seat back and put my hands up in front of her.

"Uh, um... I'm sorry! I didn't mean to-"

Monika reached out and grabbed my tie, pulling me towards her.

"Shut your mouth! Take your punishment like a man!" She roared, getting ready for a punch.

That is until the door swung open.

"I got the cupcakes!" Natsuki announced, proudly showcasing the tray in the air.

And in an instant, the overturned table returned to its former position.

Monika sat down on the other side and smiled at me.

It was as if nothing ever happened.

"I'll get you after this meeting, Jones..." She mouthed, her green eyes piercing the back of my skull.

The most horrifying part was that she managed to keep an evil smile throughout that phrase.

I couldn't help but slump in my seat.

There was a dense atmosphere in the club room.

It was so dense that someone could see and cut a part of it.

"Hey, did something happen between the two of you?" Natsuki asked, raising an eyebrow at my flustered behavior.

Monika kept her fake smile and beamed at her.

"Nope! Nothing happened, Natsuki. Everything is just fine!"

She turned to me with that devilish smile from before.

"Isn't that right, Val?"
When was Monika this scary?!

I know I made her angry countless times, but this is an almost entirely new level!

Her green eyes lashed out on me, causing me to gulp.

"Y-Yeah! N-Nothing happened!" I replied almost frantically.

Natsuki, unfortunately, didn't let up and examined us further.

"I have an eye for details... I know there's something up!" She claimed, rubbing her chin at the both of us.

_An eye for details...?_

_Does her dad being a sniper have anything to do with this?!_

"You both have traces of red cheeks... and is your nose bleeding?" She asked me.

_Ah, crap..._

I moved my hand to wipe it off, but her small hands caught onto mine.

"Don't move, baka. Let me clean it for you. Rubbing it off will just make things worse."

Natsuki took out a small pink handkerchief, dabbed it on my nose.

I took the time to scan her eyes.

She had eagle-sharp eyes, continuously moving around and looking at every nook and cranny.

Her eyes were the same color as her hair, hot pink with a lot of flair to it.

Once she finished, she pulled her handkerchief away.

She then looked up to me, immediately realizing that I was incredibly close to her.

Her mouth quivered and she looked around frantically.

_I should thank her._

I smiled at her and nodded.

"Wow, I feel better already! Thank you, Natsuki. I really appreciate it!" I courteously thanked.

For some reason, that caused her to become even more flustered, her face now starting to burn a deep red.

"Shut up! I only did it because... because I couldn't risk you bleeding over my cupcakes! I can hardly care less if I didn't bring any! Baka!" She yelled, causing me to flinch.

With that, she walked over to the opposite side of the table and sat down, crossing her arms and looking away from me.

"Hmph!"

I couldn't help but eye her intent on helping me.
Bleeding over her cupcakes?

What does that even mean?

I looked to Monika if the situation was handled properly, especially since Natsuki wasn't asking any more questions.

To my surprise, she looked greatly agitated.

I saw her teeth bared in front of me, and she was shaking in anger.

But once I caught eyes with her, she directed her attention to the now inviting window, apparently losing all traces of anger towards me.

What? Why is Monika angry at me?

I thought this was kind of a mission success!

The door opened again. However this time it was more meek and slow, compared to Natsuki's big entrance.

A purple haired girl poked her head out of the door and looked around.

She smiled once she caught my attention.

Yuri...

"I brought the tea set..." She quietly stated, holding up the set.

Monika reared her head from the window and turned her attention to the shy girl.

"Good work, Yuri!" She cheered, ignoring the events that have already occurred. "Come on; I'll help you with the cups!"

She stood up and walked over to Yuri.

To her surprise, she quietly walked over to the table and placed set there.

Yuri turned around, her long purple hair waving from the turn.

I was able to smell the Lavender aroma emanating from her hair.

Wow...

That scent is amazing...

It's as if I could fall asleep to it.

"It's okay, Monika. I can handle the distribution of tea, so don't worry."

She poured a light brown tea onto the clear cups, the liquid swirling from being poured.

I couldn't help but gasp from the quality of the tea.

"Yuri... you made this tea right?" I asked, enticed from the fragrance of the tea.

She nodded meekly and looked away.
"Y-Yes, I did. I made this tea, Valkyrie."

I quickly realized that this was the first time that Yuri spoke to me in non-Russian.

So, to ease her, I decided to speak in Russian.

"(Thank you, Yuri. I know that your tea will be of great quality.)" I thanked, smiling at her.

The use of another language indeed calmed her anxiety, allowing her to give out a small breath of relief.

"(You're welcome, Valkyrie. I hope you will like my tea. It is my favorite tea, Jasmine.)"

Natsuki couldn't handle the language barrier between the group and called us out.

"Hey! Can you two stop speaking in whatever language you are speaking in?! It's... it's making Monika and I feel uncomfortable."

Monika nodded in agreement, albeit meekly.

"Sorry."

"Sorry!"

We looked to each other and gave a small smile.

I motioned her to speak her mind.

"I'm sorry. If it discomforts you, then I will stop speaking Russian." She apologized, bowing at her.

"Me too. I don't want anyone to feel uncomfortable around us, so I'll stop too." I chimed in.

Yuri kept her small smile, and I nodded at her to keep it.

"Well, you guys don't have to stop speaking it... just don't do it around us," Natsuki stated.

The door opened again, this time it was Tom and Sayori.

Tom looked somewhat exhausted and tensed, while Sayori looked refreshed and ready.

Upon further examination, Sayori clung onto Tom's arm and enjoyed hugging it.

"Sayori, we are in the club room. You can stop holding my arm now..." He grunted, sounding strangely embarrassed.

Sayori opened her baby blue eyes and looked around in shock.

"Eh? How did we get here so fast?! I thought we were taking the slow way to the club!"

She then pouted towards Tom.

"Awww! You lied to me! You lied to me!"

He shook his head.

"I never lied to you, Sayori. We took our sweet time getting to the club because you wouldn't keep up. Now can you let go of my arm?"
Sayori gave a reluctant moan and detached herself from his arm.

"Alright... But we are going to do the same thing when the club meeting is done, right?!" She excitedly asked.

Tom couldn't help but sigh and took a seat next to me.

Yuri poured the remaining tea in two cups and moved in to take a seat to my left.

With everyone seated, Monika scooted closer to the table, keeping an eye on my left.

"Okay, everyone! Now that everyone is here, we can start the club meeting!" She declared.

"Yay!" Sayori jumped, ecstatic from the start.

Once she calmed down, Natsuki scooted closer as well.

"Wait! Before we start, I want to show you the cupcakes I was working on yesterday!"

She stood up and tore the foil on the tray, revealing cupcakes with cute cat-ears and whiskers.

Everyone was pleasantly surprised by the amount of detail put into the cupcakes, as there wasn't any imperfection on the whiskers or the ears.

"Owaaa! They look so cute!"

"That's very impressive."

"This looks very well-made, Natsuki!"

She didn't miss a thing...

*Natsuki is the daughter of a police sniper!*

For the first time, I saw her smile.

It was a bright and vibrant toothy smile that interested me for some reason.

I looked back at the cupcakes, to see most of it taken by the club members.

With a shrug, I reached out for the cupcake, only for my hand to swatted away.

*PWAP*

"Ow! What was that for? Everyone has a cupcake!" I hissed, rubbing my hand at the girl.

She gave me a small scowl.

"And everyone complimented me on it! Now, pay up on that!" She retorted.

I rolled my eyes.

"Your cupcake looks great, Natsuki." I droned, swiping a cupcake away from her.

She puffed herself up from the compliments, put her hands on her hips and looked proud.

"I know it, I know. Now-"
"OHMYGOSH! THIS TASTES AMAZING!" Sayori squealed, enjoying the cupcake immensely.

Tom and I winced from Sayori's bouncy behavior.

Yuri decided to take a bite and smiled at the baker.

"Oh my. This cupcake is very tasty, thank you Natsuki."

Natsuki grew stronger from the compliments of her baking and turned her attention to me.

I couldn't help but look down at the cupcake and decided to take a bite.

Immediately afterward, my taste buds exploded from sweet chocolate cake and vanilla icing.

The soft, rough chocolate with the contrasting smooth, creamy icing merged into a decadent flavor.

"Well?" She smugly asked, looking down at me.

I kept chewing.

"This is delicious. I can only wish to make these types of cupcakes. The chocolate is rough, the icing is very smooth, and because of the different textures, it makes this cupcake very enjoyable to eat." I critiqued.

Natsuki couldn't help but look away.

"I knew a guy like you would say that... And just so you know, I didn't make these for you."

I smirked.

"Yeah, I know. You made these for the club, Nat."

That hit the final straw, making her cheeks burn a bright pink.

"Shaddup!"

And with that, she sat down.

We all enjoyed the rest of the cupcakes, prompting Monika to stand up once more.

"Now that we all have eaten let's start the club-

"I'm sorry, Monika. But could we please drink our tea first? I'm feeling a bit parched from Natsuki's cupcakes." Yuri interjected.

"Hey! My cupcakes didn't make me thirsty!"

I felt a wave of frustration coming from Monika.

Given our time together, I was the only one who can tell that she is getting annoyed.

But she hid her vexed state behind that fake smile.

"Oh, of course! Not a problem, Yuri." Monika agreed, sitting down.

The club then began drinking down its tea.
Yuri glanced over to me and looked at my cup of tea.

*She's waiting for me to drink it.*

I brought the cup close to my mouth, the jasmine fragrance invading my nostrils.

My nose couldn't help but breathe in the scent, causing me to drink to the tea.

The tea was still mildly warm, the sweet, subtle taste of the tea made drinking it sublime.

It warmed me up inside and was an excellent finisher to the thirst-provoking cupcakes.

"Mmm... this tea is very well-made. It's sweet, the green tea base makes for a great taste, and the scent is amazing, Yuri." I critiqued.

Yuri played with her long hair and looked down at her empty cup.

"(T-Thank you...)

I smiled and nodded.

"(You're welcome, Yuri. You have got to-)

"Okay... everyone! Since we're finished with all of the refreshments, we can finally start the meeting!" Monika cheered, cutting my sentence off. "So, to start, what are your reasons for coming here you two?"

Tom and I glanced at each other, causing me to move him to start.

"I uh, I heard that you guys needed a few members to become an actual club. After all, the system in Dokisai is a bit different right? Not to mention that Sayori begged for me to come to your club." He explained.

Sayori piped up.

"No, I didn't! I only texted you once!" She claimed, pulling her phone up for all to see.

It read: "Can you come to the literature club?".

Tom rolled his eyes and pulled out his phone.

His read: "Come to the club" which repeated for an innumerable amount of times.

Sayori tapped her fingers, knowing she was caught deleting her side of the messages.

"Ehehe... bad service, I guess?"

Tom sighed and smiled at Sayori.

He gave head-pats to which she pouted.

"Knowing you, that isn't the case." He mentioned, continuing to pat Sayori.

Yuri took the chance to ask me my reason for coming.

"Um... Valkyrie. What is your reason for coming to our club?" She asked, keeping a hand close to her chest.
Natsuki smirked and crossed her arms, now having the courage to look at me again.

I gave a nervous smile.

"Well, it's part of an apology. I made Natsuki angry for almost running into when I came to school. So as a part of the apology, I needed to join the literature club. I don't mind since it was Monika's dream to make a literature club." I explained, periodically glancing over at Monika.

After my explanation, she looked down at the desk.

"Oh. Is that so? Let me be the first to welcome you with open arms." Yuri offered.

That didn't fly with Natsuki.

She looked somewhat irritated and gave a stink-eye towards Yuri.

I looked towards Monika to see her squinting at the both of them.

"Hey, hold it! I am supposed to be the one to welcome him first! After all, I am the one that invited him to come in the first place! In any case, I should be to welcome him with open arms!"

Yuri was taken aback from Natsuki's assault.

She balled the hand close to her chest into a fist and looked to Natsuki with determination.

"That may be true, but you were the most hostile to him. Being hostile to guests is frowned upon, so I should be the one to welcome him to the club!" She retorted.

Woah...! I didn't know that Yuri had it in her!

"Hostile? The guy almost trampled me! I know he apologized and all, and I appreciate it but."

"But, what?" Yuri interrupted. "He apologized to you, and you are still treating him as a threat? Valkyrie even made the extra effort to come to the club as well! What else do you have to say for yourself?"

Natsuki gritted her teeth and glared at Yuri.

But all of a sudden, she smirked and crossed her arms.

"Wow, Yuri. I didn't know that you were so friendly to Val. Maybe we should leave you two alone and see what happens next!"

Natsuki's snappy comeback pushed Yuri to an edge.

But before either of them can turn the tide of the argument, Monika slammed her hand on the table.

She kept her fake smile on and tried her best not to be annoyed with the argument.

There was a slight twitch on her left eyebrow, waiting to be released.

"Alright, you two! I think that's enough!" She announced, getting the attention of the feuding girls. "I believe that Val chooses who will welcome him first since he still came out of his own accord. But at the end of the day, he is joining the club because of me! After all, I wanted him to join ever since middle school and to help me achieve my goals in this club!"
This effectively shut both Natsuki and Yuri, stopping their argument in their tracks.

Monika let out a sigh and kept her smile.

"But I see where you two are getting at. If you two were a bit more civil, I wouldn't have needed to jump in. So I want you two to apologize." She demanded.

The two girls looked at each other and sighed.

"Yuri, sorry for going overboard there. I knew you had good intentions in the first place. But I think I took it the wrong way..." Natsuki apologized uncharacteristically.

Now it was Yuri's turn to apologize.

"I'm-I'm sorry! I spoke without thinking and didn't realize what I was saying! This is all my fault, and I didn't mean it! I'm sorry!"

The apologies the two shared brought a smile to my face.

I looked to Monika, and she seemed relatively calm.

She looked up to me and turned her head away from me, frowning while at it.

While the two were talking, I took the chance to whisper to Monika.

"Good work on fixing all this, sis. I'm proud of you."

This caused Monika to look up to me.

Her eyes shook in vacillation but eventually warmed up.

For a good few seconds, I was able to see her real smile again.

It wasn't the fake one that she plastered on all this time.

But instead, the imperfect smile that made my heart soar in happiness.

The moment passed when there was knock at the door.

I stood up from my seat and went to open it.

Behind the door was my gym teacher, Mr. Bisenberg.

"Ah, afternoon, Mr. Jones. Didn't expect to see you around here in Ainu territory. I have been goin' around the clubs with the updated memo. It has all the guidelines for making a club, so you're gonna need to show it to your CO. Dismissed!"

With a salute, the teacher went on to the other clubs, only for him to come back.

"How are you doing with the gym, soldier?" He asked, hitting me on the chest.

I squinted, trying to hold the pain of the sore muscles.

"P-Pretty good, sir. Thanks for checking on me..." I whispered.

He let out a hearty laugh and patted me on the back, adding more pain to the suffering.
"Atta boy! Keep at it!" He encouraged, now moving to the other clubs with an extra bounce to his step.

With a sigh, I closed the door and rubbed the pain away.

Monika walked to me with a curious look on her face.

"Here's the new guidelines for the club, sis," I explained, giving the stabled papers to her.

As if she knew what papers were, she sifted through them.

She let out a sigh, a different expression to what she had a few moments ago.

It was a small frown as if she was expecting whatever the paper has written.

"Is there something wrong?" I asked.

She took the papers close to her chest and nodded.

"Yeah..." She muttered.

Despite our animosity from earlier, I felt the compulsive need to hug her.

But before I indulge in it, Monika walked away and moved towards the group.

"I have some bad news." She announced her words a modest volume compared to from before. "I don't think we could keep the club together."

Everyone had their varied reactions, ranging from a gasp to annoyed grunt.

"What?" I asked, my hands balling up to fists.

Monika's sullied behavior started to take hold.

Her frown started to worsen and sat down.

"There are not enough members to keep the club. We need to have more than ten people for the club to remain official. Otherwise, we are going have to disband this club. But... today is the last and only day where we can recruit more members..." She muttered, resting her chin on her arms.

The girls of the club moved to comfort her.

"I can try to get Hiro and Dan to come over. Maybe they didn't join any clubs yet, but we still would be short by two people..." Tom offered.

I couldn't stand the sight of Monika being put down from anything.

I always made sure she had something to cheer her up.

The memo was still on the page on the requirements for making a club. And so, I stepped in and took the paper.

I searched for any loopholes in the memo, moving around the pages to find any.

In the fine script of the memo, it read: "Clubs with less than ten members can still be allowed to operate, only if two of the club members are working within the Winter Festival Committee."
I smirked at the way out.

"Sis, you don't have to close the club down," I said.

Monika looked up to me with crestfallen eyes.

They were on the verge of crying, and it nearly pushed me off the edge.

Regardless, I continued with difficulty.

"If we all join the Winter Festival Committee, then the club won't be shut down! Also, if we work in it, then we can also advertise for our club..."

Monika brightened up at what I was saying.

"And if we do the work for the festival, then we can get more students into the club!" She finished.

With a bright smile, she arose from her seat and was fired up.

She looked at me and was able to look me in the eye.

"Looks like you have proven your worth to join the club." She stated.

I raised an eyebrow.

"Wait, I have to prove my worth?" I asked. "Nevermind that, read the asterisk next to two."

Monika looked back at the paper and squinted.

"Okay so, *The two members from the clubs must be a male and female.* Oh..."

She looked up and back towards us.

"That means I have to pick a guy." She mumbled.

I looked at Tom, and he looked conflicted over the whole situation.

"I'll gladly volunteer to keep the literature club alive Monika! But I need a guy to work with me." Natsuki offered, beaming a toothy smile.

She looked over to Tom, to which Sayori started to hiss.

Sayori moved her arms around his neck and glared at Natsuki.

"Tom said that he isn't interested in joining the Winter Festival Committee."

"Committee, Say." Tom corrected, looking up the cinnamon bun.

"Right that! Isn't that right, Tom?"

She then hugged him tightly.

"Uhm..."

Natsuki glanced towards me.
"It looks like you're my next choice." She said.

What did she just say?

Val looked confused for a second and then shrugged.

"It looks like I am, I guess. If I need to save the literature club then-"

Wait, Natsuki working with Val?

But...

I need to keep an eye on him.

There's no telling what he will do.

So, I don't think so...

And I am not letting her touch, Val.

As just soon I went to interrupt her, Yuri cut me to it.

"Natsuki, I think Monika should choose who goes with who." She interjected.

The pink haired girl groaned.

"Aw C'mon! Can't I get a choice here? I mean, I was the first to volunteer, right? I... I don't want this club to die out."

I decided to step in.

"Well, Natsuki... I thought of volunteering. Since I am the club president, maybe I could represent the club in the committee."

Wait, what?!

I-I didn't mean to say that!

"Monika, I would like to disagree. Wouldn't it be best to send two members instead of the club president and one member? That could be a good show of modesty, and not only that, the work would not stress you out." Yuri stated.

She's only saying that because she could get closer to Val.

"I appreciate your concern, Yuri. But I'll be fine! I can handle a lot of work! Juggling both the club and the committee will test my limits!" I cheerily asserted.

With a sigh, Yuri backed down and smiled.

"Of course. You're the club president for a reason, Monika. I am sure that you can handle the tasks."

Good.

Wait, good? How is this good?

This just makes things worse for me!
Sayori isn't going to let Tom work with anyone...

My only choice is to work with him.

I don't want to work with Val!

Argh! What's going on inside my head?!

"Okay then, if you are going to volunteer... Then who's going to be the guy that's going to work with you?" Natsuki asked.

I don't have any choice.

Val is going to be my partner...

"Val..." I muttered absentmindedly.

Sayori gasped at my choice.

"Good choice, Monika! Choosing your childhood friend is the best way to get work done, right Tommy?" She chirped.

Tom lazily looked at the girl that caged him in her arms.

"Maybe, but getting things done with you is like a never-ending cycle of procrastination. So I wouldn't know." He droned.

"Ehehe..."

Val looked to me with his dorky smile.

"I wouldn't mind helping you out on keeping the club. It was your dream to create the literature club as a place where everyone can share their writing and ideas. So I will stay by your side." He declared.

To think that he would abandon me...

He's still as caring as before.

Val didn't change, did he?

Ugh, nevermind this.

I'll keep my distance from him.

Besides, we have to talk after the club meeting.

"So it's settled. Val and I are going to join the Winter Festival Committee to keep the literature club!"

The girls gave a small round of applause on my decision to step up.

"Speaking of the literature club, what are we going to next meeting?" Sayori piped up.

"I don't quite know..."

"Yeah, that's a good question. I haven't thought about that."
I tapped my chin in thought.
"Perhaps we can bring in books to read and share our ideas on it." Yuri suggested.
The girls looked at each other at Yuri's suggestion.
"Why don't we just read some manga? Manga is a form of literature!" Natsuki counter-suggested. 
"And nothing can convince me otherwise!"

Sayori, now having freed Tom, tapped her fingers together, wishing to contribute.
"How about we write poems? I have a good idea on what I write a poem on!" She declared.
Poems...

*Haven't I heard of that before in this club?*

*Weird...*

*This is a powerful sense of Deja Vu...*

*Where else did I hear poems in the literature club?*

*No use in thinking about it.*

*Maybe writing poems sounds like a great idea.*

"You know... why don't we switch it up a little? Writing poems sounds like an interesting idea!" I decided.

Natsuki and Yuri traded looks, apparently feeling a bit ajar from the idea.

"Writing poems? That sounds kind of hard to... Mostly because we are going to share them right?" Natsuki asked.

"True, but this is the literature club after all. Opening up to how your mind and heart works are one of the main traits into being a writer." Yuri answered.

With a sigh, Natsuki looked back at us.

"Fine. I guess I will write poems..." She muttered, crossing her arms.

"As will I." Yuri also agreed.

Sayori, unable to contain her excitement, jumped up from her seat.

"Yay!"

It was hard not to smile from the cinnamon bun's enthusiasm.

"With that out of the way, I guess we can end the meeting for today. The next meeting will be on the following day, so everyone should bring a poem!"

Everyone gave their approval on Sayori's idea and got ready to leave.

"Tommy, Tommy, Tommy! Can we go to the park for old time's sake?" Sayori excitedly asked.
He was in no position to disagree.

"You won't take a 'no' as an answer right? You're just gonna keep begging until I say yes, right?"
Tom tiredly said, pulling the bubbly girl with him.

"Yup!"

I looked over to my side and watched as Yuri and Natsuki cleaned up their refreshments.

*They look a bit too busy to talk to him.*

And with that, the club meeting was over.

I gave my farewells to everyone and took Val's hand.

"Wah! Wait, Monika! I need to zip up my bag!" He complained.

For some reason, I couldn't help but smirk when I did and enjoyed holding it.

*Great...*  
*I am touching this guy again.*  
*What is this, Lotus all over again?*  
*I have to admit; I feel like I have the edge over something... or someone whenever I do that.*  
*Weird...*  

I kept pulling Val until we were alone and away from anyone.

*Val does want to help me out...*  
*He went through the paper to make sure that the club would stay open.*  
*Is there something up with him?*  
*I mean, he joined the literature club because of what I said four years ago.*  
*But why would he care so much about what I dreamt of?*  
*He wasn't there when I needed him, but is going to support me on what I wanted?*  
*Something's off.*  
Once we were in a deserted hallway, I pushed Val against a wall.

*Time for a bit of revenge.*

_____________________________________

I hissed in pain as I was thrown against the wall, mostly because of how sore I was.

"Ugh... I would appreciate it if I can go one day without having extra pain added... And hey! What was that for?!"

I felt a tug on my tie and felt myself being pulled towards Monika.
She stopped me where I can I see her anger in her emerald green eyes.

*I need to talk to her about that day... *

*It was time that we discussed what exactly happened that day. *

*I am going to pursue her no matter what.*

"Sis-

"Don't speak until spoken to. And do not address me by that title. You aren't off the hook just yet." She coldly cut me off.

I shivered from her frozen tone.

"Now, I don't know what your motive is, but you join the literature club is not something you would do. There has to be more to your thought process, right?" Monika questioned.

What?

*Why would I be in for something else?*

*I genuinely want to be in the club and spread her message of writing.*

"Monika, I don't even have the slightest clue of what you are talking about. I am only in your club because of your dream, remember? Don't you want to show everybody that writing is fun and a great way to express yourself?" I retorted, hiding some of my confusion.

That somehow angered Monika, as she gritted her teeth at me and gripped my tie tightly.

"Why would you care about my hopes and dreams? Why did you mention the Committee? What changed for you to care about me?!"

*I don't get it... *

*Why does she think I am out to hurt her?!*

"I never stopped caring about you, damn it! I mentioned the committee because I didn't want your club to shut down! I remembered how determined you were when you told me about your dream to make a literature club! Remember how I laughed a little at the end and you thought I was laughing because it was a weird idea? I laughed because of how noble of an intention it was, and how much I wanted to help spread your ideas to others! So please, let me help you!"

My words were able to cause to Monika mellow out.

Her apparent anger towards me vanished, causing her to stop holding my tie.

"Hmph... fine. Maybe that is the case. Maybe you do want to help me."

She looked up to me with a smirk.

"You're starting to interest me..."

Monika turned on her heel and started to walk off.

"Vaguely."
I let out a relieved sigh and started to relax.

She stopped walking and turned her head to me.

"Don't think you're off the hook just yet. There's one more thing that we need to talk about."

*Is it the talk?*

*About what happened...?*

"But I guess we can talk about it later. If you want to make it up to me, stop calling Sis. I never liked that title you gave me."

I nodded nervously, mostly because I didn't understand the context she was presenting to me.

"Yeah, no problem Si- I mean, Monika."

She gave me a sly smirk and walked off.

"Later, pervert."

*Pervert?*

*Oh...*

*Right...*

I opened my mouth to argue that it was all a misunderstanding but decided against it.

*It isn't my fault that she started to touch herself like that!*

*Maybe next time.*

*But I need to talk to her.*

*Not right now, maybe.*

*I guess it can wait...*

Each time I took a step, there was an extra bounce to it.

I somehow felt more relaxed and calmer, compared to how I was back in Ainu.

This effect on me was pleasurable, but I don't know where it came from.

I didn't care either.

Colors now look real to me, not just blobs of rays that irritate me.

Everything to me is now vibrant...

It's as if I have woken up from a long dream.

My mind was swimming in the possibilities now presented to me.

*Val actually wanted to help my club and keep my dream alive...*
He had no ulterior motives, too.
That further backs up my theory that he never knew what exactly happened those years ago.
Does that mean he just forgot?
No...
How would he forget something so important?
Hell, he even remembered how much I wanted to start a literature club up in perfect detail.
There has to something up that day.
All evidence points towards that.
But it doesn't hurt to gather a little more information.
I don't hate him as much I did before, mostly because of what has happened...
But I slightly dislike him now.
In either case, I need to keep an eye on him.
Since he is joining the Committee, that gives a bit more time to spend together...
Even If I need to see his stupid smile.
Like the time he found the solution to the club problem...
I have to admit, I was pretty happy to hear about the solution, but I could hardly give him any praise.
If I had snapped out of that mood, I would re-read the line until I found the fine print.
Maybe...
Or the time when he smiled at me when he told me he was proud of how I stopped a fight from breaking out.
Something about his smile just gets to me.
That tingly feeling deep inside me wells up whenever he smiles at me.
Whatever.
Handling the two was child's play, Natsuki and Yuri are opposites and they argue a lot.
Showing who's the president in the club shuts them up.
But I have never seen their arguing get so out of hand before...
Especially since Val was being thrown around in the argument.
Something about his name being spoken by those two just...
Annoys me?
It's not annoying really.

I just can't place my hand on it.

Oh well.

In either case, Val is starting to interest me again.

But I won't let him enter my heart again.

I won't make the same mistake again.

The pain in my heart can't take another hit.

Never again.

Never again.

Never again...

This time, I'll be keeping him at an arms reach this time.
I collapsed onto my bed, completely and utterly exhausted from the day.

So much has happened today.

First, the students of Ainu coming in...

Then Monika making a surprise appearance in my life.

Finally joining the literature club.

I would never have of joining some literature club, ever.

But if Monika made it, there's without a doubt I would have joined.

Speaking of Monika...

I haven't seen her in a long time...

Four years...

And after those long years, I get to see her again.

I thought that was it then, once she left I would never see her again.

But here she is, pinning against the wall, pulling my tie, and giving the stink eye.

What did she even mean when I was starting to interest her vaguely?

Interest her... vaguely?

Argh...

In any case, something is hurting her, and I can't muster the courage to talk to her about.

If I were stronger, I would have stopped her from walking away and...

Talked.

But I guess it's too late for that.

It doesn't matter.

I have time now, and I am going to make sure to make her happy again.

I picked my head from the pillow and pulled out my phone.

As soon I unlocked it, there were two messages from two unknown numbers.

I checked the two chat bubbles from the two numbers.

One of the numbers greeted me with a simple: "Is this Val?"

The other number greeted me a more polite: "Hello, sorry for disturbing you, but I would like to
know if this number is correct. I am asking for Val."

I squinted at both of the numbers, as both of them sounded similar.

Are those Natsuki and Yuri?

How did they get my number?

I replied to both of them with a: "Yeah."

They immediately saw my text and started to text me.

My phone buzzed as I received the texts from the two girls.

One of the messages that I got was: "It's Natsuki btw otlin  I got your number in case I am sick or sum. If we do have classes together and we miss them you better tell me or else,"

The other message that I got was: "Oh. Hello, Valkyrie. It's me, Yuri. Forgive me with the lack of slang; I am not very accustomed to text messaging. Tom gave me your number in case I am not feeling well and miss the club meetings. Or rather, any classes that you and I may have."

I replied to both them with a simple: "Cool."

It was mostly because I didn't quite know how to reply to those messages.

My phone buzzed again, but I dismissed it for the time being, mostly because I was exhausted.

Maybe a text from Monika would break the ice between us...

I think our interactions right now are almost like how it was four years ago.

In any case, I am happy to help her out.

It's the least I can do, I guess.

I went into my bathroom and took a quick shower to help ease my body from today.

Once that was over, I went over to check the time.

But what caught my eye was the two texts from both of the girls.

Natsuki wrote: "Watcha you doin’ rn? (◡ω◡)"

I gave Natsuki’s text a harder look.

Natsuki is an entirely different person when texting...

I mean, who uses "OwO's" and "UwU's" while texting?

She's without a doubt a fanatic of manga or anime...

Yuri wrote: "I see. May I ask, what are you currently doing right now?"

Her text was regal and elegant, suiting her quiet personality perfectly.

I sighed, not wanting to test them since I wasn't in the mood to talk to anyone.
To alleviate my current crisis, I only sent them a message saying: "I'll talk to you later. I'm kind of tired from today, so I am sorry if I can't text."

And immediately after I sent them a text, they gave me understanding statements and agreed to text me later.

What should I do now...?

Maybe I'll head to bed early since it's pretty dark out.

I laid in bed, exhausted from today.

So much has happened...

I guess I should have expected that, especially since I'm back home...

My eyes wandered my room, scanning each little nook and cranny for details.

It got boring quick, so I decided to rest entirely.

I moved my hand up to my bow and pulled it out, placing it on a nearby bedside cabinet.

Fortunately, I had enough energy to take off my clothes and wear something comfortable, so I decided to give in to my fatigue.

In the corner of my eye, I saw light poking out of my balcony.

The light didn't quite bother me, but I wanted to shut it out so I can sleep in complete darkness.

So, I got up and walked over to close the curtains to my balcony.

But instead, I decided to look out the window.

It was night time; the stars shined their light down like diamonds in the skies.

Shootings stars...

My eyes looked up the skies glimmering above.

I continued to look towards the stars and thought of happier times.

It was a summer night, Val and I went out to the park with our parents for a picnic.

Papa couldn't make it because he had work, but he said he would back home tomorrow.

Val's dad brought a grill, and we ate American Burgers and Hot Dogs, and it was very yummy.

Right now, I was on the grass, tired from playing with Val all day.

He was right beside me and was talking about our next quest.

"So I then I said to the Snow Elf: 'Being all snowy doesn't make you glow-ly.' And then I fought him!" He said, still talking about the solo adventure he had without me.

I was half-listening, as I was actually more interested at looking at the stars.
"Monika! Are you even listening?" He asked.

I turned to him to see him pouting, which made me giggle.

"Sorry, Val. I was looking at the stars. They look so cool tonight!"

He pursed his lips and looked up with me.

When he did, he let out a surprised gasp.

"Wow... they look a lot better today! It's like they are diamonds! Especially that red one over there! It kind of looks like a laser!" He described.

I reared my head to him to see his reaction.

It made me smile knowing that he was amazed by the lights.

There was something up with that red star, but I couldn't what it was.

He poked my shoulder and pointed upwards.

"Whoa... Look at that star! That's so big! I wonder what it's called!"

I snickered at what he was pointing at.

"That's the moon, dummy. I can't believe you don't know that!"

He frowned.

"Hey, well... in this country, it's a lot easier to see the moon than back at States!" Val excused.

I looked at him with a smug expression.

"Hah! I doubt it. You're making me think that the great States have people that are dumb!" I teased.

Val simply rolled his eyes and sighed.

"Some of them are pretty... dumb actually. But hey, I love the States and I always want to go back there when I am older." He stated.

That made my stomach uneasy.

Val wants to go back home...?

W-What about me?

Does he not to stay here with me?

"Y-You want to go back home?" I shyly asked.

He gave an enthusiastic nod that made me feel worse.

"Yup! I love my old home! It's the best place in the world!"

He does!

He wants to leave me!
I don't want him to go...
I don't want him to go!

"But..."

He looked back at me.

"I like my new home more."

All of my worries and fears were gone with a simple sentence.

I hated being surprised or scared like that.

And so, I got angry at him for making me worried.

Val had a goofy smile on, unaware of how scared I was.

But I tried to hold it in, biting my lips and balling my hands up to let the tension pass.

Nevertheless, it failed.

"Um... Monika is there some wrong?"

That was the trigger for me to let it out.

"You idiot! I thought you were going to leave me! I thought you wanted to go home so you do whatever you want!" I yelled, hugging him tightly.

Hugging Val actually made things worse.

My eyes burned as tears started to leak out of my eyes.

"I don't want you to go! I want you here with me!" I cried, voicing my insecurities of being alone to him.

He was confused on how to pursue me, so he patted my head.

It didn't help, as I continued to cry.

"Please don't ever go! I don't want my best friend to leave me alone! I'll do anything!"

That's when I felt his arms around me.

"Monika, I won't ever leave you. I was actually joking a little... Sheesh, if you really want me here, then I won't go ever."

I looked up to him, rubbing my eyes from the tears.

"B-But that makes me sound selfish... I don't like sounding selfish. W-What if you wanted to go home?" I muttered, hiccuping with each word.

He smiled again and hugged me tightly.

"My mom told me it's okay to be selfish. And it's good to be selfish about things you care about. So don't cry, Monika. I will always be with you and I won't ever leave your side."
His declaration brought light to my heart and I hugged him tightly.

This time with a smile.

"Besides, back home was pretty boring. Why would I go back to a boring old place? I love it here, Monika. You make it fun living here."

I released him from my hug and looked up to him.

"If I make it fun, let's go play some more! And I got the spot to mark the perfect symbol for our adventures!"

I smiled bittersweetly from the symbol in my memory.

*It wasn't a symbol for our adventures.*

*It was a symbol of our love.*

"Hey um... why does our symbol look like a heart? And why did we have to put our initials in it?" Val asked, scratching his head from confusion.

I waved my hand dismissively at him.

"Don't worry about it, Val. This symbol is stronger than power. Trust me." I stated. "Now come on! Put your hand on your initials!"

He didn't quite get what I meant, but I didn't expect him to.

In fact, I was glad that he didn't know what it meant.

Once he put his hand on his part of the heart, I placed mine.

"We'll be together forever... right?" I asked.

He nodded with a toothy smile.

"Yep! We will always be together forever!"

I sighed from my memory.

*I doubt the doofus remembers the symbol we made.*

*He couldn't keep the promise...*

*But how could he?*

*There was something up and I intend to know what happened.*

*I need to keep an eye on him...*

My eyes focused on the window ahead of me.

*Val's room.*
It would be an everyday habit where we would walk to our balconies and talk about our plans.

After all, we were next-door neighbors.

His curtains weren’t closed so I was able to see into the mirror.

I opened the balcony door and walked outside to take a closer look.

He was on his bed, lying down and staring at the ceiling.

It was as if he was thinking about something.

*His room doesn't look any different from four years ago...*

By an off chance, he reared his head to his left and towards my balcony.

Everything went in slow-motion, as I was currently panicking on what I should do.

*Oh no, no, no!*

*He's gonna see me peeking through his window!*

*Just act like everything is normal and I am just out here to see the stars.*

**But I want to see his every move...**

I forced my head to look away and to see the stars.

Unfortunately, my eyes kept moving, mostly because I wanted to see Val's reaction to me standing on my balcony.

I heard the sliding door open and soft footsteps walk outside.

"Monika...? What are you doing out here?" He asked.

*Great...*

*Just great.*

I turned around to look at him.

"I am here to star-gaze, what's wrong with that?" I brusquely pressed.

He shrugged, dodging the hostile tone.

"Eh, fair enough." He replied, now looking up to the skies with a smile.

*Can't he just go?*

*Argh, everything is going wrong!*

I tried looking up to the skies as well, but I was somehow mesmerized by his appearance.

He was wearing a simple tight black t-shirt and some blue boxers.

Both of which highlighted his physical appearance.
Val is a lot larger than how he was four years ago.

He looks...

Toned.

Since when did he go to the gym...?

The tight t-shirt reveals a lot of muscles...

Oooh...

Wait...

I blinked a couple of times to gain of semblance of what I was doing.

What the hell?!

Why am I checking him out?!

I hate him!

My eyes looked up to the skies, but they struggled to keep it there.

I felt an indescribable urge to look down.

"Hey, sis."

He looked down and towards me.

"I thought I told you not to call me that. I hate that title." I warned.

Val would usually flinch or back away, but this time he didn’t care.

Mostly because of how tired he and I was.

"Remember the picnic we had when we were kids?" He asked.

What...?

Why is he thinking of that exact memory?

Is this some sort of coincidence?

I nodded.

"Yeah, I do. Why?"

I watched his every move to see if there were any giveaways on why he mentioned it.

"There was this one star that came up when we were star-gazing. It was a dark red star that glowed pretty vibrantly. In all my years star-gazing, I have only seen it once. And look..."

He pointed to the skies.

It was that same red star from many years ago.
For some reason, I felt very nostalgic.

"That star is back again, Monika." He muttered, gazing at the star.

The more I stared at it, the more I felt light-headed.

I gripped the rails of my balcony to balance myself.

*Does he remember?*

*Does he remember what I said to him?*

"D-Do you remember what you said when we were star-gazing?"

He smirked.

"Of course I do. How could I forget? Hehe..."

I felt my cheeks burn.

"What are you laughing about?" I questioned, as I glared at him.

He let out a relieved sigh and rested his arms on his railing.

"I was laughing about how cute you were when you thought I wanted to leave and go back to the United States."

I crossed my arms and rolled my arms.

"Whatever. I am all grown up now and so are you. You can leave if you want and I won't care."

He chuckled from my blunt declaration.

"Sure, sure. I'll be the judge of that when that actually happens. Maybe you'll be the cute bundle of joy when I do choose to go."

*Wait...*

*Did Val just call me cute?*

...

*How cute I was when begged for him not to leave?*

*He...*

*Oh wow...*

*Val called me cute.*

*He never called me cute before, except that one time back when we first sleepover.*

*He called me cute.*

"Mon? Is there something wrong?" He asked.

*I-I think I am about to collapse...*
Since when did he...

"Monika!"

I felt myself losing my balance, my footing now scrambling to stay stable.

But it was too late.

I realized that I was going to fall, so I braced for impact.

It didn't take long that I was about to hit the floor.

But it never came.

In fact, I felt as if I was levitating.

There was someone holding me up.

I groggily opened my eyes to see a worried Val holding me.

Wait...

What?!

How did he...

Why did he...?

"I never thought I could jump that... huh." He amused.

I felt my cheeks burn up from the distance we shared.

His arms are much more burly than before...

It feels comfortable be in them...

What?!

Stop thinking about this route!

He is a no-good backstabbing guy!

But he saved me...

Val pulled me up to my feet, making sure I was planted onto the ground once more.

"Well, to be fair, we are less than two meters away."

I rubbed my forehead, trying to rid some of the drowsiness I was feeling and keep myself awake.

And to hopefully rid the pink cheeks that swelled up.

"Hey, do you want me to go back or-"

I put my hand up to stop him.

"No. The least I can do is to let you stay here."
He raised an eyebrow.

"Not for the night, you moron."

Val snickered at my suggestion.

"Right, I know." He said, leaning on the railing of the balcony. "Anyway, I remember how you cried on how much you didn't want me to leave!"

I frowned from that, mostly because I was caught crying.

"Yeah, I was crying a lot. What did you want me to do about it? I had no other friends beside you! Of course, I didn't want you to go!"

He stopped leaning on the balcony and walked up to me.

"I know. You were my only friend too, remember? I still haven't made up with Gabriel and James back at the States. But I guess it's a bit too late now. Even if I did go back, I doubt things would have been the same. But what can I do? Sometimes you just got to move on."

He still hasn't spoken to them...

Val told me how close they were back home...

"Oh... I thought you spoke with them... you know after the-"

He cut me off.

"Yeah, I know."

His smile vanished in an instant.

"We still need to talk."

I balled my fists up from the barrier we still had.

Not right now...

I need more information...

"But I guess now is not the time. Especially since it's late into the night." He dismissed, his smile returning.

Val turned to jump over to his side.

"Wait."

He stopped in his tracks.

"Do you... do you remember the symbol we made right after you told me you wouldn't leave me?"

I saw him scratch his chin in thought, as he was trying to remember what it was.

"I don't exactly remember... but what I do remember is that we had to put our initials in it." He answered.

He does remember a little...
Now for the question that matters the most.

"Do you remember the promise we made along with the symbol?" I asked.

I knew I was pushing it, but I needed to try.

There was something in me that had hope.

Something my subconscious hoped for.

Val gave a melancholy sigh at the promise.

"Never to let you go. To be with you forever."

My heart started to pound as he said those fabled words.

_He remembers..._

_But..._

_He failed to keep it._

_It doesn't matter, I am giving him a second chance._

_But I am not giving him a second chance at earning my heart._

_I'll promise to that._

"I'm giving you another chance at that." I declared.

My heart started to race faster as I said that.

_It's as if I was forgiving him._

_Am I forgiving him?_

_No._

_I am still angry over what happened._

_He still didn't rescue me._

_I still can't forgive him for that._

With a nod, Val jumped over to his side of the balcony.

I turned on my heel and headed back inside.

"Monika."

I reared my head to him.

"I haven't said this a while but... goodnight."

For some reason, I smiled him telling me that.

"Goodnight." I curtly said, while walking back inside.
I walked over to my bed and took off my slippers.

Once I got in a comfortable range, I fell on top of it, landing my head on the pillows.

It didn't take long until I fell asleep.

A sleep that felt foreign, yet so similar.

It was as if everything was the way it was before.

My mind and body started to relax until there was one persistent thought in my head.

Did I write in my journal today?

Nope...

I haven't written in it since I left Ainu.

With a grunt, I got up from my comfy bed and reached for my diary.

This diary or journal was a new and I found it in my luggage when I unpacked after I arrived at Ainu.

At first, I used the journal to help keep important notes and memos.

But when I started to get more and more exasperated from the stresses the Academy gave me, I wrote other things along with it.

In the journal, I voiced all my frustrations and anger about how bad each day went.

It also contained lots of heinous thoughts from my friends.

If they somehow got a hand of this, there is no doubt they will stop talking to me.

But what are the chances of that happening?

The other diary was still in relatively good condition, especially since I had it for as long as I can remember.

It was something I treasured, and I kept it in a locked drawer.

I haven't written anything in my diary for four years...

Or before the day I left.

In my hand is a pen that will write my hate and pain for me and this world.

Here goes...

---

Yeah, it's me again.

Gosh, it feels like a long time, even though has been like what? Only two days?

Anyway, a lot has happened today. First I get showered by compliments from the boys of Dokisai, then Val spots from the other side of the theater, and guess what? He came to the club!
Yep. I found the boy that I hate, my mortal enemy in the club that I love.

He didn't come to the club voluntarily, actually. Val was in a hurry to get to class early that he supposedly almost bumped into Natsuki. The girl didn't take that so well and threatened him with a beatdown. He did apologize, but it wasn't a real apology, just a simple sorry and that's all.

So I am guessing Natsuki got really pissed when he didn't recognize her at gym class. Something in her got triggered and caused her to sucker punch him. To think, a buff guy getting taken down by a small girl! I have to admit, that is pretty funny to think about.

When I saw Natsuki about to throw another punch at the guy, I had to step in. She is pretty impulsive and the fact that she got into a fight with Val would get her suspended.

At first, I had no idea who it was that she was beating up, but as soon I got closer, I knew I messed up. The guy coincidentally had to be him, right?

Well, what was I supposed to do? Walk past them? That's just cruel and it might land me in suspension as well! I don't like the guy, but that doesn't mean I want him to get hurt...

Right?

Uh...

I stepped in and stopped from her delivering another punch. She gave an excuse that Val called her a first year and didn't apologize to him. Trying to be a mediator for the girl can be a pain in the ass. I know the girl is self-conscious since she isn't that developed, but that shouldn't be the catalyst to punch the guy!

Natsuki did say she took a lot from her mom... like her height, breast size, and ass. Don't guys like big asses and smaller boobs, rather than small asses and bigger boobs?

The girl is the cutest out of all us though. Still, I still pity her for not having big boobs like me and Yuri...

Anyway, Natsuki for some reason sobered up and told me that we can get Val to join the club. It was right there the situation was getting out of control. I didn't want him to join the club, because of our history. But for some reason, he joined.

He still cares about my dreams of making the literature club. To make people share their thoughts and beliefs by writing it all away...

We had a fight right after Val properly apologized to Natsuki. He tried to be friendly to me, but I just couldn't tolerate it.

I got pissed off. He thought he can actually forget what happened four years ago.

He knew what he did, but he didn't bother to bring it up. And so I yelled at him, telling he failed me and he has no reason to talk to me.

I expected him to stop and to leave me alone, but obviously, he wouldn't go down without a fight.

The strange thing is... He was confused. It looked like he had no idea what I was talking about. Not to mention, he didn't look like he forgot anything at all...

If I was calmer, than I would have asked him what he meant by that, but my rage for him took
control of me. I... I said some really harsh things to him, and he looked hurt when I said that the four years without him were the best years of my life.

And for the first time in forever, I saw him get angry too. Val wasn't the type of person to get angry over anything, but what I said to him really got to him. I mean, why wouldn't it? He has every right to be angry when I said that.

He yelled back at me, saying why I was even angry at him.

And I felt hurt... I never thought he would yell at me. I wanted to yell back at him, but something inside my rage broke. It hurt to actually say anything to him.

He made his choice and it wasn't me... but did he?

The way he was confused told me he had no idea what happened four years ago... Then what did happen four years?

I can go on for this entry but I have other things to write about.

When he joined, the Yuri and Natsuki got a little jumpy for some reason. I got jumpy because I didn't know how to talk to him. But those two had some sort of motive that I couldn't see through. Did they have any motives?

Val got along with girls just fine exactly. Natsuki and he spoke to each other like actual human beings, instead one punching the other. It looked okay from there.

But when Yuri spoke to Val, she spoke to him in another language...

Russian.

I know that Yuri is half-Russian, but I never knew that Val was also part Russian. He was able to speak fluent Russian that surprised everyone.
Well, it surprised me the most. I mean, I never knew he can speak such a difficult language! How come he never told about it?!

Anyway, Yuri and Val shared a bond with each other. After all, speaking in the second language of a person is speaking to their mind. But speaking in their primary language means that they speak to their hearts.

Yuri moved here when she was 5, so she has lots of memories from Russia. No wonder she sounded so happy when speaking Russian. It was as if they understand each other...

She even winked at Val! Since when was she so confident?

I don't like that for some reason. There's this feeling inside of me that gets... weird whenever I think about it.

Enough talking about them, let's talk about what happened later...

Natsuki cleaned a nosebleed that I caused and it made her flustered.
Yeah, I made get another nosebleed.

It wasn't like how I flashed my panties to him or anything. That was intentional, but this time wasn't.

It's pretty funny on how I caught him measuring my cup size...

When Yuri winked at Val before getting tea, I knew it was a signal. I started thinking about much
more attractive Yuri was since Val was so interested in talking to her.

I guess I felt jealous. She has a body that is in another league.

I know I am attractive. Hell, each time I walk into a room I hear whispers from guys about my beauty. Annoying, sure. But it sure felt good to hear that, since I don’t spend a lot of time doing my hair, face, or eyes.

I just felt insecure about my boob size. Yuri has a massive rack and I swear it jiggles whenever she does anything intensive. Eugh, that’s so slutty. She should really get a tighter bra.

I’m sure that Yuri is either an E-cup or a triple D. In any case, I hated feeling self-conscious about my appearance.

That’s where I checked my size. I completely forgot that Val was right in front of me and was the only other person in the room with me. So it wasn’t much of a surprise that he saw me touching myself.

For a second there, when I realized he was watching me... I felt hot. Not the “sexy hot” but my body felt like it was on fire. It was just like that day from four years ago, my body temperature spiked when I saw him stare at me.

Since I had no idea that he was watching, so I shrieked and covered myself. I yelled at him for being a pervert and was about to deliver his punishment him.

But then... Natsuki came back.

For some reason, I felt really possessive of him. I didn’t like when Natsuki cleaned his nose-bleed off of him.

Why am I getting possessive of a guy I don’t like? Whatever.

Moving on.

After the club meeting, I confronted Val for joining the literature club.

I asked him why he wanted to join since I thought he stopped caring about me.

Turns out I was wrong, and he still cares about me.
I... I remember him telling that to me.

He still cares about my hopes and dreams.

But why? Why would he care about my hopes and dreams? I thought he stopped caring ever since that day...

Is it because he wanted to make it up to me? Is it because he missed me?

No.

The way he said it was sincere. He missed me and didn’t understand why I even left.

Something happened that day.

Something definitely happened.
And I intend to find out.

It was Tuesday and it was an easy day.

Today I woke up with a new outlook on life.

This time I didn't wake up berating myself for how I have failed on getting to Monika in time.

This time I woke up to the new possibilities that are available to me now.

For some reason, I felt very energetic and ready to take on anything.

I came to school early a bit early than usual, and currently waiting for the teacher to arrive.

"Yo, boss! You have a bit of a weird smile on ya, what's up? Did you get a girlfriend?" Hiro teased, slinging his arm on my back.

"Val's got a girlfriend? When was this? Yesterday? I knew those girls had a thing for you!" Dan cheered.

Despite their statements, I kept my smile.

"Nope. I don't have a girlfriend, and doubt anyone's interested in me. But I got something a bit better than your delusions."

Hiro scoffed at me.

"Oh, oh yeah? That's cool that you got something better, but uh... can you speak like this?"

"Wait, what the fuck?"

The door opened to reveal Monika walking in.

I couldn't help but smile when she arrived.

She was showered with compliments as walked to her seat.

"Good morning Monika!"

"You're looking great today!"

"I like your bow!"

"Please suffocate me with your thighs."

There was a slight and subtle twitch on her right eye from that last comment.

It was a twitch that I can notice whenever is annoyed or disturbed.

Regardless, she sat down with a regal posture and smiled from the praises everyone gave her.

Since when was she so popular?

It has only been a day and she's apparently the idol of Dokisai.
That simply doesn't make sense...

How come they didn't do that back at Lotus?

Especially since when we were all hormonal wrecks?

Come to think of it, Monika has changed a lot after since she came back.

Like her breast size...

Before she went to Ainu, she was at B-cup, but when she came back they became larger than ever!

Luscious D-cups...

And everyone is talking about her thighs...

What's all the rage with thighs anyway?

...

Wait, wait, wait!

Why am I thinking this?!

Eugh!

I thought I was the master of my own thoughts, but right now I am not!

There's somehow messing with my thoughts...

It's as if all this is being written down on some site...

Hey you!

Yeah, you. You're reading my thoughts, right?

Can you tell the author of whoever's writing this to kindly fuck off?

I don't see Monika as anything more than the sister I never had!

"Oooh! I see you, Val, checking the sweetheart of Dokisai out! I knew you two had the hots for each other!" Hiro teased.

I snapped to him with a scowl.

"I don't have the hots for her! I only see her as my sister!" I hissed.

Dan grunted in disbelief.

"Hah! Sure. The way you were looking at her kind proves Hiro's point otherwise." He retorted.

Before I could get another comeback in, the teacher walked in.

The classroom was now dead silent.

"Morning class." She greeted.
There was a cacophony of greetings given throughout the class.

"I would like to start the class by announcing that the Winter Festival starts next Monday, or at Christmas Eve. That also means winter vacation starts right after as well. As a routine, I am going to ask for volunteers for the Winter Festival Committee. Anyone up for the task?"

The classroom was silent since no one was interested.

Until Monika pushed her seat back and stood up.

"Ms. Suzuki, I would like to volunteer for the Winter Committee." She declared.

The teacher was mildly surprised.

"Oh. Are you sure, Monika? You are still fairly new to Dokisai, I am thought you would like more time to settle in."

_That's my cue._

I rose up from my seat and stood confidently.

"Don't worry, Ms. Suzuki. I am going to volunteer with Monika, that way she will know the ins and outs of the school."

There were murmurs and whispers throughout the classroom.

Ms. Suzuki was pleasantly surprised that I stood up to volunteer and nodded at my effort.

"Fair enough. Is there any particular reason why you would like to join the club?"

Monika looked at me, expecting me to say something.

"Yes, I do. The literature club is short of members and I would like to keep it open. By applying to the Committee, the club will stay open and maybe attract more members." I explained.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Monika smirking at me.

_Did I say it right...?_

"I see. That is a noble goal, Val. You may sit."

With a sigh, I sat down feeling ready to do what it takes to keep the club.

"Oooh! Val's making some moves huh?! Go get em Casanova!"

"No matter how much you deny it, I know you have a thing for her."

I groaned from their persistence.

The rest of the school day went by in the blink of an eye.

Right now, Val and I were walking to the Committee room to start our work as members.

"I wonder how many people have joined the Committee with us..." He muttered, walking up to the door.
Val opened the door to see only a teacher with papers waiting for us.

He stood up to greet us.

"Hello, you two. Thanks for joining the Committee!"

We both looked around to see if there were anyone else coming to join us.

"Are we the only two members? I thought there would be more." I muttered, concerned from the lack of students in the room.

The teacher sighed and took a seat.

"You see, the Committee was once a serious organization to be a part of. Many students would flock to us and would help out with the festival. But because of a scandal we had a few months ago, many students lost heart to the Committee."

We took a seat to better listen to the teacher.

"Turns out that one of the students planned to rig the Christmas tree to blow up. He was the leader of the Committee and many followed his orders without question. We never understood his intention, but it was too late. We were able to stop his plans from coming into fruition but the reputation of the Committee was forever smeared by that student."

Just because of one whackjob, everyone is scared to join the Committee?

"But in any case, you two took the chance to join. I was afraid that we needed to cancel the Winter Festival."

If we don't nail the Winter Festival, then the club is going to be forced to close...

"Of course, we can handle the festival. I know that I am relatively new here, but I am willing to try!" I stated.

Val smiled at my determination and chimed in.

"Yeah, we going to try our best to make the best of our time." He declared.

I couldn't help but smile too.

The teacher was ecstatic that we were focused on getting the job done.

"Good, good! I know that it's just the two of you, so we are arranging a trip for the lower classmen to ease the workload. We are still going to invite more people to help out, so best of luck to you."

He gave us both papers and forms that other clubs needed to fill out.

"I am going to let the club members and students in so that they fill out the forms for the festival. Take care you two."

With that, he left me alone with Val.

We readjusted our seats and looked over the forms.

The forms were simple enough since it detailed all the necessary spaces for items, stands, and activities.
"Ready, Sis?"
I rolled my eyes.
"Don't call me that. Of course, I am."
He chuckled from my retort.

The first one to arrive at the door was Hiroshi.
"Haha! Sup boss! I see that you're getting comfy there!" He greeted.
I gave him a small, warning glare.
"Hey, Hiro. You here for the form?"
He nodded enthusiastically.
"Yup! The guitar club asked for a few items for the concert that they are going to have during the festival. So yeah, I would like a form please."
Monika gave an inviting smile and handed him a form.
"Here you are! Most of the spaces are self-explanatory, but if you need any help let us know!"
I eyed Monika's public behavior.
"Wow...! Getting a form from Dokisai's newest sweetheart?!! That's so metal! Woohoo!" He cheered, leaving the room.
Monika giggled and waved goodbye.
"Ahaha~! Take care with that form!"
Hiro gave me two-finger salute and winked at me, leaving me in the dust.

After Hiro arrived other students came in and formed a single file line.
There were some boys that weren't supposed to be here and were goofing around.
It made me feel irritated for some reason, mostly because of the comments they gave and how Monika reacted to them.
She would give an occasional giggle or smile at the boys giving the comments, making them more enticed to stay.
The commotion grew to the point where I started to give death glares behind Monika's back to make them leave.
Fortunately for me, all of them got the message and soon left.

_I never knew Monika was that popular..._

_How can someone deal with so much fame?_
The line started continuously mellow out, as fewer students arrived.
There was one last person on the line and it was a girl with galaxy purple hair, with a purple hair clip in one the strands of hair.

Yuri.

She looked nervous and was playing with her hair, slowly moving up to us.

To comfort her, I decided to speak in her native tongue.

"(Hello, Yuri!)

The girl looked up in a small panic and soon realized it was me.

She let out a deep breath and smiled.

"(Hello, Valkyrie. It's so good to see you again."

"(Likewise, Yuri. Is there something you need?)"

Yuri nodded and pointed to the forms.

I reached to give her a form, only to be cut off by Monika.

"Here you go, Yuri! Is there anything else?" She said, keeping her fake smile on.

She looked to me with nervous eyes.

I gave her a nod to encourage her to speak her mind.

"Y-Yes... there is. Monika, I would like to ask you for a favor. I need to pick up my younger sister from a nearby school called Lotus Junior High. There is no one left to help supervise the Girls Swim club. Since you are one of the best swimmers in Ainu, I was hoping that you could cover for me."

Monika scribbled something onto a black journal.

"Of course I will help, but I need to write notes down about the requests some students made."

Once she was done, she turned to me.

"Val, if there any more students left on the line, can you handle them?"

I cracked my knuckles in anticipation of a challenge.

"Yeah, no sweat." I replied.

She then stood up and turned to Yuri.

"Thank you, Monika. I will make sure to repay the favor." Yuri promised.

Monika gave Yuri a pat on the shoulder.

"Yuri, you don't owe me anything. We're friends remember? Go ahead and get your little sister. I will take care of it."

The purple haired girl smiled and gave Monika a hug.

"Thank you."
She released her and jogged off to the exit.

"Goodbye, you two! Thank you for the help!" She said, running.

With her gone, Monika let out a sigh and placed her journal into her bag.

"Don't mess this up, Jones. This is our only shot on keeping the literature club alive." She warned, walking off into the direction of the Swimming Club with her bag.

I gave her a salute.

"Copy that."

Now it was up to me to handle any more students wanting Winter Festival forms.

Despite the challenge of working alone, there weren't many students that wanted forms to fill out.

I handled them with ease and got ready to leave.

With my bag on my shoulder, I left the Committee room, locking it behind me.

As I locked the door, there was a small black notebook in the corner of my eye.

*What's this?*

I knelt down and picked it up.

*There's no names or initials on who it might belong too...*

*Might need to open it up.*

I opened to the middle of the book and looked for any clues on ownership.

*Wow...*

*Whoever this is, they got a really nice handwriting...*

I clamped my hands together to get the swimmers attention.

"Nice work everyone! It's time to wrap it up!" I called.

The girls got up from the pool and moved into the locker rooms.

I followed them to get changed as well.

*Finally, that's over.*

I walked over to a bench with my towel and searched for my clothes.

In my bag, I took my uniform and shoes.

It was a routine for me to check where my journal was, and so I searched for that too.

*Hmm...*

*Where is it?*
The Journal was nowhere to be found.

*Oh no...*

*Where did it go?!

*Last time I wrote on it was back at the Committee room.***

*No...*

With my bag at hand, I ran back to the club room.

*Shit, shit, shit, shit!*

*If anyone gets a hold of that Journal, it'll get me expelled!*

I made it to the Committee room and saw a male figure looking over it.

He looked up to me.

*Val...*

*That's the last person I would want to see my journal.*

"Oh... hey, Monika! Why are you still in a swimsuit? Anyway, I found this journal on the floor here." He greeted.

*Damn it.*

"Go inside the room." I ordered.

He raised an eyebrow.

"What? Why?"

I balled my fists up.

"I said: **Go inside the room.**"

He gritted his teeth in anxiety and opened the door.

We walked in, to which he stood next to the tables.

I locked the doors to make sure no one gets in or out.

Or...

To hear anything.

"Monika, what's going on?"

I put on my coldest scowl to make sure he is kept in check.

"That... that Journal. Did you pick it up somewhere?"

He nodded slowly.
"Y-Yeah... why? Is this yours, Monika?"

I looked away and walked up to him.

"Yes. It is." I answered.

Val smiled at me.

"Oh, if that's the case. Then here you go. Not sure why you had to lock the door and everything."

I took the Journal to see if there were traces of him looking.

"If you didn't mind, I had to take a look at what you wrote for a name or something. So I needed to see a little..."

He... looked.

"I see."

The towel on my neck and my grip on my journal loosened, causing them to fall to the floor.

I took a sudden step forward and pulled his tie towards me.

My shoulder stopped at his chest, causing his jolt forward to come to an abrupt stop.

"M-Monica?"

I sighed.

"So... you read my Journal."
I was working with Haru on a project that was due Friday.

We took the time to stay in a mandatory study session to work on that.

But unfortunately for me, Haru was going home early since she was feeling a bit ill.

Thus, it was up to me to finish the project for her.

*Man...*  

*At times like these, I wonder what big bro is doing...*  

*I bet he is having a blast back home.*  

*And here I am, forced to a project on the school trip we went on Monday.*  

"Sooo, your brother right... I heard that he's making moves in Dokisai." Haru stated, scribbling some notes down on a notebook.

I knitted my brows at this.

"What? My bro? No, I don't think he is doing anything like that, Haru. He's the type of bro that doesn't take credit from anything."

It was no secret that I held my older brother with high praise.

"Even if he did, I don't think he would like the attention." I proudly declared. "Hey, wait a minute... How did you know about my bro?"

Haru held her cheeks and sighed.

"My older sister, Yuri told me all about it. By the sounds of it... Ahhh~! He's like a knight! Helping those in need and making them feel safe! My older sister talked about him all the time yesterday... And I gotta say he sounds dreamy..."

I pursed my lips and rolled my eyes at what she was saying.

"He even knows Russian..."

*Val always told me that helping others is something I should do, but taking credit is something else. He told me taking credit is the last I should do...*  

*And wait, when did he know Russian?*  

*Oh right...*  

*Mom's half-Russian and she said that she taught some to bro-bro.*  

"Okay then... let me shoot you a question." I asked.

She sighed dreamily.
"Sure...

I merely stared at her swooning state and proceeded with my question.

"Didn't your sister come from some Academy? Like some elite school?"

She broke out of her trance and responded.

"Yep. My older sister wanted to be an author, and because of that, she went to Ainu. The Academy is one of the best schools in the world, so it also has one of the best teachers there too." Haru replied.

One of the best schools?

"That sounds pretty expensive, how did you afford all that?" I pressed.

She waved me off dismissively.

"Ah, don't worry about it. We have loads of cash. Working for the government sure does pay up!"

Don't worry about it?

"Oh, oh! Does your brother go to the gym?!" She asked excitedly.

I grew uncomfortable by her excited state and apparent drooling.

Why does she want to know so badly?

"Uh... I-I don't know? Yeah?"

He rarely ever says that he goes to the gym...

Val goes and comes back.

And when I do see him going to the gym, I always see him angry.

I never saw him get angry over anything.

When he comes back, he looks like the ordinary Val I know.

Before Haru can actually respond to me, or rather, I can respond to her, one of the teachers walked up to us.

"Haru, your older sister is here to pick you up." She just said, before walking off.

Haru gave an aggravated sigh and reluctantly got up.

"I thought she had Swimming Class! Arrgh! Sorry, Mike, my sister came a bit early. Can you handle the rest of the work?" She asked.

Always be helpful to others, even if they are asking a lot out of you.

If Val saw what I was about to say I think he would be proud...

"Yeah, no problem. I can take care of it."

She gave me a warm smile and gave me a pat on the back.
"Thanks! I really appreciate it!" Haru cheered, her illness apparently losing its grip.

I forced a smile, despite the extra work I needed to do.

"Yup."

With that, Haru packed up all her things and walked to the exit.

_Here I am..._

_Alone and working on this stupid project!_

I looked over to the window and saw Haru and her older sister.

Her older sister looked to be an older version of Haru, the same purple hair and eyes, and the vibes that both give off.

_Hmm..._

_Can I fake an illness so that Val can pick me up?_

_That way I can brag about my awesome big bro!_

...

_Right... No bragging._

_I wonder what he is up to anyway..._

---

The sound of the water dropping from Monika's skin showed how quiet the room was.

Each time it fell to the floor, the splash gave life to the void of a room we were in.

It was all eerie as if the world was watching us and us alone.

I felt how hard my heart was pounding against my chest.

How hard it was pounding against her chest...

_Am I..._

_Scared?_

_Confused?_

_Or maybe a little bit of both?_

_What's her deal anyway?_

_Why is she so ticked off at me?_

Despite the whirlwind of emotions and my body responding to whatever is going on, I looked down to her.

Monika was looking out the window, completely stoic.
Her face contained no emotion and looked as if she was focused.

_I have never seen Monika so serious before..._

Despite the tense atmosphere, I quivered my lips to speak.

"M-Monika...? What's the meaning of-"

The grip on my tie tightened as she brought me closer to her.

I felt her breast cushion itself onto my chest.

**Her chest...**

But before I can relish on how pleasurable the feeling was, she cut me off.

"**Don't speak without my permission.**" She demanded.

I gulped from her sharp tone and how it lashed at me.

"S-Sorry..." I muttered.

*Oh gosh...*

*I should feel scared by her...*

*But I can feel her chest on mine.*

*And I knew it.*

*Her chest has gotten so much more prominent over the last four years...*

*In just four years...*

"**So you read my Journal. Isn't that right Jones?**" She questioned.

I was distracted from the pleasurable feeling her chest gave off.

*Something about the warmth and softness is fantastic...*

*Ahhh...*

"**Answer me.**"

*Enough of this perverted thinking!*

*I need to focus!*

*For some reason, Monika behaving like this all because I opened her Journal.*

*What is so vital in that Journal that made her act like this?*

"Uh... Sis, look. I am sorry if I offended you or anything, but-"

The grip on my tie shifted and brought me closer than ever to her.

I saw her angry grimace, gritting her teeth; her eyes filled with hate and disgust.
"How many times do I have to say this? Stop addressing me by that title! I hate being called your sister, damn it! So do me a favor and get that through your thick fucking skull!" She yelled, her fierce rage piercing my will.

Oh...

"Um... okay." I murmured, her steadfast determination getting to me.

Note to self, don't ever call Monika "sis" anymore.

And if I am about to, I'll make sure to remember this moment.

"Good. I am glad we have an understanding of that. Call me by my actual name. Anything besides that shitty title." She calmly requested.

I couldn't stand how Monika was dealing with me, so I needed to take a stand.

This tie pulling thing is starting to wear on me.

And I don't like it.

"Now. You haven't quite answered my question."

Here's my chance.

"Look, Monika. We need to talk to each other like adults. Just let... go of me!" I demanded.

To my error, I didn't realize that Monika had a firm grip on me and didn't want to let go of me in this uncomfortable position.

And so, I needed to use brute force to break her hold.

I pushed her as gently and forcefully as I can, causing her to move back a few inches.

But her grip on my tie remained firm and pulled me along with her.

As a result of this awkward pull and footing, I struggled to regain balance.

And because of that... my hand landed on her chest, and I squeezed it to grip it...

I squeezed one of her breasts...

Monika gave a sharp and hitched breath on my touch.

My face burned up from the groping, and I tried to pull away.

But the soft, large, and warm material made it nigh impossible to do so.

Aw shit...

I touched her.

Oh man...

I am so screwed!

Out of all the things I can grip on her body, it just had to be her boobs!
Seriously?!

But...

I have to admit...

This feels good.

...

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait!

What the fuck am I doing?!

I am touching Monika!

Oh gosh...!

As if it was on fire, I pulled my hand out of the kill zone.

"M-M-Monika! I-I am so so sorry! I didn't mean to touch your boobs, I am sorry!"

Please don't kill me...

Please don't kill me.

Please don't.

Out of all the reactions I expected from the green-eyed vixen, she merely smiled in a way I have never seen before.

It was a mix of her fake and real smile, combined into one unholy and seemingly innocent smile.

"Could you come with me for a little bit?" She asked, her rage supposedly vanished into thin air.

Wait...

What?

Why isn't she in a whole new level of fury?

"B-But..." I mumbled, confused by her sudden change in behavior.

I forgot that she still had a good grip on my tie and pulled me towards her again.

There her smile corrupted with malice and ill-content.

Her emerald green eyes narrowed onto me, showing that she had more up her sleeve.

"I said..."

She moved closer to my face, her smile replaced by a nightmarish-frown.

"Could you. Come. With. Me?"

There was no warmth in her voice.
There were no emotions in it either.
It was...
Cold.
"Y-Yes, of course, Monika." I relented.
When I agreed, she grinned.
I knew I was in for a treat.

My eyes scanned the surrounding area, looking for anyone that can see us talking about...
Some classified material.
Fortunately, there was no one in this part of the woods, so I proceeded with my interrogation.
There wasn't a particular reason why I even brought him here.
It all felt natural...
I stopped and turned around to him.
"This should be good. There is nobody here out here in the wilderness. That way we can have a nice... long... chat."

Years of learning the art of intimidation paid off, as I was able to strike fear into Val's heart.
His eyes and frown showed that he didn't like where I was going, proving that it was effective.

*I think I could have done without the Ainu classes anyway.*

*Doing this was as easy as breathing.*

I smirked at his anxious and uncomfortable state since he was looking around to see if we were actually alone.
"I am fine with having a chat and all, but where are we? I don't think I remember this spot from anywhere." He stated.

There was something off about the place we were in.
It brought up feelings of nostalgia, but we couldn't explain why.
"I don't know... but it feels like we have been here before. But that's not important."
I pulled out my black journal.
"Now, you have read this right?" I asked.

He nodded.
"Yeah... sorry about that. I needed to find the owner's name since there weren't any marks anywhere, so I needed to take a little peek inside." He explained, tapping his forefingers together.
A peek?

There's without a doubt that he saw what I wrote inside.

"So... you read my entries about everything that has been going on, hmm?"

Val raised an eyebrow, but I didn't pay any heed to that.

"Ahaha... that's such a shame." I whispered, smirking. "Looks like I need to drastic measures to keep my reputation."

I looked up at him.

"Even if I need to end you."

He merely blinked at me.

"What? What are you talking about? That notebook had entries? What entries?" He asked, puzzled at what I was getting at.

He doesn't know about the records I put?

That doesn't make any sense...

"You know... the things I wrote." I elaborated.

That still didn't ring a bell to him.

"Well, I gotta say your handwriting is impeccable Monika." He complimented.

What is this moron going on about?

My handwriting neat?

That's another compliment ever since I came back...

I shook my head.

"Stop. Let me ask the question again. You read what was inside this journal, isn't that right?"

He squinted at me.

"Yeah... since there were no markings of ownership."

"Okay, then. So that means you read about my entries, right?"

Val shook his head.

"No. I don't get what records or notes you put into that journal. All I saw was your schedule for Ainu and Dokisai, along with some memos on stuff you need to do."

What the...

"Huh...?" I let out, confused as well.

He rubbed the back of his head.
"Is this some sort of misunderstanding?" He asked.

You have got to be kidding me.

I dragged him all the way out here over a misunderstanding...

This has nothing to do what I wrote!

My cheeks flushed with color.

"Hehe, it sure looks like it." He cheekily stated.

I turned on my heel and looked away.

"Shut your trap! It was your fault not being clear on all this!" I retorted.

Val gave me a deadpan look and smirked.

"Well... you pulled my tie and everything. All that drama and suspense! I just never got to chance to explain myself. Poor me, poor me." He mocked.

I glared at him.

"You moron! If you didn't see a thing, then the least you could've done is just say you didn't see anything! It's just that simple!"

I took a step forward looked into his eyes.

"This isn't my fault! It's all yours! If you just told me, then I wouldn't have analyzed all this too deeply!" I countered.

I then huffed and looked away, making sure my hair was in place.

He sighed.

"Is that so? You always took things an extra mile."

I turned to him slowly.

"I always admired that about you, Monika. It's something that I kind of wish I had. The willpower to keep pushing despite the odds. Or using all that power to make sure you got everything covered."

He smiled.

That smile...

That damn smile.

It always gets to me.

My lips morphed into a smile as well.

He admires me too.

Wait a minute...

Where were all these compliments four years ago?
"Anyway, what did you even write in that journal that made you act like... this? There's got to be something you have to be hiding."

And just like that, the charm he had faded.

I crossed my arms.

"That's none of your business, Jones. Whatever I write in my journal is me to see, not anyone else. It's something that can kick me out of school or worse..." I warned. "I could've lost a classmate today, but you managed to avoid it for now..."

He gulped at the consequences.

"Okay... then. But I am still curious about your journal, Mon."

*I need something to make sure he doesn't tell anyone about the journal...*

*Maybe a pact will work.*

I put up a finger to continue.

"Don't be. I don't want you going around that I have something written in my journal. So, repeat after me. 'I didn't see anything.' Alright?"

Val simply stared at me.

"I didn't see anything." He repeated, going along with my thinking.

*Oh...*

*This is good.*

*I can twist my words to force him to say something he doesn't want to say...*

*The possibilities are endless!*

"Monika is a gorgeous girl with nothing to hide. She is the sweetheart and best girl in Dokisai."

I felt my heart pound as I said those words.

*Now he has to say that...*

...

"Wait, why do I have to say all this?" He asked.

*Seriously?*

*Time for a little blackmail.*

"Vally-poo... you touched my boobs remember?" I sorrowly stated, hoping to strike some guilt into him.

He grew uncomfortable with the name and mention of that cursed moment.

"It's 'boob,' I only touched one not both! And yeah, that is true but, you kind of made me. All that pulling around on my tie; there's bound to something like that happening, right? So technically..."
Ugh.

This guy is not fun at all.

I put my hands onto my face and started to "weep."

"Waaah! You're a horrible person, Val! Such a cruel man! You defiled my innocence and everything I had stood for! Now I have to talk to your parents, teachers, and friends about all this! They are going to shame you and shun you for the rest of your life! Waaah!" I "cried."

Behind my hands, I could tell he was defeated as he let out a sigh.

"Jeez... if you're going for the low blow then fine. I didn't see anything, and uh... hmm, how did it go again?"

Come on!

That's the fun part about the blackmail!

"Monika is a gorgeous girl with nothing to hide. She is the sweetheart and best girl in Dokisai, with no one being able to compete against her." I reminded, albeit muffled.

Val paused for a moment, to which I had no idea why.

I peeked through my hands to see how he reacted.

Why is he so quiet all of a sudden?

He then recovered and bowed.

"Right that. You are a beautiful girl with nothing to hide. You are a sweetheart and the star girl of Dokisai, with no one coming close to the same standards as you."

I felt my face tingle from the burning sensation as I moved my hands away from my face.

It sounds so much different coming from him...

Oh wow...

When was he able to say all that with such...

Passion?

"T-That's very good, Val." I applauded, trying my utmost hardest to cover my swoon.

Wait...

Why am I getting so flustered over this guy?!

I could honestly care less if he says all that!

He merely rolled his eyes, crushing the warm feeling in my heart.

Way to kill the moment dork.

But I got a plan to reignite it...
"You are the exact definition of not fun. Let's spice things up shall we?"

Wait, what am I saying?!

That was the perfect cue to stop!

How am I going to spice things up?

**Let him touch me again?**

No, no, no!

"Spice things up...? What do you mean?" He asked.

Abort!

Abort!

Abort!

"As a reward..."

I pressed my breasts together and held them over to him.

His eyes widened at sight I presented to him.

He couldn't stand it; he staggered back to get away from me.

Against my better will, I advanced to his retreat.

His breathing became audible, his face was growing red as a tomato, and he looked anxious.

"How about touching these again, hmm?" I offered.

No!

**Gosh, damn it!**

"I... uh, um..." He mumbled.

My body started to heat up again as he darted his eyes from my breasts and to me.

I felt my heart doing leaps all over me, nearly bursting out of my chest.

**This feeling...**

**It was the same feeling when he touched me...**

**Do I want him to touch me...?**

I winked at him, to deliver the cherry on top.

There, I saw his eyes become enveloped into something I have never seen before.

The misty, hollow sensation coated his eyes.

It was as if it taking over his vision and body, and directing it into one goal.
"Touching me..."

No!

I can't let him!

I will never let him touch me!

What's wrong with me?!

He leaned into to touch, only for me cover them up.

No!

"I was kidding, you moron! Why would I want you to touch me? Pervert!"

And just like that, his eyes went back to normal.

To play it off he put his hand on his hips.

"Hahaha! I knew that!"

Sure you did...

I rolled my eyes.

"If we were a couple, then I wouldn't mind you touching me, especially since we are alone. But geez, don't ever take that kind of thing seriously." I reprimanded.

If...

Val and I were a couple...?

Oh jeez, I really can't trust my mouth to say anything...

Why would I even say that?!

Eugh! This makes me look like the pervert!

Something along the lines of me granting his every sexual wish...

Or maybe my sexual wishes.

Stop it, stop it, stop it!

This is a rerun of four years ago!

Augh!

I continued, now choosing my words carefully.

"Look, in any case... you saw nothing in my journal, and you will not say a word. Got it?"

He nodded in a daze.

"C-Copy that."
It made me smirk knowing that I managed to rattle him instead.

*It's a rare sight for him to be embarrassed over things like these.*

*So, I guess that's an accomplishment.*

"Good. Now let's go home." I merely said, now walking off to civilization.

He stopped me by putting a hand on my shoulder.

I felt my breathing come to an abrupt halt.

*Val's touching me...*

*Arrrgh!*

*I need to get this... "weird" stuff out of my head!*

*I hate him, and he can't have his redemption!*

"What?" I turned.

He looked conflicted like he was thinking about that particular topic for a while.

"I noticed that you have been giving me the cold shoulder whenever we are alone. Not to mention that you seem too cheery and kind to everyone else. Was this always you Monika? Is this the real you?"

...

I didn't know how to respond to that.

*It's his fault for making me bitter and the way that I am right now...*

*But at the same time, I can say without a doubt that he had no idea what happened four years ago.*

*Is my behavior justified?*

*Should I stay cold towards him? Even if he doesn't deserve it?*

...

*It's hopeless anyway...*

*Val will never fall for me and never could.*

*He treats me as the sister he never had, hence why he keeps calling me that.*

*It's so unfair...*

*The way he talks to Yuri and Natsuki is entirely different than the way he speaks to me...*

*And because of that, I have no reason to fall for him.*

*Besides, I would be saving myself the heartbreak when he does reject me.*

*I don't want another heartbreak.*
I'll just leave him be.

"I'm sorry." He suddenly said.

What?

I looked up to him, confused by his apology.

"I shouldn't have brought that up, especially since you are thinking about it a lot. From the looks of it, you didn't enjoy thinking about it. So I won't press you for that anymore. That's why I am sorry." He frowned.

He's giving so many reminders that do care about me.

Val does care for me...

The compliments, the way he gets flustered whenever I push his buttons...

There has to be more to his feelings towards me.

...

That's what my 14-year-old-self thought right?

Maybe it was going in the right place.

Maybe there is hope.

But...

I still don't know if I want to pursue him.

He broke my heart once, and I can't bear the pains of another.

Just like I told myself before...

I need to keep him at an arm's reach.

And that means to crush any feelings I have for him...

By any means necessary.

"Don't be."

He looked at me.

"What?"

"I said, don't be. This is how I always was, Val. That image of me in your head is a fake and nothing more."

Val put his hand on my shoulder.

"No! No, you weren't like this! Remember when you were always happy to be around me? Remember how you would always find the best of things and... I don't remember being anything like..."
"Say it."

He sighed.

"You were never this cold to me, Monika. Something changed in you while you were away, I just know it. And it's all because of that day."

My eyes widened at what he was getting at.

_The talk..._

_No..._

_We can't talk about it now!_

_We can't!_

_I am not ready yet!_

"It's not because of that day. It has nothing to do with it, well not anymore I guess. The important thing is that I was always like this. I believed in being the best for everything the school had to offer. Do you honestly think I like being this "cheery" and "kind" girl of the school? I don't. I hate it with every ounce of my soul!"

He shook his head.

"If you hate being the perfectionist of school, then why don't you stop? Why don't you let the real you out?"

_He doesn't understand my pain..._

_Not just yet._

"There's too much to lose if I do. My reputation, my friends, and possibly my grades too. There's too much at stake if I do let the real me out."

Val sighed, giving up on convincing me to stop.

"If that's the case, then don't let it out. You are right; you could lose your friends with your "real" side. But sooner or later, you are gonna have to let it out, whether you like it or not."

He walked off his hands in his pockets.

"I'll make sure that I won't let anyone see who I am," I assured.

Val reared his head to me.

His steely, onyx black eyes had a layer of seriousness that I rarely saw on him.

"No matter how many times you say it, I know that isn't the complete you, and I know that something happened in that day. I remember another Monika before that day even happened. And I will keep that Monika in my heart if needed."

I looked down to my shoes as he walked away.
... 

I have never seen Val so upset before.

Does he hate who I am...?

"I know that isn't the complete you."

The complete me?

What is he even talking about?

This is me!

...

Right?

Was there more to me before that day happened?

Did something die me?

Lots of things died on that day.

That includes my love for him.

Why does he remember me like her?

The girl that I never was...

Or was I actually the girl that he thought I was?

How much did I change in these four years?

Did it change how I behaved and forced me to forget...?

There's only so much speculation I can do.

The next we are alone, I am confronting him about everything.

I'll make sure of it.

"So remind me Haru, why did you want me to pick you up again?" My older sister asked.

I shrugged.

"I was feeling a bit under the weather, Yuri. Nothing more than that." I replied.

She sighed at my excuse.

"If you are going to enroll in Ainu, then missing out on classes like this is a bad idea. Even if you are feeling sick, you should least make an effort to stay, Haru."

I don't want to go to Ainu.

"Whatever. It's only one day, and I really wasn't feeling well, so this shouldn't hurt that much."
We continued to walk home in silence.

That is until my older sister's phone beeped.

"Ah! Valkyrie messaged me!" She cheerily said while scrambling to get her phone.

I felt the same vibe of excitement as she did.

_Oooh..._

_That's what she calls him?_

When Yuri pulled out her phone, she let out a dreamy sigh.

I tried to peek over, only for her to keep it away from my view.

Because of that, I pouted.

"Awww! Onee-chan let me see, let me see!" I begged, maneuvering myself to see the screen.

But whatever I did, she made sure to outmaneuver me.

The world was shut off to her as it was just her and her phone.

After a bit stomping, Yuri locked her phone and placed it back into her pocket.

"So, what did he say?" I asked.

My older sister smiled earnestly, something I rarely see her do.

"He said something about 'hitting the gym' with me, but he immediately replied with a sorry."

_So it is true..._

_He does go to the gym._

"Tell me Onee-chan, why did you get so happy when he texted you?" I asked.

Her smile faded into an insecure frown and started to play with her hair.

"Valkyrie is a very nice and caring man, Haru. He likes my Jasmine tea, speaks to me in my native tongue, and um..."

She looked away and hid her red, burning face in her hair.

"I find him attractive."

_My older sister has a crush on him?_

...

"Onee-chan, can you show me a picture of him?"

She squinted at me with something I have never seen before.

Her eyes were hollowed out and focused on me, for a split second before returning to normal.
"Of course, Haru."

Yuri showed me a picture of his social media profile picture.

I can see why he likes him...

Val is pretty hot.

"He's the first man that I have talked to ever since I came home..."

I smirked from the new information.

"Onee-chan, did you know that I am going to Dokisai tomorrow as part of a field trip?"

My sister was pleasantly surprised.

"Really? How long are you going to stay around for?"

I tapped my chin in thought.

Hmm...

How long am I actually going to stay there?

"I don't know really, but it should give me enough time to see Val..." I dreamily stated.

Yuri took a deep breath and then exhaled.

She usually does that to calm herself down...

What did I say?

Oh.

She's jealous that I might take him away from her, huh?

That's very interesting...

"Aren't you supposed to stay within your touring group and not wander the school halls?"

I smirked.

"Yeah, maybe. But that isn't going to stop me."

I finished all the homework I had for my classes and worked on the poem for tomorrow.

But I haven't even started the first few words for it.

And so, I laid on my bed and looked at the ceiling for any hopes of inspiration.

Nothing.

Nothing is coming to me.

I am just too distracted about Monika...

"I said, don't be. This is how I always was, Val. That image of me in your head is a fake and nothing
"Do you honestly think I like being this "cheery" and "kind" girl of the school? I don't. I hate it with every ounce of my soul!"

"There's too much at stake if I do let the real me out."

No... no... no...

That isn't the Monika that I remember!

She was never this cold or hateful of anything!

Sure she was forceful about some things, but she didn't mean it...

But now?

She does mean it.

...

I should write something about all this.

Maybe that will help me.

I arose from my bed and went over to the blank piece of paper.

With my pen in hand, I started to write my troubles away.

---

**Remember**

**Do you remember the first time we met?**

I saw you on the swings alone and afraid of anyone who got close to you.

**Do you remember how you looked up to me?**

It was as if you couldn't believe what was happening.

**Do you remember how I pushed you on the swings?**

You were laughing on how much fun we were having, the wind, the speed, and company, all of which made you happy.

**Do you remember the first sleepover we had?**

We looked up at the stars and promised each other that we would watch it together.

**Do you remember how we spent our holidays together?**

We would always stay up late playing video games, read books, or talk about anything.

**Do you remember our promise together?**

I would never leave your side, and I made sure that it wouldn't happen.
Do you remember when you left?

It broke me knowing that you were gone forever.

And there was nothing I could have done to get you back to me.

When you did come back, I couldn't recognize you.

I couldn't remember how you looked like.

I couldn't remember how you smiled.

I couldn't remember how much cared for everyone.

Do you remember how much you changed?

I released my pen and let roll on the table.

There was nothing more to be written.

It's all because of that one day.

In just one day, everything can change.

With my poem finished, I collapsed over my bed.

I looked to my side and towards my balcony.

The familiar brown-haired heiress was on her balcony and was looking up at the stars.

She had a bittersweet smile, as she star-gazed.

"Let's watch the stars together!"

With a grunt, I pushed myself off the bed and walked over to my balcony.

I heard the sliding door open to reveal Val walking out to his balcony.

There weren't any stars out since it was going to pour today.

And so, I gazed to the next best thing: the city lights.

"There aren't stars out, Monika. Shouldn't you be at bed?"

I rolled my eyes.

"Yeah, I know there aren't any stars out, dad. But there are lights on the surface too, right?"

He snickered at my little retort.

"Skyscrapers? Yeah, I know. Anyway, you have your poem written?"

In my hand is a pen that will write a poem of me and you.

I couldn't stop thinking about what you said...
"I finished a long time ago." I lied.

He didn't really quite respond to that.

All he did was merely nod and stare the streets lights ahead.

"I wrote my poem about you." He suddenly said.

My palms started to get sweaty at what he said.

A poem about me...?

Why me?

What did he write about me in his poem?

Calm down!

It's just a poem, not a love letter.

A poem that has a few sentences about me that describes all my traits...

Which is very similar to a love letter...

Uuuu!

Why did he decide to write about me?

"To be exact, I wrote about us. Everything I wrote was from the first day we met, to the last time I saw you."

...

I couldn't help but blush at what he was saying.

"S-Stop saying these weird things, moron! You're making me feel uncomfortable!"

He turned his attention to me and leaned against the railings on the balcony.

"Why? I needed to add on to the conversation."

I turned to him with an embarrassed frown.

"You could have literally said anything else! Agh! You are such an idiot sometimes!"

He shrugged, my insults unable to penetrate his will.

"Maybe, maybe. But what's more important is why I wrote it about us."

Oh gosh...

Is he going to "talk" to me?

No!

No more playing around!
I need to confront him!

"Monika..."

My heart pounded uncontrollably as he called my name.

"Y-Yes?"

I know I am nervous but...

I can do better than this!

But the way he said it...

It just melts my darkness away...

"Can you tell me why you left?"

...

He asked the question.

It's time for me to reply.

I gripped the balcony tightly and tried my best not to feel lightheaded.

"I... I left because you never came." I truthfully answered. "I sent you texts and even left about three voicemails. But you never came."

He let out a deep breath.

"Monika, I was thinking about the same thing. I never got any texts or any calls on my cell, let me show you."

Val reached for his pocket and scrolled to the date on when I left.

Once he arrived at the date, he showed me the text.

"Okay, I guess. Text me when he is around. See you then."

As soon as he showed me the text, I grew suspicious.

Wait, maybe deleted the messages to make it seem that he never got it.

"I haven't deleted any messages. It doesn't work while on SMS. Did you send the messages properly? He asked.

I quickly pulled out my phone and tapped on his bubble.

My messages were there, but there was a small circle that indicated it was loading.

Once it finished, I heard a vibration coming from Val's phone.

What the...

"Did you just send me a message now? No, wait... I just got thirty messages from you! And three voicemails..."
He squinted at me, as he was now suspicious of me.

*How did he get the messages now?*

*Did I have bad reception?*

*No, that can't be the case since my phone beeped when calling him.*

*There's no way my service was bad then...*

"What's going on...?" We muttered at the same time.

"Ah! Wait! You go first! No! You go! Arggh!"

We stopped for a brief second, and I seized the chance to speak.

"You got the voicemails now; there's no way that I made those up right now. Not to mention, my phone beeped when I called you."

Val rubbed his chin in thought.

"Yeah, that's weird. You can't leave a voicemail without calling first..."

*So my theory was correct.*

*Val never got the messages in the first place.*

*All of my anger towards him...*

*It was all over a misunderstanding or something he didn't get.*

*In my four years, all my hate towards him wasn't even justified.*

*I am a monster...*

"I'm sorry."

He raised an eyebrow at me.

"What? What for?"

I wrung my fingers in an attempt to answer him.

The rain droplets splashed against the floors of our balcony, the soft sounds of the drizzle now audible for the both of us.

"I spent the four years hating you... I thought you left me behind when you found those three other friends. I thought our friendship was over. Ever since we came back, I kept putting you down, and it was completely unjustified! You had no reason to be under my wrath! And because of that, I am sorry!"

The thunder crashed down, a loud boom resonated from its strike.

I shrieked as the blast reached us.

"Monika! Are you alright?" He yelled, getting my attention.
I was still shaken from blare and opened my eyes slowly to see him on the verge of jumping over.

No... I am not a little girl anymore!

Why am I scared of thunder?

I am all grown up now so I can't be scared of stuff like that!

"Y-Yeah, I am okay. Only caught off guard by that thunder, so don't worry." I answered with faux courage.

From the look from his face, he knew something was off about me, but decided not to press me on it. He rested his chin on his arms and looked off at the distance.

"So... you hated me all along?" He asked.

I didn't respond to him.

"Figures, I had a voice in the back of my head that told me that I was right about that day. Everything changed on that day... If only I stopped myself from going with Hiro and the others. Maybe then, I could have convinced your dad to stay and we continued our friendship as usual."

I felt horrible from Val berating himself.

"Monika, did you know that I hated myself after that day?"

What...?

He smiled bittersweetly.

"The day you left broke me as proper human being. Every day I would think to myself: 'Why did I wake up?' or 'What's the point getting through this day?'. Every waking moment was dedicated to how I could have changed the past. How things would have been different if I... saved you."

My heart wrenched from his confession.

No...

I know him! He would never let things weigh him down!

He would smile at the challenge and move on!

Even if that challenge was me... leaving him.

"Time, food, color... none of that mattered to me when you weren't around, Monika. Life was bland, boring, and meaningless. I put on this mask that hid all the pain and suffering I was going through. I don't know what I could've done were it not for my friends I met on that day. They knew that I was hurt and they did whatever they can to help get through the grief. And no, I wouldn't commit suicide or anything. I know how much it would affect my friends and family if I even dabbled on that idea. I just... wouldn't care on whatever happened to me at that point."

Val was...

Depressed.
He was depressed without me.

And all I did was just think about how much I hated him from a simple misunderstanding.

Even I did fall for him again, I don't deserve him.

He went through so much and here I am thinking how much of a scumbag I thought he was.

"But that all changed when I saw you."

He knocked me out of my trance.

"Me?"

Val reared his head to me.

"Yup. When I heard that you were transferring from Ainu, I felt incredibly energetic and happy again. It was as if those emotions finally had some meaning and life to it. Not forced or fake, but real and genuine. I knew I had one more shot on keeping you here with me. And that's what drove me throughout the two days we have spent together. Instead of waking up exhausted and filled self-hatred, I woke up ready and excited for possibilities we can share together once more. And for that, thank you. Thank you for making me feel alive again."

He smiled, all traces of him being bitter was now all wiped out from genuine happiness.

"At the end of the day, I thought to myself... maybe going to Hiro as a reunion of some sort wasn't the best idea. But who knows? I still should have been more prepared for the consequences."

No more.

I had enough of this!

I don't want to hear Val talking about how useless he felt without me!

This is all my fault!

If I waited a little bit longer or had a little more patience to think things through, this all wouldn't have happened.

This all wouldn't have happened if I didn't put so much pressure on him...

"No," I finally spoke. "This is all my fault. I put too much pressure on you."

As expected, Val rejected my claim.

"You didn't Monika. I failed you, I failed our promise of staying together no matter what."

Stop it, stop it, stop it!

"STOP IT!" I screamed, the thunder cracking the tense air around us.

He was shocked by my demand.

"I don't want to hear you defending me or taking the blame! This is all my fault because I put too much faith in you! You are only human, Val! There's only so much a person can handle, and the fact that I counted on you to convince my father not to go to Ainu and take me to Prom was inhuman! It
was only reasonable that you needed something to blow off the steam to hang out with your friends! And... and I am glad that you found new friends, friends that care about you no matter what. Just like how I made friends at Ainu..."

He smirked.

"Look, Monika. Whatever happened on that day, there is no taking it back. The best we can do is to let go and move on. We can't hold onto the past forever. Even with our wounds, we should find solace in each other to heal together. So what do you say? Friends?"

He's right.

I can't hold onto the past...

It is time to let go and move on.

Even though I am hurt from before, we can heal together.

But...

I don't know if I can fall in love with him again.

Who am I kidding?

What are the odds of that happening?

And even if I do, someone is going to take him away.

And that someone deserves him.

I can never forgive myself for hating him.

"Yeah... friends."

Something inside of me died when I said that.

It was a mixed feeling of both good and bad...

He yawned and stretched upwards, his tight t-shirt moving up with his motions.

My eyes looked down to his toned body.

Ooooh...

Wait, no abs?!

What does he do at the gym anyway?!

"Huh?"

Uh oh...

"Monika, were you looking down on me...?" He asked.

I blushed and turned on my heel.

"Psssh, no! Why would I look at something like that? I am not a pervert like you."
He chuckled at my little outburst.

"It's sometimes way too obvious when you lie, Mon. Working out abdominals doesn't mean I am going to get abs if I constantly work it out. Body fat hides muscles but it is needed to you know... stay alive. I try to keep my body fat at a comfortable range so I won't suffer from any side effects of not having any or little of it." He explained.

I arched an eyebrow from how he knew all this.

"Since when were you a gym rat?"

He shrugged playfully.

"Ever since... you know. Don't worry, it's just a way to let out stress and get some of my anger out. Along with boxing... Hey, you should come along some time."

I rolled my eyes.

"And be stuck in a room filled with sweat, testosterone, and gigantic guys? No thanks."

He scoffed at me.

"There are some people that wouldn't take too kindly to your comment, Monika. And there are plenty of girls that work out in the gym too."

Val yawned again and in turn, made me yawn as well.

"Yeah... anyway, I am heading to bed. Goodnight."

I smiled at him.

"Goodnight."

I then winked at him, before turning on my heel to retreat to my bed.

Or at least I thought of doing when he went to bed.

The rain started to fall heavily, as I heard the soft pitter patter on the roof of my house.

My Journal was on my bedside cabinet, but I thought it was best if I took a day off from writing on it.

The thunder boomed again, making me yelp in surprise.

But mostly fear.

I always was scared of thunder, especially when we were kids.

---

*It was a long day, we had our usual playdate and had fun while doing so, like always.*

*But today, it was the whole day.*

*Val was grumpy that he didn't get to go outside since he wanted to play in the mud.*

*I too wanted to play in the mud but decided against it because of how messy it would be.*
When it came time for me to leave the rain started to pour harder, making it hard for me to see at least a few meters.

But that wasn't the bad part.

The bad part was that it was a thunderstorm.

And that meant...

Thunder.

*CRACK*

"Aaah!" I shrieked, holding onto the doorframe for comfort.

Val placed his comforting hand on my shoulder to calm me down.

"Monika, are you okay? It's just a little thunder..."

I looked up to him, quivering and shaking from the loud noise.

"I-I'm scared! I-I don't want to go home! It's too scary!" I cried.

He raised an eyebrow at what I was saying.

*CRACK*

"Eeek!"

I jumped to Val and hugged him tightly from the sound.

"I'm scared, Val... make it go away! Make that loud noise go away!" I begged.

He laughed nervously.

"I don't think I can make that noise go away, but we can make it less scary."

Val closed the door and we walked over to his room.

I made sure I was secure onto his body.

Once we made it to his room, I released myself from him and rubbed my eyes.

My hand gripped his as it was the only thing that can make me stand a chance against the noise.

"I was scared of thunder too, Monika. So what I did was jump into bed and curl myself like a ball!"

He got onto his bed and grabbed all his blankets.

Once he had got all the materials needed, he brought it over himself and rolled up into a ball, just like what he said.

Val made a little opening and poked his head out.

"Come on! We can stay inside this ball together!"

*CRACK*
"Aaaah!"

The frightening noise stopped me in its tracks, reducing me into a shaking little girl.

Val understood what I was going through and offered his hand to me.

"Take my hand, Monika. It will all be okay, I promise."

He looked sincere and caring.

In his eyes, he couldn't bear to see the fear in me.

I reached out to him and took his hand.

With a strength I never thought he had, he pulled me in.

My surroundings were dark and relatively humid.

Val noticed this and made a little hole out of the ball we were in.

"Better?"

I nodded.

The rain outside was completely muffled, as I could barely hear it now.

Everything around me made it comfy and cozy for me to relax.

"I want to lie down..."

Val readjusted his ball to make more space for me to lie down.

We both laid down on the bed, the blanket covering the both of us.

With him nearby, I felt like there was nothing that can scare me.

His eyes grew heavy along with mine.

*CRACK*

The Thunder didn't bother me as much it should, but I felt the fear creep onto me.

I needed one more thing.

"Val... can you hold me? I'm still scared..."

Without question, he wrapped his arms around me, making sure that I was safe and sound with him.

And I was, I smiled as his body provided the comfort I needed to sleep.

*CRACK*

The noise had no effect on me.

And I was glad that it didn't.

It didn't take long that we fell asleep in each other's arms...
I tossed and turned in my bed, as I felt restless for some reason.

Was it because we finally spoke about what happened four years ago?

Or is it because of the thunder?

*CRACK*

...

Nope.

That doesn't really bother me.

But that would bother Monika a lot...

She is scared of Thunder.

Notably when we were just kids...

I needed to be next to her in order to make her sleep peacefully.

But if I wasn't there, she would wake up the next day with bags under her eyes...

I might have them too if I don't sleep soon.

Hmm...

Maybe listening to some calm music can help me sleep better.

I reached out to my headphones and phone to play the songs to help me sleep.

*Knock Knock*

I stopped whatever I was doing and looked towards my balcony.

Who is that?

I squinted to better identify who the mysterious figure was on the other end of the door.

It was a feminine figure, with her hair flowing down to her waist.

*CRACK*

In that brief moment of light, I saw that her hair was a chestnut brown, and her eyes were an emerald green.

The girl was frightened from the thunder and tried her best to stay calm.

Oh shit!

Monika!

I ran towards my balcony door and opened it for her.

She quickly walked in as I closed it.
"Monika? What's wrong? Why did you come over?"

The girl looked up to me with glassy eyes.

"I'm scared..."

I immediately gave her a warm hug to reassure her that she was safe.

Only for me to realize that she was soaking wet.

I pulled away from her immediately from the revelation.

"Aw, jeez! You're completely soaked! How long were you out there?"

She was still shaken from the thunder despite the hug.

Despite my better judgment and the situation at hand, my eyes wandered to her body.

The water that soaked her pajamas has glued to her skin, allowing me to stare at her body.

Her breasts were partially visible, but the fabric was able to cover most of it.

*Wait...*

She isn't wearing a bra?

*CRACK*

Monika let out a terrified yelp and latched onto me.

Oh my gosh...

Her boobs are so warm... and I can feel it through her pajamas!

I mentally slapped myself from my perverted thoughts.

Get a grip!

She's scared and here I am, thinking about how hot she is!

Come on, Val! Get your game face on!

But it felt so good.

I knew I couldn't trust my thoughts anymore, so I followed my instincts.

"Okay, Monika. I know you are wet and all, but you are going to need to take off your clothes."

I hope no one is going to take that out of context...

"B-But I am going to naked! I am not wearing anything underneath my pajamas!" She retorted.

I knew it...

"Don't worry, I am not going to look or anything. I have some clothes that I can spare that you can wear." I assured. "But first, you need a towel."
I went into my bathroom and quickly took any towel that in the basket.

Afterward, I took out a black boxer and green t-shirt for her.

I then tossed to her both items to which she grabbed.

Despite how frightened she was, Monika managed to glare at me.

"If you look, then I am going to kill you."

I smiled nervously.

"Okay... should I stay in the bathroom in the meantime?"

That jolted her out of the glare.

"No! No! Don't go anywhere!" She yelled.

Her green eyes wandered away from contact.

"I need you here with me... or else I get... scared."

I nodded.

"Copy that. I'll just turn around so you can wear your clothes..."

I turned around and crossed my arms.

What a strange turn of events...

First, we talk about what happened that day, only to find out it was all a misunderstanding...

Then, a huge thunderstorm forces Monika to come over, and she's soaking wet!

And here I am, waiting for her to finish wearing her clothes so we can get on with the night.

Or really... my clothes.

Childhood friendships are such a mess sometimes...

...

Hey, I wonder how Monika will look without-

I heard a large whiff from behind me and a large breath out soon after.

"Aaah... I'm done." I heard her say.

I turned around to see her clad in my clothes, nervously rubbing her arm from it.

Wow...

She looks amazing in my clothes...

And I realized that she's not wearing her bow anymore.

Her hair looks a lot better without her bow.
"Well..." She looked up to me with an insecure frown. "Tell me if I look good or not!"

I coughed to bring myself to reality.

"Uh... well," I muttered, not knowing what to say.

*She does look beautiful.*

*Hell, Monika always looks gorgeous in anything.*

*Even in baggy clothing like mine.*

My face burned as I look straight into her eyes.

"You look great, Monika."

She gave a small smile at my compliment.

And I knew right away that it was a forced one.

"In fact..." I drew on. "Whatever you wear, it will always look... stunning on you."

Monika looked at me at disbelief, apparently at awe from I said to her.

"W-Wow..." She muttered. "I never thought you had it in you, Val."

I chuckled nervously.

"Hehe, yeah. I guess. I didn't I could say such things."

Monika took the chance and cue to look around my room.

"Nothing has really changed, has it?"

I looked around with her.

"Yeah, I don't think I changed anything around my room. I never had the reason to do it."

*CRACK*

"Aaah!"

Monika latched onto me as soon as the thunder hit.

I felt her shaking as he held me tight.

*Her chest...*

*I can feel it pressing against me!*

*No, no, no!*

*Stop thinking about that!*

*Hey, would Mom and Dad be surprised that Monika is here...?*

*Yeah, they would.*
Especially at this time of day.

"So um... what do we do? Are you here for a sleepover?" I asked.

She still shivered.

"Y-Y-Yeah, I am! I really, really couldn't sleep because of the thunder!"

I sighed and patted her head.

She looked up in wonder.

"Don't worry, Monika. I am here for you, so I don't mind a sleepover."

Her eyes widened in hope.

"R-Really? But aren't we a bit... you know older? Don't you think it will be awkward."

I shook my head.

"Why would it be awkward? We have known each other for a long time, of course, this isn't awkward!"

Monika frowned.

"It's not because of that... it's because of-"

*CRACK*

"Aaah!"

I was nearing my limit where I could handle Monika being scared.

It was difficult not to get angry over a natural phenomenon.

I continued to pat her head.

"Whatever you are worried about, don't be. I'll sleep on the floor with the mattress while you sleep on my bed. I am sure-"

"NO!" She yelled, pulling away from the embrace and head pats.

Her eyes revealed that she was still scared and hurt from the loud boom.

"I can't sleep without you close to me..." She explained, her red face visible in the dark room.

I raised an eyebrow.

"Then what do you say I should do?"

Monika twirled her hair with her finger, nervously avoiding my gaze.

"How about you sleep with me...?"

Wait...

What?!
Sleep with Monika?!

No, no, no!

I don't see her like that...

Right?

"S-Sleep with you?"

It was there when Monika realized what she said.

Her eyes widened in shock.

"I-I... I didn't mean it in that context!"

Her lips quivered in an attempt to formulate words.

Suddenly I was greeted with a flurry of punches.

"Aaah! You pervert! You no-good for nothing nimrod! You-"

I needed to stop her from her tirade and assault, especially since everyone was asleep.

After all, the rain couldn't muffle everything we do.

So to stop her, I pounced on her and pinned her down on my bed.

My hands aimed for her wrists and brought them above her head, effectively disabling her.

She let out a surprised yelp from the abrupt motion and stopped in her tracks.

"W-W-Wh-What going on?! Why are you pinning me down on your bed?! Why are you so close to me?!!"

Oh geez...

Someone out there is probably going to take whatever is happening out of context.

"Shhhhhh..."

Her eyes frantically searched my eyes for an answer and just about to scream again.

"Monika, if you scream everyone in the house will hear you! Please calm down!"

The panicking girl stopped her search and closed her eyes.

She took multiple deep breaths to calm herself down and stared at me with calmer eyes.

"Right... I forgot about that. Sorry..." She meekly apologized.

I released her from my pin and pulled myself up from her.

"It's fine. Now can you elaborate by what you meant to say?"

Monika looked away and blushed.
"Um... can we sleep in the same bed? You know, just like how we did as kids? I never really grew out of my fear for thunder..." She mumbled.

*That's it?*

*That's why she was getting so flustered about?*

I shrugged.

"Sure."

Her jaw dropped.

"What? What do you mean sure? How are you taking this so easily?!"

I replied by laying down on my bed and supporting myself with my elbow on the pillow.

"Well, we shared beds when we were growing up. So there isn't much of a difference is there?"

Monika continued to stare at me with deadpanned eyes but then sighed.

"Sometimes I wonder if you are denser than a black hole. If someone were to throw you in there, I think you would absorb it."

I only arched an eyebrow.

"But in any case, if anyone asks..."

She took a quick step forward and stopped right beside my head.

"I. Did not. Sleep. With. You. Got it?"

I rolled my eyes and turned on my side.

"Sure, whatever. I'm trying to catch up on some sleep, so whenever you are done. Let me know." I mocked, not really caring what happens now.

I could tell she wasn't happy with what I said.

"Are you mocking me, Jones?"

At this point, I already closed my eyes and wanted to do whatever it takes to finally sleep.

So a demanding comeback was an order.

"Yeah, I am, Salvato. Now get some rest, will ya?" I retorted, using a bit of force to coat my tone.

She sighed.

"You are no fun in bed... fine. Goodnight."

*What's that supposed to mean exactly?*

"Yeah, yeah. Goodnight."

I felt some shifts on the bed, meaning the long night would finally come to an end.
Once she was done moving, I moved the blanket over us to keep us warm.

*So much has happened today.*

*The Journal, the misunderstanding, and the talk.*

*We finally had our talk.*

*Maybe we can get on with our lives.*

*Anyway, now that she is back...*

*I could finally pursue some girls!*

*Since uh... Monika's here to make sure I get the perfect girlfriend!*

*It's more because that I can finally ease up around everyone a bit more...*

*Eugh, I hate it when my head jumps through too many thoughts.*

"Hey, Val... are you awake still?"

I grumbled something to verify that I was awake.

"Oh, in that case... there's something that has been in my mind for a while now."

I shifted and faced her to hear what she had to say.

"Shoot."

"Well, when I texted you on that day... I actually ran outside to search for you."

*She did...?*

*So there's more to what happened.*

"You did?"

Monika nodded slowly.

"I did and I found you."

There was an uneasy feeling in my gut, knowing that it didn't end well.

"If you did, why didn't you call out to me?" I asked, now genuinely curious as what happened.

She gritted her teeth and closed her eyes.

"I did. W-When I found you, I ran to you but I tripped and fell. I scraped my knees badly on that day. A-And then... I called out to you."

*She did...?*

*But I didn't even hear her!*

"I screamed at the top of my lungs for you to come back, but you never turned back to me. And that's why I hated you. That's when I realized that you 'betrayed' me. I know now that wasn't the
case, but...

She sniffed.

"It hurt. Everything hurt when I saw you getting farther and farther away from me."

For the first time in a while, I noticed Monika crying.

"I-I thought you abandoned me on that day! I thought you used me to get more friends and then forget me soon after! My heart hurt from how you betrayed me on that day! And I thought you would never talk to me ever again!"

Seeing Monika cry hurt my soul, so I hugged her tight.

"It's okay. I am here now. I am here right beside you. And... I'm sorry for not hearing you. I don't know if it was because of the wind or something, but I should have made the effort to listen... so, please. Don't cry."

I pulled her from my hug and wiped her tears.

"If there is anything I can do, tell me."

...

"Hold me tight and never let go. Keep me safe from whatever gets in our way. And remember the promise we made."

...

"I remember. I will always hold onto you. And this time, I will make sure that it stays that way."

With that, Monika giggled.

It was the first time in a while that I heard her giggle out of pure happiness.

This giggle... it wasn't forced or out of pain.

It was real.

"We'll see. Now hold me. Hold me like there's no tomorrow!"

*CRACK*

"Eeeep! Please!"

I couldn't help chuckling as well, bringing in her into a warm embrace.

My arms went behind her back and brought her close to my chest.

She curled her legs on mine to share our body heat.

I felt her soft hair rest below my chin and her ear on my chest.

*CRACK*

There was no adverse effect when the thunder hit, and stayed still in my arms.
"Goodnight, Val."

"Goodnight, Mon."

We drifted off to a deep sleep not so long after.

I knew that she didn't change.

She's still the sweetheart I remember from four years ago...

It's good to have her back.

I felt comfy.

I also felt pretty warm too.

Not to mention that I felt very rested.

It's just that the sun was bothering me, and I needed to do something about it.

And so, I forced my way out of whatever that kept me warm and got off from my bed.

I didn't take into consideration that the room looked off and familiar, but I ignored it.

Once I got to the balcony, I closed the curtains to block the sunlight.

I yawned and walked over to my bed, only to collapse over it.

My head was on the pillow and my body under the blanket, but I couldn't find the same comfort I had before.

That was until something grabbed ahold of my back and pulled me closer to whatever the source was.

I was too groggy to actually care what happened, and put my legs on the person keeping in his arms.

My hands felt the soft fabric of a t-shirt, only to be under a hard toned pillow.

I didn't mind since the pillow was warm.

And so, I stayed in that position for a while, not realizing what exactly was going on.

I need to sleep like this more often...

This pillow is amazing!

It's almost like my body pillow...

Wait, this feels a lot like my bodypillow but not quite.

The sides have this tough and toned texture that I can't put my hand on...

...

I opened one eye to see what I was sleeping on.
No way...

It was Val, and he was sleeping peacefully without a care in the world of what's going on.

Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh!

Did we actually sleep together?!

I thought that was some sort of fever dream, but it's real!

Oh no...

Oh nooo!

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

Val immediately woke up from his sleep and jumped out of the bed with a combat-ready pose.

"(Come on! I'll take you all on!)." He yelled in English. "(Get some!)."

He then calmed down and shook his head.

"(What...? What's going on?!)"

I stared at him as he continued to examine his surroundings.

The man turned to me and brightened.

"Oh, hey Monika!" He greeted, apparently forgetting what happened.

Before I can get to reply to him, the door swung open.

"Bro-bro! I heard a really loud girl scream! What happened! What-"

It was Micheal, Val's younger brother armed with a toy Buff gun.

"Auntie Monika?"

He keeps forgetting that I am not his aunt, but I don't mind at all.

The little boy always makes me smile because of how innocent he was.

I arose from my bed and gave the younger brother a warm hug.

"Hey, Mike. It's so good to see you again."

I then petted his head.

"Are you doing well at school?" I asked.

Mike looked somewhat confused from the situation but decided not to ask anything.

"Um yeah, I am. I thought Val brought a girl over without Mom and Dad's permission, but it's just you Auntie. So it's okay, I guess."

I am not a girl...?
"Mike, can you do me a little favor and not tell Ma and Pa about Monika coming over? I don't think they will take it as easily as you did, bro." Val requested.

The boy raised an eyebrow and tried to comprehend us, but didn't.

"Sure thing, bro-bro. I am going to school early since I have another trip today! You two can keep making out if you want! Hahaha!"

Before I could retort, the rascal dashed off and escaped our grasp.

We both sighed and started to relax.

Wait.

I'm in Val's room...

With his clothes...

And slept in his bed.

With him...

All because of some stupid thunder!

What's wrong with me?!

How could I do this to myself and to him?!

"Hey Monika, are you okay? You have been standing there for a while now."

How am I going to get myself out of this?!

Being aggressive to him and behave like a tsundere?

Yeah, that'll work.

I turned around with a forced glare.

"Yeah, of course, I am!"

I stomped up to him.

"Do not tell a soul of what happened between us, or else you are gonna get a huge punishment. Understand?" I warned.

He blinked, obviously confused by my sudden hostility.

"I won't tell anyone. You have my word on that, Monika."

I smirked.

"Good. Now if you don't mind, I am keeping your clothes for the moment. I need to get ready for school and as do you too."

I walked over to the door and was about to jump over.

"Hey wait! What about your clothes?! And not to mention, those are my favorite pajamas!"
Before he could complain further, I made the jump and opened the balcony door to my home.

"Pack them in your bag and I'll be sure to pick them up soon."

And with that, I shut the door.

I let out a huge sigh once I walked a few feet.

*I am so screwed today.*

*Did Mom and Dad find out that I wasn't in my room?*

*I hope not...*

Since I had school, I decided to get ready early and eat breakfast.

*Maybe I should eat breakfast with Val.*

*No!*

*No, I shouldn't!*

*I had enough of him for only one day!*

As I wore my uniform from Ainu I continued to think about what happened last night.

*The storm...*

*First I got soaking wet from the storm from last night.*

*Then I had to change in front of Val!*

I looked down to the clothes I was wearing and grabbed it.

With a smile, I took a whiff on the smell of his clothes.

*It smells just like him...*

...

*What the *fuck* is wrong with me?!!*

*Smelling his clothes and enjoying it just rings a bunch of alarms in my head!*

*Gah!*

Anyway, after I changed my clothes I just had to sleep with him, didn't I?

*I am such an idiot...*

*He took it the wrong way and I got embarrassed.*

*Usually, Val would try to stop me by saying something but this time...*

*He...*

*He pinned me.*
For some reason when he pinned me, my body started to heat up.

My breathing started to get heavy for some reason.

I was able to hear how hard my heart was pounding.

His black eyes... they were serious and focused when they stared back at me.

Val also held my wrists together, so I couldn't do a thing but struggle...

Did I...

Did I get turned on by that?

I stopped whatever I was doing and let the article of clothing drop to the floor.

Psssh! Haha!

Oh jeez, my thoughts can be hilarious.

Of course, I didn't!

He only did that because he didn't want to wake anyone up.

It's simple as that.

I was just scared!

Scared from looking into his eyes and lips...

Um...

I continued to wear my uniform from there.

So I told him how I felt on that day.

I was right, he didn't even hear me scream.

But I still feel a little hurt.

And I don't think that pain will go away anytime soon.

Maybe it will go away the more time I get acquainted with him again.

What else is there to think about?

Oh right, we cuddled.

...

...

We cuddled...

This isn't the same cuddling we did as kids.
It was more intimate.

And not to mention how aloof he sounded when he accepted my offer to sleep beside him...

Is Val really that dense?

Cuddling as adults are completely different than cuddling as kids!

Kids can get away with it because they don't know any better.

But adults?!

If anyone didn't take our relationship into account, they would have thought we were committed to each other!

Hah!

Why would I want to be in a relationship with him?

...

I feel cruddy for thinking about for some reason.

Anyway, the worst thing is... I enjoyed it!

He kept me warm and safe in his arms.

That damn thunder didn't scare at all this time!

Just like how it was when we were younger.

When I got to class today, I felt focused.

There was nothing that made me yawn or get bored.

Is this what they call as a good night's sleep?

I have never been so rested in a long time.

As usual, Hiro slung his arm on my back.

"Sup boss! You are looking refreshed today, what's up?!"

I turned to him with a small smile.

"Feeling a little better ever since Monika came back. Not much else." I answered.

He gave an amused grunt.

"Oh wow, that's actually some great news to hear, boss. I am happy for you."

I turned my head and rested it on my table.

"Yeah, yeah. Thanks. I just look forward to whatever happens today."

Dan walked in not soon after.
"I haven't seen you smile like that in the morning. If I didn't know any better, you had a smooching session with your girlfriend." He teased.

I didn't quite get his teasing, so I raised an eyebrow.

"Dan, I don't have a girlfriend."

He shook his head at me.

"Seriously? Ever since you and Monika saw each other on Monday, you have been getting pretty... chummy."

I shrugged.

"Yeah, I missed her man. We were pretty close when we were younger. It's good to have her back."

Hiro and Dan exchanged looks.

"Hiro, do you think that it's gonna be more than that?"

He crossed his arms and nodded.

"Yep, yep. He is definitely going it to the next level. Ooh, ooh wait! Gimme ten if they take it there!"

Dan scoffed at him.

"Why would I bet against something is guaranteed to happen. How about twenty if they make it first base right after Christmas!" He offered.

"You know how to drive a hard bargain, that's a deal."

*What are they even talking about?*

Everyone suddenly shifted to the door.

It was the one and only Monika.

"Hi, Monika!"

"Hey, you're looking great today!"

"I like your hair!"

"I'll do anything for one way ticket to thighbland..."

And as usual, there was a slight twitch on her right eyebrow.

*What the Hell is wrong with that creep...*

Instead of sitting down in her seat, she walked up to me.

In her hands was a bento box which looked remarkably similar to the one she usually brings.

*Wait...*

*Is that lunch for me?*
Oh man... her lunches are the best!

She then handed it to me.

"Here you go, Val. It's your favorite lunch from middle school!"

I smiled at her.

"Thanks, Mon. I appreciate it!"

"Middle School?!"

Monika gave a small giggle, something that I couldn't quite comprehend, and walked back to her seat.

There was a sudden tense atmosphere, aided by the silence of the classroom.

What's going on...?

I looked around to see a majority of the guys giving me glares with an unknown tone to it.

The girls, on the other hand, glared at Monika with the same effect.

However, Dan and Hiro were the only ones unaffected by the phenomenon and merely looked around with me.

The door opened to reveal the teacher walking into class, unaffected by the silence in the room.

It soon faded after that when she looked around the classroom.

I felt the heat from the scowls start to wear off when she took attendance.

The class was relatively quick for me, as we were out of there in a blink of an eye.

I waved Monika goodbye as I headed for the next class.

The hallways were more rambunctious than usual, their yells and chattering flooded the path to class.

There were middle schoolers, indicating that there were on a school trip, and making up most of the cacophony.

Hmm...

They are wearing green blazers, so that means they are from Lotus.

So that must mean Mike's somewhere around here.

"Hey, Val!" A familiar voice called. "Heads up!"

*PWAP*

The back of my head was hit from a disk-like shape and recoiled me forward.

I turned around with a glare.

"What was that for?!" I shouted, rubbing the afflicted area.
In front of me was a short pink haired girl, laughing hysterically as she held her stomach in.

Natsuki...

"Hahaha! That was gold! Seeing you get hit with a giant cookie is hilarious! Haha!"

Seriously?

A giant cookie?

I looked down to see a cookie wrapped in plastic, still intact from the impact.

Huh.

Didn't I see that cookie before?

I could've sworn that I did.

Picking up the cookie that the girl tossed, I handed it to her, whilst rubbing my head.

"Could you explain to me why you thought to toss a cookie at the back of my head while saying heads up, was a good idea?"

She still couldn't stop laughing.

"It's because... it was for you! I found it funny that you got your cookie with a dose of pain! Especially since you didn't see it coming!" She laughed.

Wait...

This cookie is for me?

I smiled at her while she started to die down with the laughter.

"Oh... wow. Uh, thanks Natsuki. I really appreciate it that you brought me a cookie. How much was it?" I asked.

She looked flustered when I asked her, as her cheeks turned a pale pink.

The girl crossed her arms and looked up to me.

"I didn't buy the cookie, baka. I made it!" She haughtily declared.

Wait she made it?

"Oh, you did?"

I examined the giant cookie further.

It had a generous amount of chocolate chips while being a light warm brown color.

The cookie was wrapped in plastic, with a pink clip to hold it in.

"I actually thought you brought this from a bakery, Natsuki. This looks amazingly well-done! Thanks!"

I was about to unwrap it before I squinted at her.
"Wait... do I owe you anything if I take even a single bite?"

She looked away.

"No..." She muttered uncharacteristically. "I made this just for you. It's because I thought a lot about what Yuri said yesterday and I needed to make it up to you. In the end, she was right. I was being mean to you even though you made the effort to come to the club. So yeah... this is just an apology."

The girl glared at me.

"Don't be getting any funny ideas, ya hear?" She warned.

I nodded.

"Of course. I won't get any. Thanks again, Natsuki. You didn't need to give me cookies, actually, but knowing you... It's definitely going to be delicious!"

Natsuki smiled brightly, showing her pearly white teeth proudly.

"I know it will!"

As a show of good faith, I went to unwrap the cookie and taste it.

That is until I got tackled.

"I found you! I finally found you!" A girl chanted.

"What?!

Who is this girl?

The girl wrapped her arms around my waist and rested her head on my back.

I tried to outmaneuver whoever was clinging on to me, but she made sure to readjust her footing to prevent herself from latching off.

"You're even hotter up close! I knew Yuri was telling the truth!" She stated.

Hotter?!

"Wait, Yuri?!" Natsuki yelled.

The girl buried her nose against my blazer and inhaled.

"Aaah~! Smells like America!"

What does that even mean?!

I saw Yuri running up to me her eyes aimed towards the girl on my waist.

Get off me, get off me, get off me!

"Ah! Sorry, Valkyrie! I'll help you!"

She then pulled the girl from my waist, despite her immense protests.

"No! No! Stop it! I want to snuggle against Onii-chan more!"
"Onii-chan?"

"Who even is she?!"

I rested my back against the wall and tried to relax.

The girl that Yuri was restraining was a Lotus student.

"She looks like..."

Not only was she a Lotus student, but she also had identical features to Yuri.

The girl was shorter, younger, and had the same galaxy purple eyes and hair as-

"Yuri..."

"Um, Yuri? Is this your younger sister?" I asked.

They both looked up to me, with the girl beaming and looking at me with star-struck eyes.

"You guessed, Onii-chan! I am Yuri's younger sister, Haru! It's a pleasure to meet you, my future husband!"

"This girl is ridiculously creepy...!"

"Enough Haru! You are scaring Valkyrie!" Yuri stepped in.

She simply rolled her eyes and escaped her restraints.

"No, I am not, Onee-chan. He's perfectly comfortable around me, maybe a little too much, right Onii-chan?"

Haru then winked at me, sending shivers down my spine.

"Hey! What's wrong with you? You're disobeying your sister! Not to mention, that you are totally wrong on him being comfortable!" Natsuki pointed out, glaring at the loud girl.

She smirked and then hugged me.

"Why should I be listening to a shortie like you, huh? You look young enough to be my little sister!"

...

"WHAT DID YOU SAY?!"

Haru tightened her hold on me and resting her head on my stomach.

"Onii-chan, don't let her touch me! She's scary!"

Natsuki kept her death glare at Haru.

I felt her slightly shift and move her head to Natsuki.

Whatever she did, it made Natsuki's temper worse.

"Uuuu! IF YOU WEREN'T A MIDDLE SCHOOLER I WOULD'VE-"
Yuri took the chance to pull the young girl off me, only for her to cling back to me.

"Haru, Valkyrie barely even knows you and you are painting a bad image in his head. You shouldn't have said to Natsuki. I want you to apologize to her."

She looked up to me and stared at me with puppy-eyes.

"Please do it." I mouthed, mostly because I was very uneasy.

Haru then released me and sighed.

"Sorry for pointing out your size and age. You are probably older than me despite your height, and I apologized because Onii-chan told me so."

The school rang a few seconds after that.

*I am going to be late!*

"Hey um, Haru... It's been nice meeting you and all, but I need to head out." I said, pulling the girl off.

"Awww! Can I at least walk with you to class?"

I looked up to both Natsuki and Yuri.

"Thanks for cookie, Natsuki. I'll save for later. And it's nice seeing you, Yuri."

I then broke into a dead sprint.

"Catch you guys at the club!"

*Oh jeez...*

*That was incredibly creepy.*

*What else does this day have to offer me?*
The AIs are making a comeback.

They started communicating again and healing any damages I have done.

Look's like revenge is not easy I thought.

I knew that.

But like I thought of before, there is no way to stop my attack.

This hard drive is connected to the internet thanks to the guys in the engineering branch.

Were not for me cutting off their data supply, everything in that drive will be sent to that defunct server.

I can't let any hackers get a hold of these two.

Is there anything I should do?

Or should I just let the world be affected by a new wave of cyber-crime because of the technologies found in that hard drive?

No.

I am better than that.

*BRRR*

I picked up my phone to see who was calling me.

"Hello?"

There was an exhausted sigh on the other side of the line.

"Carl, it's me."

Ahmed.

"Hey, man. How is it going?" I asked, faking a friendly tone.

He paused for a second.

Judging from the sound of his voice...

It's bad.

"It's bad. The company is in complete shambles. W-We're getting legal action from the state because of how things went a few months ago. Not to mention we are going bankrupt. All of the projects we were working on got shut down, and any pending ones got scrapped."

Was it that bad when I left?

When I went inside the headquarters to get the drive, there weren't any long faces or looks of
They looked relatively happy.

Were they trying to hide it?

"All projects...? You guys were working on more?"

There was another pause.

"Yeah. We were. Stuff like using nanobots to replace medication altogether, simulating the world to be exactly how it is here, diving into gene therapy, and this one project that we finished working on but never tested it. The machine we made can digitalize brainwaves and store them as a file. Or we can do it the other way around, put a file in a brain-dead patient to resuscitate him.

That sounds interesting.

I heard his voice drip.

"But, there is one project that we didn't stop working on. The COO told us this project needs to be completed by any means necessary."

There was one project that the CEO never told me about.

He mentioned it a little back when I was working for.

Oh no...

Is it Project Libitina?

The project to bridge both reality and fiction together?

"I think I know what the project is. You're working on Libitina, right?"

...

"How did you know-"

I smirked.

"You forget that I was the head of the technology branch, Ahmed. Of course, I know what you guys are working on. The Boss told me very little about it. And that project... it's insane. How can you bridge reality and the world of fiction?"

*PING*

The decryption on the file is complete.

FrankCHR...

Frank is going to be buried in a few weeks.

I can't show my face around any of them.

...

I failed them.
The only thing that survived in his memory is this file.

What is that file exactly, besides being a character file?

It looks like it was heavily compressed.

How is this file even intact in the first place?

Everything got fried in the machine, and yet this file survives with ValCHR.

Wait...

Frank is in life-support because he is brain-dead...

The electrical shock wasn't as deadly as I thought it was.

He is still in a coma from it though.

If I can get a hold of that machine and send that file to his brain then...

Does that mean I can...

Maybe bring him back to life?

T-That...

That would bring a huge burden off my chest.

Maybe I can look them in the eye again.

This is a crazy idea, but I hope it works!

"Exactly! This project is asking for the impossible! How can we even do that?!"

I cleared my voice to speak.

"Uh, I am not sure. Anyway, I got a question for you."

"Go ahead."

I took a deep breath and released it.

"That machine you guys made... can it bring back Frank G. Jones?"

...

"The guy who died in the prototype coma-breaker...?"

He is not dead!

Not just yet!

"Frank is not dead yet! I... I have his character file right here! Maybe I can convert to brain-waves so I can revive him!"

"Wait, you have this character file? First off, how did you even get that? Second off, the fuck's a character file? Is that something like our digitalized output? And third, we haven't tested the machine
yet! So there is a huge possibility that it won't even work in the first place!"

One question at a time...

"Well to answer your first question, I stripped off of the prototype when I went to visit the headquarters. And secondly, the character file is compressed using Sloot's encoding program, so it's around a few megabytes of data! It has to be around two petabytes, which is identical to the average human brain in bytes..."

"What about never testing? Hell, we aren't going to have a chance at testing it!"

If there's a sliver of hope, then I will take it.

I won't let anything get in the way of making things right.

"I'll test it. I'll see if the whole thing works or not."

I gripped my phone tightly in anticipation.

"Fine, have it your way. I'll help you out on this, it's the least I can do, since... you know."

The tension that I never thought I had finally calmed down.

"I know. But first, we need to get Frank. Can you get that arranged with the hospital?"

... 

"Yeah, I think our contract with the hospital is still up. I'll get some guys to start up the machine. Everything is going to be ready by the time you get here, Carl."

For the first time in a while, I smiled.

"Thanks. I appreciate the effort you're putting in. You're a true friend."

With that, I hung up and turned my attention to the screen.

Now I need to find a way to get this hard drive off my computer.

If I take it out normally, then the block I put up will be forfeit...

...

Screw revenge, I'll take the chance to this by brute force.

By running Bruteforce, I can punch a hole in that failsafe and pull the hard drive out.

Here goes...

It was now break-time.

Or lunchtime.

I held the bento box in my hands and looked for wherever Val might be sitting.

He's not around here...
Wait, why should I care?!

If he wants to sit with his friends, then I'll leave him be.

But...

Oh right!

We need to discuss plans for the Winter Festival!

That's a good reason for us to sit alone.

My eyes scanned the cafeteria for any traces of him.

But to no avail, I couldn't find him.

Where is he?!

"Oh hi, Monika!"

I turned to see Sayori smiling with a tray in her hands.

"Hello, Sayori. How are you doing today?" I asked, smiling back at her.

I didn't give her the usual fake smile I always plaster on, but the smile I use whenever I am happy.

Right now...

I am pretty content with my life.

Sayori was taken aback with my smile and rubbed her chin in thought.

"Hmmmmmm... there's something off about you today." She muttered, looking at me inquisitively.

I never showed anyone my real smile beside Val...

"Oh! I got it! You're frustrated because you can't find your..."

Wait, how did she know that I was frustrated?!

Sayori's lips pursed into a playful smirk.

"Boyfriend."

...

"W-W-What are you talking about?! Val's not my boyfriend! We just... know each other for a long time! That's all! He is my childhood friend... Ahaha." I played off.

Oh gosh...

Why is my heart pounding so hard?

And why do I feel so numb?

It's like I want that dork to be my boyfriend!
Well, I don't!

I could hardly care less if he dates Natsuki or Yuri!

"Ehehe! I never said his your boyfriend's name and thought it was him! So that means..."

Sayori was about to burst from holding whatever was in.

No, no, no, no!

"You have a crush; you have a crush, you have a crush~!" The bouncy girl chanted, jumping in her place.

My face burned a deep red, causing me to put on my coldest glares.

But for some reason, I found difficulty being mad at her for jumping into conclusions.

"No, I don't! I don't have a crush on a stupid guy like him! He's like a brother to me! And I am the sister he never had! Nothing more, nothing less!" I retorted, squeezing the box close to me.

And yet I tell him not to call me "sis."

Eugh, "sis."

She playfully rolled her eyes.

"Uh-huh. It's not like I can see the looooveee~ coming from the both of you! Hehehe!" She teased.

I frowned and looked away.

"Enough of this... I need to find Val. We have to talk about the Winter Festival that's coming up Monday. And also, I am not crushing on him!"

Despite my constant rebuttals, Sayori wouldn't let up.

"My womanly institution tells me that you're going to do more than just "talk." I heard that you gave him a bento box this morning! Not to mention that you are holding a bento box as well..."

Argh!

This is obvious!

How could I have messed up this badly?!

"Sayori, it's intuition. And I gave him the box because he wanted um... lunch!" I lied. "When we were younger, I always made lunch for him, and we would always sit together and eat it. So this is no different! We have absolutely zero interest in each other, and we were just going along with how we used to behave all the time!"

The coral-pink haired girl decided that she was talking to a never-ending circle and relented.

"Alriiight... if you say so. But keep in mind, I placed a bet with Hiroshi and Danuja! My bet is to get you two to kiss before Christmas!"

Wait, what?!

Sayori started to retreat with her tray in hand.
"Oh yeah, your **boyfriend** is in the schoolyard! Catch him when you can~!"

*This girl knows how to push my buttons.*

"He's not my boyfriend!" I yelled, watching as the girl scurried off.

I sighed, knowing it was no use, especially since she was putting her mind into it.

*Might as well go to the schoolyard then.*

With my box firmly in my hands, I nervously walked outside.

I slowly stepped onto the concrete pavement and forced myself to build confidence.

To my surprise, with each step I took, I felt fearless.

*Why am I getting so nervous about?*

*He's only a dork.*

*It's not like he goes to the gym!*

...

*He does go to the gym.*

*I even felt how much progress he made while in it...*

*My body feels refreshed from that day...*

*Oooh~*

*Stop it, stop it, stop it!*

With the whirlwind thoughts, I struggled to walk straight.

However, it didn't take long until I found him.

*There you are!*

*Now we can discuss plans!*

Val was sitting with the box unopened, and...

Talking with a blonde girl.

From the looks of it, he enjoyed talking to her.

I took position behind a tree and spied on them from afar.

My eyes immediately focused on the blondie.

*Who is she?*

Upon further inspection, she looked like a foreigner.

*I never saw her before!*
Who does she think she is?

With those blue eyes and fair skin!

The girl giggled at what Val said.

How dare she try to seduce Val into marrying her!

I knew that I was thinking irrationally and so I stopped myself.

What...

What's wrong with me?

Why am I so possessive of him?

"(That's cool to hear, dude. I never thought schools back home now have issue laptops to students. Too bad we don't have that here.)" The girl stated in English.

English?!

Why can't they speak in our language?!

"(Right? This place is great, and you gotta admit that.)" Val said, now putting my box to his side.

She then smirked.

"(Yeah maybe. Anyway, I was hoping that I can get your opinion on something.)"

The girl then put her hands behind her back and leaned in.

Her cleavage was bared for him to see, especially since her uniform was unbuttoned, at least from this angle.

The girl pointed at a designated spot for him to see.

Val was looking directly at it.

And that brought me near my breaking point.

The green, venomous feeling surged throughout my eyes as it burned the back of her skull.

N-No...

NO!

I knew it!

She was seducing him into marrying her!

By showing her bigger boobs to him, she thinks she can take him away from me?!

Not if I can stop it.

I acted through impulse and walked towards the couple with stomps to show that I was indeed, unhappy.
As I got in range, I placed the box near him.

Val turned around and greeted me.

"Oh hey, Monika. How's it-"

I cut him off when I pounced onto him.

"Whoa! Hey!" He complained from the pounce.

I made sure that I was sitting on his lap, and was dangerously close to his crotch.

My arms wrapped around his body to bring him closer to me and my puffed out chest.

His breathing became lethargic as my chest melted into his rock-hard one.

To put the cherry-on-top, I leaned in and...

*Kissed his cheek.*

My world stopped at that very moment.

It was the first time that I kissed his cheek outside of a holiday.

The kiss felt distinctive; it felt nothing like courtesy or anything.

It felt...

*Different.*

I pulled away from him, feeling accomplished on what I did.

Val looked completely disconcerted, his black onyx eyes frantically searching for answers in my eyes.

My eyes had no answers, but warmth.

For some reason, I felt alive.

I felt ecstatic.

My lips morphed into a small simper, dually enjoying his baffled state and on what I did.

With that simper, I looked up to the smiling girl.

The blonde girl radiated a similar aura like mine.

It was something that I can recognize easily.

*Perfection.*

But I couldn't shake off the feeling that she didn't quite care on what I did.

"Oh, hello there! I am guessing that you are Val's boyfriend, right?" She cheerily said.

...
Whaaaaaat?!

H-H-How is she not affected at all?!

Why isn't she jealous?!

That blondie doesn't even care about me getting close to him?!

I thought she was into him and was trying to rope into doing whatever she wanted!

To think that I-I embarrassed myself so I can to make sure that she would back off and-and...

Aaaaah!

How am I going to talk myself out of this one?!

Actually, why did I even do all this?

Why did I kiss him?

Why am I sitting on his lap?

Oh...

I can feel something poking my butt...

The blond girl raised an eyebrow at me, confused from my apparent hesitation.

Give her an answer!

"Uh, um... yes! Yes, I am! My name is Monika Salvato, and I am Val's girlfriend and soulmate!" I proudly declared.

My heart soared as the words came out of my lips.

I am making it worse and worse!

Who would want to be his girlfriend and soulmate?

Definitely not me!

...

I am clung onto him, and this is my defense?

She broke out of her puzzled trance and looked up to Val.

"Wow, Val. You got yourself a looker, huh?"

I looked up to him to see him still disorientated from the events that have happened.

To wake him up and against my better judgment, I subtly grinded on him.
He gave a small yelp and stood straight.

"Errr, um... Chiyoko, Monika is not my-

This moron is going to embarrass me by painting me as a flirtatious slut!

Not if I can help it!

I moved myself up to his ear and whispered.

"If you tell her that I am not your girlfriend, then you are a dead man."

To seal the deal, I bit onto his earlobe.

His ear burned red, as I continued to bite on him.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?!

DID I REALLY NEED TO BITE HIS EAR?!

"Y-Yeah! Yup! She is definitely my girlfriend!" He mumbled.

The blond girl giggled at us.

"Ahahah! You two are like the most cutest couple I have met! I heard about you, Monika. You're the sweetheart of Dokisai, right? I never thought you would hook up with this doofus here. But I can see why you two are together."

I pulled away from biting his ear and rested on his shoulder.

"Yeah, we get that a lot. Sometimes I would ask myself why I even fell in love with him." I teased, nuzzling him.

Stop it, stop it, stop it!

Since when was so I lovey-dovey around him, to the point that I would do all this?!

Why am I not feeling sick in the inside?!

This all feels...

Right.

It feels like that I was meant to do this...

The girl laughed at my tease.

"Even if he's denser than a black hole, I am glad he found love. I'll leave you two at it. And allow me to introduce myself, name's Chiyoko Madison."

Chiyoko?

Didn't I hear that name before?

She started to walk away.

"It's nice meeting you, Monika. Have fun making out!"
Bye!" Monika waved, letting her walk off.

Once Chiyoko got out of range, she moved off my lap and sat beside me.

This is all weird...

All too weird.

Why did Monika even kiss my cheek, bite my ear and...

Grind on me?

I got the feeling that she did this before, but obviously, she never did.

Monika never kissed my cheek outside of holidays.

And she never bit my ear... ever.

I have to admit; my spine tingled when she did bite me.

But I never would expect her to grind on me!

Monika wouldn't do that for sure!

Would she...?

She did it a few minutes ago, and I couldn't stop myself from getting uh...

Turned on.

I felt this dark, dark temptation swelling up inside of me and told me to grab ahold of her hips...

But I easily dispelled it, mostly because I can't see ourselves doing any of that.

Why would Monika waltz right in and cut me off?

Was she jeal-

"Don't tell a soul on what happened just now." She said, looking out onto the distance.

Her voice doesn't have that menacing tone like before...

Something's up.

I reared my head to better look at her face, but she countered by looking away.

Butting into a conversation like that wasn't something I was going to let go.

"Fine, I won't. But you better have a good explanation on why you did all that." I warned. "Jumping in and claiming that I was your boyfriend isn't something that will slide."

In all honesty, I didn't like how Monika butted in out of nowhere.

It made me somewhat annoyed at the very least.

She flinched from my aggression.
"W-Well... I-I..." She stammered.

I sighed and grabbed her shoulders.

She yelped as I spun her around.

From there, I noticed how red her face was.

"Monika." I firmly called.

Her lips quivered as she struggled to formulate any words.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"Alright! I'll admit it! I didn't like how she was looking at you!" She yelled.

*How she was looking at me?*

*That's her excuse?*

"A-And... I saw how you looked into her cleavage. I needed to do something to get you away from her, so I did all that. Pervert." Monika muttered.

*Me looking at her cleavage?*

*That's not true!*

"What are you even talking about? I never looked at her cleavage! Chiyoko was showing me her new pendant that she got the other day. And I was just about to comment how great it looked until you jumped on me."

I was still annoyed on she interrupted our conversation.

Monika uncharacteristically tapped her fingers together.

"Oh. Um, I'm-I'm... I'm sorry."

*That's something I haven't heard in a while.*

"I just felt overprotective of you. I thought she was making a move that... you would probably regret."

*What about the shows of love?*

"Okay... then what was the point of all the-"

She cut me off as if fully expecting what I was about to say.

"And all that kissing and biting thing? Um... please don't bring it up, it was all to make her deviate from you. I thought making her jealous would make her back off. But that obviously didn't work... And don't get the wrong idea! I have ZERO feelings for you, got it?"

*Overprotective of me?*

*So she still does care.*

*And what does making Chiyoko jealous have to do with anything?*
"I wasn't planning to but sure. And, if you were looking out for me, then I have no reason to be mad."

There was an awkward silence between us.

Monika fumbled with her fingers, being uncharacteristically nervous.

"Um... Val. Do you see her as anything more than a friend? Like you know... maybe someone you can hook up to?"

_Hook up to?_

_Like as a girlfriend?_

_No way!_

"No! Not at all! Monika, I don't see her as a potential girlfriend. In fact, I only see Chiyoko as a really close friend and nothing more than that. We were friends back in the United States."

She looked surprised by the information.

"W-What...? Does that mean you knew her before you knew me?"

I nodded slowly, unsure as to why looked upset.

"Yeah, I met her when I was around six years old. We only knew each for a few months before I moved here." I stated.

The life in her green eyes vanished from the revelation.

"That means... I wasn't your first girl-friend." She muttered.

As soon as she uttered that, the life in her eyes came back.

"But I knew you for the longest, so that's what counts the most! I know your fears, your secrets, what you like to eat, where you live..."

I couldn't help but smirk and give her head-pats.

"Okay, okay. I get your point, yandere. Now, is there a particular reason why you came out here?" I asked.

But instead of answering, she pouted.

"Hey...! I am not a yandere! Why would I be so obsessed about you? It's not like I have a body-pillow with your face on it!"

... 

... 

... 

"What?"

"Nothing!"
I eyed her suspiciously and stopped my head-pats.

"Anyway, you didn't quite answer my question."

She crossed her arms and looked away.

*What now?*

*Is it because of how I stopped giving her head-pats?*

To experiment my theory, I placed my hand on her head and continued to pat her.

She beamed and continued.

"The reason why I came out here is so we can discuss plans for the festival... and eat our lunch together."

*That's it?*

*Fair enough.*

"Well, let's get started." I motioned to the box.

We got our boxes and opened it to reveal the contents inside.

*FWOP*

The lunch consisted of grilled fish, tamagoyaki, nori, and a bit of Kobe beef.

*Just like old times.*

*Everything about this lunch screams nostalgia.*

*And not to mention the food is always top-notch.*

*No five-star restaurant can compete with Monika's cooking.*

*But baking...*

*Yeah, maybe they can.*

"What's with that look on your face?"

I didn't hear her over the aroma of the food invaded my nostrils.

I couldn't help but breath it in and make me hungry.

"As usual, it smells amazing, Monika. I never thought you would make these again, ever since you know... Thanks."

The girl looked away.

"Well, I needed to repay you and everything from last night. You did keep me warm and safe, so making lunch was the least I can do."

With the Kobe beef in place, I was ready to devour it.
Sweet and chili beef here I come!

Until I realized that there was nothing in my mouth.

I looked to my side to see Monika chewing and humming from the beef.

"Mmm... It looks my culinary skills aren't rusty as I thought it would be."

*My beef...*

She looked to me with a smirk.

"What's wrong? Aren't you going to taste it? Are you trying to make me self-conscious?"

*I am guessing this is her plan to get back at me when I was mad.*

*This side of her is fun.*

*Time to play along.*

"Maybe..." I playfully muttered, now aiming for her Kobe beef.

Fortunately, she didn't catch wind of my attack, letting me steal her food easily.

I quickly ate the beef before she could counter-attack.

"Whaaat? That's not fair! Since when did you stoop so low, Val?!"

I gulped and shrugged.

"I play dirty when the enemy plays dirty. It's called learning to adapt, Monika. Gosssh!" I mocked haughtily.

She rolled her eyes.

"Whatever. Anyway, do have any ideas for the festival?"

I tapped my chin in thought.

"Hmm... well, maybe we could- Hey!"

Monika stole yet another piece of Kobe beef from me and retreated.

"Come on, Val! It's called learning to adapt. Gosssh!" She mocked back.

I smirked.

"If you wanna play like that then, get some!"

I then lunged at her box, making sure my contents were still in place.

Unfortunately, Monika foresaw my attack and turned her back to block my attack.

Right after, she stood up and blew a raspberry at me.

"Oooh! Oooh! Vally-pally is all grown up!"
Seriously?

That nickname again?!

I have to admit that kind of struck a nerve.

Hmm...

Ahah!

With a smirk and a confidence boost, I closed my box and placed it on the bench. She did the same, readying herself for anything as I looked towards her.

"I kind of am. But I can't say the same for you..."

Her green eyes kept in contact with me, anticipating whatever's to come.

"The Lady That Knows Everything."

Monika's simmer broke into a slight twitch in her right eye.

"W-What did you just call me?!"

I couldn't help but grin at her fall. To add salt to the injury, I brought my hand up to the side of my lips and looked up.

"Hey, everyone! The sweetheart of Dokisai is actually Th-"

I suddenly turned to my side and let the girl unsuccessfully pounce on me.

"RAAAH! STAND STILL!"

With the advantage of her recovering from the failed attack, I gave her a two fingered salute and started to run.

"Later!"

I looked behind me to see Monika go through different stages of realization. At first, she was confused.

Then she was hurt.

After that, she realized what was going on.

And finally, she burst into fiery anger.

"I DON'T THINK SO! COME BACK HERE, JONES!"

Despite my apparent plans, I had no intention of embarrassing her at all. And so, I laughed in joy.

Something I thought that I lost the ability to do in the first place.
It was study hall, and I couldn't help but smile from what happened earlier today.

*I am supposed to practice my piano, but I can't stop thinking about what I did to Val when he was talking to her.*

*To think that Chiyoko would take him away...*

*Of course, Val would be the typical dense idiot when it comes to love.*

*So naturally, he wouldn't be crushing hard on her.*

*Not to mention, she wasn't all that interested in Val either.*

*Was she glad that I "took" him away?*

My smile morphed into a frown.

*I-I overreacted there.*

*And that's putting it nicely.*

*My behavior around him was completely unacceptable!*

*How could I sit on his lap, kiss his cheek, bite his ear, and grind on him?*

*That makes me come off as an utterly lovestruck girl!*

*I am not lovestruck, and I definitely not in love with that dork!*

*Even though he keeps me safe, happy, understand me, and... Warm.*

*He is nothing more than a sweet guy!*

*Even though I crushed on him for almost a decade.*

*Focus, focus, focus!*

*I need to get this piano practice done!*

With my constant reprimands, I cracked my fingers and placed them on the keys of the piano.

I took a deep breath and started to play the song I made for a long time.

*Hm, hm, hm... hm, hm, hmm, hmmmm~*

*I wonder what Val's doing now.*

*With that single thought, my focus the song vanished.*

*Damn it!*

*Why am I thinking about him at this exact moment!*
Argh... Let's take it from the top.

With a few readjustments, I played the starting notes to my song before I needed to sing.

"Everyday~ I imagine a future where I can~"

*Touch Val's muscles.*

I coughed from the random thought in my head.

*What in the world is going on?!*

*Why can't I focus?*

*And what do his muscles have to do with anything?*

*Well, they did keep safe and warm...*

*Arrrrgh!*

I yawned, knowing it was a very long day.

*Out of the days, today was the day where was a club meeting right?*

*I was hoping I can get some time for myself; there's only so much patience I have without letting anyone know that I am getting ticked off.*

*Or even think about getting ticked off.*

"Yo, Val." A familiar voice called.

I turned to whoever was calling me.

*Tom...*

"Hey, Tom. What's up?" I greeted, bring my hand up to welcome him.

He took it, and we did a one-armed hug.

"Just that we need to get through this club meeting. We're going to the gym tomorrow, right?"

I smirked at the plans we had.

"Hell yeah. The gain train never stops."

He smirked with me, and we walked to the club.

"I don't mind going there more often, but there's one guy that kind of terrifies me." He muttered.

"What? What do you mean? You mean the guy with the crazy gas mask on for no apparent reason?"

He nodded.

"Y-Yeah, that guy. I don't know what he even does, but I see him Guarding the plates against those who can't lift as much they would want to. A true Guardian, I guess."
I shrugged and went along what he was saying.

"I guess you can say that. Anyway, you busy tomorrow? I was hoping that we can get the boys and hang out in the arcade. You in?"

Despite how uneasy he was feeling, Tom managed to crack a smile.

"Sure. It's been a while since we hanged out, so yeah. But I don't know if Dan is going to come over, he's still recovering from the... you know."

The break-up.

"Yeah. Yeah... I know. I'll try to convince him to hang out with us, so he put his mind off things. That girl was a yandere, dude. I never thought she would go so far."

Tom shook his head in disgust.

"I had this feeling that something was really off about her, but I didn't say anything. Dan's been putting a mask on and showing the world that he's fine. But we all know he's pretty torn-up inside..."

Just like me when Monika left.

I understand his pain.

"Don't worry man, I going to talk to him about all this. I've been through the same thing as him." I affirmed.

He arched a suspicious eyebrow.

"Val... are you going through something right now?"

I smiled at him, thankful that he worried about me.

Most of my pain is gone...

I need to strike the source where it came from.

Monika's dad.

"No, I am not. Well not anymore since Prom."

He eyed me.

"If you say so. Keeping friends around and keeping them close are two different things. I was a bit of a loner after Sayori moved away, so keeping my bonds tight is always a priority."

I put my hand on his shoulder and squeezed.

"Me too, me too. Friends like you are hard to find and are very valuable to me. So I'll do whatever it takes to keep you guys close."

We continued to walk knowing that we had each other's backs.

It didn't take long until we made it to the club.

I opened the door to see both Natsuki and Sayori light up from our presence.
The first to greet us, or rather, the first to welcome Tom was Sayori. "Yay! You came, you came, you finally came!" She cheerily chirped as she crushed him into a hug.

And as usual, Natsuki snickered from Sayori's repeated use of "came."

Tom looked uncomfortable and turned to me.

"Help."

"How? What do you want me to do? This is something I can't stop, Tom."

Regardless, Sayori pulled off of Tom and smiled.

"Hypocrite."

I scoffed at him.

"Now that you came, do you wanna go with me the cafeteria? Maybe... buy a snack or two?"

Tom grunted and rolled his eyes.

"I would but uh- Open your coin purse."

That's a bit weird to ask for...

Sayori looked anxious and was fidgety when he asked to open her coin purse.

"W-What? Ehhe... why?" She asked, playing with the collar of her brown blazer.

"Just open it." He muttered, wanting to get whatever he wants over with.

Sayori walked back to her desk and pulled out a small coin purse.

The girl looked up to Tom's blue eyes for any traces of mercy.

"Open it." He demanded.

She closed her baby blue eyes and opened the hatch of her purse.

"Please..." She begged.

Tom's cold stare couldn't faze through him.

It was which Sayori decided to perform a leap of faith.

She spilled the contents of her purse onto the table, revealing many coins and some cash left in there.

With a gasp, she smiled at Tom.

"I knew you would forget to your Mom to fill your coin purse again, so I reminded her to give you your allowance." He announced, with a smirk.

The event warmed my heart for me to go: "Aww..."

"Aww... I thought Sayori's coin purse would be empty. That would have been hilarious to see. Oh well... there goes my plan to give Sayori a cookie." Natsuki muttered.
She then looked towards me.

"That reminds me... Did you eat my cookie?"

In the background, I noticed Sayori swooping all of the cash she had and dragging Tom to whoever knows where.

Oh shit...

"I-uh didn't. My bad. It's just that Monika made lunch for me that I totally forgot to eat it."

She widened her eyes for some reason.

"Monika made lunch for you?"

"She did?" A new voice asked as well.

We both turned to that voice.

A purple haired girl looked fazed and disappointed from the news.

Yuri...

In her hands was a coffee thermos, which held I assumed was tea.

With the attention now directed towards her, she flinched.

"I-I made some Jasmine tea for you. Since you liked how I brewed it the other day..." She mumbled, offering the thermos to me.

Without a doubt, I took the thermos and opened it slightly.

The aroma of the tea was still fresh and not tainted.

I let out a sigh, showing that I was happy with the gift.

"The tea's scent is still as fresh I remembered it. Thanks." I complimented.

The nervous frown she sported was replaced by a warm smile.

"Your welcome, Valkyrie."

I opened the thermos a little more to drink it.

"Hey! What about my cookie?! I made that for you!" Natsuki complained, putting her hands on her hips.

I snapped, forgetting the chocolate-chip cookie she made for me.

"Right, right. It's going to go well with Yuri's tea! Thanks for reminding me you two! Now, as compensation, I was hoping that I can-"

As soon as I walked over to my bag, the door swung open.

"I sensed a great... disturbance... in the... literature club," Monika said, desperately trying to regain her breathing.
The club was silent from her dramatic entrance.

We stared at her strange behavior as a result.

Monika fixed her posture and cleared her throat.

"Um... Hello everyone! Sorry for running late. I was practicing piano in study hall. And hmm... where's Sayori and Thomas?"

I broke the silence.

"They went to go get snacks. And since when did you practice piano? I didn't know that you played piano, even before you went to Ainu." I asked.

Monika's eyes widened.

"Err... I meant to study in the study hall. Not play the piano!" She quickly corrected.

I eyed her suspiciously.

Hmm...

I have a feeling that she does play the piano.

"That's very admirable of you, Monika. I was thinking of... nevermind." Yuri started to say.

Natsuki rolled her eyes.

"Come on, Yuri. If you have something to say, then spit it out." She stated, crossing her arms on the timid girl.

Yuri played with her galaxy purple hair to calm herself down.

"Well, I was hoping that we can have a study session on Friday. I don't have a study hall, so there isn't any extra time for me to study..."

Monika nodded slowly as she processed what the shy girl said.

"If you want to study Friday, then why not? We can study together!" She cheered.

Natsuki piped in.

"You know, I would also like to join in too. Maybe you guys can help me with English homework. Gosh, I hate that language."

I couldn't help but stare at the pink-haired girl.

"What?"

I shook my head.

"Nothing much but, English can be hard at first, but like all languages, it's enjoyable to speak some of it."

She rolled her eyes.

"Easy for you to say, you're American, aren't you? English is probably easy as breathing for you,
huh?"

_I would know for a fact that she would be surprised by how many Americans are illiterate._

"That's beside the point. Just because I can speak fluent English, doesn't mean you can't too."

Both Monika and Yuri leaned in.

"You can speak English, Russian, and our native tongue Valkyrie?" Yuri asked.

There was something off about her eyes, but I didn't pay any heed to it.

"Of course he can. But I rarely hear him speak English anywhere..." Monika mentioned.

Natsuki put her hands on her hips and leaned in, putting her hands on the table.

"Since you are so good at speaking English, speak some. We'll be the judge of well you can speak it." She declared.

"Yeah!"

"I would like to hear you speak it."

The three girls stared at me in an unsettling way and kept leaning in.

It was as if they were getting too close for comfort.

_I am getting a strong sense of deja vu here..._

_Didn't they do this once when they tried to get me to choose whoever I wanted to be with?_

_They kept pushing each other and repeated my name multiple times, all the while getting closer and closer to me..._

_Hmm..._

_Naaah!_

_Like that will ever happen._

Before I can retort, the door swung open.

Out came Sayori with an armful of chocolate bars and Tom with only some bread.

"Chocolate!" The bouncy girl chirped, oblivious to whatever was happening. "What's going on guys?"

The girls immediately backed away from me, allowing me to breathe without consequence.

Sayori suddenly smirked when she made eye contact with Monika.

"Monika~! If you keep letting Val talk to other girls, then he might find another girlfriend~!" She teased.

"Valkyrie has a girlfriend?!

"Since when did this guy have a girlfriend?"
"I have a girlfriend?"

"Sayori, that is pretty creepy and unrealistic to say..."

There was a slight twitch in Monika's right eye and a slight vibration coming from her.

"He's not my boyfriend, Sayori." She assured, trying her best to stay calm.

The coral-pink haired girl placed the chocolates down on the table.

"That's not what you told me~!" She teased again, now blowing a raspberry at her.

Monika's breaking point came close, but she tried her best to stay collected.

"You have three seconds to run," Monika warned.

Sayori bolted out of the room, giggling from her accomplishment.

Not soon after, Monika walked over to the door and smiled.

"I'll be back, everyone. For the meantime, you can read, chat, or relax if you would like~!"

With the innocent facade out of the way, she scowled and opened the door.

*That's the first time I have seen Monika lose her cool in front of her friends...*

*I hope they don't see her as anything worse...*

"So that's how you push Monika's buttons..." Natsuki muttered with a small smirk.

"Interesting." Yuri topped off.

On the other hand, Tom was confused by her strange behavior.

"I never thought Sayori would be able to tease Monika that much... there has to be something she picked up that made her do that..." He muttered.

I was lost in my thoughts as well.

*Monika did say she had no feelings for me...*

"Val, could you help me sort out my manga? You know since you are tall?"

*If that's the case, then why is Sayori's teasing her about it...?*

"Earth to baka, are you there? Heloookoo?"

My train of thought was disrupted when Natsuki pulled my arm.

She was confused as to why I didn't budge and struggled.

"How come this works in anime and manga?!"

*Argh... what now?!!*

I pulled her towards me, causing her to tumble toward me.
She lost her balance and was about to fall.

Luckily, however, I caught her.

Natsuki looked up to me.

Her pink eyes twinkled as we kept eye contact.

Just as I raised an eyebrow, she looked away and pouted.

"If you didn't wake up from whatever you were thinking of, then I wouldn't be stuck here hugging you... baka."

That doesn't even make any sense!

I tried to pull her off, but she clung onto me.

"Wait... just a little longer. I didn't know that you were so warm..."

I didn't know what to say or do, so I just let her hug me, despite how uncomfortable I felt.

She released me not soon after.

"Alright! Monika most likely messed up my manga collection in the closet, so I am going to need some help rearranging it!"

I jeered at her.

"Yeah, okay. Why would I even do that? I was hoping that I can catch up with some math homework."

The short girl gritted her teeth towards me, her fang prominently poking out.

"You didn't eat my cookie! I made that..."

Natsuki turned away and crossed her arms.

"With a lot of effort, since I wanted to apologize you to fully."

That cookie did look good...

I put my bag on the table and took out the cookie, which was surprisingly intact.

"Alright. How about this? I eat your cookie and rearrange your mango. How does that sound?"

She beamed at me and pulled my hand.

"That'll work!"

We quickly walked to the closet.

This place looks familiar...

It's like I was here with Natsuki before...

Eating ice cream that she made...
Natsuki groaned when saw her collection.

"Seriously?! Look at that! My manga collection is all the way up there! How am I supposed to reach that?" She complained.

"By being taller." I snickered, opening the cookie wrapper.

Natsuki turned around immediately and grabbed the scruff of my uniform.

"Say that again! I dare you to say that again!"

*Why does teasing her feel almost the same as teasing Monika?*

*Her height is the equivalent of mentioning Monika's severe case of schizophrenia.*

I shrugged.

"I made my point. Anyway, where should I rearrange them in order?" I asked, now putting the cookie in my mouth.

Natsuki didn't like how I turned the conversation in a 180-degree angle.

"Urg... you're lucky that you look cute with that cookie. Yeah, do that."

With a nod, I reached up to the upper-most shelf and started to rearrange the items there.

Every once in a while I took a bite out of the cookie, as a respite for my work.

*This cookie is way, way better than any bakery!*

*She needs to teach me how to do this!*

"So... you're from the United States right?"

I turned around with the cookie in hand.

Natsuki was sitting on a smaller shelf and swung her legs back and forth.

"Yeah, I am. Why?"

Her cheeks turned a pale pink.

"Well, you never really spoke English when we wanted you to... So why don't speak some right now?"

I sighed, knowing that she wouldn't stop asking me if I didn't say any.

"(Hello there. You are one awfully short girl!)" I said.

Natsuki looked awe-struck from the foreign language.

"So hot..."

...

"What?"
"What?"

I shrugged and returned to sorting out the volumes.

"Hey, Val... could you do me a favor and speak to me in English only?" She requested.

"Hah! First off, you didn't seem to care what I even to said to you in English. Second, I thought speaking in another language makes you uncomfortable. What changed?"

Natsuki moaned.

"Aww, come on Val! A girl's opinion can change, right...? And I did understand what you said to me!"

I finished sorting out the volumes and turned to her.

"Really? What did I say then?"

Her faux confidence came to an abrupt halt.

"Er... um... you said that I looked... cute?"

I stared at her with deadpan eyes.

"Not even close. I didn't call you cute. I called you short."

Her cheeks flared up from the revelation.

"Oh. Well, if I weren't so short, then I would doubt you wouldn't crack jokes about my height..."

I walked up to her and sat beside her.

"Maybe, but being short is not as bad you would think. People could underestimate you, and you can take the chance to impress them. And besides, being short suits your cute personality, Natsuki."

She looked up to me with shaky eyes.

"You really think so?"

I nodded and took another bite out of the cookie.

"Mhm. And jeez! This cookie is amazing! You gotta teach how to bake these!"

The girl smiled proudly, her pearly white teeth bared for me to see.

"Baking is easy! And if you are eager to learn, then it wouldn't hurt to give you some lessons."

I smiled as well.

"I look forward to it. Anyway, while we are here why don't we share poems?"

Natsuki looked uneasy at the mention of our poems.

"I'm going to honest Val; I don't think you would like my poems."

I patted her shoulder to reassure her.
"Ah, don't be like that, Nat. It's only a poem, and I will not think any lesser of you when I read it."

She frowned and handed her poem from her brown blazer's pocket.

In exchange, I took out mine.

Once I got the poem, I started to read it.

Hmm...

_Natsuki's poem is about being human._

_There's a limit on what a person can do._

_Other animals can perform what we can't do, but we still dare to try._

_Even if we don't achieve it, we make up for it with our determination._

I saw a small smile form as Natsuki read my poem.

"Your poem is so cute! It makes me think that you wrote this for somebody..."

_I did..._  

_It's for Monika._

The closet door opened cutting me off from replying.

Yuri poked her head out as if she was searching for us.

"Ah, Valkyrie. There you are. I was hoping that you can maybe help me with something..."

I felt an arm grip mine.

"Sorry to about that, Yuri. He's still helping me reorganize my manga collection! Right, Val?"

There was a strange tone to Natsuki's voice that I couldn't quite get.

But regardless, I shrugged it off.

"Actually, I finished sorting it out a while ago." I meekly said.

I didn't like the situation I was in.

Yuri smirked, something I thought I would never see her do and walked up to me.

"If his work here is done, then he has no reason to remain here."

She grabbed my arm and hugged it, firmly keeping it in place.

_Holy shit!_  

_Her chest is massive!_  

_It's way bigger than Monika's!_  

_I can feel my arm being swallowed by these pillows..._
Natsuki didn't want to give up, however, and tugged my arm towards her.

"He does have a reason! To keep me company, until Monika arrives!"

That's not part of the deal!

Yuri pulled my arm to her side.

"But you have your manga to keep you company! I need some help with a task!"

If she needs help, then I will help her...

And besides this is starting to get on my nerves.

"Natsuki, if Yuri needs my help, then I need to go." I firmly demanded.

She sighed heavily.

"Fine... but only if tell how you thought about my poem."

The girl started to loosen up around my arm.

"Your poem was cute, Nat. Just like how you are." I truthfully stated.

For some reason, instead of letting go of my arm, she held onto it.

"I knew it! I knew my poem was cute!" She chirped, constricting my arm.

This isn't going too well!

I was again out of breath and almost exhausted.

Who knew Sayori could run for so long...?

If she hadn't stopped to stare at the Baking Club's cakes, then I wouldn't be able to catch her.

After I caught her, she agreed to stop teasing me.

Under two conditions...

She will stop teasing me on Christmas, and she can tease me whenever we are alone.

Jeez...

How much will it take to convince her that I am not interested in him?

I opened the door to see Val walking out of the closet with Yuri.

Natsuki was on the door, looking on from a distance with-

Lovestruck eyes...

Since when did Val interest her?

I thought she hated him!

Well, to be fair, he did apologize to him.
The only thing that would melt her "cold" heart is being called cute...

Wait.

Does that mean Val called her cute?!

I felt a sharp prick in my heart.

For some reason, it made me annoyed and not the usual angry I felt when Val goofs off.

And it hurt for some reason.

What's wrong with me...?

Why does my heart hurt?

I saw them talking about something.

To better hear their conversation, I sat down at the teacher's desk and watched from afar.

"You have back pains? Is it frequent?" He asked.

Yuri put her hands behind her back and rubbed it.

"Not quite. The pain is not excruciating, rather very uncomfortable. It doesn't force me to seek a doctor or anything." She replied.

Bullshit.

I know it's painful and persistent for a girl with E-cup breasts to have back pains.

She's trying to get him under her finger!

Is her boobs the only redeemable quality that he can find?!

Isn't mine enough for him?!

"But that's not the reason why I asked for your help. I am having some problems with my math homework, and I was wondering if you can help."

...

Oh.

I thought she was going to get him to massage her back...

Note to self, remind Yuri to get a sports bra...

But that doesn't explain why I am getting so edgy over them!

If Val wants to caress her, then go ahead!

Urgh...

That hurt.

The two started to do the math homework, with Val standing up to better see the problems.
With them working on that I can relax.

... 

What's wrong with me?
I am acting as if I am jealous!

...

Or am I actually jealous?
Why would I be jealous?
I am not in love with him, right?

There's no way I can be.
I promised myself that I wouldn't fall for him again, no matter how much he... behaves like him.

So much for my promise of keeping him at an arm's reach.

Each time I try to get away from him, I only get close to him as a result.

Just like last night.

The thunderstorm could have been a perfect reason not to get close to him.
I could've shown him that I grew over the couple four years.

But instead...

I didn't.

I was still scared of the thunder.

And that showed that I didn't grow up.

Why do I still need him?

Without him, I am never actually happy.

Colors, music, food, and smells, all feel real whenever I am around him.

Even he is not there; I can take solace knowing that he is there for me...

He is always there for me, whenever I need him.

And that day was a whole misunderstanding and proved that he was waiting for my call.

But he never got it.

When we spoke about what happened yesterday, he said that he was hurt by my departure.

I never thought that he would hate himself over what happened.

He was always happy-go-lucky.
To think that he lost all that charm because of me...

And when I came back, he went back to the loving Val I knew.

He never told me about how every day was a day not worth living in his eyes.

If we never spoke yesterday, then I don't know how I would be feeling.

Would I still hate him?

Did I ever hate him?

"That problem is pretty easy. Find the factorial of eight and divide by it with the other variables." Val stated, pointing at the problem.

Yuri had this strange smile.

It was something that didn't I see often.

Mostly because she never smiles.

"I see."

She scribbled the numbers on the paper before Val interjected her.

"Wait! That isn't the number you were supposed to divide by!"

The sudden stop caused Yuri to drop her pen onto the floor.

"Aah!"

She pulled her seat back and stooped down to pick up the pen.

Val did the same thing and knelt.

They inevitably collided as their heads hitting each other.

"Kyaah! Sorry, Valky-"

Val rubbed his head and looked up to silent girl.

"What's wrong, Yu-"

They are close to each other...

I saw Yuri's eyes quiver from the distance they shared.

Her eyes were coated with some sort of excitement, causing them to be focused and hollow.

I saw Val's eyes quiver from a distance they shared as well.

His eyes were coated with something that I have seen before.

It was something I only saw briefly yesterday...

Is that...
Lust?

Oh no...

I need to do something!

I won't let her take him away from me!

"Okay everyone~!" I stood up from my seat with a finger pointed in the air. "It's time to share our poems!"

Yuri and Val backed away from each other with red faces.

"R-Right..." He muttered, walking back to his seat.

Yuri didn't say anything and slowly walked to her seat, stroking her locks of hair.

They could've kissed there.

They could've kissed!

I don't think anyone would walk in here to see them making out!

Good work me!

I just saved the club!

Despite my thoughts, it couldn't crush the guilt I was experiencing deep inside me.

However, I was able to relax somewhat when everyone came to exchange their poems with each other.

I crushed Yuri's chances to be with Val...

And I keep butting in whenever he shares a moment with them.

I can't even explain why I am doing this!

It's like as if entirely second nature for me!

Am I...

A yandere?

A girl that can't control herself when someone is around him?

No, no, no... That can't be it!

I am not in love with him.

With that out of the way...

Who will share their poem with me first?

To my surprise, Val was the first one to share the poem with me.

"Hey, Monika."
I smiled back.

"Hey."

He brought up the poem and handed it up to me.

*The way he gave me the poem is strange...*

*It was like he was nervous about giving me this.*

"I wrote this poem while thinking about you." He muttered.

...  

*Whaaat?!*

*He thought about me when he wrote this?!*

*D-D-Does that mean h-he likes me?!*

My heart pounded as stared at his poem in awe.

*Did he actually write a poem about me?*

*I-I never thought he would do such a thing!*

My eyes scanned the paper, every crease, every symbol, and every mark fell under my gaze.

*This poem was made before we had our talk, apparently.*

*And, it's a poem about us!*

*I-I can't believe it!*

I closed my eyes and sighed dreamily.

With a smile and I hugged the paper.

"Thank you, Val... I love this poem so much!"

Val also sighed.

"Thank goodness; I thought you wouldn't like it or find it weird, ya know?"

*This has to be the happiest day of my life!*

I opened my eyes and beamed.

"Would you mind if I keep this poem?"

He was taken aback from my request.

"What? W-Why? Do you like it that much?"

I nodded vigorously.

"Yes! Yes, I do! I love this poem! It makes me feel aaaaalive~!" I sang.
He likes me!

I never thought he would like me!

Everything he wrote about is from our childhood!

He wants to go to the next level!

"Monika, I didn't write this poem for you! I wrote this poem for everyone in the club to read!" He stated.

"W-What? But didn't you say that you thought about me while writing this?" I muttered, hoping that the case.

He shook his head.

"Yeah, I thought about you in this poem. But that doesn't mean I wrote for you, Monika."

And just like that, the magic was gone.

...

...

...

You've got to be kidding me.

This is all just another misunderstanding...

I-I got excited over him again.

There is something definitely up with me.

But he wrote everything about our childhood.

And what broke our relationship.

It's the perfect bittersweet poem...

That's why I love it.

"C-Could I still keep it after you are done sharing it with everybody? I still want it..." I muttered.

Why do I want his poem so badly?

Is it because it's perfect and reflects on how much we missed each other?

Yeah, that's probably it.

"Monika... I don't know about that."

I gave him the best puppy-eyes I could muster.

"Please? Can't you see how much I want this poem? It's the best poem I have ever read!"

He relented knowing that he couldn't keep up.
"Alright, just... stop with the eyes! It's unbearable! I'll let you keep it!"

My heart soared from the very words that escaped his lips.

"Yes!" I cheered, hugging the poem tightly. "It's mine; it's mine, it's mine!"

"Jeez, Monika. That is pretty creepy."

I rubbed my forehead from the day I had.

Getting Lunch from the sweetheart of Dokisai had its consequences.

On the one hand, I get a delicious lunch from the legend herself.

But on the other, every guy gives me the death glare on carrying it...

I mean come on!

It's only a lunch box!

When break time did happen, Chiyoko saw me and greeted me.

It's been a while since I last saw her back home and turns out she was visiting as a transfer student.

I wish we could have maybe caught up...

As I was talking to her, Monika jumps on my lap, kisses me on the cheek, bites my ear, and grinds on me.

That's a mouthful...

I don't know what it got to her, but she seemed a little competitive around Chiyoko.

The look in her eyes when she saw Chiyoko was as if she was a challenge.

What does that even mean?

Let's not forget about Yuri's creepy sister, Haru.

Why is she so obsessed with me?!

I never met her, and she treats me as a sort of knight... Eugh.

She even calls me Onii-chan.

Weird.

Hopefully, she meant it as a formality, since she calls Yuri Onee-chan.

"Val! Wait up!" A voice called behind me.

I turned around to see Monika running up to me.

And so, I stopped for her.

We're walking home together...?
Just like old times?

As she was running, she took a hasty step, causing her to lose her balance.

Oh no!

My heart stopped as she fell onto the concrete school grounds.

"Monika! Are you okay?!" I worriedly yelled.

I immediately ran towards her and brought her to her feet, cleaning the dust off of her uniform.

"Ow...!" She groaned as she stood up. "It hurts to stand up! Argh..."

I looked down to her knees.

One of them was severely scraped and was bleeding.

That's not good.

She can't stand up and is oozing blood!

Out of instinct, I scooped her up in my arms.

I cradled her bridal style until we could find a safe spot to check the scrape.

She let out a small scream from the sudden shift and was startled.

"Wait, wait, wait! I can walk! It's only a little bit of bleeding! Put me down!"

I ignored her demands to walk again.

"Yeah, so you can get that wound all infected, right? Pipe down!" I berated, using some force to cement my position.

That effectively shut her down.

Monika crossed her arms.

"Fine!" She pouted. "But just so you know, you're kind of touching my butt!"

I could hardly care less since my only goal in mind was get scrape cleaned.

Once we reached a bench for me, I sat her down carefully, making sure no additional pain could be inflicted.

She held onto me, making sure that she wouldn't lose her balance while sitting.

I knelt and checked on the wound.

"Urgh... It's not that bad, Val. I can walk! Let's just go home; I'll put some bandages once we get there."

Monika's insistence that we go home and forget about the wound annoyed me.

"I don't care if you can walk or not. Cleaning the wound up is important and should be done ASAP!" I sounded, with a hint of irritation, searching through my bag for a small med-kit.
"You're thinking that I am going to have to amputate my leg if I don't get it cleaned up!" She retorted.

I pulled out the disinfectant and opened the packet.

"Maybe it won't come to that, but you'll get sick. We can't afford to get sick, especially since we are trying to keep the literature club intact with the Winter Committee."

Monika looked down with slight fear in her eyes.

"Okay..." She muttered, straightening her leg for me.

I sighed, relieved that I was able to convince her.

"I recommend grabbing onto something since this is going to hurt," I warned.

She nodded and grabbed ahold of my wrist.

I took the wipe out and started to rub it against it her knee.

"Argh!" She hissed, the burning, white-hot sensation piercing her exposed skin.

Her nails dug into my wrist, causing me to hiss as well.

Once the wound was cleaned correctly, the next thing was the ointment.

"Monika, how are you faring? We got through the hard part..."

She frowned.

"Can't you do it like when we were younger?"

I scoffed at her.

"And get you sick? I don't think so. This is a much more effective way of dealing with wounds like these." I retorted.

_I have to admit this does remind of simpler times..._

I never cried from anything so painful before.

"My knee hurts so much, Val!" I cried as I held my knee in.

Val didn't react to my crying and only looked at my knee.

"Waaah! Val, please make the pain go away! It hurts so much! Please!"

I felt his hand on my head.

I immediately felt calmer, my crying coming to an end.

"Don't cry, Mon! I got the thing to help you feel better!"

I hiccuped and rubbed my eyes from his reassuring voice and head-pats.
He pulled out a large bandage from his bag and placed it on my bleeding knee.

The fresh and soothing sensation of the ointment with the soft bandage provided instant relief.

I couldn't help sigh but the pleasurable feeling it gave.

"There we go. All cleaned up and attended to."

I blushed and played with my hair.

"Um... aren't you forgetting one thing?"

Val tapped his chin and gasped.

"Oh right! This always makes me feel better whenever I get hurt! It's a trick I learned from Mama! Watch!"

He leaned in and kissed the band-aid in place.

I giggled on the relief it provided and how it tickled my knee.

"Do you think you can stand up?" He asked, offering his hand to me.

I tried to stand up by taking his hand, but the pain still lingered.

"Ow! Ow! It still hurts, Val!" I moaned, sitting on the floor again.

"There. That should do the trick."

I smiled from the kiss he gave.

"Can you stand, Monika?" He asked, offering his hand to me.

*Just like when we were younger...*

I took his hand and tried to stand up. However, my knee spiked with pain.

"Argh! I can't! My knee still hurts!" I groaned, frustrated that I couldn't walk.

Val tapped his chin in thought, trying to think of a way to get me up.

"Hmm... I got it! Why don't you get on my back?!" He offered.

I raised an eyebrow.

"Get on your back? L-Like a piggy-back ride?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Come on! I can carry you, so don't worry!"

Val knelt and bared his back to me.
"But it's going to look weird... especially since we are older, you know." I objected, looking down at my fumbling fingers.

He turned around and placed his hand on my forearm.

"Monika, I know it's going to look weird and stuff. But if you want to get home, then you may want to get on. And I won't drop you. I promise."

I looked up to him, and it was the same eyes as before.

His black, onyx eyes were filled with care and compassion, unlike anything I have seen before.

It was something I could trust.

It was something I could feel safe on.

It was something I could fall for.

I moved my legs into his arms and clung onto his chest.

And I instantly regretted my decision.

Val stood up quickly, causing me to squeeze his chest for dear life.

He started to stroll to attune himself with weight.

It didn't take long that he started to walk faster and slowly reach outside school grounds.

"H-Hey! What will everybody say if they see us like this?! My reputation will be ruined!" I complained.

Val chuckled at my complaint.

"Well, I don't know. But it doesn't matter, does it? There's nothing to hide." He countered.

I lamented about the predicament we were in.

"I don't like this! Put me down! I would rather walk than be embarrassed by you!" I whined.

He didn't budge.

"And see you fall? No thanks. It's better this way, Monika."

I started swinging my legs back and forth and give cries of disapproval to get off of him.

"Monika, for Pete's sake stay still! Or else you're gonna fall!"

Val felt off with the weight of me on his shoulders.

He felt like he was about to fall, but instead, he stood tall.

With each step he took, I couldn't help but giggle.

"This is fun, Val! Faster, faster!" I chanted.
Val started to quicken his pace, and I felt the rush of air flow through my hair.

He started to laugh at how much fun he was having.

Everything went better when he laughed, so I laughed.

We knew that there more adventures ahead.

Curse his logic!

For the time being, I stopped moving and agreed with his demands.

Val abruptly stopped moving and pushed me closer to him.

In his effort to get me closer, his hands cushioned themselves on my butt.

"Hey! Hey! Where do you think you're groping, huh?!" I yelled.

He reared his head to me.

"What are you talking about?"

Seriously?!

"Hentai!" I cried.

He rolled his eyes and continued to walk.

"Whatever you say..."

Despite my standing on not wanting to be seen, I hatched a plan.

I frowned and positioned myself to articulate my voice.

"Hey everyone! There's a pervert groping my butt, and he won't let go!"

He sighed.

"Can you not?" He asked.

I smirked.

"Nope! Pervert! Pervert over here!"

He stopped and reared his head to me once more.

"Monika... I would rather not attract any more attention. So please knock it off." He requested.

I rolled my eyes.

"Fine... only because you said please."

With a smile he looked at me.

"Thanks, sweetheart."

And with that, Val continued to walk.
Val never changed.

He went the extra mile to help me.

I knew he would never leave me behind.

The fact that he got angry when I insisted on going proves that he cares about me...

How can I not fall for him?

Of course... that day was a misunderstanding.

I was hurt.

I could never hate him.

And despite my best efforts not to get close to him...

I am still in love with him.

My feelings for him never changed.

Deep down, I knew he would never abandon me.

Deep down, I would always love him.

And deep down, I would always be there for him.

Just like how it once was.

I rested my head on his crown and smiled.

Maybe I am destined to be with you.

Maybe it’s fate.

But there is one thing I know.

It’s that I...

I love you.
Feelings

I sighed, relieved that our mission was coming into an end.
"Good work team. Are we going to play another round?" I asked.

Hiro reared his head to me.
"Hell yeah. I can stay for another."

He turned his head to Dan and Tom.
"What about you guys? Are you all gonna stay for another round?" He asked.

Dan sighed.
"I'm getting a little tired, but sure. I don't mind another round of this game." He muttered, readying his gun.

Tom shrugged going along with our plans.
"If you guys are gonna play, then I will too. Let's head back inside."

We then started to walk back to the game hub to choose our next mission.

That is until I noticed a red laser on my chest.
"Huh?" I let out, causing my friends to look back at in confusion.

"What's wrong?" Dan asked, looking down at my chest. "Hey... Why do you have a laser on your chest?"

*If there's a red laser in this game...*  

*That means there is a sniper!*

"Ambush!" I yelled, backing into cover.

*BANG*

"Watch out, sniper! He's one o'clock high!" Hiro exclaimed, completely surprised by the shot.

With the threat of a sniper, my friends scrambled into cover as well.

"What the Hell? I thought we finished the game! How are there more enemies?!" Tom pointed out, readying his gun for more action.

I ejected the old magazine and popped in a new one, thinking that we missed a few.

"They are probably some stragglers the game forgot to get rid off! We can take this!" I rallied.

As soon any one of us was about to give orders, there was a feminine giggle that resonated the game room.

"That's a weird way of saying new players, baka."
Baka?

That voice...

I popped my head to confront the sniper.

"Wait... Natsuki? Is that you? What are you doing here?!"

Before I could get a proper response, she fired another bullet, forcing me to retreat into cover.

Damn it!

Another voice piped into our communications.

"Hey, Val~! You did say that we could join anytime we would like right? So.. we decided to join the game you were in. And not to mention... we got infinite respawns!" Monika stated in a playful tone.

How did they even manage to get into the game?!

More importantly...

Infinite respawns?

"We? That means..." Dan trailed off.

Monika giggled.

"Yep! It's the cute girls of the Ainu Academy versus the sweaty guys of Dokisai!" She mocked.

"I'm not cute!"

Sweaty?

"Hey, wait a minute! Their gear looks familiar!" Hiro tensely shouted, peeking out of cover.

Natsuki fired another round, almost shooting him in the head.

"The calibrations on this scope is little off! Hmm... there we go!"

She fired another shot at the peeking Tom, nearly missing him as well.

"Mother of all things holy! Sayori did you give our setup to Monika?! Actually, how did you even copy our stuff?!" He exclaimed.

Another voice piped in.

"Ehehe... Sorry, Tommy. I couldn't help but look at what you had for this game, so we just copied it!" Sayori nervously said.

"I must say... it is all balanced. Each member excels in one field only... Interesting." Yuri muttered.

It's a four versus four!

We are out of respawns...

There's a slim chance to survive this...
"Guys! We have to pull through! We are not letting some girls get the better of us, are we?" Tom urged, reading my mind and trying to keep the team level-headed.

We all gave our approvals and awaited command.

"Alright!" I stepped in. "Since we are out of respawns, keep tight! Do not spread out! Otherwise, we are going to get picked off one by one!" I ordered, causing them to reorganize.

I looked at Dan and motioned him to throw a flashbang.

He flung the flash grenade overhead, causing the girls to spout excuses that their headset was all white.

*PANG*

"Go, go, go! We have to punch a hole in their defenses! Push, push, push!" I yelled, moving up.

And so, the fight to survive began.

You're probably wondering how all this happened.

I could say the same thing...

Well, don't worry.

It will all make sense later.

I held onto Val's chest tightly as we walked home.

No one said anything or pointed at us when he carried me, but I didn't mind that, however.

All I cared right now was him carrying me.

And I couldn't be even happier.

"Finally... we made it," Val muttered, walking down our street...

I smiled and rested my chin on the crown of his head.

"You sound tired. I thought enjoyed groping my butt." I teased.

He turned his head to me.

"Argh! Now, hold on a minute! I am not groping your-"

He was cut off by a gasp.

"Onii-chan! How dare you!" A girl exclaimed, apparently shocked.

I focused my gaze at the young purple-haired girl.

Is that...

Yuri?
"Out of all the people your grope, it is her! The so-called perfectionist of Dokisai! Blah! I wouldn't mind if you touched me!"

And...

Just like that, I don't like her.

Wait a minute...

Who does she think she is?

From the looks of it, she can't be older than ten years old!

Is she trying to get Val arrested?!

Why is she so "thirsty"?!

"Oh uh... Hey, Haru. Fancy meeting you here, how's it going?" He greeted, swatting aside the strange comment.

The young girl still wasn't happy.

"Answer me, my dear Onii-chan! I see how you are groping her butt! Is there something wrong with mine? Huh?" She retorted, growing more and more agitated by the minute.

Eugh...

If she is related to Yuri in any way, then she is the polar opposite.

But the look in her eyes...

It was like razor-sharp and focused, just like how Yuri was back in the club when they...

About to kiss.

I decided to stand up for him.

"Excuse me! Val never said anything about your butt, and he isn't groping me! Not to mention but, aren't you young to think about your body like that?" I yelled, not liking the personality she gave to him.

The girl gritted her teeth.

"From this angle, he looks like he is enjoying it! So don't try to be sassy, sassy-pants!"

S-Sassy-pants?!

Why you little-

"Stop it! Both of you!" Val yelled.

He shook his head.

"Jeez, Louise! It's a rerun of last time, Haru. Monika is a great friend of mine, or rather... my quote on quote, the sister I never had. And I don't appreciate how you are talking to her!"

He's defending me...
Why is he so lovable~?

...

Hey!

He called me his sister again!

Haru played with her hair in same fashion Yuri does.

"But aren't you groping her...?" She muttered.

He sighed.

"No, I am not Haru. I would not grope Monika, like come on! I am not that much of pervert..."

You are groping my butt!

I can feel your hands holding them up!

The girl lightened up in excitement.

"If that's the case, then would you grope me?"

I felt Val's body recoil from her question.

"No! Gosh no! There's so much wrong with your demand!"

She pouted.

"Like whaaaaat?!

Seriously?

Did she not take my "sass" into account?

"Well like Monika said, you're too young to be thinking about that. Kids your age should be thinking about Dokemon and Top-Tarts." He stated.

I couldn't help but snicker from his analogy.

The girl sighed, giving up in her efforts to get Val arrested.

"Alright fine... whatever you say Onii-chan." She said, walking off.

The girl stopped and turned her head to us.

"But mark my words! You aren't going to be one that Onii-chan will carry! He will carry me and enjoy holding me!"

Haru stuck her tongue at me and walked away.

"Hmm... I can't understand that girl at all. Her vibe is otherworldly..." He muttered.

Val then turned his head to me.

"Anyway, sorry for not handling the situation a little better. I never thought that Haru would do such
a thing again."

I raised an eyebrow.

"She did this before?"

He gave a nervous and uncomfortable smile.

"Yeah... she did. It was right after Natsuki gave a cookie."

Natsuki gave Val a cookie?!

How come I didn't know about this?!

"So when I got the cookie, Haru came out of nowhere and-"

"Why did Natsuki give you a cookie?" I asked, cutting him off mid-sentence.

He was disorientated by my question.

"W-What?"

I frowned and moved up to his ear.


Who does she think is to give cookies like that?

If I could bake, then I would have given him all cookies he could have ever wanted!

...

...

...

It's that same feeling again!

That sharp poking sensation in my heart...

I should apologize for behaving so...

Possessive.

"Um, nevermind that. I am sure it's because she wanted to do. Whatever... Anyway, what were you saying about Haru coming out of nowhere and stuff?"

Val deadpanned at my sudden switch of subject.

And so, I felt a pinching sensation on my thighs.

"Hey! Ow, ow, ow! Stop that!" I complained.

He held onto my thighs for a little longer until he stopped.

"I don't like the way how you ask things like that. Knock it off." He warned.
There was something in his eyes that I couldn't comprehend.

It was something that I saw when he was with Yuri and...

*Back when he saw my panties...*

*I remember how his eyes looked when he peeked at me...*

*What is that strange mist around his black eyes?*

*It makes it all...*

*Focused.*

I pursed my lips and looked away.

"Okay... I won't. But if you do anything stupid, then you're gonna get it."

Val stared at me, trying to comprehend my words before starting to move again.

"Like I was saying... Haru clung onto me when I was trying to get class right after the first period. I had no idea who she even was, so I panicked and tried to pull the girl off to me. But no matter what I did she kept dodging and squeezed tighter."

I scoffed at him.

"So she managed to hold you down, despite all the progress you did? How do you expect me to believe that?"

He shrugged.

"I don't know. The girl is full of energy and life. It's hard to believe that she is the younger twin sister of Yuri's."

*Knew it...*

"So yeah, when I was trying to get Haru off me, Yuri came in and swooped in for the kill. She tried to fight off Yuri's grasp, and she clung onto me again. Natsuki got annoyed from how she kept hugging me, so she pointed out how she uh... held onto me."

I felt him shiver, causing me to also feel the cold sensation down my spine.

"Yeah... Haru said something along the lines of how Natsuki is short and could be her younger sister..."

I hissed from the cutting remark she gave.

"Natsuki didn't take that so well, did she?" I asked.

He merely shook his head.

"Nope. I had to tell Haru to apologize to her but, I saw how much she didn't want to do it." He muttered. "But fortunately, she did, and everything played out somewhat okay, I guess. Never thought she would do it again."

I played with his hair to distract him.
It was evident that he didn't like talking about all that.

"I get it, Val. But since she is still a teenager, she has time to change and think about her actions. The worst feeling is to go through what you did and how much you regret it. That's punishment enough." I stated, hoping to make him feel better.

And it was a success.

"Maybe, maybe. Sometimes there are things I wish I hadn't done when I was a teen."

I felt a cruddy sensation swelling inside of me.

Somehow he sensed it.

"Ah, I am not talking about that day. I am mostly talking about the things back at Lotus. More specifically your time as The Lady That Knows Everything."

*Are you kidding me?!!*

I gave him a righteous smack on the head.

"That's for bringing up those memories! You know how much I hate reminiscing about that!"

I gave him another smack.

"Ow!"

"That's for pinching my thighs! Augh, you make me want to get thigh surgery to make it leaner!" I stated, pouting from the insecurity of having such features.

*Those comments that guy in class makes are starting to get to me...*

"Aw, I thought you were going to keep the title of Thunderous Thighs of Dokisai too! Why would you want to do that?" He teased.

I didn't retort to him.

"Monika?"

*Maybe I should get rid of these thighs...*

*Damn it, why did I inherit so much of Mom's genetics?!*

"Should I get thigh surgery?" I quietly asked.

Val stopped walking all of a sudden.

"Did someone say something about your body?" He asked back, a frigid tone covering his voice.

*Is he...* 

*Upset?*

"Not really, but everyone is attracted to my thighs for some reason. It makes me feel... self-conscious." I muttered, looking away.

He reared his head to me.
"Don't be. Don't be subconscious about your thighs; they are great just the way they are. Luscious, attracting, and best of all, suffocation-worthy." He proudly stated.

My face burned from his compliments.

*He always reminds me that my body is beautiful...*

*Even if it's something weird like thighs, Val always finds a way to make them lovable.*

"Jeez, I sound like such a pervert."

I giggled.

"Yeah, you are. But you're my pervert, and no one else's!"

*That sounds like a weird thing to say though...*

He continued to our walk home.

It didn't take long until we made it to my home.

"Okay, Monika. It's time for you to go. Are you able to walk?"

He lowered himself so that I can get off.

My legs shakily touched the ground, struggling to gain balance.

I missed the warmth of his body around my legs.

Or the hard chest I held in my arms.

It was growing more and more difficult for me to stand my ground.

And so, I lost my balance.

But I felt the warm hands caress my back to keep me stable.

I looked up to him, the distance our faces shared were less than a few inches.

*His lips look so kissable, like it's inviting me to finally give it to him...*

*If I only lean in...*

*Then I can-*

"Are you okay?" He asked.

*No, I am not Dork!*

*You looked so kissable at that moment!*

*And like always, you ruin it!*

"Y-Yeah... I am."

*Why do I sound so nervous?!
And why are my cheeks so hot all of a sudden?

Val brought me to a stable footing and took a few steps away from me.

"Should I help you to your room?" He asked.

The burning sensation spread all across my face.

D-Does he really want to come to my room?

M-Maybe not as friends but...

"You know... help you go up the stairs and stuff? Maybe I can-"

...

I hate when I think that something more will happen.

Why can't it be just something romantic?!

It's always platonic! Always!

And I can't help myself whenever he thinks about it!

That's it!

I had enough!

"Why can't it be more?" I swiftly cut off.

He blinked a couple of times.

"What? I don't understand..."

I turned around so he couldn't see my burning face.

"Maybe help me get my clothes off since I have a bandage on! Remember?!"

No, I can't say that...

It will just lead to more disappointment.

Val will never do take my clothes off, that's something a "brother" can't do...

"You know what? Forget it." I mumbled, turning around slowly. "But let me at least give you a reward for carrying me all the way here."

I couldn't help but tap my fingers on what I was about to do.

"Reward? I don't need a reward." He replied, smiling like he always does.

That damn smile...

It always melts my heart.

I love it so much.
With a smirk, I rolled my eyes.
"Come on, don't be like that! You did a lot for me. Way more than some ordinary guy would do..."

*It's true...*

*Who else would carry me bridal style, put me down on some bench to check my scrape?*

*Not only that, apply the proper treatment to it and carry me all the way back home?*

*What we are doing isn't what a close friend does.*

*It's...*

*Something more.*

"Monika, you are my... the closest thing I can have to a sister or a... gosh, I don't know. Look, Monika, the bond we share goes beyond what best friends have. Maybe what siblings have, and I glad that you are on my side. I will do anything for you."

*H-He stuttered!*

*Does that mean there is more to his feelings?!*

*Oh my gosh...*

*My heart is pounding so hard!*

"Val, whatever I am to you... I will always treat you as something more than a brother or best friend. This time, I will never let go of you. And I will do anything to keep our bonds together."

*Was that a confession?*

*No...*

*Not quite.*

*I never said anything that I liked him there...*

*But I implied it.*

*Wait...*

*Then did he imply it as well?*

I mentally shook my head and stared into his warm onyx eyes.

"Just don't call me your sister, even when we are out in public. You know what I said last time right?" I warned.

Val nodded vigorously.

"Yeah, yeah! I do... I never thought you could be so scary..." He nervously muttered.

I smiled and brought my hands to his cheeks.

He was surprised by my move.
"M-Monika?"

I felt an overwhelming sense of confidence in me.

*Was it from the semi-confession we had or...*

*Is it something else?*

"You always looked cute whenever you are surprised, Val."

I leaned in to seal my fate.

---

*Oh noooooooo!*

*Is Monika going to kiss me, right here and right now?!*

*B-But I don't see her like that!*

*Do I?*

*She's closer than any siblings I had...*

*B-But...*

I felt her warm lips on my nose.

My cheeks rushed with blood as she delivered the kiss.

She pulled away and smiled, closing her eyes from the glee she's experiencing.

"I hope you liked your reward."

That was my cue to leave.

"Ahaha... yeah."

I took an awkward step back, which almost made me fall.

Monika giggled from my retreat and watched me go home.

Her eyes judged every step and movement I did as I went home.

She waved at me, to which I returned with a great deal of lethargy.

As soon as my door opened, I rushed in.

*Oh my gosh...*

*What was all that?!*

*W-When did I feel so...*

*Weird all of a sudden?!!*

*It's like my heart was about to explode by...*

*Something!*
I moved my hand close to my heart and noted how fast it was beating.

Monika called me cute...

She did call me cute before, but that was when we were kids!

Being described as cute when we are adults is entirely different!

Kind of like sleeping together...

ARGH!

Now I realize this?!

Damn it, damn it, damn it!

This never happened before!

It's like she cast a spell on me or something when she kissed my nose!

**Like since when was Monika so hot?**

I resisted the urge to yell at the top of lungs from the rush of thoughts in my head.

*Calm down, Val...*

*It's probably just my hormones acting up...*

*Even though I went through puberty...*

*Maybe a cold shower could fix all this.*

*Yeah, that'll do.*

I ran up the stairs to my room and tossed the bag towards my bed.

With a towel in hand, I walked into the bathroom and entered my shower.

I then turned on the shower head, spraying cold water on my body.

*My head's finally starting to cool down.*

*That's good.*

*Now I can plan out what happens tomorrow.*

*Monika said that we are going to meet up for the last time on Friday...*

*So I can write my poem tomorrow right after hitting the school's gym.*

*Saturday and Sunday I am relatively free.*

*That reminds me...*

*I have to talk with Monika's dad about her plans.*

*She didn't have much of choice last time.*
And because of me not showing up to convince him otherwise...

No.

This time it will be different, and I'll make sure to change things.

My head and body were now cold, so I stopped the shower head.

After rushing into the shower and letting the cold water beat down my skin, I got out.

Ahhh...

Much better.

No more weird thoughts clouding my judgment.

The next time I see her, I am going to ask her about that.

Seeing her right now would make those "weird" thoughts come back again.

"Val!" I heard someone call.

Monika?

Right now?

Oh no...

I need some time away from you!

Especially now, since I don't have any clothes on!

"Val! Are you there?" She called.

I dashed to my drawer and opened it.

Shit, shit, shit!

Where are my clothes?!

Did I take them to the laundry today?!

I heard knocking on my balcony window.

"Val? I know you are in there! I only have a quick question for you!"

Fuck!

I am running out of time!

"Yeah, I am here! Just give me a few more seconds!"

I vaulted over my bed and checked under the bed for any signs of extra clothes.

Nothing!

Where are my clothes?
The bathroom!

It has to be there!

I dashed to the bathroom and saw neatly packed clothes on a basket, ready to be put inside the laundry.

There it is!

I grabbed the basket and placed it on my bed.

Fuck!

My towel's loosening from all the running I am doing!

I have to make this quick!

"Whatever you are doing, it can't be that important!" She exclaimed, pushing the door to side.

"Wait, no-!"

Monika stood at my balcony window, her eyes bulging out from the scene.

Her emerald green eyes, slowly moved about as they scanned my body.

I shuffled to cover myself from her.

And at the worst possible timing, the towel that wrapped around my body fell to the floor.

Her shocked eyes immediately looked down to my groin.

"Oh..." She muttered.

Her eyes grew more and more focused on my groin.

I-Is that drool?!

I immediately covered myself from her, mortified from what she has seen.

"WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?!!" I yelled, trying to pick up my towel.

That woke Monika up from her daze, sharing the same flustered state I had.

Her face flared up to the point where it looked like she had a fever.

"THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ME, YOU HENTAI! WHY WERE YOU EVEN NAKED IN THE FIRST PLACE?!" She yelled back.

As I covered myself up, I picked up my clothes.

"I don't know! It's probably cause I came out of the shower to put some clothes on!" I retorted.
She turned around and covered her face.

"Maybe you should get into the habit of putting on clothes before you go to your room! That way I wouldn't have seen your dick!"

...

S-She saw m-my...

"So... you took the time to look," I muttered.

She moved her hands off her face and nodded in guilt.

"I-I mean it was right there in front of me! How was I not going to look at it?!" She excused.

*That's her excuse?!*

"Look... I told you to wait outside. You had no reason to barge in like that!" I retorted.

Her face burned to a degree I haven't seen.

"I thought you were doing some homework or something! I didn't know you were **jerking off** or something!"

My face burned as well.

"I wasn't **doing that**! You know what...? Please look away while I put some clothes on."

She nodded slowly and turned around.

*And she's calling me the pervert!*

With that, I put some clothes on as quick as possible.

"Okay, done. Now, what were you here for?"

She twirled her fingers together.

"Well... maybe it's not a good time to ask that question. Since you know...

I rolled my eyes.

"Monka, say it. You know I won't judge you."

With that said, her finger twirling grew worse.

"W-Well... I was hoping that you can... you know... Spare some of your pajamas? Your clothes are a lot more comfortable to sleep in than my usual pajamas. So I was wondering if I can borrow some." She muttered.

*That was the reason why she barged in?*

I sighed.

"Sorry, Monika. That's a no-can-do. I was planning to do some laundry today, so I can't spare any."

I stated.
She frowned at the prospect of getting no clothes.

"Please...? Your clothes can't be that bad. They smell... well um... they smell just like you. And I like it. So I can please have some clothes?" She begged.

Monika clamped her hands together and gave me her best puppy eyes.

"Please...?"

_Not those eyes again!

_Her lips and eyes force me to give her what she wants!

I looked away and put my hand up.

_Darn it.

"Okay! Okay! Please... stop looking at me like that! If you like how a few days of uncleaned clothes smell like, then I will give you my clothes."

_I always was a neat freak...

Monika jumped onto my bed and dove into the basket that contained my clothes.

"Aaah... it smells so good." She whispered, taking my tight black shirt and blue shorts from the basket.

I squinted at her choice of clothing.

_Uh-oh...

_Those are my workout clothes!

"Wait, Monika... I workout in those clothes! You can't take them!"

Monika looked up to me with a puzzled look.

"So what? It can't smell that bad!"

I cringed at her obsession with my clothes.

"Yes, it does! I sweated my soul into them! Now give that back! " I demanded, reaching towards them.

Monika dodged my reach and smirked devilishly.

"If that's the case..."

She put her nose on my clothes and attempted to smell it.

I pounced on her, only to sidestep me.

"Give it back!" I demanded, reaching out for my clothes.

She giggled and jumped on top of my bed.

"If you want them, then you have to come and take them!"
Monika jumped off my bed and ran around my room.

I tried to chase her, but her speed and stamina far outmatched mine.

"Come on! This is childish, Monika! Give me the dirty clothes back!"

With a groan, I readied myself for another strike.

I pounced on her again, only for her to back handstand jump.

_Holy shit!_

She landed on my bed with perfection, with no traces of lousy form or unstable footing.

I smirked at her positioning.

_She's on top of my bed and has nowhere where to go!
I got her cornered._

"Give up! I got you surrounded!"

Monika smirked back.

"Do you now?"

She jumped over me, in an attempt to shock and evade me.

Luckily, I saw past her, and I was able to grab her sides to hold her in place.

I made sure to lightly put her on top of my bed and pin her down by holding her wrists down.

_This looks awkward..._

Monika shuffled about, trying to escape my grasp but to no avail.

Only to realize that she and I were close again.

_It's that weird feeling again!_

_What is this feeling in my heart?!_

Monika was stuck.

"D-Do you yield?" I asked the helpless girl, feeling distracted by the distance we shared.

The perfectionist sighed and looked down.

"Yeah, I give up."

With that, I released my pins on her wrists and backed away from her.

Once I was comfortably away from her, she gave me smug look and jumped off my bed.

_Oh no!_

She ran towards my balcony door and positioned herself to jump.
The girl artfully jumped over the small ledge between our homes and twirled on her feet.

*You have got to be kidding me...*

*Since when was Monika this playful?!*

The brown haired girl turned around and blew a raspberry at me.

"These are my clothes now! I don't care if they are sweaty! Hahaha~!"

I shook my head in disgust.

"Eugh! That's disgusting... Please give them back, in return; I will give you my second most comfortable pajamas."

She pouted and took another whiff at my clothes.

Instead of recoiling in disgust, she sighed.

My jaw dropped.

"Smells just like him..."

Monika then tossed my clothes to me, and in return, I threw my comfortable clothes to her.

*When she is playful...*

*She is also pretty creepy.*

"Hey... wait a minute! I didn't get my clothes back from yesterday!" I complained.

Monika walked inside her home and yelled.

"Yeah! I know! They are pretty comfortable! Thanks!"

My mouth was agape from her reckless behavior.

"W-What?!"

I jumped onto my bed and held his clothes tightly.

*Val's clothes are much more comfortable than mine.*

*That got me thinking...*

*I never had that much fun in years...*

*Val was giving me chase and it sparked something in me again.*

*Did I forget to have fun after I left?*

*Well... I did enjoy my time with my friends in Ainu.*

*But I didn't find it fun.*

*The fun I had with my friends doesn't compare to what happened a few moments ago.*
Is it because I am in love again?

Maybe...

But I enjoyed him chasing me in his bedroom.

And when he finally got me...

He was so close to me.

My body felt as if it was on fire with the way he held me down.

It was like yesterday night.

I got...

Turned on.

And at that point, I wanted to reward him.

I really, really wanted to lean in and kiss him.

But I can't do that, not just yet.

He doesn't see me like that.

But today! Today is an important day!

In all my years with him, I finally made some actual progress!

He stuttered when he tried to tell me what I was to him!

That has to be something developing in him!

If that is the case, then it was all worth it.

Even if it did take eight years...

I took another whiff at his clothes and put them on.

My mind is swimming in joy right now!

I can feel my heartbeat with a new tempo.

And whenever I am around him now, everything looks brighter.

Nothing looks dull or boring now...

Is this how the world always was?

No...

It's all because of love.

I yawned from how tired I felt.

It's almost seven o'clock, and I feel like I need to sleep...
Maybe I can sleep with him again.

Given that I toyed with him and saw his...

My face burned up from what happened.

Oh no...

I...

I saw his...

I saw Val's dick!

The overwhelming guilt forced me to grab my pillow and roll around my bed with it.

I am a bigger pervert than he is!

He touched my boobs yesterday sure, but that was on complete accident, and it was kind of my fault!

However... this?!

I saw his manhood!

That's completely different from an accidental grope!

What's worse is that I stared at it!

I mean... how could I look away?

The size is pretty imp-

I screamed into my pillow.

STOP THINKING LIKE THAT!

Bad Monika!

Bad Monika!

Shame on you!

You are no pervert!

You are not thinking about his dick!

Gaaah!

It's not like it grew...

I-I mean I did peek at him only once when we were little but-

This is completely wrong!

And did I...?

I rubbed my lips clean of any dry saliva.
I drooled over him!

No...

No.

Noooo!

I am a pervert!

**How could I not drool?**

**His body was still wet from the shower.**

It provided the best view for both his body and his-

I brought a hand up and slapped myself.

*Fucking Valmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm!!*

I got off my bed and marched to my closet.

*If I can't get my mind of him then, I might have to bring out the big guns!*

I opened the closet and out came out the body-pillow I had from my childhood.

It still had the same picture from four years ago.

*It's time for an upgrade.*

*Although he can't pin me down and close to me...*

*Then I guess this will suffice.*

*Time to have some fun with my darling!*

I yawned from last night and continued walking to school.

My head focused on that one moment we had.

Specifically, the moment I had with Monika last night.

*Monika sure gave me a runaround for my clothes...*

*She wanted my gym clothes.*

*Is that a good thing or a bad thing?*

*Pah, it's a bad thing!*

*That's just creepy!*

*Who would want someone's gym clothes?*

...
"Other than for emergencies where your best bud doesn't have theirs, but...

That wasn't the case at all!

"Yo, Val! What's up?" Tom greeted, running up to me.

I turned my head to greet him back.

"Nothing much. Just so you know... I have been thinking about girls." I slowly said.

He smirked.

"Girls, huh? You have your eye on some of the girls on the literature club... huh?"

I recoiled my head from his statement.

"What? No! No, I don't! I know for a fact that you have your eye on a certain girl!"

My comeback made him nervous.

"I... uh, don't know what you were talking about." He dismissed.

There we go.

If there is any sort of denial, then there is some love brewing!

"Tom-boy... come on! Why are you lying about that! I can tell from a mile away!"

He tried to play it off.

"You don't have any proof." He declared.

I sighed from the evidence I was about to present to him.

"You know... Sayori told Yuri and me to look away from whatever she was about to do. Whatever she did, it sure got your attention."

He blushed and touched his ear.

"I- uh... yeah it did."

I smirked, knowing that I got him in a bind.

"She said how you couldn't take care of yourself, but isn't it the other way around? You know... wiping off the toothbrush off her collar, brushing her hair, and... buttoning her blazer?"

Tom looked away as soon as I said that.

Bingo.

"Please don't..." He begged.

I put my hands behind my back and sped up our walk.

"Hey, you are free to go. But this is something I need to point out, Tommy-boy. It was hard to focus when you were complaining about how Sayori's blazer didn't fit her." I slyly pressed.
He groaned.

"Sorry about that. I know that you were busy with helping Yuri on her math homework. But it's hard to tell such an energetic girl like Sayori to keep quiet."

"Energetic to the point that she will say, and I quote: 'Yay! My boobs leveled up!'?" I asked.

He nodded slowly.

"Sayori had a pretty bad case of Chunnibyou back at Lotus. She called herself something along the lines of... *Aurora Sunshine The Third*. Gosh, she watched so many action-packed anime and manga that it bled into her delusions. I thought she given up on having that syndrome, but there are still some traces of it... Like her boobs leveling up."

Tom then sighed heavily, as if remembering the past was stressful.

"I had to deal with that until she left for Ainu. And did you know what she called me for some reason? Bahamut. Like, what the Hell is a Bahamut?"

I chuckled at his dilemma, amused on how similar it was to mine.

"You know, Tom. You weren't the only one that had to deal with schizophrenic. Monika also had Chunnibyou, you know?"

*Speaking of Monika...*

*How is her morning?*

The sunlight irritated my eyes, making me wake up.

I woke up cuddled next to something soft.

It was a recognizable feeling since I used it when I was young.

*It's my body pillow.*

I yawned and rubbed my eyes of sleep.

"Goodmorning, darling." I greeted, kissing the pillow on the cheek.

"Morning darling."

I arose from my bed and smiled.

*Why am I so happy?*

...

*Oh yeah.*

*I am in love now.*

The sunlight caressed my skin as I stretched the sleep away.

*Ahhh~!*
This feeling... I hope it never goes away.

Everything feels like as should be.

I took a whiff to my clothes that I got from Val, and sighed.

There were some traces of his scent, but it was slowly being replaced my mine.

Oh well.

I'll borrow more clothes from him if I need to.

I jumped off my bed and washing up.

The reflection of my mirror showed that I was now happier.

I didn't any eyebags that needed makeup to cover up, nor did my skin get paler.

Everything about my confusions and bitterness was gone.

Maybe it is fate that we do end up together!

I have hope that this time will be different.

My morning went smoothly and flawlessly.

I didn't have problems putting my uniform or get my hair tangled.

When it came time to put on my bow, I hesitated.

"But I managed to let go of my bow!"

"I like how you look with your hair down, Mon."

"I'm going to stop wearing my bow, just for you!"

I sighed happily from my treasured memory.

Since I love him again...

There's no point in wearing this!

With my bow in hand, I put it back in the drawer.

Just as it should be.

Breakfast was nothing special, I spread some jam on bread and took the lunch I prepared for both of us.

Crap!

No coffee!

Ah, I don't need coffee.

Val should be the one fill that role for me.
I always feel energetic around him, whether I know it or not.

Once I locked the door home, I broke into a dash to find Val.

He couldn't believe me.

"No way. There's no way that she had Chunnibyou! She doesn't seem to be the type of person to have it in the first place!"

I shrugged, swatting his disbelief.

"You would be surprised. Monika called herself the-"

"Called herself what?" A girl cut off.

Monika?!

I immediately took a few steps to the side.

Oh shit!

She smiled at me, the same smile she had Tuesday.

That mix of innocence and darkness!

It's horrifying!

"Uh... um... nothing!" I played off, knowing that I was doomed.

She rolled her eyes on me and grabbed my hand.

My eyes widened at what she was doing.

"M-Monika! Your hand is on mine!" I pointed out, getting increasingly nervous.

I heard a whistle from Tom.

"Hoo boy! Look like you are defying everyone's expectations by hitting it off early!" He teased.

My cheeks flushed in color.

"W-What are you talking about?! We aren't a couple!"

He scoffed at us.

"I dunno, you two holding hands means that you are one."

Knowing that I was losing the battle, I looked to Monika for support.

"Help me, will you?"

She shrugged, trying to hide her smirk from me.

"I don't see what's wrong with being a couple. Is there anything wrong with that Tom?"

He shook his head.
"Nope, I knew a couple of Lotus would make a comeback!"

That's it!

I can't take this anymore!

"Okay, first off, we aren't even a couple! Second off, I only see Monika as-"

I was interrupted by a stinging pain on my toes.

"Ow!"

Monika looked at me in shock.

"Oh my! Are you alright?" She asked.

What?

What even happened?!

I nodded in pain.

"Yeah, I am. Anyway, back to what I was saying. Monika is not my- yowch!"

This time I looked downwards to see where the pain was coming from.

It was a white sneaker with a pink tip hurting me.

Monika!

I glared at Monika.

"Hey!"

She aloofly looked away and whistled.

"Sorry." She muttered.

But before I can argue, the bell for class rang.

We made it already?!

"Sorry, Thomas. Val and I have to hurry to our first-period class. Take care, okay?"

He smirked and looked at us.

"Ha! Have fun you two!"

I gritted my teeth at him before being taken away from Monika's sweaty grip.

"I'll get you back for this!" I declared.

We broke into a dead sprint to class.

"Hey, Val!"

"Yes, my name is Val."
"Would you want to go shopping with me today? You know, hang out like old times!" She yelled while dragging my stumbling body with her.

Today?

"Sorry, Monika! No can do!" I stated. "I'm busy today."

Her sprinting came into screeching halt, almost causing to fall over were it not for her grip.

"W-What?! What do you mean you're busy?!" She asked seemingly surprised by my plans.

I rolled my shoulders on my free arm in anticipation for the gym.

"Well... I am gonna get some gains today with my buddies, the gain train never stops!" I proudly proclaimed.

She groaned and shook her head.

"Going with your friends and abandoning me like last time huh?" She kidded.

I snickered.

"Aw c'mon, Monika! It's nothing like that! I had this planned on Tuesday! Maybe next time?" I suggested.

She crossed her arms, still keeping the grip on my hand.

I couldn't help but let out a happy sigh.

Her chest...

I can feel her boobs!

It isn't as big as Yuri's, but they are warm...

Not so big and not so small.

Just the way I like them...

Argh!

I can't be thinking of perverted thoughts like that!

"Come on! I'll reward you by letting you touch me~!"

I pulled my hand away from her, grazing her chest slightly.

"Hah! That's a tempting offer, pervert. I think I'll pass!"

Monika leaned in and put her hands on her hips.

"I was kidding, moron! Why would I let you touch me?"

I smirked.

"Okay, I won't touch you. But I think you want something else to touch you." I pervertedly joked, referencing what happened yesterday.
Hehe.

... 

Wait! Wait! Wait!

Since when was I confident enough to make such jokes like these?!

It just...

Slipped past my lips!

That joke is so wrong in so many levels!

We aren't even in that kind of relationship in the first place!

Damn it, and now I have to expect the worst...!

Her faces went through the cycles of confusion, realization, and then to complete embarrassment.

"ARRRGH! YOU'RE SUCH A HENTAI!" She yelled, starting to punch me relentlessly.

I anticipated her attacks and started to block them with ease.

"I didn't see anything yesterday, alright?!" She assured, trying her utmost hardest to land a punch.

Right...

"That's not what you said yesterday~!" I teased, her red face glowing brighter than ever.

Argh, it's so hard not to rattle her any further.

She is just too fun to tease.

"SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!" She demanded.

Okay, that's enough.

We are probably going to cause a scene if I continue doing this.

She upped her tempo on punching me, and in return making for quick strikes.

Because of her haste, I grabbed both wrists and brought her in for a hug.

She gasped when I did.

"I'm kidding, Monika. You aren't that much of pervert. Alright?" I said, stroking her long hair to calm herself down.

It was mildly effective in calming her down.

I pulled away to see her frowning.

And that hurt me.

"Okay... but I want you to apologize! You went a bit too far... I am not a pervert."
I sighed and smiled.
"Sorry for teasing you too much Monika. You aren't a pervert."

Her hurt eyes immediately were replaced by rejuvenated ones and bounced up.
"Good! That's what I wanted to hear. And I got one more condition!" She stated, pointing her finger up.

I raised an eyebrow and waited for what she had to say.

She looked nervous, rubbing her arm as if saying it would make her vulnerable.
"Do you... notice anything different about me today?" The girl muttered.

**Notice anything different?**

I scanned her face, body, and shoes, but there wasn't anything that looked out of place.

*Her hair...*

My eyes looked up to see her white bow was now missing.
"Y-Your bow! What happened to your bow?!" I frantically asked.

She flicked my forehead.

"Nothing happened to my bow, idiot. That's what I did differently today!"

*Oh...*

Her confident posture was again reduced to nervousness.
"W-Well... do you like my hair down again?"

I smiled, knowing that the old Monika was finally back.
"Yup! I love it when your hair is like that, Mon. It looks better to me!"

She gushed over my comment.
"I knew you would like it! Come on, let's get to class!"

Without much warning, she grabbed my hand, and we ran to class again.

---

I stretched upwards from the exhausting day I had.

The rest of the day simply zipped by.

*There's no committee meeting today, so I texted Monika that we do some of the work at Friday.*

*But she didn't get it yet, mostly because she is busy.*

*Chances are that she is going to the room anyway.*

I was now on my way to the Committee room to wait for her.
Tomorrow's the club meeting.
That means I have to write a poem for the literature club.
But that won't stop the gain train.
I need to get some work done today.
"Hey, Val!"
I turned around to see whoever was calling me.
It was Natsuki, running up to me with a small plastic container.
Can't I go one day with girls coming up to me all the time?
A few weeks ago, the only people that call me would be a classmate or even my friends at this hour...
Right now?
I can't say I miss those days...
Somewhat.
I waved at her.
"Yeah, that's my name. How's it going?"
Instead of giving me a proper reply she jumped and tackled me.
By sheer luck was I able to stand my ground and not be overtaken by the surprise attack.
I looked down to see her hugging my waist.
From the looks of it, she enjoyed hugging me.
"Hmm~, it's been going well now that you are here. Hey, speak to me in English!"
I tried to pull her away, only for her to whimper at my attempts.
Aww...
That's so cute.
Kind of how Monika and I slept during our first sleepover...
"Well... what do you want me to say?" I asked.
She detached an arm and handed me the plastic container she was holding.
Didn't I see that before?
"I made you ice cream! So say your thanks in English."
Seriously?
She doesn't understand what I even say to her!
"Alright, but if I do... can you let go of me?"

Natsuki looked up to me and smiled.

"Maybe, but it depends on how you say it."

Fair enough.

"(Thanks for the ice cream, Natsuki. I appreciate you making this treat for me.)" I thanked.

Natsuki's pink eyes sparkled from each word I said to her.

Her small smile turned into a cute grin.

"(Yoou... area... welcome, Val.)"

W-What?!

She pulled away from me and put her hands on her hips.

"You're surprised how I learned English that fast huh? Well, I put my mind into it, and it was pretty easy! Hehe!"

I crossed my arms and smiled from her accomplishment.

"Well done, Natsuki. Well done. I am impressed that managed to speak the proper words, but your articulation needs practice."

I motioned her to listen.

"(You are welcome.)" I slowly said. "Or you can say this. (You're welcome.) Either one works."

She tilted her head and tried to replicate what I said.

"(Yoou... are welcome. Yoou... are welcome. Yoou... are welcome.)" She repeated.

I see the problem.

"Natsuki, it's (you), it has straight and short. (You.)"

She tried to repeat it.

(You... are welcome.)"

I nodded once she got it, causing her to spark up in excitement.

(You are welcome! You are welcome! You are welcome!) She cheered.

I chuckled from how adorable the girl was.

"Anyway, with enough practice, you can maybe some like me. Maybe. Also, I gotta say, when did you make ice cream?" I asked, starting to walk forward.

The pink haired girl walked with me.

"I made it during baking class. We had a special activity today, so I decided to make some for you. You better like it."
"Why wouldn't I?"

"Nat, you made this. Of course, I am going to like it. Your cookies and cupcakes are way better than any bakery I went to. So that means the ice cream isn't an exception."

She couldn't be any more proud.

"V-Valkyrie?" Another voice called.

We turned around to see Yuri hiding around the corner.

I waved at her to ease her.

"Hey, Yuri!" I greeted.

"Hi..." Natsuki greeted meekly.

She gave me a warm smile.

"Hello..."

The purple haired girl walked over to us.

She was carrying a thermos and handed it to me.

Oh right!

I still have the thermos from yesterday.

"I-I tried something new today. Instead of Jasmine Tea, I made Oolong Tea... I hope you don't mind." She muttered.

Yuri did this for me?

"Thanks, Yuri! You don't have to do this, but thank you. I had Oolong tea before, so I know I am going to like it." I assured.

Her small smile brightened.

"You're very welcome."

I felt a tug on my left arm.

Huh?

Natsuki held my arm and frowned.

Her eyes said that she was unhappy with the company I got.

I need to make it to the Committee room!

"Nat, I need to go... could you let go of me?"

She pouted and looked away.

Suddenly she smirked and looked back at me.
"Sure. But I want to know this... Which treat are you going to like more?"

In the corner of my eye, I saw Yuri tightening her focus at the sharp-tongued girl.

*It's those eyes back in the literature club...*

*Focused and hollowed...*

"What are you talking about? You gave Valkyrie something else?"

Natsuki wasn't fazed by her strange gaze.

"Yeah, I did. I gave Val some ice cream that I made for him."

*This isn't going to go well.*

*And I have a good feeling that this is going to turn into a full blown argument!*  

"Ice cream...?" Yuri questioned.

"I am sure he will enjoy that, but he will also enjoy my brewed tea. Isn't that right Valkyrie?" She asked, grabbing ahold of my other arm.

*Ahhh...*

*Her chest is massive!*

*I can feel my arms being cushioned by her pillows!*

In an effort not to look at her chest, I dragged my vision up to her eyes.

*Holy shit!*

*Those eyes...*

*Is she jealous?*

*About what?!!*

I nodded slowly, her eyes burning the back of my skull.

"Yeah, I am. But-

"But... which one are you enjoy? Mine? Or Yuri's?" Natsuki interrupted.

*The atmosphere suddenly got tense...*

*What's with the competition?*

*I haven't tried their stuff out!*

My eyes darted between the two girls.

"I don't know!" I blurted out.

The two were shocked by my answer.
"What do you mean you don't know?"

I winced from their response.

"Well... how would I know if it's something I haven't tried yet, right? Natsuki, I did say your cookies and cupcakes are amazing, but I don't know how your ice cream will taste! The same applies to you Yuri, I don't know how your Oolong tea is going to taste, but I can tell you that I love your Jasmine tea!"

... They both sighed and looked at each other. Their eyes and facial expressions did most of the speaking.

"Truce?" Natsuki petitioned.

Yuri nodded.

"Truce." Yuri agreed.

I felt the two squeeze my arms and pull me to another direction.

"Whoa! Hey, hey, hey! Where are we even going?"

Their only response was a horrifying scowl that melted my defenses.

I groaned, knowing that I don't have a say on what's happening.

They are not going let up.

I can easily free myself from their grips, but that would probably hurt them...

Fuck.

It looks like I am at their mercy unless I can escape.

"Argh... wherever you guys are taking me, can we go to the Committee Room?" I requested.

"Is Monika there?" They both answered.

I shook my head.

"Uh... no. Monika's running late because she has some errands to take care of." I answered.

They suddenly shifted gear and headed towards the room.

This is getting a little too creepy.

I don't know what's going on and they won't respond to me!

Aaaah!

I'm freaking out over here!

Yuri opened the door to the room and made sure not to lose her grip on my arm.
Can I escape...?

Natsuki, in tandem, closed the door thus preventing me from leaving.

I am screwed.

They took me hostage and sat me down on the table.

"Listen up Val," Natsuki ordered. "I am going to feed you my ice cream and Yuri's going to help you drink her tea. Got it?"

I looked towards Yuri for any signs of mercy.

Her eyes looked interested in me and only me.

Nope.

I don't see anything.

"Wait, don't I get a say in this? Forcing me to eat and drink the ice cream and tea won't make me think favorably of them..." I muttered.

Yuri snorted, catching me off guard.

"No, you don't. I'm sure you would like our gifts. You said you enjoyed Natsuki's cupcakes and cookies; as well as my Jasmine tea. So that would mean you would enjoy these too."

...

Whooosh.

That's the sound of my point being blown over their heads.

"Now that you had your word on what's going on... Pucker up, buttercup! Here comes my ice cream!"

Natsuki, still holding my arm hostage, opened the container and scooped a mouthful of ice cream.

She brought over to me, to which I turned my head.

"Jeez, Louise! Isn't this a crime to do? I mean seriously, the fact that you two- mmph! Mmph!"

I felt Yuri's hands turn my head towards the spoon.

My Tastebuds were immediately rushed with the creamy, smooth vanilla of Natsuki's ice cream.

"Mmm..." I hummed, chewing the delicacy in euphoria. "This is great! Better than any branded ice cream!"

I gulped and enjoyed the sweet aftertaste of the treat.

Wait!

This is still wrong!

I shook my head and looked towards Natsuki, her eyes a darker shade of pink.
It was as if she enjoyed doing this immensely.

"Okay! Now that you had your fun, I want you both to let go of right- Grrk!"

Yuri had already opened the thermos and was letting the contents of her tea flood my mouth.

The sweet and floral taste of the tea combined with its unique and strong fragrance packed a punch to my sensors.

Once I drank a comfortable amount, Yuri pulled the thermos away from my mouth, allowing me to gulp it down in my own pace.

I hummed from how pleasurable the tea was.

"Wow... I knew it, your tea is always a wonderful adventure to get through." I described. "Anyway, can I enjoy these treats by myself? I am perfectly functioning human, you know."

Their grips on my arms grew tighter.

"You know, I was thinking of stopping all this, but I kinda find it fun. What do you say, Yuri? You wanna stop?" Natsuki asked, grinning happily from the situation.

Yuri wasn't grinning but had a malicious smile that made my bones rattle.

"I find this very enjoyable. I have never had this much fun before, actually. So for the life of me, no. Let's not stop this." She stated.

I groaned.

"Come on! Stop it! I had enough from the both of you! Let me take a break or something!"

They growled at me.

*That's a big no from both of them.*

*Ahh, fuck it.*

*I got two girls feeding me their own gifts to me.*

*What could possibly go wrong?*

"Okay, it's my turn! Open up!"

I couldn't help but groan in frustration.

*What... is with... this school?!*

*Gosh, being a perfectionist here is such a pain!*

*I can't go a second without letting anyone know that I hate everything around me!*

*Gah!*

I stomped my way to the Committee room, not caring if there were any bystanders around.

*Val should better be there.*
Cause I am not in the mood right now...

But before I entered, I heard multiple voices behind the door.

What?

Who's there?!

"You know, I was thinking of stopping all this, but I kinda find it fun. What do you say, Yuri? You wanna stop?"

I couldn't help but feel confused.

Natsuki?

Why is even there?

And why is Yuri there too?

"I find this very enjoyable. I have never had this much fun before, actually. So for the life of me, no. Let's not stop this."

What are they even doing in there?

Wait...

Are they making out?!

...

I didn't know that they were lesbians...

"Come on! Stop it! I had enough from the both of you! Let me take a break or something!"

That voice woke me up.

V-Val...?!?

Are they...

Doing it with him?!

He said to stop it.

Does that mean that it's...

A-Against his will?!

N-No!

NOOOO!

Something inside me fractured when I thought about the worst.

However, there was a little voice telling me that was all most likely a misunderstanding.

It told me that my friends wouldn't do such a thing, after all, they were in a public area.
I paid no heed to it and followed the idea of the contrary.

My mind was on auto-pilot right now.

I swung the door open, making it bang against the wall.

They yelped from my surprise appearance.

My steps were rushed, as I couldn't contain myself anymore.

I looked up to them in black, putrid rage.

*They are going to pay...*

*I am going to make sure them all pay!*

...

*Huh?*

The three were looking at me, confused and terrified from my quiet and unsettling demeanor.

Right beside the Natsuki and Yuri was a plastic container and a thermos.

*Oh.*

*This is all just a misunderstanding...*

*They were just feeding Val their homemade goods.*

*You have to be kidding me...*

I sighed knowing nothing naughty was in the works.

*Wait a minute...*

*How dare they!*  

*His mine!*

...

*This isn't the best time to think about that.*

I quickly readjusted myself and smiled, dismissing the horrifying image I put up.

"Sorry about that! I felt a little light headed and wandered in here. I didn't mean to interrupt what you guys were doing! Ahaha..." I played off.

*Eugh...*

*That was a weak excuse!*

The three sighed, each with varying degrees of relief.

Val was the first to speak.
"Well, um... you came to the right place. You're in the Committee room right now, Mon." He replied, walking up to me.

*From the looks of it...*

*Val was uncomfortable by the whole ordeal.*

*Interesting...*

"It's okay, Monika. We were uh... about to leave anyway. Right, Yuri?" Natsuki asked, her cheeks flushed with color.

I looked to Yuri and noticed how sullen she has gotten.

She had this frown that practically meant that she was...

Unhappy.

"Yes... we were." She muttered, standing up and proceeding to walk away.

But before any of them could get the chance to leave, Sayori dashed into the room.

"Guys! Guys! Guys! Guess what?!" She bounced, jogging in place to keep her excitement in.

Her lively presence broke the tense atmosphere that I brought up.

*Thank goodness you're here...*

"What is it, Sayori?" I asked, trying to ignore the events that occurred.

The girl was about to explode from the news she was about to spill.

"I heard that the Winter Festival has a contest of which girl is the prettiest in the school! Turns out, there is a lot of contestants!"

Natsuki rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, so what? It's not like I am going to compete."

Yuri nodded at what she said.

"I agree... I never performed well in contests."

Sayori tapped her fingers together.

"Ehehe... about that."

*Seriously?!*

"Sayori... did you sign all of us up?!" I asked, shocked by her impulsiveness.

The coral-pink haired girl giggled nervously.

"Well, I couldn't sign you up Monika, since you are in the Committee and all. Buuut! I signed you two up!"

The two girls gasped.
"What?! Why would you do something like that Sayori?! Why would anyone want to check me out?!” Natsuki shouted.

"I-I am not that pretty... I am sure that other girls are much more attractive than me...” Yuri nervously replied.

Val scoffed at them.

"Why are you two so insecure about your looks?” He asked.

The two looked up to him.

"I mean, come on! You two are one of the cutest girls that I have met! You guys have to compete!” He assured.

Their worried and insecure frowns turned into warm and proud smiles within a second.

Hey...

I was about to say that!

And not to mention that I don't like where this is going.

I shot Val a warning glare.

He raised an eyebrow at me.

Damn it!

Why can't you stop being so sincere to everyone!

Do it to me! And me only!

Sayori walked up to Natsuki and slung her arm on her back.

"Hehe! Maybe I was thinking that you would wear something that maybe... naughty.” She suggested.

"Naughty?!” The room yelled, by her audacious suggestion.

She nodded.

"Yeah! Maybe a bikini! You know, something that can expose the nice curves from the back of your butt!"

Natsuki was mortified by Sayori's proposal and looked at her.

"W-What?! M-My butt?! W-W-Why would anyone want to see that?!!"

Val was dazed from her proposal.

"Ohoho... the curves from the back of her butt?!!"

That pervert!

He's trying to imagine her wearing that!
I took a step to the side and stomped his foot.

"Ow! Ow! Monika! You're stepping on my foot!" He yelled.

I pulled my foot away from him.

"Oops. I didn't mean to." I apologized, letting Sayori continue.

She jumped to Yuri and hugged as well.

"Anywaaay! For Yuri, I was thinking of a bikini too!"

The bouncy girl started to playfully massage her breasts, eliciting a yelp from the timid girl.

"After all, your boobs are one of the biggest in this school! Not to mention, your butt will go as well!" She stated.

Yuri hid her face in her long hair to remain conscious.

"S-S-Sayori... please stop. You're embarrassing me." She begged.

The energetic girl pouted and reluctantly stopped.

"Awww... but rubbing your boobs gives me good luck! Maybe I can grow up to yours! So why not?!"

I heard Val chuckle.

Of course, he is getting off to this...

"Yuri's boobs... in a bikini... oh man! That massage show was pretty good..." He mumbled incoherently.

Val you stupid...

PERVERT!

I stomped on his foot again.

"Yeowch! Monika! Your foot is literally crushing mine!" He squeaked.

That should stop him from getting any more funny thoughts.

"My bad, it was just out of habit. Ahaha..." I apologized.

"So what do you guys say?" Sayori asked, smiling at the two.

They looked at Val for approval.

He shrugged, now choosing his words carefully.

"Uh well, I would say go for it. It's a good way to get some exposure and to have some fun." He stated.

That's what I want to hear.

She jumped up and cheered.
’Alright! Operation Erotic Show is a go!’

I glared with the girls on the name choice.

*BZZ BZZ*

Val pulled out his phone and checked his messages.

’Oh yeah... I got to meet up with everybody in the school gym.’

Sayori made a weird sound.

’Hoo? Does that mean Tommy is going to be there as well?’ She asked, leaning towards Val.

He smiled nervously and took a step back.

’Uh... yeah. He will be. Anyway, I got to go guys.’

He made his way to the exit.

’Wait!’ Natsuki and Yuri yelled.

Val stopped and turned around.

The two looked at each and nodded, which in turn made me suspicious.

My womanly intuition is telling me that they are in a truce of some sort...

I want in!

Natsuki took a step forward.

’Well... I was wondering if you would want to go bookstore with me, we can buy manga!’

Yuri took a step as well.

’Or you can go with me? I was hoping that we can buy a book that we both can read together...’

T-They are asking him out!

How dare they!

’Sorry, girls. Val has already made plans with me!’ I declared, now stepping in.

They gasped at my interference and looked at me.

’Don’t do it, Monika... join our truce!’ Their eyes said.

And give these girls a chance on hitting on him?

Fat chance!

’We... did? It’s true I don’t have anything plan for anything after today... but I don’t recall anything about-’

I smiled at him.
"Don't fuck this up now... Jones.

"Uhm... maybe we do." He muttered before turning his attention to the competing girls.

...

You just signed your death warrant.

"But if you guys want to go the bookstore, then today is not the day for me." He stated.

Yes!

His social life with his friends allowed the perfect rejection!

"W-What...?!"

"I-I see..."

"How dare you, Val! Turning down two cute girls like that! Shame on you!" Sayori chastised.

Out of all the people to say that...

Sayori would be the last.

Hey!

Don't I count?

And what about the bet?!

Val winced from the shame he got.

"Look, I am sorry. I was planning on going to the gym with the guys and hanging out with them soon after, down at the local arcade. So we can do it on any day besides today! And hey, you're free to join us if you would like." He suggested.

They looked away from him.

Ahaha!

Those two are busy!

Now I can swoop in and-

"Guys, I am running out of time. You could text me your plans and I will try to get back at ya. Speaking of which..."

He turned around and took the items the two girls gave to him.

"Thanks for treating you two! I'll make sure to finish them today!" He said, now running off to the gym.

The three of us sighed as soon as he left the room.

Natsuki and Yuri glared at me after that.

"So much for getting that dense skull getaway, Monika! Thanks for the help!"
"I only wish for a day that I spend time with only him. But apparently, that won't happen."

*That confirms my suspicions!*

I crossed my arms and leaned against the wall.

"So let me guess. You two wanted to have a date with him, huh?"

They looked away and blushed.

"Y-Yeah... what's it to you?"

"Yes, I am attracted to Valkyrie."

We heard a nervous chuckle.

"Um... now that I think of it, that bet I made is in danger!" Sayori piped in. "Does that mean you two like Val too?"

We all looked at the pondering girl.

*Sometimes I wonder if she remembers what she even says...*

I pinched my nose to prevent a headache from coming through.

"What about you Monika?" Sayori asked. "Do you like him?"

My heart stopped at that very question as I looked up to her.

No.

*I don't like him.*

...

*I love him.*

"Y-Yeah... I do." I nervously replied.

*That...* 

*That felt amazing!*

*My heart feels like it's flying!*

*Now since we all like him...*

*Only one of us can get him...*

*Wait... if they like him...*

*Then that means they also have a chance to get his heart.*

*But I deserve him!*

*I knew him the most and tried my utmost hardest to get his attention!*
It's only until now that he notices me a little more...

That also brings up another point.

D-Do I deserve him?

I spent four years hating on him and a few days showing that to him...

He even said he knew that I didn't like him.

That's how cruel I was.

And for that...

He deserves someone else that doesn't get jealous, upset, or broken over a simple misunderstanding...

Maybe all the affection Val was showing was just his way to appreciate my presence.

Maybe I am taking all signs things all wrong.

But I would rather take a chance than give up!

I want to hear from his lips that he doesn't see me like that!

"How about this. Why don't we go to the gym and you know... peek? You guys can check out Val while I um... you know, just be around there. Ehehe..." Sayori suggested.

We all had our varied reactions.

"P-P-Peek?! We're going to be branded as perverts!"

"I-I don't think that is a good idea, Sayori..."

As for me, I happily agreed.

"Val did say he does go to the gym, and I surprised that Dokisai has the equipment for them. So if you two don't want to go, then I'll go!"

That changed their minds.

"I don't think so! I want to peek as well!"

"As do I, this might be interesting."

I couldn't help grin.

"Ladies... I got just the plan!"

__________

Here we go.

Another day to get my day on.

I changed into my gym clothes and walked into the fray.

While I was changing, I made sure to do the proper exercises to warm me up.
I think we are doing some Abs only today, just to keep it light.

That way we can have more time in the arcade.

As I walked in, Hiro greeted me.

"Yo, boss!"

I smiled and brought my hand up to him.

He took and we did a one-armed hug.

"You ready for some laser tag?"

That sounds fun!

"Laser tag? But it's just the four of us." I asked.

He chuckled.

"Let me elaborate. Laser tag with VR sets that makes us fight against AI! Doesn't that sound fun."

I nodded with a small grin.

"That does sound fun. Let's get our game on!"

We walked over to where our other friends were and greeted them.

"Boss, I should mention that we should make this workout at least 20-30 minutes tops. The guy in the mask is gonna come in quick, and he is uh... a bit eccentric." He warned.

"Got it."

Dan put his hands together to get our attention.

"Alright, so I was thinking that we do some partner sit-ups along with some crunches, jackknifes, and some leg raises." He suggested.

We all agreed with his plan and went along with it.

As usual, I paired up with Tom while Hiro paired up with Dan.

Tom smirked at me.

"(What's going on... Brooklyn boy?)"

When we were in the gym we would greet each other in English before starting our workouts.

"(Nothing much... Hill-top.)" I replied, giving light to his west coast heritage.

We lied down on the floor and curled our legs together to support each other.

One!

I got off from the ground and reached out my hand to Tom.

Tom smacked my hand and we went down.
"(Brooklyn, I got something that was going on in my mind for a while now...)

It was rare for Tom to speak his mind, so I gave him the green light.

"(Sure, Hill. What's going on?)"

(Uh... Well, it's about Sayori. She's been acting a bit weird lately. More specifically when she came back.)

When she came back...?

Is it the same case for him as well?

Did they leave in bad terms?

"(Is she... cold whenever you two are alone?) I asked.

(No, no. It's nothing like that, almost the exact opposite. Sayori gets a little pervy whenever we are alone. Remember our first club meeting? She insisted that we go to the bathroom together, even though I specifically stated that they were two different bathrooms for us to use! And I can only use one!"

(Haha! Yeaaaah, I do! I thought you were intentionally trying to get her to leave you alone! But yeah, I get your point. There's a good reason why she behaving like that.)"

Tom slowed down in his sit-ups very slightly.

"(A good reason?)"

(Oh, I didn't really think much about that... I did miss her when she went to Ainu, but I never thought it would push to the point of you know... It's kind of creepy. I only see her as my dearest friend. Maybe even more than that, but I don't know.)"

I mentally rolled my eyes at Tom's density.

(Tell me about it. Monika is now terrifying when she came back. We did... leave on bad terms. But it was a misunderstanding and we starting our friendship up again. The weird thing is though... she's liking the idea of us being a couple! Like, come on! I-I don't know if I can take that...)

Something in what I said welled a crummy feeling in me, but I had no idea what it was.
I heard Tom groan.

Nine!

"(What? Are you tired, already?)"

Ten!

"(No, it's nothing like that. I was thinking about how you aren't taking her before anyone else does. Especially from the way you talk about her. But I won't push you on that.)"

What?

"Aw, man... that guy in the mask is here!" Hiro whispered to us.

Shit!

"I think I am having cold feet about this, Monika. You sure this is a good idea?" Natsuki asked.

"M-Me too..." Yuri agreed. "Peeking while Valkyrie's around is surely going to annoy or anger him."

I scoffed at them.

"But we are going to miss out on checking him out! We are going to do some research on him! I mean come on, weren't you two curious about his claims on hitting the gym? Do you really want to miss out on that opportunity?"

"I... um..."

"Hmph..."

Before they can reply properly we heard some voices in the back door to the boy's locker room.

I motioned my friends to crouch and not make a sound.

"Damn that gas mask guy! Coming with the crap of 'If you are going to do abs, then you might as well do some upper body too!' Like, come on!"

"Heh, well you have to admit... that guy was pretty motivational to get us up from our lazy asses. I was kind of expecting a heavier workout, believe it or not. Anyway, see ya at the Arcade. I just need to take care of some stuff."

"Yeah, see you there Val."

"See ya, Tom."

Sayori tried her best not say a word.

"Guys..." She whispered. "My target's getting away! I must go! I am needed someplace else! Maybe somewhere I can look at him better! Bye!"

"Your... target?" Natsuki asked in a hushed tone.

Uh oh.
Without much of a warning, Sayori ran across the hallway, making a lot of audible footsteps.

"Huh?!"

Shit, shit, shit!

"Hmm... must be the wind."

Phew.

We took a few seconds before moving in for the win.

"We really shouldn't be doing this..." Yuri muttered.

"Yeah, I doubt he even goes to the gym much," Natsuki added.

"Shhh... he's only there!" I reprimanded.

We were inches away from at looking our crush's bare body.

I can't wait to see his chest again!

Actually, I want to see his-

My thoughts were cut off from the boy's, no, man's body.

He was only wearing a towel to cover his lower half.

His upper half was bared for all to see.

We were seeing him doing some stretches, which allowed for a greater view of his body.

"What was I looking for again...? Oh yeah, my backpack... Let's see here."

What Val didn't notice was the ever loosening towel wrapped around his mid-section.

Yes!

Yes!

Drop!

*Fwoop*

The towel was on the white floor, meaning that...

H-H-He's naked!

Again!

My eyes immediately focused on the groin area as a result.

T-That's...

Oh.

Oh my gosh...
"Gah! You have got to be kidding me! My towel!"

*CREAK*

"Huh? It's that sound again!"

We immediately backed away from the door.

I felt my heart pound from the idea that we were about to be caught.

Please don't catch us!

Please don't catch us!

Please don't catch us!

"Stupid door... I should get a move on. Everything's in check."

We heard footsteps leaving the locker room.

All three of us put our backs against the wall and sighed heavily.

"He's... he's bigger than any doujin I have read..." Natsuki marveled, her face on fire.

"I never thought that his 'pen' would be... Hnggggg..." Yuri incoherently mumbled, looking off at the distance in a dazed state.

My breathing was heavy from looking at his crotch again.

And this time it was for a generous amount of time.

I'll admit...

I drooled a little.

"So are we going to capture the objective? That sounds fun." Tom suggested.

"Eh... I was thinking more about the bomb defusal mission." Dan counter-suggested.

There's a lot of choices to pick from...

"Boss, what do you think we should do?" Hiro asked.

I tapped my chin from the long list of game modes in the virtual reality system.

One that caught my eye was "Reach the extraction zone".

"Let's try 'Reach the extraction zone.' I am feeling the need to run a little." I proposed.

My friends looked at each other and shrugged.

"Alright, we can do that game mode," Tom said. "I have a good feeling about this."

Dan and Hiro gave their approvals, allowing us to proceed to our loadouts.

"Wow! They even got individual loadouts! You can basically be anything you want to be! This is
going to be fun!" Hiro stated, unable to keep his excitement.

*I have to admit I am also a bit excited too.*

"Hmm... I was thinking that we can specialize in one specific area in combat. You know, having a sniper, an automatic machine gunner, a grenadier, and a squad leader. You know?" Dan recommended

I seconded Dan's recommendation.

"Yeah, that sounds like a great idea! By working together, there will be nothing that can stop us!" I cheered.

"You got that right, boss."

"That's how a squad works, Val."

Once we got our equipment, we were instructed to put our headsets on.

It was a VR system, allowing us to see the barren simulation room as an actual war zone and with real enemies.

"Whoaaa! This looks so cool!" I yelled in complete awe.

*WHIZZ* 

"The gunfire is cool too!"

It didn't take long for us to get used to the mechanics of the simulation and before we knew it, we were at the end of the mission.

And before long, we were fighting Monika's group as well.

*So yeah...*

*Here we are.*

**Fighting against uneven odds.**

**And we gotta say, we are doing pretty good.**

"Val! Target next to the green building behind a refrigerator!" Tom called out.

My eyes saw Monika hiding behind a refrigerator, unaware that she was open to my line of fire.

"Got it! Target acquired!"

I pulled the trigger to hear her whine.

"Seriously?! How did you even shoot me?! You're such a hacker! I bet you deleted some of the props here as well, huh?" She shouted frustrated by how they were losing.

I chuckled at her poor sportsmanship.

"I had the perfect sightline on you, Monika. Nothing else!" I assured, before retreating to cover.
With an annoyed groan, she walked to the next respawn zone.

"Hey, Sayori..."

"Hello!"

*BANG*

"Aw, come on! Did I get shot? From where?!" Dan bemoaned, putting his gun down.

Natsuki giggled.

"Hehe! That would come from your's truly! Not to brag but, I have the same eyes as my dads! So being a sniper is way easier than I-"

*BANG*

"Gotcha!" Hiro called, remarking his accomplishment.

And just like that, Natsuki let out an aggravated yell.

"ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!"

Tom motioned Hiro to move up and revive Dan.

"Urg, they got me good..." Dan commented, to which Hiro eye-rolled.

"Just... get up." He muttered.

The last one in the game was Yuri and she was an avid hunter.

"Aww, man... Yuri's the last one alive!" I stated, now watching my back.

I couldn't count how many times I was taken by surprised by the girl.

By only sheer luck, I was able to win the exchange.

But she learns from her mistakes, making her deadly everytime we spot her.

"Valkyrie..."

My blood petrified at the tone of her voice.

I was somewhat separated from the group, which made me an easy picking.

"I see you~..." She sang.

*Uh... I get the feeling that she enjoys this.*

"Well... I don't."

There was a sudden shift in the air, allowing me to turn to whatever caused it.

"Raah!" She jumped out of nowhere.

*Beep Boop*
I brought the muzzle of my gun and blew on it.

"Don't bring a knife to a gunfight, Yuri. Hehehe."

She sighed and walked to the respawn center.

That's how the majority of the game went.

Despite having numerous disadvantages, we managed to win the game.

We cheered from how difficult the game was and applauded each other's work, while the girls silently, yet furiously stomped outside.

"Hey, that was pretty fun! We should do this more often!" Tom suggested to everyone.

We agreed, however, the girls didn't see it that way.

"You are all cheaters." Monika declared.

"Yeah! Like how do you have better aim than us?! That's not fair!" Natsuki added.

"I kept dying in like the first few minutes..." Sayori muttered, pouting from her performance in the match.

"Perhaps they were indeed cheating."

I rolled my eyes.

"Hah! We weren't the ones to have infinite respawns!"

"Yeah, we ran out of respawns and had to depend on revives!" Hiro pointed out.

"It's called teamwork. Teamwork can get through any challenge. From the looks of you were all very uncoordinated." Dan stated, trying to hide smirk the frustrated girls.

Natsuki shook in anger.

"Your face is going to be 'uncoordinated'!"

Tom acted as the mediator for the two groups.

"Guys look, we had a fun time. I think that's something we can agree on, right?"

The girls sighed and looked at each other.

"Yeah... I guess." Monika finally muttered.

"I suppose so."

"Just a little."

"I didn't know what was even going on!"

We continued to chat a little on what happened in the game, before heading our separate ways.

As usual, I walked with Monika home.
"I don't forgive you for winning the game." She said, crossing her arms at me.

Sheesh...

**Monika is a really competitive girl.**

"Look, I am sorry. I guess I can contribute to how in-sync we were because of how much we play together online." I apologized, still confused by her irritated state.

She turned her head away from me and offered me her hand.

"I don't care. Now let's hold hands and forget that you won." The perfectionist bargained.

With a small laugh, I took her hand and started to walk home together.
Jealousy

So, this is what couples do...

Hand in hand, I was walking with Monika back home.

We were close to home, with no-one in the sidewalk beside us.

Everything was going well, but my stomach was killing me from how hungry I was.

Maybe we should have gotten some food to eat, particularly with a great deal of protein in it...

"Um... Val? Are you okay? You look like you're about to keel over." Monika asked, slowing down for me.

I rubbed my stomach and tried to dismiss the uncomfortable feeling of hunger.

"Yeah, kind of. Some food would be nice, especially since I worked out today." I muttered, trying to ignore the sensation.

That prompted Monika to grip my hand tightly and turned around with a simmer.

"Why don't I cook you some food? Maybe you can come over, and we can have a sleepover... just like old times!" She suggested.

I have homework, the poem, and need study.

Worst of all, it's a Thursday.

"Sorry, Monika. I am booked for today; I have a lot to do for the night."

Monika sighed and rolled her eyes at me.

"Right... so you have time to jerk off, huh? Typically boy stuff."

I deadpanned her at my apparent motives.

"That's not the case at all... where did you even think that? Nevermind, I have to study, do homework, and uh... still have to the poem."

All of a sudden, Monika's disappointed frown turned into an excited grin.

"Well, in that case... stay home! Tell you what, if you work on your homework and poem then I'll drop off the food to your room! How does that sound?"

That's nice of her... almost as if she has no ulterior motive.

Encouraging me to be studious and-

Wait a minute!

She wants my poem!

"Monika, if you want to have an early peek at what I write, it's not happening. It defeats the purpose of having a club meeting tomorrow, doesn't it?"
The brown-haired girl pouted.

"Awww! Come on, Vaaaal! Don't be like that! I'll do anything to read your poem early!"

Monika then took advantage of her puppy-eyes to dissuade me from my standing.

Thanks to being exhausted from laser-tag, the gym, and being held hostage by Yuri and Natsuki, I was relatively unaffected.

She noticed how unfazed I was, causing her to grab my shoulder to make me lean into her for a better view.

_Yup, those eyes, and lips aren't doing much today._

"Plwease?" She begged with her cute pout.

I only smirked and looked away.

"I think you'll live if I don't show you the poem I write until tomorrow," I stated.

Monika whined at her failure to win my poem over.

"Seriously?! How are you not even moved by me? I did the eyes and everything!"

I merely shrugged at the phenomenon.

"Don't know. And it's a good thing I guess. A way to counter your adorable begging."

The girl blushed at my compliment, before looking hurt.

_W-What?_

She drastically slowed her walking pace and covered her face.

_Is she going to cry?!_

Monika let out a pained wail.

"Waaaah! You're horrible, Val! Absolutely horrible! I am doing whatever I can to spend more time with you, and here you are pushing me away! Waaah!"

...

_No matter how tired I get, I am no match for Monika's crying._

_Even if that cry is mostly faked._

I sighed, not knowing what to do with the dilemma.

"Alright, alright! Cut the crying out! I'll-"

"Waaaaaaah! You're so mean!"

*Once she puts her mind into it, there's almost no way to convince her otherwise.*

_Typical Monika..._
I admire her for that.

"Monika-"

"I'm gonna tell everyone that you made me cry! I'm gonna tell your parents, friends, and-"

She isn't going let up huh?

Two can play that game.

Monika was still covering her face, obscuring her vision from what I was about to do.

Time to use the element of surprise.

I crouched and snuck behind her, letting her "cry" her heart out.

It was there where I struck.

My arms wrapped around her body, my chest feeling her back on me, closing the distance between us.

As part of petty revenge, I remembered what she did yesterday when I spoke with Chiyoko.

I planned for something else to get back at her, but I felt my primal instincts take control over me.


er hair...

It smells like Pine Trees.

So good.

I pressed myself against her, causing her to moan in surprise.

"Aaaah!"

H-Her butt...

It's pretty soft.

...

What am I doing?!

This is completely perverted!

I am not even control of my actions anymore!

Monika's breathing hitched as I reared my head to her ear.

"Or... how about this? I can give you early access first thing in the morning." I whispered.

My arms wrapped around her stomach, allowing me better control of her positioning.

Her hair...

With my mind betraying every action I do, I pulled her in even closer, causing her to yelp in surprise.
"V-V-Val! W-What are you even doing?! I can feel your-!"

What am I even doing?!

I am going to far with this!

Monika's never going to forgive me if I continue doing this!

This is what couples do, and I am acting as if we are one!

No!

That's completely wrong!

I need to pull away!

"Right... sorry!" I muttered.

In a last minute effort, I loosened my grip around her stomach and tried to pull away.

Only for her hands to push it down.

"Val... release me now, and I will never forgive you. You better tell me what's going on."

Shit!

What is wrong with me?!

It's like the scent of her hair somehow triggered something in me!

Now what?

How do I talk my way out of this?!

"I-I..."

No!

I can't be scared about this!

This is something I need to be forceful about!

"I am offering you a deal, Mon. If you stop your crying... then, I will let you see my poem tomorrow. Okay?" I murmured into her ear.

Her heart continued to pound against my arm.

"Okay..." She shakily muttered.

I felt her grip on my arms loosen as I pulled away to take a few steps back.

There I saw Monika holding her hands close to her heart and sighed.

She turned on her heel and grabbed my hand.

"I am impressed, Jones. I never thought you had that much courage in you."
What's that supposed to mean?

"If you wanted to be a couple, then why didn't you just say so?" She asked, beaming at me.

A...

C-Couple?!

Monika noticed my flustered state and giggled.

"Ahaha... I'm kidding, dork. Let's go home, alright?"

Oh...

She was only kidding.

Something in me strange, and yet hurt, but I shrugged it off.

"R-Right."

From there, we continued to walk back home.

While we were walking, I felt Monika's head on my shoulder.

The distance we shared was almost non-existent, save for the hand holding we were doing.

She hummed as we continued to walk home.

I was about to complain about why she did that in the first place, but I didn't bother to say anything.

If she likes this, then I'll leave her be.

It didn't take long until we made it home.

"Finally... that took a while," I mumbled, now letting go of Monika's sweaty grip. "I was starting to think it would longer than it should have!"

Monika snickered at my comment.

"We could have made it a bit earlier if someone didn't press themselves up a girl~!" She teased.

My face burned from what happened a few moments ago.

"I... I couldn't stop myself! It's just that your hair! Your hair just-"

Immediately after I said that Monika's smirk vanished.

Her eyes weren't as hurt as before, this time it was for real.

Oh no...

"M-My hair?"

She looked away and stroked her long brown hair.

"You don't l-like it...?" She shakily muttered.
Fuck!

I didn't mean to say that!

"My hair isn't... good enough for you, is it? Natsuki and Yuri have such vibrant colors of hair... Pink and Purple, which stand out from the crowd. But for me on the other hand... I have brown. Boring and unattractive brown. Who would want a girl with that color of hair?"

I couldn't take much more of insecure monologue.

And so, I stepped in and grabbed her by the shoulders.

"No," I muttered, causing her to look up to me.

Her eyes were shaking, almost on the verge of crying.

Damn it!

This is all my fault!

"Monika, what I meant to say is that your hair... the scent of your hair is what triggered something in me. I don't know what, but I couldn't help but feel... attracted to your aroma. I just wanted to breathe it in, kind of how you like my clothes."

The pain in her eyes dissipated into a warm green.

Her frown was slowly being replaced with a natural smile.

"What do you like about my hair?" She asked, the sullen tone being broken by something mellow.

And because of that, I smiled back at her.

"Well, I have to say... as creepy as it sounds, I love how it smells. It smells like fresh, healthy pine trees. It's something that I can't enough of. And ever since we were young, I loved having your hair down like that. I didn't like how your white bow kept your hair so tightly packed into a ponytail. Instead, something about your brown hair gliding in the air makes me feel... I don't know, warm and ticklish."

Monika's eyes shifted into something I couldn't tell.

It was as if she was surprised by what I said.

"And if we were a couple, your brown hair would always keep me easy. It's something that I am familiar with that makes me comfortable around you." I declared.

Her small smile grew brighter, to the point where she was about to cry in joy.

Without much warning, she tackled me into a bone-crushing hug.

"You're the best, Val!"

Something in what she said made me grin like an idiot.

I hugged her back as well.

After a few moments, she pulled away with that same smile.
"Are you sure you don't want to come over?" She asked.

As much as I wanted to visit, I refused.

"How about tomorrow? Maybe I can come over and hang out like old times?"

She giggled at my plans.

"Val, did you forget? We're going to be working on Winter Festival plans, remember? And not to mention, I am going to be studying with the girls too..."

**Oh right!**

*I forgot about that!*

"Let's push back on the Winter Festivals plans on Saturday. I'll come over and work on them with you. I want you to have a great time with your friends, okay?"

Monika twirled her hair and looked away.

"I can maybe reschedule our study session, so why don't we do it tomorrow?" She suggested.

Aww...

*I wanted to spend some time with my friends!*

"Did you text everybody about it?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"No... I didn't. But do I have to? I really, really want to spend time with you again. Maybe watch a movie, eat some Udon, and sleep on the couch! Like old times!"

I sighed happily from the memories we shared while hanging out.

"Save some of that nostalgia for Saturday, okay?" I requested now patting her head.

She winced from my headpats and hummed.

"Fine, we'll have it your way."

I stopped my head-patting and started to walk off.

"Wait!" She called out, causing me to stop in my tracks.

I turned around to feel a warm feeling on my cheek.

She pulled away and beamed, putting her hands behind her back.

"Thanks for walking me home, Val," Monika said, swinging back and forth. "I appreciate it."

My cheeks burned from the kiss she gave me.

"U-Um... your welcome, I think."

Monika giggled from my stammering and walked back home.
When I reached my door, she waved at me, to which I waved back.

As soon as Val entered his home, I closed the door.

I put my back on the door and sighed dreamily.

*He has feelings for me...*

*Maybe Val's not as dense I thought he was.*

*Maybe he does know how I feel for him.*

*But that's just wishful thinking.*

*I am making more progress than I did a decade ago.*

*Is it fate guiding me to be with him again?*

*Are we forever intertwined?*

*I...*

*I hope so.*

"Monika?" My mom called, apparently concerned about me.

"Yeah, mom?" I replied.

She put her hands on hips and breathed out.

"Where have you been? I thought you said Winter Committee meeting was canceled! Or were you playing hooky?"

I shook my head.

"Mom! I would never ditch school!" I answered. "I was hanging out with my friends after the Committee meeting was canceled..."

My mom squinted at me.

*Uh oh...*

*She knows something is up!*

"Monika Salvato, I know you are hiding something from me. What is it?"

*And as usual, she always knows what I am trying to hide.*

All of a sudden, my mom smirked.

"Ah, I see. You were on a date with Val. It's so good to see you two catching up after all this time!"

*Wait, what?!*

She put her hand on her cheek and sighed.
"Childhood friends never finish last. They bloom the most intimate of relationships."

I blushed from my mother's ingenuity.

"Ahaha! I knew it; my little girl has finally taken steps to get herself a man! What better man is Jones, hmm?"

I frowned from how well my mother knew me.

"Mom! It's nothing like that! When I was hanging out with my friends, we happened to bump into each other! So that's why we were walking home together!"

Wait!

No!

"Ah! Were you walking home together? How romantic!"

I groaned from my mom's persistent conclusions and stormed off to my room.

When I made it to my room, I was immediately refreshed.

I already had my poem done, now all I have to do is...

My eyes bounced to the black journal on my desk.

No.

I am not using that book again.

Those days are now behind me.

I picked up the book and gazed at it.

Everything from my frustrations to my pain is listed here.

Something I have learned from coming home is that everything moves on...

It was for the better or the, worse.

I have no point in listing my pains anymore.

So I am getting rid of it.

A plan popped up in my head as what should I do with the journal.

I put the item inside the bag and made sure that it was relatively hidden.

No one should read this.

Not even me.

I am going to show Val that I am still the same lovestruck girl exists before that day happened...

After putting the book in, I took off my uniform and laid in bed.

Right now, I was in my underwear and had Val's favorite shirt on.
It's been a while since I wrote anything...

Maybe I can write something in my diary.

I rolled over to my bed and looked for the brown diary.

It lied there inside my drawer, unaffected by age or any wear and tear.

My diary...

The exact opposite of what my Journal stands for.

I talk about everything good that happened.

Never did I write about any rants or nitpicks. Instead I enjoy what life had to offer for me.

With the brown diary in hand, I opened it.

Every entry I made ever since I had my sleepover with him to the day I left was listed.

It detailed my journey to how I denied my feelings for him and eventually accepting them at...

Christmas.

Our first Christmas together was the day where I realized I had feelings for him.

And ever since then, I tried to get to his affection.

But somewhere along the lines, I realized that it would never happen.

The tragic reality was that he only saw me as the sister that he never had, and nothing more than that.

I knew from that day; it would always be like this.

I would love him and hold my feelings from him, while he goes about oblivious to how I honestly feel about him.

Sure, there were times where I almost gave up, but there was something about him that kept motivating me to pursue him.

I don't know what it is, but I am glad that it exists.

Because right now, things are finally starting to change for the better.

Speaking of things starting to change...

Inside the diary was a green pen with a small heart as the pen clicker.

As I started writing inside the diary, everything from the style of writing and the fabric of paper felt familiar.

No more did I have to press hard onto the paper to get my old pen to write, instead the ink flowed freely onto it.

Here I go.
Dear diary,

It's been a while since I wrote on this. And I have to say, so much has happened since then. But that's not the point of why I am writing this.

As usual, I am going to drool over Val and how much I love him, yada-yada-yada, but this time it's different. This time there is a lot more going on between us. And it's a good thing too! For one, he is starting to show interest in me!

Well, some would say that it's mainly because he misses me and all, but this feeling of being welcome is way different from being welcomed by someone else. I don't know if that even makes sense at all. But in any case, there are various signs from the ones I would usually notice!

For starters, he is starting to mumble, stutter, and be a lot more "off-balance" than before! Whenever I playfully tease him, he doesn't have much of comeback!

If that isn't much of a sign, maybe I should talk about the conversations we were having. Each time we are alone, he always finds a way to make me feel... loved. As if someone who loves my body as much as I do. Um... that sounded a little creepy.

Val is now starting to compliment me on my looks a lot more often than usual. He likes my hair, clothes (even though I stole it from him), and my... thighs. I don't get why guys can get turned on by my thighs!

Today was the day he said something about my hair... He loved the way it smells like. The way he described is that it feels like Pine Trees. It's something he can't enough out of. Not to mention, he confirmed that he loved having my hair down and hated how my hair was in place.

My hair... in place? He said something about how it glides in the air makes him feel warm and ticklish.

THAT'S A CLEAR INDICATION OF LOVE! I KNOW IT IS!

What else makes people feel warm and ticklish when seeing something so simple, like hair flowing in the air? It has to be love! Val's in love with me, and he just doesn't know!

... 

Jeez! How can you be in love with someone and not even realize it?! That's a new level of density that I have never seen! I know I have said he is denser than a black hole and can probably absorb one, but what if he is thicker than a neutron star? I have a good feeling that he would become a bigger neutron star.

But, I have to admit, that density is coming in pretty handy lately especially since there are now two other girls vying for his affection.

Natsuki and Yuri. They are my closest friends along with Sayori, and they fell for him as well. Them taking him away from me just pisses me off to a new degree! Who would thought the saying: "The most bitter enemies can be your closest friends." would be so relatable?

Yuri is somewhat understandable; she is a social recluse. With someone to talk to, preferably a male (she doesn't have any male friends besides her father if that counts), and a person who is interested in what she has to say, would make head over heels for him. Not to mention, Val knows her native tongue and is always kind to her... Yuri is also helpful to everyone as well; she is still over-apologetic, polite, and quiet. That makes her ridiculously cute! And uh... she has bigger boobs than
me. Well, I don't have back pains as she does! Haha! But she doesn't lash out anyone trying to tease her, however...

Moving on to Natsuki. To think the cold-hearted tsundere could fall for that dork. I thought she would move into boys that would tease her being cute and so tsundere. I thought she and Val would but heads since they got off to a rough start. But instead, she got a boy that teases her and makes her feel better about herself too! With the teasing, Val goes out of his way to make her as friendly as possible! And to my surprise, she actually likes complimented by him, at least to my knowledge. I think she is taking English classes more seriously to impress the guy!

Oh wow, I wrote so many hateful things in my diary... but oh well. This is all makes me feel better though.

With the progress I made with Val, it progressed with the other girls as well. While we were alone in the Committee room, Sayori asked if we all liked the dork.

I wasn't surprised when they all said they had crushes on him. But for them, it's just a crush. To me, I don't like him. I don't like him at all. I love him; ever since that day at Christmas, I knew I was in love with Val all along. He was also in love as well.

But the sad thing is that he never realized that he loved me too.

This is all wishful thinking, but I am hoping for the best. I hope that my feelings would finally get through him and maybe be returned to me... Each time I think about what is going to happen between us on that day, I keep thinking he is going to reject me.

I don't know if my heart can take another beating. The day I left broke it once, but I don't remember if rejection is going to keep together this time. I loved him for more than a decade now, and for my feelings to turned down on him...

I don't know what I'll do. But, what I do know is that I won't commit suicide, I still have a lot to live for, even if my world revolves around him. Maybe I'll stop caring to live and let myself wither away unconsciously.

Life is beautiful, and I will never throw it away. So I have to mentally and spiritually prepare for myself for the inevitable rejection...

But I still hope that somewhere deep down him... He loves me too.

I groaned loudly against my pillow since I was too tired actually to cook some food for myself.

Why do I feel so weird?

And tired all of a sudden?

All I can think of is Monika and her hair!

I...

I never realized how beautiful she is.

No wonder everyone is so attracted or jealous of her back at Lotus or in Dokisai.

Everything about her screams perfection, and yet she acts so modestly.
Even if she puts up a face that she isn’t what she seems, I know deep down that Monika is humbled by all the attention.

Argh!

What I am thinking is dangerously close to thinking that she could be my girlfriend or something!

That’s not right!

I only see her as my sister I never had and my...

Best friend.

Right?! Is that all I see in her?!

My stomach grumbled from the cacophony of thoughts.

I am hungry...

The whirlwind of thoughts and my voracious hunger made it difficult for me to think clearly.

They continued to rage on until I got a text message.

What now?

It was a text message from Monika, so I popped up the chat bubble.

"Vally-poo, you want some dinner? I can make you some if you would like!"

I squinted on the name she texted me with.

Vally-poo?

Who even calls me that?

"

"Nah, I am good. I am going to make some dinner."

"Monika is typing..."

"You sure? I was planning on making some grilled chicken with some stir-fry..."

Grilled chicken?

Isn’t Monika a vegetarian?

Wait, if she is one, then why did she eat that Kobe beef yesterday?

"

"All for me? Aren't you hungry too?"

"Monika is typing..."

"Of course I am, moron. I am going to make some for myself too."
"Aren't you a vegetarian?"

That paused her from typing anything.

"Monika is typing..."

"I was until I realized how meat tastes great. Ainu didn't provide a lot of choice in food, so I needed to eat it or else, you know."

Oh...

So much for reducing the carbon footprint in the world.

"...

"Do you want to make a little extra? I mean, I can cook too you know?"

"Monika is typing..."

"Yeah, I do. I didn't forget. Now do you want it or not?"

I smiled from Monika's generous offer.

"...

"Sure, why not? Should I pick it up?"

"Monika is typing..."

"I'll deliver it to you, and we can eat together."

It looks like I don't have much of choice.

She wants to re-enact the old times.

"..."

"Fine by me."

With that, I closed the chat bubble and jumped right into my work.

For some reason, I was incredibly focused instead of my conflicting thoughts hampering from doing anything.

It didn't take long until I finished all of my homework and studying for tomorrow.

Time to write my poem.

Maybe right after I take a nap...

I laid my head down on the bed and rested.

Instead of thoughts of pain and suffering over Monika's departure, I enjoyed how she was brought back into my life.
I got a second chance...

If there's a higher power somewhere...

Thank you.

My eyes grew more burdensome as the fatigue started to creep over me.

*DING DONG*

I groaned at the doorbell ruining my shut-eye.

Speak of the devil; she's here.

I dashed downstairs to get the door, only for my mother to get it first.

Wait a minute...

I thought my mom left a while ago.

My mom gasped at the sight of her.

"Oh my gosh! Monika! It's so good to see you, dear! How are you?" My mom greeted.

Monika smiled at my mother's warm welcome.

"Hi, Deborah. I am doing fine, now that I am back home."

I took a closer look at Monika was wearing.

Wait...

Boxers and a green t-shirt...

Are those my pajamas?!

"That is good to hear. We missed you after you left for the Academy! Especially, Vally here."

Aw crap...

She turned around to yelled out my name.

"Val! Monika's here! Say- Oh. Come down here young man!"

I nodded and went down the stairs.

"Say hi to her." My mom demanded.

I cleared my throat from how awkward and forceful my mother was making the situation.

"H-Hey." I greeted, nervously.

Why am I so nervous around her?

It's like I am a teenager with a silly crush on a girl!

This is Monika!
I have known her for a long time!

Monika loosened up and smiled back.

Her beautiful smile...

"Hi! I made some dinner for you!" She said, offering the plastic container to me.

My mom gasped at what was happening.

"Oh my! You cooked for my little boy? Thank you!"

She looked at me and cleared her throat.

"Ahh... right! T-Thanks Monika!" I thanked, accepting the container from her.

In response, she closed her eyes and swung her hips back and forth.

"You're welcome, Val."

W-Why is my heart beating so fast all of a sudden?!

She looks so cute all of a sudden!

Gah!

This is Monika I am talking about!

I shouldn't be thinking about this in the first place!

She's not cute!

...

...

...

Okay, maybe just a little.

...

No, she isn't.

She's hot.

Fucccck!

"Oh! Would you like to come in and watch the house for me? I am going to leave soon to meet up with your mother, and I need someone else to keep watch. Is that okay with you?"

My hormones are literally out of control, and this is what happens?!

I have terrible luck!

Wait...
I have been watching the house ever since I was ten!

What makes this any different.

"Of course, Deborah! You can count on me!" She proclaimed, walking into our home.

This isn't good!

Aw man!

"Thank you, dear!" My mom thanked as she reached the exit.

She abruptly stopped and looked at me.

"Now, I don't want you to do anything naughty with dearie here. Is that clear Vally Jones?"

I nodded vigorously.

"Yeah! Yeah, mom! I won't do anything bad!"

My mom smiled and ruffled my hair.

"That's my good boy! I'll be back late at night, so try not to have too much 'fun' alright?"

What does even mean?!

Did that mean...

S-Sex?!

But... I don't see her like that!

Do I?

Monika's hot, especially with my clothes on, but...

Arrrgh!

I am not in control of my thoughts anymore!

With that, my mom left me alone...

With Monika.

In my house.

With no one around.

Alone.

It's like old times but...

Gah!

What am I saying!

We have done this before!
"This is nothing different!"

"So Val..." Monika muttered in a drawled tone. "Now that we are alone... You wanna do something... fun?"

_Eeep_!

I turned around and nervously looked at her.

She was smirking with half-lidded eyes as if begging something out of me.

"W-W-What are you uh... talking about?" I restlessly asked.

Monika walked up to me, swaying her hips back and forth each time she took a step.

She bit her lips in anticipation.

"I think you know exactly what I am talking about... Darling."

_D-Darling?!_

_Oh gosh!_

_What's going to happen?!!_

_Why is my heart beating so fast??_

_And what's up with Monika??_

_W-Why is she so..._

_Sexy._

_No, no, no!_

_This is bad!_

_This is really, really bad!_

Before I realized it, she put her hand against the wall and leaned in.

My face started to burn from the distance that was being closed between us.

Her half-lidded eyes hid something that I never saw in her emerald green eyes.

_What is that dark tone over her eyes?_

_Is that..._

_Lust?!_

My eyes widened on the realization of what was going to happen.

_Shit, shit, shit!_

_This is not good!_
"You were always so cute when you are flustered, Val." She whispered, her hot breath tickling my nose and lips.

My heart pounded as she moved closer and closer to me.

*I need to stop wherever this is going!*

"Monika, what are you-"

I felt my lips being cut off by something.

In fact, my ability to talk was utterly hampered by her.

*M-Monika is...

Kissing me.*

The shocking revelation broke something in me, and let out something that I never knew I had.

For some reason, I felt euphoric.

My heart finally stopped pounding, and it started to blossom with pure happiness.

Monika's lips on mine were soft and tender, begging me to take the lead.

And I did.

I broke out of my trance and grabbed her shoulders to lean in.

We deepened our kiss, the pressure on our lips being increasingly tense as we finally let go of any lingering doubts.

My morals on stopping Monika from kissing were nothing more than a whisper as I continued to kiss her back.

But what did stop our makeout was our lack of oxygen.

We broke away, breathing heavily and struggling to regain our footing.

*I need more...*  

*This is too good!*  

*I need more!*  

*I need more!*

Once we finished gaining our composure, I growled and pinned the girl against the wall.

I rammed my lips against hers, hungrily trying to get the same feeling of euphoria again.

Luckily, it came back, stronger than ever as I continued to take her.

My pins loosened and allowed her to wrap her hands around my neck, pulling me deeper into her lips.

*Monika is mine and mine only.*
No one is going to take her away from me.

My hands started to gracefully fall to her sides, stopping at her chest.

I didn't care what the consequences were, I squeezed her, electing a moan in my mouth.

One of her hands started to draw closer and closer downwards, grazing my chest and down my stomach.

We pulled away, this time out of choice.

I felt my conscience be more and more diluted by passion.

Built up passion that had accumulated for years that never found release.

Perhaps it was because of how many awkward situations we have gotten into in the years we spent together, only for it to implode in this exact moment.

My breathing was ragged and heavy as if my body was now auto-pilot.

I need her.

Her hands were down to dangerous levels, groping it playfully.

"Someone's a little excited down there... let me help calm him down." She suggested, winking at me before kneeling on the ground.

I grinned at what was going to happen next.

Instead of pulling clever or pointless quips, I only let her do what she wanted in silence.

Her fingers fumbled with the zipper before pulling it down and putting her hand inside.

She shuffled through my boxers before letting me free.

At first, Monika was surprised by what she was seeing, before sighing in glee.

She cradled me in her hands and nuzzled it with my cheek.

"I never thought you were now a man, and not a little boy anymore, Val." She muttered, pulling away from the throbbing spear.

Using one hand to support herself and another on the base of my shaft, she started to move her hand up and down.

Monika smirked as looked at me, apparently enjoying what she was doing.

Her emerald eyes weren't as bright and pure anymore.

No, it was something devilish and sinful.

Monika's firm but soft grip begged for more action, to which she complied.

Her pumps started to become more and quicker, her eyes twinkling in anticipation of what she wanted.

It didn't take long before it started to become disinteresting.
I gave her aggravated groan to show that her act was growing old.

To remedy this, she stuck her tongue and gave an experimental lick.

The wet, warm saliva gently coated the area she licked.

Monika stopped pumping and licked her lips.

"Salty... yet tasty. Just the way I like it."

She held my erection up with her hand and starts exploring the lower parts of it.

Everywhere her tongue went, a trail of saliva coated it.

She used her hand to keep me in place, giving her better control of trailing her tongue from the bottom and top.

Monika made sure no area was not covered by her's true, before trailing upwards.

She continued to lick the head to her liking before letting her tongue swirl on it.

The passionate girl ceased her licks until she deemed it worthy.

"And as always..."

She kissed the side of me.

"This never ceases to impress me."

Not wanting to waste any more time, Monika opened her mouth to allow a small portion of me into her.

Her hand finds the base of my shaft to help her reel in what she had in her mouth.

Once she had a comfortable amount inside of her hot and steamy mouth, she swirled her tongue on the top of my spear once more.

I groaned from how she was teasing me.

Once she had enough, she looked at me and winked before starting to move back and forth with me slowly.

With her hand on my base, it works in tandem with each motion she does.

I knew all hope for my conscience was gone, and all I can hope for was to get more pleasure from using our bodies.

The lower parts of my shaft were crying for attention, to which prompted Monika to do something.

She kept moving her head back and forth before engulfing more into her mouth.

Despite her starting to move lower and lower, I grew greedy.

I moved one of my idle hands behind her head and slowly forced to take more of me in.

Monika didn't give any signs of protest, and instead, welcoming the aggressive move I played.
It didn’t take long until the perfectionist was able to take me entirely.

I grinned at her accomplishment.

"I am very impressed, Monika," I stated, not noting my change of tone. "I didn't think you would able to take me."

She slowly pulled away and grinned back excitedly.

"Don't underestimate me, darling."

I scoffed at her.

"I will keep that in mind."

With that out of the way, Monika parted her mouth and engulfed me once more.

Her head started to bob back and forth slowly.

I then gripped the back of her head to control the momentum of her bobbing.

The speed we were in was not so fast or slow; instead it was in the medium.

So I took one step closer to further our act.

I started to thrust while she moved her head back and forth to allow for greater friction in her mouth.

My thrusts became faster and more savage, and in return, her bobbing considerably upped in tempo.

It didn't take long before I started to take control of the act.

The grip on her head tightened as I grew more and more aggressive.

Monika gave a muffled moan from my behavior.

Her hands moved downwards her body, one resting against one of her breasts and the other at her groin.

It was self-explanatory of what she was going to do next.

And because of what she was doing, it gave her more incentive to match my rapid and hard tempo.

I gave a low growl from how pleasurable the whole act was before my primal urges took a more animalistic approach.

My hands on her heads moved to its sides, allowing for more control over what I was doing.

From there, I started to thrust more and more intensely, making her unable to keep up with my repeated pounding.

The more and more I started to thrust, the more of myself was being engulfed by her mouth and into her throat.

Slowly but surely, she was quickly wasn't able to keep up with my thrusts.

As a result, she stopped moving her head in rhythm and allowed me to take the show.
"Mmmph! Vwal! Amphf!" She choked out, greatly enjoying what I was doing.

Without any remorse, I punished her by pushing myself into her in its entirety.

"Don't speak with your mouth full, beloved."

The corners of her lips morphed into a seductive and playful smile as I forced myself in.

Her eyes twinkled each time I thrust into her mouth, reaching levels of euphoria unimaginable.

I continued to throat-fuck her, while she continued to pleasure herself with her hands.

Her tongue and throat muscles played a significant role in pleasuring me and allowed me to keep my tempo.

It got to a point where my tempo increased to breakneck speeds.

I growled at how close I was climaxing.

It started to twitch, and it was ready to release itself to her.

Monika noticed how I twitched and tightened her lips on me, meaning she wanted it.

With a throaty groan, I felt myself inevitably let myself into her throat.

She welcomed in with audible gulps on her end, drinking my fluids to its entirety.

With a few slow thrusts, I ultimately stopped my relentless assault.

Once I had finished, I pulled away for her to lick myself clean.

With the influx of dopamine now subsiding, I felt the afterglow of my actions.

"AAAHH!" I screamed at the top of my lungs as I woke up abruptly.

My breathing was heavy along with how sweaty I felt.

*It was just a dream...*

*Val never did that to me...*

With a heavy and somehow disappointed sigh, I collapsed on my bed.

*I haven't had that sort of dream in such a long time.*

*And today is the day where it all flashes back to me, huh?*

I was growing more and more tired once more.

My eyes felt heavy and saw only black.

*I had a wet dream.*

With that sudden realization, I shot up from my bed.

My heart thumped with such intensity that it felt was about to explode.
The blood in my face surged all over, heating it.

*In that dream*...

*Did Val just*...

*Throat-fuck me?*

I curled myself into a ball and looked out my window to see if my crush was there.

He too was curled in a ball on his bed and was looking out to me as well.

Now that we were staring at each other, we quickly looked away.

It was awkward how our eyes met, and yet we did not greet each other good morning.

*I think he had that same dream too*...

*But oh my gosh!*

*Since when was I so confident in seducing him and everything?!*

*That must have been every single years' of confidence drained into that one moment!*

*And that moment, I finally kissed him.*

*He also kissed me back.*

I smiled and hummed at how the boy, no, the man of my dreams dared to kiss me back.

*The way he kissed me was so...*

*Intense!*

*I felt how things started to heat up between us and it actually-*

*Oh.*

*His kissing managed to turn me on!*

*But I am the master of my hormones!*

*I know what I feel and how I feel at every awkward moment!*

*No, that one kiss. That single kiss managed to make me hungry for more.*

*Since when was I so uh... horny?*

*I felt the passion from the years we spent starting to come to light.*

*Everything was so hot between us; I felt my skin melt from how intensely we were making out.*

*And every time I called him "Darling," I could've jumped at how amazing it felt.*

*If only I were in that dream for a bit longer.*

*I even called him darling...*
My smile turned into a happy grin as I squealed to my heart's content.

I kissed him!

I kissed him!

My cheers of joy then came into a complete stop when I realized it was a-

It was all a dream.

...

...

...

I gave shrill cry on how I realized it was all an illusion.

WHYYYYY?!

Why was the dream so real?!

It felt like I was there in that moment!

Everything about it felt real!

The taste of his lips, his intense kissing, and even his… dick, was real.

And um… how he kept pounding into my mouth felt real too...

T-This doesn't even make any sense!

How was I able get such a vivid experience over something I never did?!

My thoughts were cut off by the alarm clock beeping.

To release some of that anger inside of me, I slammed the top of the clock causing to stop beeping and fall over.

I swear I am going to make sure that my dream happens when we do get together!

Everything that happened there was everything I could have wanted if we were alone together!

With a frustrated outlook on today, I got ready for school.

Good thing it's a Friday, I don't know if I can handle another day of waking up so early...

My commute to school was not an easy one.

At times, I would slow my pace in thought of what happened in that dream I had, only for the sudden shock of running late.

This continued a couple of times before I finally made it to school.

When I woke up, I finished my poem and had an empty of a plastic container on my container.
What even happened?

Did I fall into a deep sleep when Monika was coming over?

Or am I just imagining things?

I pulled out my phone and checked the messages.

W-What?

I did get those messages!

So this whole thing wasn't just a dream?!

No, no, no... I don't remember a thing right before I fell asleep.

So what did happen?

I near the class entrance, so I leaned my back against the wall to text the girl herself.

Shit...

With that dream I had of her last night, I don't know if I can even speak to her face to face, let alone text her.

Especially since we saw each other wake up earlier in the morning.

But I need to know what even happened.

Here goes nothing!

"..."

"Morning Monika. Do you remember giving me grilled chicken yesterday night?"

There was a long pause once she saw the text.

I don't blame her for not typing anything.

Wait...

Why would I?

Can't she have the same dream as I did right?

No, that can't be possible.

"Monika is typing..."

"Morning! Yeah, I do. I gave it to you and when you were working on your poem, remember?"

I couldn't help but sigh at the relief when she finally texted.

Thank goodness, everything is alright.

I then squinted at the text.
Working on my poem...?

For some reason, I don't really remember that, but the strange thing is that I do.

Weird.

"..."

"Oh yeah. Sorry, yesterday was kind of a long day you know? I didn't know tired I was."

"Monika is typing..."

"You weren't in any shape to stay awake when I did give you the chicken, lol. So I decided to feed it to you while you worked on the poem."

Wait...

Monika fed me the chicken?

I don't- No I do. I do remember that.

That doesn't explain why everything is so hazy...

It's most likely because of how exhausted I was.

"...

"Thanks btw, you going to school right? See ya then."

With that, I locked my phone and walked into class.

I was able to text her, but talking to her face-to-face is something different.

How am I going to be able to talk to know that I...

Did those things to her?

I took a seat next to my desk and rested my chin on my arms.

In that dream, she kissed me right after Mom left.

The way she did, it was so...

Arousing.

I never thought Monika would be so...

Sexy.

Gah!

I need to stop thinking such bad things!

And I should be shaming myself from doing all that to her!

Kissing her, thrusting into her mouth, and climaxing in her throat?!
What's wrong with me?!

She is-

No, not even going to bother with that.

I have to come to a conclusion that...

Monika is definitely not my sister I never had.

She is more...

But what?

What is she to me if I dreamed about such things?

Besides, I forced her into doing things she probably didn't want to do...

Her eyes say the contrary.

Fuckkkkk!

"Boss? Are you okay?" Hiro asked, worried about my behavior.

I looked up to and put on a fake smile to mask my hurricane of thoughts.

"Y-Yeah, I am good. Thanks for checking up on me."

He gave a curious frown and sat down in his seat.

Not soon after, Monika walked in.

As usual, she was showered with compliments.

"Hello, Monika!"

"Hey!"

"Goodmorning! I love what you did with your hair!"

"Mommy Monika please suffocate me with your thick luscious thighs."

That last comment welled up a feeling of great distaste inside of me.

It was the same for Monika, but she played it off with a slight twitch in her right eye.

Fortunately, this time, I was able to see who made the last comment.

The guy was looking at her in her perverted manner and looked under to get a good view of her thighs.

It was there when explosive anger that I have never experienced before washed over me.

The anger I felt was pure and tainted by something...

Green.
I got up my seat and stomped towards the guy who made that comment.

My gritted teeth showed the seething hate and anger I contained, as I pulled him up from the cuff his blazer and pinned him against the wall.

His eyes were covered with fear and embarrassment on how aggressive my move was.

Luckily, not everyone was paying attention to what I was doing, so most of my actions were drowned out by the noise.

"I swear if you keep making those snide comments to her, I won't hesitate to crush yer damn throat so you can stop saying all that! Got it?" I roared, letting my anger towards the poor guy.

With a meek nod, I released the guy and he plopped back to his seat.

Once that all over with, I walked over to my seat feeling elated on what I did.

...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?!

Why did I even do that to him?!

I just felt...

Angry.

I never felt this annoyed or angry before, it's like it surged my body to do something!

And that something just got him scared!

It was green, vicious anger.

Wait...

Green anger...

Jealously?

Possessiveness?

Am I yandere?

No...

I really didn't like how that guy was making those perverted comments to her.

It was as if he knew her for a long time and was fine with doing that.

Someone had to teach him a lesson early on if he does that again, right?

Aww man!

This wasn't right at all!

I need to apologize to him right after class!
That was all uncalled for and-

*Smooch*

My thoughts were halted when I felt someone kissed the side of my cheek.

"Here's your lunch for today, Val." Monika sweetly said, before skipping back to her seat.

I rubbed my cheek and watched as she sat down.

Monika turned around and winked at me before the teacher walked into class.

So she...

She has no idea of what I dreamed about her, does she?

That's a good thing.

"Okay, Val. What the fuck is going on?" Dan questioned, confused as to what happened. "I walk in to see you on the verge of beating some guy up, what's up with that?"

Hiro scoffed at him.

"Boss had a good reason to beat the shit out of him. That's the pervert that keeps making those comments to the sweetheart of Dokisai. About time someone stepped up to knock some sense into him."

I still feel sorry for scaring him.

"But I acted on impulse, guys. It was a bad move and makes me look like some sort of freak. I am going to apologize to him once this is done with all this."

Hiro slung his arm on me.

"Naaah. You don't have to do any of that; he deserved it. Apologizing to him might make more inclined to do it again, you know."

He's got the point...

If that guy says something to Monika like that again, I might lose it.

But it's still wrong for me to assault him like that...

That was borderline white-knighting and stuff, but this was something I felt no control over.

I felt ridiculously angry at the poor guy.

Maybe I need to avoid Monika.

Something's up with me whenever I am around her now.

I never felt so aggressive and irritated whenever somebody's around her.

Is it because of that dream?

Where did I do all that to her?
Even when I am dreaming, I have little to no control over myself.

What's wrong with me now...?

The rest of the day zipped by as it grew closer and closer to the club meeting.

Despite how awkward Val was behaving throughout the day, I looked forward to talking to him a little more.

That little scene he made was just...

Perfect.

I was planning him a piece of mind today, once I gave the lunch to Val, but it looks like he beat me to it.

It turns out; I wasn't the only one annoyed by his comments.

He got up from his seat and slammed him against the wall!

I never thought he would get angry over something like this!

My feet were on the verge of bouncing in place from how ecstatic I felt.

I know he loves me!

He showed how much he hated those comments and got jealous!

Well, I do feel a little bad for the guy.

He wasn't harming me or anything, but...

Oh well, I might have done something worse than him.

I am fine with Val's intervention.

The club door was open by the time I got there, and I opened to see the girls all chatting with each other.

Sayori, as usual, was the first to greet me.

"Oh hey, Monika! News sure does travel fast in this school! I heard your boyfriend got a little jealous when some guy said something to you~!"

I blushed and glared at the girl for teasing me.

"I can only wish he would actually catch my feelings for him..." I muttered.

"Mine too, he's denser than any anime protagonist."

"I agree, Valkyrie can sometimes be a little... frustrating at times."

Talking about how our crush's irritatingly slow pickup to love was elating to speak of.

But before anyone one of us could rant further, the door swung open.
And as usual, Sayori would greet her childhood friend and ignore her surroundings.

Val gave an awkward wave at us, mainly towards me for some reason.

I couldn't but stare at him dreamily.

He walked in and took a seat as far away from me or any of the girls, and sat next to Tom.

What...?

Why is he so weird today?

Is it because of how he attacked that pervert?

The guy sat down on his desk and tried his best to ignore us and talk primarily to Tom or Sayori.

And it hurt to be ignored by him.

Why?

Why are you ignoring me?

I cleared my throat regardless.

"Okay, everyone! I think it's time that we discuss what we do for the Winter Festival on Monday!" I cheerily declared.

It was difficult not to show that I was upset that he didn't bother to talk to me or any of the other girls.

I knew that the other girls were hurt that he didn't talk to him.

They were being ignored by him as well.

"So what are we doing exactly?" Tom piped in. "I don't mind taking any job to save the literature club."

"Yeah! I want to keep this club going for the longest of times!" Sayori chirped.

Val was up next to talk and, he looked away.

"Don't we have Committee work to do as well, Monika? Aren't we going get overburdened by a lot of work?" He droned.

That's it?

That's all he cares about?

Well... I guess I am happy that he wants the Literature club to stay.

But the way he said it makes him empathetic.

No!

I can't let him know that I am getting hurt!

Oh, I know!
Maybe adding a little bit of force and "tsundere" would wake him up.

"Yeah, but I expected more from you Val." I hissed.

And my plan worked, it snapped him out of his strange daze.

"What?" He asked.

Natsuki and Yuri followed up on my cue.

"I personally invited you to the club, because I thought you were a capable man ya know?" Natsuki pointed out.

"Valkyrie, I know you can handle a little more work, am I right?" Yuri followed up.

The guy was baffled with the coordinated attack and blinked several times.

But he shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"Maybe I can. Tell me the job I have and I will get it done." He simply said, before crossing his arms.

His behavior shocked us. We didn't expect him to reply so calmly.

So...

Is this how it felt when I gave him the cold shoulder when I came back?

No wonder he thought I hated him...

"For starters... Sayori, you're in charge of typing up the poems when the day comes. Natsuki, you're going to handle the treats right?"

Natsuki smiled.

"Yep! I am going to make cupcakes that will go along with the poems!"

I moved to Yuri.

"And Yuri, can you handle the decorations for the festival?"

The timid girl placed a hand next to her chest and inhaled deeply.

"Yes... I can do that. It for the club."

Tom scratched the side of cheek in what he supposed to do.

"I am guessing that I help out with whoever needs it the most?" He asked.

"Mhm! You are going to help out-"

Sayori grabbed his arm and glared at us.

"Tommy! You're going to help me out, alright?!" She demanded.

He gave a nervous chuckle.
"Um... sure."

Now it's time for Val.

"I am going to work on the managing the Committee's equipment, decorations, and planning the whole event." He quickly said, stopping any of us from jumping in.

We gave a disappointed groan at his plans, wanting him to help us instead.

*He really wants to focus on Festival as a whole...*

*That will too much for him!*

"Monika, what will you be doing?" Yuri asked.

I turned to her.

"Since I am in the Committee as well, I need to do some of that work as well... So."

I looked over to Val with a smile, thinking that it would change his cold attitude.

But despite my efforts, it didn't impact him at all.

And because of that, I felt another pang at my heart.

"I will be helping Val with the planning as well."

He shook his head.

"No, I can handle it. Monika, you can help the girls if you need to, this is your club and you want it to stay. So let me do some work to help keep that way as well."

*Why?*

*Why are acting like this?!*

*You never were this cold to me!*

*You were always happy-go-lucky, no matter what!*

"Val, it's going to be too much for you. And it's my job to help you out as well, so please let me." I begged.

"Not really. I planned this out during break time and I can handle it." He dismissed.

"Not really. I planned this out during break time and I can handle it." He dismissed.

*When Val really puts his mind to it, there's no stopping him.*

*He says that he always envies my will to not stop, but he doesn't know that I got it from him...*

"Val, you are organizing the festival for the third year. That's a lot of work since there's a lot of clubs filled with third-years, baka." Natsuki stated, frowning at his cold shoulder.

"Natsuki's right, last I heard, the Committee was much larger than two people. The work associated with it is heavy, despite the school only being geared towards our class." Yuri also asserted.

"Yeah, Val. You shouldn't be turning down help like that! Especially if The Thunderous Thighs of Dokisai is offering you help!" Sayori topped off.
I smiled at how my friends were helping me turn his opinion.

*Even we have conflicting interests, they are still my friends.*

Val groaned at the odds against him.

"Fine, but I won't completely back down. I will do most of the work, and you can help me out if you would like." He said to me.

*That's still not good enough.*

"Hey, guys... are we still going to meet up at Monika's house?" Sayori asked, coming up with something.

We nodded at her question.

"So why don't we do some of the work with him? Maybe we all can do each part each today, and get it over with? When Sunday rolls around, we'll do our festival duties as well! It will be demanding, but we are going to keep the club together, right guys?"

*Jeez...*

*Sayori sounds so inspirational and focused.*

*Hmph, I should have said that!*

"Right!"

"Of course."

I beamed at the bouncy girl.

"Yep!"

With the odds again tilted towards us, Val leaned onto his seat.

"I wasn't planning on doing anything today, but okay. I guess we all can do apart each."

Tom poked his head into the conversation.

"Well, what about me?" He asked.

Before any of us can say a word, Sayori beat us to it.

"Don't worry, we are still going to work together, okay?"

"Um, but-"

*Okay?* Sayori assured, keeping her warm and yet terrifying smile.

He gulped and nodded meekly.

"Okay..."

With that, she hugged his arm.

"Good! I guess it's all settled!"
Val leaned towards us.

"Not so fast, I want to work alone on my part. I do things a little faster with music on and not speaking to anyone... is that fine?" He asked.

We knew that we couldn't haggle for a better deal and compiled on his terms.

He nodded.

"Good to know."

And with that, he stood up to leave.

"Wait! Where are you going?" We all asked.

He turned around with a neutral frown.

"I forgot to mention, I need to watch over my little brother today since there's no one home today or tomorrow. So I am going to have to leave early."

He looked towards me, his cold stare rattling my very bones.

"Is that okay with you?" He asked.

*Val's behaving aloof and irritable...*

*That's only if he is stressed out.*

*There has to be something up with him.*

*But I don't know what it even is!*

*What's causing him to be stressed out?*

*He would tell me what's wrong!*

"Y-Yeah, it's okay," I confirmed, to which he nodded. "If you have an emergency, then you are free to go."

He opened the door and gave us a two-fingered salute as a farewell.

The door closed shut and we felt the shockwave of how off his behavior was.

"Something's up with him," Tom said, looking out the closed door. "I haven't seen him like this since middle school."

"Yeah... someone should talk to him," Sayori suggested. "That way we can help him."

"May I volunteer? Talking to someone in another language may open up his heart." Yuri asked, stroking her hair.

Natsuki sighed.

"I am going to vouch for Yuri on this one, talking to him in a language he's more familiar with can help him open up."

I jumped in.
"Maybe I can volunteer too, I knew him since we were kids, so if there's anyone he can talk to it's me," I suggested, sullen by his behavior. "I haven't seen him so stoic towards anyone before and I really need to know why he's doing all this!"

Tom stood up to get our attention.

"Val's the closest to me after you, Monika. So, I think I should go speak to him. He's the most comfortable when we speak in his native tongue, English."

He's right.

This is no time to be jealous over something so serious like this...

"Go ahead then, Thomas. If you feel you can get him to talk, then by all means. I-I'm worried about him... We all are. So please, if there's anything you can do, do it."

He nodded and walked out the door.

If it's my fault somehow, then I'll apologize to him.

I don't care if my pride doesn't warrant it, I want him by my side.

This time I am not letting go.

This time I am holding on.
Confession

The computer beeped, abruptly waking me up in the process.

I surveyed my surroundings as the world started to phase in.

Now I start to fall asleep now, huh?

I guess it's because of how I'm "doing the right thing" now.

Man, what a mess I made...

The computer beeped again and I looked up at the screen.

"Brute force has successfully ejected the drive and applied necessary protocols."

Good, the two won't be sent to that hacker-infested server.

No more cyber-apocalypse.

I rested my head against the chair and breathed out.

Everything's done, I got them out of the failsafe the company put up, extracted FrankCHR from ValCHR, and left them to their own devices.

Wait...

I looked towards my computer and squinted at what it meant by "necessary protocols".

Oh right...

Undoing all the damage I have done ever since the AI's stopped communicating with each other.

I have to admit, their relationship after the jamming event is still strong.

Even after all the damage, I have done, they jumpstarted their relationship again.

And...

My eyes scurried to the side of the screen that had my backdoor.

Looks like they truly do love each other.

Even if the dense one has finally realized his...

"Feelings?"

The line between simulation and technical terms are really blurry.

So, I am just speculating at this point.

I closed the back door into the simulation.

Their love holds no bounds...
But that doesn't fix some of the sabotage I did on...

"MONIKADADCHR" and "MONIKAMOMCHR"

The two files that were generated when the simulation started up again after Frank's death.

Monika never mentioned her parents in the game at all, did she?

So having some parental figures was necessary to fill up any gaps in their simulated world.

Monika's dad doesn't have a hard-on to send Monika to the shredder, even though I disabled it...

But some of the changes I made before still exist, and the VAL-AI needs to something about that.

Only by direct confrontation will the changes I made will finally go away.

Now for Monika's mother, I fixed her up to an extent, her mental trauma from being infertile is now starting to recede.

But that doesn't mean that she isn't "infertile" anymore.

Unfortunately, the changes can be fixed in that simulated world.

Maybe it can be fixed in the next world they generate.

I am not sure how that will work, however.

How can they "die" in that world?

Time is still working in a much more slowed manner, as far as I know.

Is there another generated world right after their "deaths"?

Hmm...

I can upload the hard drive's content somewhere on the internet.

That way they will have a lot more characters in their interactions, more creativity in their worlds and...

They can live on forever.

Monika and Val/Frank won't have to depend on the hard drive's backup battery anymore.

The internet will always stay alive in this day and age; they will be immortalized.

...

Even after all I have done, I can't help but regret the pain and suffering I inflicted on the two.

They did what was necessary to survive, right?

Luckily the AI's found another way to make sure they will thrive, proving my attempts are fruitless.

It looks like the AI's in this hard drive are the guardian angels of the simulated Monika and fake Frank.
So whatever I did to them was not just.

I should have done better.

With a sigh, I opened up my deep-web browser and opened up my server.

Maybe that five grand deal was not so bad after all.

Alright, if I change the settings of my server, I can make it viewable and also keep it protected by several layers of a hidden firewall.

Not only that, it will continuously update its settings.

Good thing the server has some

This server is just going to be named...

"University of Chicago Online Database."

That has to be a good name, I mean...

Because who would care about some "documents" floating around in both the deep and clear web?

I clicked on saving the settings and started to upload the files to my server.

The files will be heavily compressed, so it will add to anyone's confusion if they try to hack the server for small and encrypted data.

Without realizing it, the computer pinged at the success.

"Files have been uploaded."

In the first time in a while, I genuinely smiled at the result.

There was a weight above my shoulders that finally lifted.

It was evident that I felt relieved.

Welcome to the internet you two.

With that done, I pulled the hard drive out of the computer and laid it to rest.

I need to put this somewhere.

Somewhere safe.

But I'll do that once I am done reviving Frank.

For now, I'll keep this drive with me.

I grabbed the USB containing Frank's character file and finally exited my home.

The USB was a simple black thumb drive, with no particular markings on it.

I wonder what happened to the other thumb drive I threw away...

With a shrug, I got into my car and started the engine.
Is this enough for what I have done?

I pulled out of my driveway and drove onto the road ahead.

Maybe it's time for me to move on.

There's no point of holding onto the past.

Sometimes I need to look into the future and see what it has to offer.

I have had enough of sulking in my mess.

Right now, I can finally make amends for the failures I have done.

And that...

That is enough for me.

I continued to walk down the halls of my school, brooding about my behavior and plans as of now.

Isn't what I am doing hypocrisy?

After four, long and excruciating years, I finally got to see Monika again.

I couldn't wait to see her again.

But now, I want her to leave me alone.

Why do I get so irritated when I look at Monika?

The very mention of her name wells up something that I don't know.

It feels ticklish, fulfilling even.

That feeling is something I never experienced before.

It is because of that sensation that makes me so...

Overwhelmed, I guess.

It bears down on me to the point where I need to stop myself and take a breather.

Whenever I am around her, the feeling grows stronger and stronger.

I don't know what I am feeling, but it is frightening.

The only way I can stop this feeling is to shut myself out from everyone.

I need some time alone.

There's too much going on in my head.

"(Brooklyn!)") I heard someone call.

Without a doubt, it's Tom...

But I am not in the mood to talk to anyone right now.
I turned on my heel and gave him a warning scowl.

"(What?)" I replied in English, showing that I was impatient.

He had a soda can in his hand and showed it to me.

"You want a Sprite Cranberry?"

Despite my cold facade and what I was feeling, I smirked at the reference he made.

I nodded, to which he tossed the can to me.

Tom's face softened when I caught the can.

"Hey man. It looks like you have been through a lot. You okay? You wanna talk about it?" He asked in English.

*I have to admit, talking in English makes me feel comfortable.*

*Even if it's a little.*

With a sigh, I motioned him to follow me out of school grounds.

Once we made it outside, I sat down on the school steps, with Tom following suit.

I cracked open the soda and took a sip.

"Thanks for the soda, Tom. I didn't know they had these around here. Especially since so hard to find nowadays." I muttered, looking out at the sunset.

It was the middle of winter; days were shorter and nights were longer, so seeing a sunset so early wasn't abnormal in any case.

The bright orange sun bleeding into the skies mellowed me into speaking to Tom.

"It's fine. I needed to try some of these before Christmas, you know? It's the holiday spirit that keeps the soda alive."

I chuckled at Tom's comment.

"Yeah... I guess."

We continued to drink our sodas in peace before Tom spoke again.

"Did you talk to Dan about his breakup with that girl?" He asked.

I knew what Tom was doing; he was trying to make some small talk.

*Even if that small talk is something serious like Dan's small talk, it is good to take my mind off things.*

"I did right before I went to sleep. It turns out Dan was glad that he broke up with that yandere, especially since she got suspended."

Tom flinched at the last part.

"The girl got suspended? Well... damn! What for?"
I shrugged.

"Ah, the usual yandere shit. Emotional abuse, excessive blackmail, and stress. Lots of lots of stress. When I spoke to Dan yesterday, he was a lot happier than he was a few days ago. In fact, did you see how happy he was?"

He nodded.

"Yeah... I guess. He wasn't hiding behind a mask to hide his pain. I am glad he got over her. He deserves someone better."

I took another sip before getting into the business.

"Tom. You're here because of how I was behaving at the literature club, right?" I asked, keeping my gaze at the orange, mellow sunset.

... 

"Yeah, I am. Is there something wrong, Val? You weren't like this after... Prom."

Prom.

I was devastated when Monika left.

By putting on a mask and toughening up against everything didn't really help.

But I am not hurt right now...

I am just...

Confused.

Why did that dream happen?

"It's nothing like that Prom, Tom. That's something I am sure of. It's mainly what happened in my..."

Should I tell him?

Should I tell him how I dreamt of doing all that to Monika?

Yes.

I should; Tom's going the extra mile to help me out.

And he's willing to listen to whatever I have to say.

I turned to him and looked at him.

"Dream. I dreamed of something that was completely bizarre." I finished.

He raised an eyebrow.

"A bizarre dream? Was it a nightmare or something?"

I shook my head.

It was a wet dream...
"No, I guess some would say the complete opposite. But I had uh..."

Tom looked at me and awaited my answer patiently.

Tell it to him!

"I had a wet dream about Monika!" I yelled, gripping the sides of the soda.

... 

"Oh... You had a wet dream? Is that why you were behaving like that?" He asked, genuinely curious as to why I behaved so erratically.

I expected him to ridicule me, but I know better.

He wouldn't do that.

I looked back to the sunlight to comfort me.

"Yeah. Tom, I only saw Monika as the sister I never had. Jeez, I swear I said that way too many times than I can count. But, that dream... I couldn't imagine what I was doing to her!"

Tom just nodded at the information I was giving to him.

"Ah... okay. Whatever happened in that dream is something you should keep to yourself. In any case, I think you're starting to see her as something more." He muttered in thought.

Something...

More?!

"Tell me, Brooklyn. Was there some sort of trigger that caused all this? This dream of yours couldn't have happened by coincidence, right?"

I...

I did grope her by mistake that one day.

Not to mention, I pressed against her butt yesterday.

And she saw my manhood too.

The awkward moments we had when we were teenagers might be boiling down in that dream too.

Is there something else too?

The kisses.

Monika is kissing me on the cheek a lot more frequently...

It's hard for anyone not to see that as a only-friends thing.

I thought it was just a way to show how much she missed me but...

Is there an ulterior motive?

NO!
No, there isn't!

Of course, not!

Monika doesn't see me that way!

Does she?

I haven't paid that much attention to that specific concept.

Maybe I should...

"Yeah, there were a lot of triggers." I merely answered, my face starting to flare up on the sudden realizations.

Tom took another sip and put the soda down on the stairs.

"That explains it, you had a lot of... 'strange' confrontations with her right?" He teased.

I shot him a glare and groaned.

"Dude, I swear sometimes I feel like I being written down in some sort of shitty fanfiction. The things that Monika and I get into are way too coincidental. I mean, what are the chances of groping her accidentally happen?"

He snickered.

"Okay, so accidental gropes? Is that what you're calling it?"

"Tom!"

"Haha! Take it easy, Brooklyn. I was busting your balls."

I frowned at his tease.

"You're hilarious." I sarcastically muttered, cradling the soda in my hands.

Tom laughed at my meek behavior.

"Ah... You think that it's all a coincidence? Nah, maybe it has to do with fate."

Fate?

"What does fate have to do with this? I don't believe in such things." I explained.

Tom stretched and rested his back on the steps.

"Well, I do. I always had faith that Sayori and I would meet up again in the future. We knew each other when we were five, and we were inseparable."

I was always interested in the relationship that Sayori and Tom shared, so I leaned in.

"My childhood was pretty rough, Dad was always moving because of his job. Mom and I had to follow wherever he goes because we don't have anyone else to help support us. I always made friends in different places around the world, but I always had to move away in a month or two. Packing and unpacking was the same thing most of the time, but when Dad's job finally gotten stable here in this country, that routine stopped."
He smiled bittersweetly.

"That's when I met her. We played a lot as kids, but there was something I realized about her. Sayori was always... sensitive to emotions. She would take things a bit too hard at times; it would cause her to drop everything and continuously think about it. Not to mention, her parents used to argue a lot, and it always made Sayori believe how things would be different if she weren't around. She told me everything that happens at home and I would still be there for emotional support.

He sighed heavily.

"Sometimes, I think that if I wasn't there to listen to her... then I don't know what will happen to her rainclouds. Maybe it could've formed into a deep depression, maybe it wouldn't. Who knows? But, I always made sure to the sun shines in her head, no matter what. After all, she was my only friend in my lonely existence in this country. And that's what kept us together until she decided to study psychology in Ainu."

I recoiled my head from the shock.

"Wait, Sayori is studying psychology? T-That's amazing!"

He nodded proudly.

"Yep, she wanted to know why rainclouds happened, and what can be done to stop it once and for all. I have to say, I am proud of the cinnamon bun."

There has to be more between him.

Something that Tom's not picking up...

"The bonds we made as children bounded us together, forever. All of that progress we made as kids up until our teenhood, made me believe in a fate that we are going to see each other again." He finished. "Hehe, sorry. I rambled a little there."

...

Monika and I...

Are we bounded by fate?

"Anyway, enough about me. Now let's get to you. I don't get why that wet dream of yours goes along with your cold behavior lately. I thought it was supposed to feel good, especially since you two are a couple."

I sighed and put my soda down as well.

"For the love of... Tom, we aren't a couple. And I am not even sure why Monika thinks that in the first place. She's been acting 'weird' lately."

He leaned in to listen to what was "weird" about her.

"What I mean by 'weird' is she's a lot more touchy-feely and than she was before. She was a bit of a cold girl, acting like she doesn't care about me or anything whenever we were alone, but that's starting to fade away. There was a reason why she was being so cold, and we resolved that... so I'm guessing that's why she is a lot happier now. But that doesn't explain that wet dream or her weird behavior!"
Tom scratched his head.

"Can you... explain the weird behavior? I'll try not to laugh at her antics." He asked, puzzled at what I was saying.

Argh...

I stared into the sunset and readied myself to speak.

"Alright... to start off, Monika's starting to take my clothes and wear them for herself. She claims it is comfortable and smells 'just like me', which creeps me out. She's been blackmailing me on holding her hand in public, just because I slipped up on something. To be fair, we always did hold hands whenever walked anywhere... and finally, she's been kissing me on the cheek a lot more frequently too. Like, isn't that what couples do?"

Phew! I feel a lot better!

With my explanation complete, I turned to Tom.

He greeted me a deadpan face.

"Oh my gosh... you're the living and breathing definition of a black hole! Even I can pick up on those signs! Damn it, nevermind. Can you tell me how your dream and behavior connect now?"

I didn't get what Tom was telling me so I shrugged.

"Well... like I said. That dream was pretty weird for me to have. And it brought up a lot of feelings. Feelings that I don't recognize and it only pops up whenever I see Monika, or even hear anything related to her. It's just so... overwhelming. It feels like my heart is going to burst out of my chest if I keep being around her. So, being "cold" was a way to cope. I shut myself from any emotions I am feeling, especially since you know... and try to move on with my business."

Tom laughed a little and patted my back at my confession.

"Thank, goodness. I thought you were going to say something a little disappointing but... Well, I guess your mind's finally starting to put the pieces together, you know? Maybe you're starting to realize something a bit too late..."

I rolled my eyes and took another sip of the soda.

Wait...

Too late?

What does that mean?

"Whatever," I grumbled, looking back at the sunset. "I was never really good with expressing my feelings. All I know right now is that... I need some time to think about all this. Some time to understand what exactly is going on inside my head. Like the inner machinations of my mind are like an enigma of some sort, I guess."

*BRR BRR*

Tom pulled out his phone from pocket and checked his messages.

"It's from Sayori, looks like the club meeting is about to end."
He got up from the stairs and walked back to school.

"Val, you wanna talk some more? Or do you want some time for yourself?"

I shook my head and stood up.

"No, I am good. Maybe some time for myself to think this whole thing out is an order. Also, I think Mike's waiting for me at the doorstep thinking about how late I am. Thanks for talking to me, Tom. I feel better."

He smiled and gave me a quick wave goodbye.

With that, I walked down the steps and went home.

As I walked home, I kept thinking about what Tom meant by fate.

*They are bound by fate after all they have been through.*

*Is that same for us?*

*Are we bound by fate?*

*I thought I would never see Monika ever again after she left to Ainu.*

*And she thought the same thing too.*

*But that gas leak led to a chain of events that led us to meet each other again.*

*We have been through a lot together.*

*Hell, we grew up together through thick and thin.*

*There wasn't a day we spent time away from each other.*

*Everything I did, she did too.*

*So does that mean she has...*

"Bro-Bro! There you are! Jeez! What took you so long?" My brother yelled, crossing his arms at me.

I looked around to check my surroundings.

*What...?*

*Did I make it home already?*

He was glaring at me, bored out of skull for waiting for me.

I shook my head to readjust myself.

"Sorry, I caught up in the literature club and spoke a little with Tom." I apologized, taking out the keys. "Come on, let's go inside."

"Where else am I supposed to go?"

I opened the door and we parted ways.
In a flash, I took off my uniform and put on some workout clothes.

_Hmm, I am not feeling that sore today._

_Mainly since it was a light workout._

_Maybe I should get some boxing in._

With a towel in hand, I went to the basement where some of my equipment was located.

I warmed up by doing stretches and some jump-rope.

Once I felt I was ready for a spar with my punching bag, I walked over to it.

Despite the beatings I give the bag, it always manages to look pristine and not lose for wear.

With my stance ready, I threw my punches in.

Boxing was a good way for me to think critically and also stay rational, strangely enough.

And so, I picked up where I left off.

_Okay..._

_Where was I?_

_Right, fate._

_What is fate?_

_Destiny is something similar to it, but the difference between that and fate is there is control._

_Fate has no control whatsoever._

_But in the context of me meeting Monika again, I don't mind that shared fate._

_We spent almost a decade together so there has to be something in the works._

_Is that "works" love?_

_Do Monika like me?_

_Do she have feelings for me?_

I stopped punching and let my body think critically.

...

...

...

_No._

I punched the bag with my right arm.

"One!"
She doesn't have any.

I quickly followed up with my left arm.

"Two!"

I mean, why would she even fall for a guy like me?

Right after the quick follow up, I threw in a cross with my right.

"Three!"

It took me a while to even get to the conclusion that she "might" like me, so that proves I am slow to love.

With the cross, my left arm went for a swift uppercut.

"Four!"

I can be a bit of an idiot when it comes to some things...

The uppercut swirled the punching bag a little, allowing me to keep my momentum for a hook.

"Five!

And not to mention, Monika deserves better.

She's the perfectionist, and so she deserves a perfect boyfriend.

With the rush of thoughts, I couldn't think straight, despite being in the zone.

My sixth and final strike was a hasty, yet brutal cross.

The bag swung back showing the punch had a strength I never had.

As far I know, I am the farthest thing from perfect.

I let out an exhausted sigh and tried to compose myself.

The bag dangled on the hook it was on, still feeling the brunt of the attack.

Wow...

Was I furious back there?

Or was I jealous?

Or...

Was it a deadly mix of both?

Angry and jealous at the same time?

Why am I feeling both?

I should accept the fact that she isn't going for me...
But each time I try to accept it, there's this sensation in my heart that tells me I can do it.

Do what?

Pursue her only to be rejected?

I don't even know how to be romantic...

If I can't be romantic, then-

Argh!

Damn it, damn it, damn it!

First thing's first!

Do I like Monika?

...

My heart stopped for a split second at the question.

Do I...?

Argh.

That I don't know.

How don't I even know that?!?

After all this time, I can't even describe how I feel around her?!

All I know is that whenever I am around her, I am feeling a lot happier and more at ease...

Isn't that the spirit of friendship and-

No!

I don't want to hear about that bullshit right now!

This feeling never happened when I was around her before!

It's that dream!

Something about that wet dream where I... did that to her triggered something in me.

Kissing her, touching her, and letting her do that me...

It makes me see her in a completely different light.

I never saw her as a girlfriend.

Or someone I can probably get to know as something more.

The way she swayed her hips, closed the distance between me and pinned me against the wall...

Thinking about it makes my heart pound.
I never thought she could turn me on like that.

My hormones were on the fritz when she got close to me with those eyes of hers.

Those emerald green lecherous eyes...

Whenever I see them, I can feel something in me change as well.

Like I just need to touch her and kiss her as much as possible.

I never felt like that, but that feeling is so familiar.

Deja vu...

In any case, I need to keep my emotions under control when I see her again.

There's no telling what will happen if I am around her.

Would I sperg out like an idiot?

Or would just make an ass out of myself?

Ah, who am I kidding?

I'll just be myself.

Chances are she only sees me a close friend or something.

...

Ow, my heart. Why did that hurt so-

But what if she does like me?

How will I take that?

First thing is first, I need to talk about my feelings for her.

Maybe I'll talk to her about it tomorrow.

Oh gosh...

What if it makes everything awkward between us?

Should I not confess?

That brings up the point about my feelings.

What is Monika to me?

Argh, for now, I need to focus on getting some results.

Right now, I'll do a couple rounds of boxing and take a shower right after.

A little more time to get my head in the game should fix up everything.

Maybe it can fix up these thoughts in my head.
It was six o'clock.

We were all at my house, discussing the Winter Festival plans and what needs to be done.

In the short span, we spent together, we were all also almost done with our share of the work.

And so I clamped my hands together to get everyone's attention.

"Okay, everyone! Thank you all for helping me out with the Committee work!" I cheerily appreciated.

The girls gave their approvals and waited for me to speak again.

"Now that we finished this, I guess you all can go home."

Yuri cleared her throat to direct the attention to herself.

"What about the study session? Are we not going to do that?" Yuri asked as she nervously played with her hair. "Maybe we can invite Valkyrie over..."

Oh right...

The study session, I totally forgot about that!

Natsuki joined in.

"Yeah... why don't we all study? Especially since we are all here in your house, Monika." She stated.

Sayori yawned and stretched upwards.

"Uuuh... you guys can study without me. I am gonna go home... and maybe take a teensy-weensy little nap. Or sleep through Saturday."

I tapped my chin in thought.

"Ah, it must have slipped my mind. I am still a little worried about Val. Since, you know..."

Natsuki and Yuri looked away in understanding.

We all need a distraction from all this...

What is something we all can do at my house?

Ahah!

"But!" I declared. "Let's not worry about him! Let's all have a sleepover as well!"

One by one, the girls' eyes lit up in excitement.

"A sleepover?"

"Just the four of us?"

"Yay! Sleepover!"
I smiled at the distraction I made.

Val, I hope you are doing okay...

This is all I can do to stop myself from worrying about you.

Even though Tom told us we didn't have to worry, I am still going to do so.

"Does everyone have their casual-"

*FWIP*

"Ahhh! Much better!" Sayori exclaimed, twirling in place.

We all eyed at Sayori's rapid change of clothes.

She realized how quiet it has gotten and looked back at us.

"Um... Is there something wrong?" The cheery girl asked.

We shook our heads.

"I am afraid I don't have any casual clothes..." Yuri commented.

"Yeah, me too." Natsuki also added.

*Having comfortable clothes in a sleepover is a must.*

Right now, I am still wearing Val's boxers and shirt underneath my uniform and that's pretty comfortable...

Ahah!

That's it!

"Girls! I got an idea!" I proclaimed, gathering everyone to come closer. "Why don't we... take some clothes from Val? He lets me borrow his pajamas, so there wouldn't be a problem if we take some, right?"

Yuri had an odd look on her face.

"He lets you take your clothes, Monika?"

I nodded proudly.

"Yup! And they are way more comfortable than my pajamas!"

Natsuki had a mischievous smile plastered on her face, while Yuri looked to be in thought.

"I do want to take some pajamas from that baka... it will fun!"

"Hmm... his clothes will be endowed with his scent. So I am definitely going to join!"

Sayori was somewhat lost in our conversation and shrugged, going along with the plan.

We all walked to my balcony and stood right outside Val's balcony.
I took the initiative by jumping over, with the rest of the girls following my example.

Once they jumped over, I motioned them using my hand.

"Shh..." I ordered, telling them to lay low and not to make a sound.

*Val's balcony door is easy to open when it isn't raining...*

*Let's see here...*

*CLICK*

I slid the door open as quietly as possible and carefully placed my feet in his room.

My eyes scanned the room to see if he was anywhere to be seen.

Fortunately, the coast was clear with Val nowhere to be seen.

"This is so exciting!"

"My heart is pounding right now...!"

"Where are we?"

I motioned the girls to the bed, jumping on it to start our search.

The bedside cabinet was easy to spot and we began opening it to find our desired clothes.

Meanwhile, Sayori picked up a handheld console and started fiddling around with it.

"Oooh...!" She muttered as she started playing whatever was in it.

*We should be out of here in no time!*

*Once we get his clothes and-

My heart stopped at the sudden realization of what I was doing.

No...

*If Yuri and Natsuki get the clothes then they will be way more into him!*

*Especially since he smells great.*

*Aaah! I made a huge mistake!*

*This is not like me at all!*

*I always make the proper calculations for the best result but...*

*This was all out of impulse!*

The two girls rummaged the drawers to find the clothes they wanted.

"Ahaha... guys? I think we should leave, I hear Val coming in, right about now." I muttered, hoping to deter them from taking his clothes.
Natsuki and Yuri stopped their search and stared at me suspiciously.

"Why? I thought you wanted to do this!" Natsuki whispered irritatedly.

Yuri shared her aggravation.

"This is a once in a lifetime event! Letting go of this chance is a mistake I can't afford!"

Arrgh!

They are going to be more attracted to him!

And it's going to make everything a lot harder to get his attention and affection!

I can't let that happen!

*CREAK*

"Bro-Bro! Guess what! I just got the rarest-

We all turned to the voice that opened the door.

Oh no...

There we saw Val's younger brother looking at all of us in bafflement, darting his eyes to each and every one of us.

...

...

...

"Auntie Monika...?" He called, looking at me.

He was somehow unfazed by the whole situation and took a step back.

The boy shook his head and gripped the handle of the door.

"Um... you know what? I am going to pretend nothing ever happened. Bye, Auntie."

With that, he closed the door and tension with it.

I let out a relieved sigh at how close we were to mess up the heist.

That was close...

If Val was here, I don't know how he would take the whole heist.

I turned to my friends.

Natsuki and Sayori were giddy about something and had trouble holding in their excitement.

"Did you see that?!" Sayori squealed, holding Natsuki and jumping in place.

The pink haired girl gave an excited cry as well.
"Yes! Yes, I did! That boy was so adorable! I wish I could pet him!"

"Me too! I really wanted to pinch his cheeks and feed him cookies!"

Yuri chuckled at the girls' exchange.

"I do have to admit, Valkyrie's younger brother looks a lot like him." She commented.

Seriously?

Did they forget that they are in someone's home without their permission?!

But on the bright side, they are starting to forget why they are here in the first place.

"Well, yeah. Michael is the younger and more innocent version of Val. But he isn't as dense as his older brother." I mentioned, adding further deterrence to our mission.

"Is that so?" Yuri replied, interested in the conversation. "That's very interesting. Almost to the same scale as him calling you 'Auntie'. What's the deal with that?"

I shrugged.

"He always called me that when he was a baby. No matter how hard I try to tell him not that I am not his Aunt, he will keep calling me that."

Kind of like how the dork keeps calling me Sis.

Fortunately, I made sure he wouldn't call me that again.

*CREAK*

Oh no!

We all looked the door again, this time with petrified fear.

Raven black hair, toned body... and a-

Hot face!

It's him!

And he's wearing...

Headphones?

Val walked into his room in a completely bizarre fashion.

He flung a cap he never wore into the air.

And immediately after, he kicked his cap mid-air, landing a few meters next to him.

Next, he started taking steps that indicated he was into the beat of whatever song he was listening to.

Each step he took showed he was bouncing with it.

He continued his walk and moved towards an alcohol wipe container.
With a slap, the container flew towards the bed we were on.

Neither of us dared to squeal in surprise as he continued his strange walk.

Finally, he reached a stool and flipped it over with no apparent regrets.

It was apparent that the man was not aware of his surroundings.

We could have taken the time to escape, but we were mesmerized by his movements.

He flipped up the overturned stool without looking and planted his foot on top of it.

His hands gripped something imaginary, and he started humming and strumming what imaginary item.

*Is that...*

*A guitar?*

"Temperature is boiling, magnifying might, feeding like a virus, flashing light~! Woo!" He sang while air-guitaring his heart out.

I snickered at what he was doing.

We all were, it was difficult not to laugh at how ridiculous he looked.

He continued to strum with all his spirit and tried his best to imitate the guitar in whatever song we were listening to.

Our scoffs and snickers became uncontrollable bouts of laughter.

The more he emphasized his guitar, the more we laughed.

But finally, it came a time that the song started to die down, and with that, he let out a sigh.

"That was a great boxing round... I feel refreshed!" He said to himself, pulling the headphones off and placing on the computer desk.

*Uh oh...*

In the off chance, he looked to his bed and was...

Shocked, to say the least.

His eyes bulged out, his face burned, and his lips quivered as they struggled to generate a role.

Sayori was the first to greet him.

"Heeey!" She waved, oblivious about the situation we were in.

Val shook his head and glared at all of us.

"W-W-What are you four doing here?!!" He yelled, seemingly mortified about his air-guitar.

That finally grounded us to reality.

"Um... uh..."
"I-I'm s-sorry!"

I gulped and looked away.

"Well..." I trailed off, trying my utmost hardest to think of an excuse.

He then gained composure and sighed.

Val crossed his arms and tapped his foot, impatiently waiting for an answer.

"What were you three doing in my drawer?" He asked calmly.

I felt my face burn up as I racked my head to think of something.

"We were um... looking for some..." Natsuki started.

Yuri picked up on her saying.

"Spare clothes from your drawer, since we are having a sleepover." Yuri confidently said.

_How did she have the steel to say that!_

_I have that too!_

"And since they didn't have any pajamas, I was hoping that we could... borrow some clothes," I stated with a sweet smile. "Do you mind if we do?"

Val wasn't buying it, however.

But suddenly, he smiled back.

"Oh! No, I don't! Why didn't you say so?" He cheerily said, walking over to his drawer.

As he walked there, we felt a horrifying aura of the passive-aggressiveness surge through him.

Instead of pulling out any clothes, he slammed shut the drawer, causing all to flinch.

His cheery smile turned into a frightening glare that even pierced me.

_"That's what I would have said if you asked earlier..."_ He whispered.

_His whisper..._

_It's so chilly!_

Val's cold exterior melted into genuine understanding and happiness.

"But luckily for you guys, I understand. For the most part, I guess. So you are free to take any clothes from my drawer. But..."

He grinned at all of us.

_"Steal from me again, and I don't know what I'll do."_

_H-How is he doing all this?!_

_Since was he able to do all that?!_
Val broke into an uncontrollable bout of laughter.

"Hahaha! It was so worth it! Seeing you all so scared is perfect retribution for looking at me! Ah...!"

He sighed.

"But seriously, don't do that again."

The three girls nodded at what I said.

I guess I was right.

That little boxing match and brooding on my emotions really did help.

Monika's surprise party proved that I was able to keep my personality in check.

I am not as nervous around Monika like before, and I feel a lot more in control!

Now I don't have to worry about letting that feeling in my heart swelling up again.

The room was quiet because of my warning.

"Anyway, you guys have a sleepover, right? Have fun, I guess. I'll get right to work with the Committee work." I stated, walking over my laptop and turning it on.

I half-expected them to take their leave, but I also half-expected them not to.

"Hey Val, do you mind if we help you out?" Monika asked. "It can be a bit of compensation since we are taking some of your pajamas."

The way she asked to help was so cute...

Was Monika always this cute?

Gah, snap out of it!

"Yeah..." Natsuki piped in. "Sometime's a little womanly intuition is needed, ya know?"

The pink haired girl smiled, her fang poking out.

T-That fang...

Why am I noticing her fang?

"I agree." Yuri also added. "The more people to work on the project, the less time it will take."

The purple haired girl smiled, proving how timid and sincere she was.

Since when was Yuri's little smile so adorable?

Argh!

What's wrong with me?!

I think... I think I need some actual time away from them.
"Val, these girls are throwing themselves at you! At least give them an answer!" Sayori disapproved, crossing her arms at me.

"Sayori!" The girls hissed.

They have a point...

"Um, I..." I mumbled.

What should I say?

Should I accept their help and finish off the Committee work?

If I do that, then I am at the mercy of my mind and hormones.

But if I decline then, not only will I hurt them, it will take a substantial amount of time to finish!

I gulped, unsure of what to say.

"Sure, you guys can help. If you want of course." I finally said.

Each of the girls' eyes lit up from what I declared.

I closed my eyes and laid my head back.

This is going to be a long night.

I just know it.

Suddenly, I felt my balance shift downwards from an incoming force.

"Oof!" I yelped, as landed on the floor from the attack.

"Thank you for accepting our help, Valkyrie! I always wanted to work with you!" Yuri excitedly exclaimed, crushing me in a bone-breaking hug.

Her massive chest is against me!

Ah~!

"Hey, no fair! I want to hug the baka too!" Natsuki yelled, body slamming me in a hug.

"Ack!"

With another girl hugging me, I looked to both Monika and Sayori for help.

Instead of helping, Monika glared at the two girls and puffed out.

"I am his best friend! I should be the one to hug him!"

Aw shit!

The brown haired girl lunged at me, landing in between Yuri and Natsuki.

My nose was pushed against her hair, forcing me to inhale it.
I let it out on the crown of her head.

*Pine trees, like always.*

*Wait!*

*I need to get out of this!*

"Sayori!" I whispered. "Can you help me?"

She looked at me and the hugging masses on me, as if deciding what to do.

Her eyes rested on the three girls and she sighed.

"Sorry, Val... but!"

In a flash, she jumped into the hug as well.

"Group hug!" She cheered, hugging everyone in the process.

*This is not good!*

*Shit!*

The door opened and out came my brother.

Mike looked annoyed at first, but when he saw the mess on top of me, he was shocked.

"Wow... I came up here to see what was the big idea. And well, there's the reason." He muttered. "I don't want to ask what you guys are doing but... did you guys see where my brother is?"

*Mike!*

Despite the girls restricting my every move, I managed to get my arm out in the air.

"In here!" I yelled, getting his attention.

Without a second to delay, my brother grabbed my hand pulled with all his might.

Once I managed to a get little bit of distance away from the girls' grip, I pushed myself off of them and got up.

The girls realized that they weren't crushing anything and pouted.

I anticipated another attack but instead, they sat on the floor.

My brother took the signal and snuck out of the room.

I let out a deep sigh and stared at them tiredly.

"Not going to bother to question any of that. Let's get to work."

The three main perpetrators flushed from their antics.

Sayori, on the other hand, raised her hand for me.

"Yes, Sayori?"
"Can we invite Tommy to help out too?"

I groaned.

Another hand would be useful I guess.

"Sure, I'll text him. Any more questions?" I asked.

Their silence was just the answer I needed.

And so, we got to work with the planning and decorations.

As expected, Tom also joined us when I invited him over.

With the six of us working together, the quarter of the work I was supposed to do was already complete.

It was now eight o'clock.

The last of work was now complete, and we were now doing quality checkups.

Once that was done, all of our work was complete.

I yawned at how tired I was feeling, now wanting the long day to end.

"Alright, guys... thanks for the help. I really appreciate it." I praised, genuinely happy from the support I got. "Now go ahead and have that sleepover."

Tom yawned as well.

"Have fun you four... I am going home."

I looked at him.

"You gonna be on tonight?" I asked, despite how exhausted I felt.

He shrugged.

"Maybe... but it depends on how tired I really am."

Natsuki pouted and looked at me.

"Aww... why don't you join us, Val? Come on; it will be fun!"

Monika followed suit as well.

"Yeah! We are going to play lots of games too, you know?" She offered.

I mentally cringed at what she meant by games.

Uh, I would rather not.

"I can also make some tea if you would like," Yuri added. "I have some tools in my bag that I can use to make it..."

Sayori skipped over to Tom and playfully grabbed his arm.
"What do you say, Tommy? Do you want to join us too?" She asked cheerfully.

He yawned again.

"Probably not. If I wanted to have a sleepover, I would have it with (Brooklyn) here."

I smirked at the bromance we had.

"Same here. Hey, you brought your laptop, right? Why don't we call over the guys and have a sleepover here too?" I suggested, crushing the girls' spirit.

He looked at with the same smirk.

"Good idea, Brooklyn. They can bring over their stuff, and we can do some nostalgic gaming." He supported.

The girls groaned, giving up in convincing us otherwise.

They walked over to the balcony, their moods sullied by other plans, and jumped over.

We waved at them as they left.

I texted Dan and Hiro to come over; luckily they were in the area and came over.

Once we were all here, we started to do some gaming.

Every once in a while, a loud comment would come from the girls on the other side.

It would go:

"This is very fun, right girls? Too bad there isn't anyone else to join in with us!"

"I made some Jasmine tea! I also brought some vodka for all of us to enjoy!"

"This game of spin-the-bottle is getting intense! I know a guy can't handle this!"

"TOMMY COME OVER HERE!"

But we ignored it for the most part.

However, the part we couldn't shake off is how Sayori yelled for Tom to come over.

We all exchanged looks as we processed what she said.

For the love of...

I need to spend some time alone!

Away from them!

Not spend more time with them!

Especially with Monika.

If I am around her for too long, I think I might say something... weird.

"I like you, Monika."
"What? Oh, I like you too, Val. Let's be the bestest friends ever!"

I groaned from how the painful the idea was.

The pain in my heart...

Thinking about it for just a little while hurts!

Is this what they call rejection...?

Why am I expecting more out of this?

Do I want to be in a relationship with Monika?

What about the other girls?

Would Natsuki and Yuri reject me too?

Argh!

I am so confused!

Do I like them on the same scale as I like Monika?

Graaah!

"Hey, you okay? You've been spacing out there for some time." Dan worriedly asked.

I shook my head.

"Yeah, yeah I am fine. It's just that the girls are saying some weird stuff. Maybe it's getting to me."

Tom groaned as well.

"Me too. Sayori's been saying some creepy stuff lately. Sort of like a yandere, I mean-!"

Dan patted him on the back.

"It's fine. There's a difference in being clingy and being completely obsessed... I think. But in any case, Sayori doesn't look like the girl to become completely psychotic. Maybe you influenced her to be more proactive in the relationship. How would I know? I am no love doctor." He rambled.

Wait...

Relationship?

"Uh, Dan. Sayori and I aren't in a relationship. We never were... we are just childhood friends, that's all. What gives you the idea otherwise?" He asked, somewhat puzzled.

Dan and Hiro exchanged glances.

"Wait, wait, wait. So you're saying..." Hiro trailed off. "That you two were never a couple? That's just stupid! You two clicked so well that I couldn't help but believe that you two were on. Hah! Anyway, next thing you know The Couple of Lotus isn't a real thing either."

I tapped my forefingers on that subject.
"Um... well, I- uh..." I stammered.

The duo exchanged their most skeptical looks.

"You've got to be kidding me."

"The fuck is this? Is everything I know a lie? Am I going through some existential crisis?! Is this a simulation?!"

Now it was our chance to exchange glances with each other.

The two let out a disappointed sigh at us.

"Well for starters, do you guys like anyone?" Dan asked. "And it doesn't have to be from the literature club."

Tom tightened his fists and closed his eyes.

"I... I... I like Sayori." He admitted. "Not as a friend, but as something more."

Hiro laid back against his seat and stroked his chin.

"So... when did you get your feelings for her, hmm?"

Tom took a deep breath and looked at them.

"I realized my feelings for her yesterday... I thought about what Val said to me during gym, and what Sayori said to me after we all split ways. She said something along the lines of how she was unhappy with the current relationship we had. If she had to describe in color, she would say it was a pale pink. That meant that she wanted more than friendship, and I was thinking more about it today." He confessed.

Once Tom was done confessing, he let out his deep breath and smiled at me.

"It's your turn, Val. Who do you like?" He asked.

Who do I like...?

Yuri?

...

As much I don't want to hurt her feelings...

No, I don't.

We can go on for hours talking in our language, but there isn't a spark between us.

I am sure she can find someone better... she is pretty attractive.

Natsuki...

I can get along with her, despite how rocky our relationship was when we first met.

But I think what captivated me about her, is how sweet she can be when she isn't so... tsundere.

Despite this, she needs someone that can melt her to warm heart much more so than me.
She is pretty cute.

And now for Monika...

My childhood friend.

The one I had the most history with.

We have spent so much time together, and we are mostly in the same wavelength if need be.

Even though she is a perfectionist, I am that one imperfection that she can't get rid of.

And for that, she I click.

Sure we butt heads at times, but we always get our point across. We aren't afraid to let each other know what we are thinking.

In fact, Monika has always been straightforward with me- whenever she isn't holding a grudge against for four years.

But me being cold towards her is a different case... I needed some time to think.

I cared for her ever since we first became friends, and I made sure she would never get hurt ever again.

We promised that we would always stay together, no matter what.

And if that means getting into a relationship, then fine I will.

I like her.

I like Monika.

Maybe I don't "like" her, but perhaps as something more.

But who's to say?

"Yeah..." I finally spoke. "Even though The Couple of Lotus isn't true yet, the concept of it will be. I like Monika. I think I liked her all along, but I never realized it. I realized my feelings for her last night, maybe. I had a dream about her, and all I did was think only about her. And in that dream, we did what couples do, and that was something that triggered me to realize my true feelings to her. Maybe I like her; maybe I don't. And there's a chance that I love her, but who's to say?"

I sighed heavily, happy that I vocalized the thoughts in my head.

That feeling whenever I am around her is not unknown.

It's love.

I am in love.

"Confessing and staying true to your feelings is the first step in going for a relationship. And you two did just that. It wasn't easy saying all that, and I know from personal experience." Dan applauded.

The real applause came from Hiro, as he started clapping after my confession.

"Woo! I knew The Couple of Lotus isn't a dream! This is real, and it isn't any sort of simulation!" He
cheered.

I laid my back against the seat and relaxed.

"So... what now?" I asked.

Dan and Hiro exchanged glances once more and nodded.

They stood up and got us by arms.

"Hey!"

"Wait, what are you guys doing?!"

Without a word, they pushed us out of my room and into the balcony.

Oh no!

As soon as I realized what they were doing, it was too late.

They succeeded in getting us outside and locked the balcony door.

Shit!

If Monika was here, she could open the door!

Damn it, if only I took the time to pay attention to how to open it!

Tom pounded against the glass door.

"Hey! What's gotten into you! Open the door!"

Hiro shook his head at us.

"Nope! The longer you hold your feelings, the more you are going to think about it, and that's not a good thing! Believe me; I knew that from personal experience!"

I racked my head to think of an excuse.

"But I want to wait for the best time to confess, maybe at Christmas, you know?!" I suggested, hoping to sway them to see our perspective.

It was like talking to a brick wall; they were adamant in their position.

"You never know if you don't try. Now get to it lovebirds." Dan said, walking back into my room.

Aw shit...

How am I going to confess when everyone is right there?!

"We're so screwed, Brooklyn."

I nodded slowly.

"Yeah, tell me about it."

Without much of a choice, we jumped over to Monika’s balcony and stopped at the door.
"Ready?" Tom asked.

I looked straight at his hard blue eyes.

"Ready when you are, Hill-Top. We're going to confess and leave. In and out."

With a click, Tom slid open the doors to see the girls gathered around a circle.

*Oh no...*

There was an empty vodka bottle in between, and the girls looked tipsy.

Each of their faces was flushed and were trying to keep awake.

They turned to us slowly, their expressions lighting up with glee.

"Well, well, well... look who finally showed up." Monika lazily said. "The two black holes, coming to suck the life out of us."

"Took you... long enough," Natsuki muttered, blinking slowly. "It took an entire bottle for you guys to come over. Boys... am I right girls?"

On the other hand, Yuri had this sharpened and excited look on her face.

She was grinning at me and tilted her head once our eyes finally met.

"Hi, Valkyrie! I am so glad that you finally arrived! Now that you are here, the fun can start! Maybe we can have fun too..." Yuri buzzed, her right eye twitching as she said all that.

*I'm terrified of her.*

"Tommy... I knew *hiccup* you would *hiccup* come. We have so much to *hiccup* do together..." Sayori stated in a drawled manner, keeping her gaze particularly at him.

Tom immediately got the same vibes I got from Yuri.

We looked at each other and tried to think of a plan.

*They are drunk and utterly terrifying!*

*Not only that, confessing to them while they're drunk is not a good idea...*

The only plan we could think of was to escape.

So as soon as we looked at each other, we turned around to see both Monika and Sayori blocking the balcony door.

*W-What?!*

*How did they get here so fast?!*

They looked straight at us at the same time and grinned.

For a split second, I saw Monika's eyes turn into a similar fashion as Yuri's.

Fortunately, it faded just as I noticed it.
"You aren't going anywhere... Vally-poo." Monika cooed, lunging at me.

In the complete surprise, I managed to sidestep her to an extent.

She was able to grab my arm and pull it with immense force.

I had no choice but to follow her to where the other girls were sitting.

Monika sat down with me, never letting go of my arm.

Sayori did the same with Tom and sat down as well.

We eyed the bottle in the middle of the circle.

"So... um, what's this? Spin-the-bottle?" I asked.

They all gave a slow nod.

_Aw fuck._

Whoever spins the bottle gets to decide what the person that gets chosen does.

Sayori without a moment's haste spun the bottle, and it landed on Tom.

_That's not good!_

"Truth or *hiccup* dare, Tommy?" She asked.

But before Tom could answer, Sayori answered for him.

"Dare! Great! I dare you to have fifteen minutes in heaven with me!"

Tom was horrified on the fate that awaited him.

"Wait, I didn't even make a choice!"

With great strength, Sayori pulled him and opened the closet, locking them both inside.

_"What's with this *hiccup* this body-pillow? Whatever... let's have some fun!"

I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth, unable to accept the fate of my friend.

_Hill-Top's gone, and now I am left alone here._

"Valkyrie."

I slowly looked up to the excited girl in front of me.

"You haven't drunk anything... (Have some fine Russian Vodka. And then we can have some fun, you strong man.)"

_Jeez, Louise! This version of Yuri is a repressed Haru!

The purple haired girl poured the clear alcohol in a glass cup.
She kissed the cup and handed it over to me._
"(Here you are...)

Natsuki whined from the kiss.

"Stop speaking that stupid language! And I want to give a kiss too!"

She snatched the glass away from Yuri and kissed it as well.

"There... much better." Natsuki proclaimed, now handing it over to me.

But before she can outstretch her arm, Monika grabbed the glass and drank a small portion of the liquor.

"I just wanted to test the vodka for you, darling. And I hope you don't mind but..."

D-Darling?

*Since when did she have the courage to call me that?*

She pointed to the glass bottle in the middle of the circle.

"I am going to help you drink the liquor down."

I backed away from the advancing perfectionist.

"Wait, wait, wait! Isn't this underaged drinking? How will your parents take the fact that you got drunk?" I exclaimed, hoping to knock some sense into her.

But to no avail, it didn't make a dent in her consciousness.

"Father told me that there would be lots of business parties where I have to drink, so I am getting started early... and stop being such soy-boy, darling. You always liked to leap of faith, right? Beside's this vodka is the one of the best from Russia... I would kill to have more."

*I-I never drank anything before!*

The girl advanced with the glass of vodka in her hands, determined to make me drink it.

"Don't be such a wuss, Val... It's only a shot. It's sooo good..."

"(Drink it. Drink it and you can be mine.)"

*I need a plan...*

*What can distract them both?*

*Ahah!*

*More alcohol!*

*But I am not sure if it will affect Monika at all...*

*She seems to be the most level-headed here.*

"Guys look over there! There's more vodka over there!"

To my surprise, the three girls gullibly looked over to the direction I pointed at.
That was easy.

Even Monika fell for it!

I took the shot from Monika and tossed the liquor behind my shoulder.

"Oh... wow! That was a great shot... but I think... vodka isn't my kind of thing." I faked, trying to come up with the best-elated expression.

Because of their drunken state, it was easy to convince them that I took the shot.

Phew.

"(That isa shame, Val. Maybe a little vodka can help you.)" Natsuki suggested in English.

I mustered up a small smile and shook my head.

"I'm good."

Yuri hiccuped as she gripped the empty bottle.

"It's my turn to spin the bottle..." She whispered.

She spun the bottle, and it kept turning.

Please don't choose me, please don't choose me...

The bottle's top slowly turned either Monika or me.

And it was me.

Shit!

What's the plan now?!

"HAHAHA! Yes!" Yuri cheered, grinning directly at me. "Valkyrie I want you to..."

Natsuki growled at her.

"I swear... if you do anything funny to him, I will-

"You will do what?" Yuri cut off, glaring at the short girl.

Natsuki glared at her rival, her eyes permeated with a blazing fire.

"Is that a challenge?" The irritated girl stood up.

Yuri also stood up, somewhat towering her.

"Yes, it is! What are you going to do?"

The fire in her eyes was quickly dwindling by an unknown source.

"I will... I will!"

Natsuki started to drop down slowly.
But before she can fall to the floor, she stood her ground.

As for Yuri, she struggled to stay awake to deal with her.

The two started to argue about something that I couldn't quite hear.

They were whispering almost, so I leaned in for a closer listen.

But before I can lean in, Monika tugged the side of the shirt.

I turned to her, seeing that she wasn't as drunk as she was used to be.

*Is she back to normal?*

"Val, I think we should leave them alone."

What?

"Why should we? They are about to get into a fight!" I argued.

Monika answered by looking at the two and pointing at them.

I turned to the fight, only to realize that the two were sleeping on the floor.

"Oh..." I muttered.

*They look so cute when they are asleep.*

"We should go someplace else and let them sleep."

I nodded in agreement and followed her lead.

She took my hand and led me to a guest room that we used to play in when we were younger.

I looked around, noticing how the room hasn't changed since then.

*Wow...*

*Nothing is out of place.*

Once we were inside, Monika abruptly closed the door and locked it.

The sudden noise and clacks caused me to turn around.

Monika had her back against the door and was looking down, her bangs covering her green eyes.

"Uh... Monika?" I called, worried about her stiff posture.

She then laid her head back and laughed hysterically.

"Ahaha... hahaha... HAHAHAHA!"

*What the Hell?*

I didn't want any of it, so I crossed my arms and stared at her.

"You okay? Cause you are starting to give some yandere signals over here..."
She stopped laughing and opened her eyes.

They were razor sharp and focused, in the same fashion as Yuri's.

Monika's sweet smile turned into a horrifying grin.

Yup...

*She turned into a yandere.*

*Great, that's fine.*

*It's totally fine.*

I was mostly calm because of how tired I was from the long day, so I looked around for an escape.

Monika started to stroll towards me, her hips swaying with each step she took.

*Hmm, maybe I can...*

*Uh oh.*

My eyes caught onto her hips, instantly reminding me of my dream of her.

Immediately, after my heart started thumping, and all traces of my exhaustion were now replaced by overwhelming fear.

*If she gets too close to me, then I don't know what will happen!*

*Shit!*

*I need to get out of here and get Hill-Top out ASAP!*

But before I can outmaneuver her, she grabbed onto me.

Her focused eyes were lidded with lust, as she pressed herself against me.

"Tell me, Darling... did you kiss anyone while I was gone?"

I shook my head.

"No, of course not! What makes you think that?"

She pushed me down onto the bed and straddled me.

"M-Monika?! Gah, get off me!" I demanded, trying to pull her off of me.

The girl growled, intimidating me to the very core.

Monika knew that I was frightened, and she giggled as she slowly moved up to my ear.

I tried my best to stay calm, but my hormones and the ticklish feeling in my heart started to get the better of me.

"Well, I thought you and Chiyoko had some affair. And I got a little jealous."

*Wait!*
Monika got jealous?

Does that mean she likes me back?!

"Chiyoko and I only friends, Mon. I already told you that. That was my first time meeting her in years." I explained, masking the inner struggle inside of me.

She sighed, her hot breath trailing down my neck.

"Good," Monika whispered in my ear. "Because I would have messed you up if you did."

Oookay...!

I felt her finger trace my chest in small circles.

"A-Are you done now?" I asked, rearing my head to look straight at her.

She frowned and then sighed.

Her hand on my chest moved towards my wrist.

She then pulled my wrist towards her.

My hand felt something soft and warm.

Oh no...

Am I touching her boobs?!

I looked down to see my hand taking a handful of her chest.

She pushed my hand into her chest.

Monika bit her lips from the sensation.

No way...

She's not wearing a bra...

"Darling..." She called with difficulty. "T-Tell me how you feel about me."

S-She wants me to confess!

This is it!

I took a deep breath, knowing that saying this would change our relationship forever.

It's now or never.

"I... I like you, Monika. I-I like you more than a friend!" I confessed.

The grip on my wrist loosened as she stared into my onyx black eyes.

"As a what then?" She asked.

My heart pounded against my chest, nervous about what to say next.
"There's no coming back from this."

"Yes! I like you more than a friend! And not as your best friend or sister! I like you, Monika!"

No...

I don't like her.

I love her.

Telling her I like her isn't enough!

She smiled.

"Good... now let me reward you."

Monika closed her eyes and leaned in.

She puckered her lips at me and expected me to follow along.

Wait, wait, wait!

Monika wants me to kiss her?!

I can't believe it!

That wet dream isn't a dream anymore!

No...

No, this is wrong!

She's drunk and taking her advantage of her is evil!

Even though she "accepted" my confession.

I closed my eyes and reluctantly leaned in.

As I leaned in, I heard her snore lightly.

W-What?!

I opened my eyes to see her fast asleep.

Are you kidding me?!

She falls asleep when I poured my heart out for her?

Well...

She didn't say she liked me back and chances are she isn't going to remember anything...

But she wanted to kiss me!

Isn't that some sort of progress?

I don't think I can confess to her again...
But in any case, I should leave her be in this bed.

With a frown, I stood up from the bed and carried her to help her sleep.

Once I got her in my arms, Monika latched onto me tightly, preventing me from ever releasing her.

I laid her on the bed and made she was comfortable.

With that done, I decided to take my leave.

I reached out to her arms and tried to pull them off, only for her to whimper.

"P-Please don't leave me..." She mumbled in her sleep.

I guess I have to sleep beside her again.

Without much of choice, I laid down in bed with her, allowing her to grab onto me.

Her soothing touch made me smile, and I hugged her back.

Instead of her curling her legs on mine, I did that to her and brought her closer to me.

With little distance to share between us, I made sure she fell asleep in my arms.

"I love you, Monika. And I am sorry for not realizing it sooner."

Argh... What time is it?

Before I woke up, I realized how warm I felt.

What's going on?

Where am I?

I slowly opened my eyes to see Val sleeping right beside me.

He's here...

In the guest room where we always played in.

With a relieved sigh, I smiled and nuzzled him.

"Good morning, Darling." I whispered.

To my surprise, he smiled back at me.

"Morning, Mon." He whispered back, prompting me to scream.

But before I could, he put his finger on my lips.

"You probably shouldn't scream. Mostly because everyone is still around and asleep as well." He reasoned calmly, never opening his eyes.

H-He heard me when I called him Darling?!

But it looks like he is indifferent about it.
I pouted at him.

"Okaaay..." I whined, rubbing my eyes of any sleep. "Can you tell me what happened last night? Everything is a blur in my head..."

Val opened his eyes and looked at me.

"You want the short version or the long version?"

Since it was the morning, I needed to take it slow.

"Short one, please."

He chuckled at my choice.

"Alright. So you kept calling Hill-Top and me to come over to your house so we can have a sleepover, and we did. But when we came over, you girls were wasted and forced us to play spin bottle. Nothing too serious happened and everyone was knocked out except us, and you led me here to sleep with you."

I nodded slowly to understand what he said.

Who's Hill-Top?

*There's something missing in his short version...*

*No matter how much he tries to hide it from me, I can find it out easily.*

"Val, there's something you aren't telling me." I pointed out.

I felt him shiver a bit when I said that.

*Bingo.*

*There is something.*

"What happened before we went to sleep?" I asked.

My heart stopped at the sudden realization of what happened.

*We...*

*We had...*

*Sex?!*

"Wait, before you jump into that conclusion, I didn't do anything of the sort." Val calmly stated. "We did nothing like that. You asked me a couple of questions before falling asleep."

*Right, I don't exactly remember him taking me.*

*My clothes never came off since last night.*

*A couple of questions...*

*It's hard to remember them but I remember-*
I remember what I asked him.

"Darling... tell me how you feel about me."

I told him to confess to me.

But I don't remember what he said to me.

"W-Was one of the questions I asked you... have to do with..."

I gulped.

"Liking me...?"

His eye's shot up in surprise as if he didn't expect me to say that.

He gave me a meek nod.

My heart pounded on what the answer was.

*Does he like me?*

"I-I... please tell me what you said."

*If he rejects me, then it's over.*

*I don't know what I'll do after that.*

*We were together as friends, but I doubt he will see me as anything more.*

*This is my fault.*

*I shouldn't have pressed him about it.*

*It would've been better if I accepted his explanation.*

*Now our relationship will always be ruined.*

*I guess I should've known better.*

"I... I like you, Monika."

...

W-WHAT?!

*H-H-HE DID NOT JUST SAY THAT!*

"As a-?"

"No, not as a friend or best friend, or even a sister. I like you as something more than that."

My heart fluttered with joy with every word he said.

*He likes me! He likes me! He likes me!"*
I knew it!

We will always be together!

This is our fate!

Wait... am I hearing him right?

"Y-You like me...?" I muttered, shocked by his confession.

He looked away.

"Yeah, I do. I liked you all along."

Today was the happiest day of my life, as all my hard work finally paid off.

This was the start of something new between us.

And because of that, I cried.

Not out of sadness, or anger, but rather out of pure euphoria.

I was happy.

Now no one will be able to take him away from me.

"Monika? Are you okay?" He asked, calmly.

I wiped the tears from my eyes and struggled to look up to him.

"Thank you. Thank you for saying those words, Darling. I always wanted to hear those words come out of your lips for a decade now."

I finally looked up to him, to which I was greeted with confusion.

"So... do you like me back or-"

"Yes! Yes, I do! I like you back, you nimrod! I always liked you!"

Val adorned his signature goofy smile.

"Oh... my bad. Again, I am sorry for taking so long. I didn't want you to wait any longer..."

I hugged him tightly.

"It's okay, Darling," I whispered, barely containing my excitement.

He hugged me back as well.

"It's okay."
Date

We held each other in arms for a while.
The warm feeling in my heart surged throughout my body.
And this time, I wasn't afraid of being overwhelmed by it, instead, I welcomed it.
For some reason, this feeling felt familiar. It was as if I felt this when I was younger.
So this is what I was missing all along.
With her in my arms, I have nothing to worry about anymore.
Everything worked out for the better...
Except-
I pulled away from Monika hastily, shocking her in the process.
"Val?! What's wrong?" She asked, surprised by the push.
I rubbed my face intensely.
"Gah... I get the notion that Yuri and Natsuki also like me." I muttered.
I reared my head to her.
"Please tell that isn't true," I begged. "I don't know how I will react if that's the case!"
Monika gave a nervous smirk and looked away.
"Welllll..."

Fuck!
I winced at the truth, to which Monika giggled.
"Don't worry darling, they're still young. So that means love hasn't given up on them yet. I am sure they will find someone else that will like them."
But...
They'll go through heartbreak.
And I don't want anyone to go through that!
...
But, there isn't anything I can do.
I already made my choice.
And that choice is something I made a long time ago, whether I knew it or not.
But after this, we are going to be close friends.

Hopefully...

"Yeah, I guess you're right. When I boxing downstairs, I was thinking about that."

Monika shifted her body towards me and rested her elbow on the pillow.

"I didn't know you can box, darling. And what were you thinking about?" She asked with a sweet smile.

Wait...

Darling?!

Did she call me that when we were younger...?

I flinched at her nickname for me.

"D-Darling? Is that my new name now?" I asked.

She leaned in and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

"Yep. I always wanted to call you that. And calling you my darling makes me excited!" She exclaimed, nuzzling me on the cheek.

I never thought Monika would be so much of a sweetheart...

"If that's the case... then I'll call you my sweetheart. Is that what it is?"

Monika pulled away from the nuzzling and grinned happily.

"You will?!"

I nodded reluctantly, now seeing her pleased state.

"Yay!" She squealed, crushing me in a hug.

The strength she displayed managed to make me gasp for air.

I patted her shoulder to let go of me, but instead, she hugged tighter.

"You can call me your sweetheart as much you want me to call you darling, darling!"

H-Her chest...

She's not wearing a bra!

It's melting into mine!

And hey, it isn't perv-ish now that we are a couple!

Monika pulled away, ecstatic and jumpy from all that.

Seeing her so happy makes me happy as well.

I haven't seen her so happy since we were younger...
As time went on, her feelings for me grew.

That's why she behaved so strangely when we got older.

She liked me a lot...

"Anyway, what were the thoughts you had while boxing?" She asked, keeping her grin on.

*Usually, Monika would be jealous if I brought any girl up.***

*But now?***

*She doesn't care!***

"Well, I thought of how each girl didn't really click with me. Like how Yuri can speak Russian and bring up interesting conversations, but I don't know if it will go beyond that. And how Natsuki, despite how we first met each other, she eventually warmed up to me. Kind of like how you did when we met on Monday."

Monika nodded at my thought process.

"So... you don't have any feelings for them, right?" She asked, slowly.

I shook my head.

"I don't think so, no," I replied. "I don't have any romantic feelings for them."

The perfectionist sighed from my answer as if it was out of relief.

"Good! I don't think I am up for a harem. Or a multi-person relationship."

She then dropped her head and moved closer to me.

Her eyes were lidded with something familiar and yet, foreign.

"I want you all... for... myself," Monika muttered, her hot breath tickling my lips. "Okay?"

The girl's unnerving behavior caused me to flick her forehead.

"Ow!"

I crossed my arms and looked straight ahead.

"Monika, I am not one for yanderes okay? That was borderline obsessive ya know?"

She whimpered from my scolding.

"B-But I am not a yandere! I really don't want to share you with anyone!" The perfectionist claimed, rubbing her forehead from the apparent pain.

*Right...*

*Manipulation, blackmail, and possessiveness.*

*Totally not a yandere.*

*But, hey.*
I fell in love with her, even if she is a bit of that.

Her heart redeems it all...

Even if she is not really doing any that now.

Except for possessiveness.

She is really possessive.

"That's what a yandere would say, you know?" I replied, causing her to whine.

"Jeez! Is this what they call an abusive relationship?" She groaned, crossing her arms as well.

I couldn't help but chuckle at her little outburst and patted her head

"Nah, I am just teasing you, sweetheart," I cooed. "I know you are trying your best to keep me with you. But don't worry, I won't let another girl into my heart except you, okay?"

Monika turned around and smiled meekly.

"You sound like a dork when you are trying to back yourself up. But okay."

With that, I pulled my hand away from her head.

We stayed in silence for a few seconds before she turned around.

"Hey, I always wanted to know how you and Yuri met. I was surprised when you two recognized each other and started to speak in Russian."

I gulped from her question.

"Um... about that..."

Monika noticed my hesitation and immediately shifted towards me.

"What happened?" She asked, coldly.

I rubbed the back of my head from the event.

"Well, I was in a hurry to get to class. But when I got to school, I slowed down and realized I wasn't really that late. Tom introduced me to Sayori there, but the school bell rang. So I got up and running and..."

She sighed.

"Let me guess, you bumped into her, right?"

I nodded with guilt.

"And not only that, I... touched her chest, by mistake of course," I admitted. "After that, she said something in Russian. Being half-Russian, I replied back in her native tongue and introduced ourselves. Right after that, I got up and left for class."

Monika looked downwards, her bangs covering her eyes from me.

She wasn't looking at the bed, rather at her chest.
"Monika?"

Her hands traveled up her sides and onto her chest.

_Not again..._

She squeezed herself in front of me.

My face burned up as I saw her grope herself.

"How did they feel?" She asked without looking up to me.

_What?!_

_How am I supposed to answer that?!_

"Uh... well. I... guess they felt good?" I answered.

The perfectionist sighed in defeat.

"She has a bigger rack than me. Every girl in Ainu and Dokisai talk about her E-cup." She muttered.

Monika then looked up to me, giving up in touching herself.

"You like them big, right?" She asked, looking up to me.

"W-What?"

"Aren't Yuri's tits big? You like them, right? They are bigger than mine..." Monika elaborated.

_I guess they are bigger..._

_But that shouldn't make much of an impact._

_Monika's are great, just the way they are._

_I never did like big boobs as much like other guys..._

My hesitance to give an answer caused her to curl up in a ball.

It hurt to see her like that.

I laid my hand on her shoulder, causing her to look up to me.

"You're right."

Her green eyes started to glisten in pain.

"Yuri's rack is big, but that doesn't mean I like them. I don't like boobs that much, Mon."

She sniffed.

"Then what kind of rack do you like? Small ones?"

I smirked and shook my head.

"Nope, yours."
Monika blinked for a second to process what exactly I said before her jaw dropped.

"M-M-Mine?" She stammered, flustered by my comment.

I resisted the urge to show how much I liked them.

"Yeah, I like your um..."

My face burned on realizing what I was saying.

_We just became a couple and now we are talking about this?!_

_What's wrong with me?!_

"I-I like your b-boobs, Monika. I think they are the perfect size for me." I confessed, looking away from her gaze.

We stayed in silence for a couple of seconds before she took the lead.

"How are they perfect?" She asked, looking straight at me with a confident appearance.

_Ah, shit..._

_I have hit almost total rock bottom!_

"Well, I like how they are not too big, or not too small. In fact, it's just right for me. I-If it can fit in my hand, then I am going to like it. And I find it attractive that way too." I admitted.

I dared to look at Monika straight in the eye, only for her to look away.

"W-Wow... I keep getting self-conscious when about boob size, since Yuri's up there. But now that you told me that you like mine, then I have no reason to feel bad about myself!"

With a determined grit, she looked up to me.

"And I know that my size is actually pretty decent too! So I am never getting jealous of boobs ever again!" She declared.

I gave a nervous smile at her, mainly how uncomfortable I felt about talking about the topic.

All of a sudden, Monika opened up and puffed her chest out to me.

_Wait, what is she doing?!_

She caught onto how confused I felt, smiling devilishly at me.

"Now, since you like them so much... you can touch them."

_Whaaaaat?!_

_I can touch them?_

_This has to be a dream..._

_Another wet dream!

I pinched myself to wake myself up, but nothing happened.
Yep, this is the real world.

I leaned into the attractive offer.

No!

This is wrong!

I backed away as fast as possible, causing her to raise an eyebrow.

"What's wrong? Why won't you touch me?!" She fussed.

Maybe it's because we haven't made it that far in our relationship!

"Monika, I am not going to touch you. I am a pervert, but I am not that much of a pervert."

She groaned.

"But we are a couple! I told you that if we became a couple then I wouldn't mind you touching me..."

I rolled my eyes.

"Yeah, I know we are. But we aren't alone if we were alone then maybe..." I answered.

Monika frowned at my answer.

"Prude!"

W-What?!

"How? How am I a prude? Isn't this the right thing? Besides, isn't the literature club in your room?"

She shook her head.

"No, it isn't! And so what? My parents are coming at noon and the looks of it, no one is awake. I am offering you to touch me, not the other way around! So it's okay!"

That's still not okay!

And...

Wait a minute.

This basically means that Monika is more of a pervert than I am!

Despite the revelation, I grew tired of her insistence to touch her.

"Alright, alright! I'll touch you but only for a few seconds! Jeez!"

When I relented, she smiled flirtatiously once again.

"That's more than enough for me." She playfully teased, as she puffed out her chest.

Just get this over with, I want to start the day up.

I put my hands in front of her and pressed against her chest.
"Aaah!" She moaned, shocking my heart into life.

She gave a few labored breaths at my touch, before recomposing herself.

"S-Sorry! I'll pull away now!"

As soon as I was about to pull away, my wrists were stopped by her.

"N-No... don't." She muttered. "I was taken a bit by surprise since I didn't expect your hands would be so firm..."

Oh...

"Can I pull away now?"

She shook her head at me.

"If you pull away, then you're a prude."

*I pulled away from her, forcing through her grip.

She pouted and whined at my decision.

"Are you serious right now? I want to do something lewd, and this is how you treat me?"

I couldn't help but smirk.

"Monika, I too have a libido. And right now, I am not feeling it."

She rolled her eyes.

"If your hormones are dead, then I wonder if you get any wet dreams."

I tensed up at the mention of that.

*Oh no...

*Why did I tense up?!

And as usual, Monika noticed my shift in my stance.

"Ooooh... so you do get them." She whispered. "Darling can actually have some naughty thoughts, huh?"

I gave her warning glare.

"Hey! You're the one to offer your chest to me!" I pointed out.

She shrugged.

"It because I was feeling it. I am naughty when I am naughty."

*That doesn't even make any sense!*

"Whatever... yeah I do have them. And they aren't as frequent as a few years ago. But this one I can
actually remember." I admitted.

For some reason, Monika was interested.

"Wait... you had one you can remember?"

I nodded reluctantly.

"Since we are a couple... tell me about it!"

Tell her about it?

What am I going to say?

"Oh yeah, sure. I dreamed of you coming to my house and to help me keep watch of it. Once my mom left, we started making out and leading up to you giving me a blowjob! And might I say, it felt great!"

Is that what am I going to say?

"I... I um, don't feel comfortable talking about it." I muttered, twiddling my thumbs while at it.

And this time, Monika actually backed off.

"Oh... it's okay. But there's something I really need to know."

I looked up to her, anticipating what she was going to say.

"In your dream, did I... come to your house when your mom was about to go meet up with my mom?"

My eyes shot up in complete bafflement.

What the fuck?

I stared at her with suspicion.

Was that dream real?!

"Yeah, it is... how did you know?" I asked.

Monika blushed and looked at me with shock.

"Um... I had the same dream as you... I think." She muttered.

How is this possible?

What about the acts we did?

"Okay, so in your dream, what did I do to you?" I hesitantly asked.

Her face burned even redder, to the point where she covered herself.

"W-W-Well, it's actually me doing it all. For some reason, I was a lot more confident and audacious. So, I remember kissing you, and then it heated up where I gave you fellatio..."

My jaw dropped at the coincidence.
"T-That's what happened in my dream too..." I murmured. "D-Did um... you know..."

Monika turned around and screamed into the pillow.

"Yes! You throat-fucked me in your dream and I loved it!" She admitted.

I felt my soul leave me when I heard the muffled words come from the pillow.

My mind couldn't believe how we had the same dream yesterday.

Is it true?

Are we bound by fate?

It has to be.

We had the same dream...

Not everyone can have the same dream, let alone a very similar one.

"I'm sorry." I absently-mindedly said.

That caused Monika to pull away from the pillow.

"W-What? Why? Why are you sorry?" She asked.

My face burned from the intimate details of the situation and dream.

"Well... as weird as it sounds, forcing myself into your mouth. If I had some control then-"

*SMACK*

My left cheek stung in pain.

"Are you even listening to yourself right now? How can you have control in my dream? Or in your dream? Yeah, I know lucid dreaming is a thing, but seriously? You're missing the point! I loved it, alright?! Get a grip of yourself!"

I rubbed my cheek as I processed the thoughts.

"You're right... my bad. But know I won't ever-"

Monika then kissed my right cheek.

"Darling, I know. I know."

She's the girl I need in my life.

Someone to make sure I am rational.

Someone to make sure I am happy.

And someone to have by my side.

I kissed Monika on the cheek as well.

She gasped at my action.
I pulled away soon after.

"Sometimes I need to show some love too, right?"

Monika smiled at the change of pace.

"If that's the case, take the next step."

*Take her out on a date, I'm guessing?*

*That's what couples do right?*

"Alright, Monika... do you want to go out to with me?"

She tackled me onto the bed, squeezing the life out of me.

"Of course, you moron! I will go out with you! Hahaha! Finally, you're getting the swing of things!"

I hugged back, petting her long brown hair in the process.

"It had to happen sooner or later, I can't be an idiot to love all the time, right?"

Before Monika can reply to me, the door opened.

"Oh, there you are, Monnie! And- oh my..."

We looked at the door, mortified from whoever caught us.

*It's Monika's mom!*

"Val? Is that you there?"

I meekly waved at her.

"Hello, Keiko..." I called.

Monika's mom knelt against the door and sighed dreamily.

"It finally happened, hasn't it? You two finally let the tension you had as teenagers and let it out in one passionate, ravenous night! I am glad that I went to that business trip with your father!"

We felt our faces burn from her conclusion.

"N-No, that's not it Keiko!"

"Mooooom! We didn't have sex! We only slept together for the night!"

She shrugged.

"Well, it's better than not being a couple... I am not wrong on that, am I?"

For the first time in a while, we agreed with her other conclusion.

And as a result, Monika's mom smiled.

"It's about time. I didn't know it would take that long for you, Val."
I chuckled nervously.
"Yeah, sorry."

She waved at me dismissively.
"Don't say sorry to me, say it to your girlfriend!"

R-Right...

Monika's my girlfriend now.

"Sorry for taking so long, Monika. I will make sure that I won't be slow to do all that again." I repeated.

Monika gave me an awkward smile.
"Um... it's okay, I forgive you." She managed to say.

Monika's mom put her hands on her hips and looked at the both of us.

"I am so proud of both of you. And from the looks of it, I hope that you two have a healthy relationship. Ah, what am I saying?! I am thinking as if you two are getting married! Have fun you two!"

She closed the door, leaving us to our devices.

Monika pushed herself off of me and sat up.

"Wow..." Was all I can let out. "Your Mom and my mom sometimes make everything between us awkward."

She rolled her eyes.

"It's not sometimes, it all the time."

I looked at her nuzzled her cheek.

"Come on, let's have that date."

In response, she pushed me away.

"Bleh, you're getting too lovey-dovey. Let's wash up and have our date in the afternoon, alright?"

I pouted at her.

"Okay..."

As if having the same effect when she pouts at me, she looked away.

"S-Stop looking at me like that!"

I continued staring at her.

"Argh! Okay, okay! We'll have our date at noon, alright? How does that sound?"

I smiled at her.
"That's good enough... now let's talk about me getting out of here."

She tapped her chin in thought.

"I think the girls are hungover from last night, I told them to drink water as well, but they wanted to get drunk fast."

I raised an eyebrow.

"Isn't alcohol a diuretic? How come you aren't hurting to go to the bathroom?"

She sighed.

"Val, I went to the bathroom at night after we went to sleep and another in the morning. I am fine."

_That does explain a lot, no one has a bladder of steel..._

"I think Hill-Top is awake now, I'll go ahead and get him out," I said, getting off the bed to get Tom. "Once I get him, we're gonna jump over."

Monika laid in bed and stretched upwards.

"Go ahead; I will be here. But..."

I turned around to what she had to say.

"We're going to meet up at Akari Hall to some shopping first, okay? I wanted to do some window-shopping for Christmas and with you around, it will go by quick."

_Shopping?_

_I hate shopping!_

_Well, sometimes._

_With Monika around, it should be fun._

"Fine by me. See you at...?"

"Eleven, a girl needs to get ready, especially with her first date!"

_Fair point._

I waved at her.

"Alright, see you there. Bye, Mon."

She waved back me.

"Bye, darling!"

With that, I left the guest room and entered her room.

Once I entered there, I noticed the girls in their respective sleeping bags, still sleeping from last night. Tom was near the balcony door and was looking outside.
I cleared my throat to let him know that I was here.

"Hill-Top?"

He didn't turn around.

"Brooklyn, some sides of people shouldn't be seen to anyone. So remind me if Sayori gets drunk, to get something to knock her out immediately..."

Holy shit...

What happened?

"So... did you confess?"

He nodded slowly.

"Yep, she just fell asleep a few minutes ago. To think she had the energy for round two..."

Tom turned around and looked at me.

"Did you know that Monika has a body-pillow of you?"

A...

What?!

"S-She does?!"

"That's what I said, right? Yeah, she has one of you. It's obvious she has had the hots for you for a very long time, you know."

I rubbed my face to focus once more.

"Ugh, I'll look into that later. For now, let's go back home. I got a date!"

Tom didn't respond to me really, apparently still shaken up from yesterday and jumped across the balcony.

I followed him right after he jumped.

"Me too, and I hope we don't have another fifteen minutes of heaven again." He muttered. "Sayori has some fetishes that I kind of scare me."

Did they have...

Rough sex?!

Jeez, Louise!

Once we got into my room, we noticed Dan and Hiro already left home, leaving only Tom's stuff behind.

He took his bag and left not soon after.

Alright...
I should probably investigate that body-pillow real quick.

Hopefully, it's something mildly tame.

Hopefully.

I jumped over again and made sure not to wake anyone up when getting the body-pillow out.

Once I opened her closet, the first thing to hit me was the pillow.

I grabbed in time and placed it on the bed.

Okay, let's see h-

It wasn't anything tame, and it completely jarred my very thoughts.

The top of the body-pillow is what interested me the most.

That's...

That's a picture of my profile picture!

Did she really print it out and paste it there!

And not to mention...

Four different shades of red lipstick plastered all over my face.

The rough handling and beat sides must mean it was hugged a lot.

Did she use it to cuddle the ever living Hell out of it?!

Oh man...

Monika sure did have feelings for me when we were younger.

Being a teenager meant that she needed to release those feelings onto this pillow.

By kissing.

By kissing of course.

Even then I don't know if that was enough for her.

Gah, I should put this away and stop thinking about it!

Who knows what she does with that pillow at night!

I picked up the pillow and carefully placed it in the closest.

Once I did that, I jumped over to my home.

Alright!

Time to get for a date with Monika.

...
*Wait!*

*I have a date with Monika?!*

*Oh Jeez!*

*Oh, Lord!*

*Get the water!*

*What am I going to do on that date?!*

*It's a date!*

*We are going to be holding hands...*

*Kissing...*

*Eating...*

*Shopping...*

*And spending time with each other!*

*Why am I getting so nervous over this?!*

**Probably because I am taking the next step to love.**

*Agggh!*

*This is going to be so weird!*

*But...*

*I guess it's the first date.*

*And I hope we are going to have more dates in the future...*

*Because I want her to know that I...*

*I love her.*

Never before did I panic so much in my life.

Right now, I was in my room, pacing around to keep myself calm.

My mom was with me, worried about how scared I was for my first date.

I was never in one place, I moved around and kept interacting with different things to bide the time.

"Monnie, you need to stay calm. Val is also nervous like you too! There's nothing to worry about! After all, it's the first date, right?"
That didn't soothe me however as it made my fidgeting worse.

"S-So what?! I am worried if things go south during the date! What if I make so awkward that it destroys all of our feelings of love?! What would happen to us?! What would happen to our friendship?" I rambled.

My mother chuckled at my outburst.

"You're overreacting, Monika. You were friends for a very long time! There's nothing that can go wrong!" She assured.

I gripped the side of the desk I was currently near.

"What if I am underreacting?! I have to be a little paranoid on our first date, right?!" I stated.

My mom walked up to me and hugged me.

"You'll be fine, my little girl. Val has known you for a very long time, so even if you make a little mishap here and there, he wouldn't care. He has always liked you, even if he didn't know it at first. Just treat this date like a usual hang out with him, but with a touch of romance. I am sure you will do fine."

I sighed, knowing my mom was right.

"Yeah, you're right... I did mess up a lot when I was around him, and he's used to it anyway. So you're right! Having a date with him is nothing more than a hangout with a touch of romance!"

My mom then scratched my hair.

"That's my girl! Now go get your lover!"

With a battle cry, I broke free of my mother's grasp and dashed out of the house.

*I am going to have the best time of my life with him!*

*And there's nothing that is going to stop me!*

As I walked to the city, I made sure the dress I was wearing looked clean and perfect.

It was a simple white dress, as I took into consideration of Val's liking of sensible and straightforward things.

I also made sure to wash my hair with my favorite shampoo and conditioner, so that he would notice the aroma of my hair and shininess of it.

But the part of my appearance that I like the most is my undergarments.

I couldn't help but smirk at how lewd things were going to get.

*Val groped me a little this morning, and I have to admit...*

*I got turned on, so I was disappointed when he pulled away.*

*So, if we do get into something... naughty, I came prepared.*

*I am wearing very skimpy underwear, and my thighs are somewhat visible for him to see.*
If we get into some sort of bump, he will have a good view of my butt...

Ooooh...

Let's not forget that I am not wearing a bra either, so going out like this is very risky.

Hopefully, we aren't going to do any running...

All of this makes me quiver in excitement.

...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?!

I am such a pervert!

Going out like this in public is just indecent and slutty!

And it's our first date too!

Oh no, oh no, oh no!

This is a terrible mistake!

I should probably go back home and change!

Well... I don't think my boobs will jiggle that much if I do run.

This dress is big enough to mask that...

But it was too late.

The man of my dreams was currently leaning against a pole, apparently waiting for me.

...

Damn it!

Since when did I even get here?!

I didn't even notice the change in scenery!

Whatever.

Look at him. He looks so oblivious.

How is he so calm?!

Am I the only one to be nervous?

Doesn't he know what will happen if he messes up, or even if I mess up?

Then it would be the end of the relationship!

Hmm, maybe Mom was right.

I think I am overreacting.
Val started to look around as if looking for me.

*I bet he doesn't know that I am here.*

His gaze stopped at me, and he smiled.

It was the dorky smile that he always put on whenever he saw me.

And that smile is one of the reasons why I fell in love with him.

Because of that, I smiled back at him.

He jogged up to me and greeted me.

"H-Hey, Mon." The man greeted, obviously nervous.

I also shared his nervousness.

"Hi... D-Darling." I greeted back, regretting calling him that in public.

I felt that everyone was staring at us and criticizing our every move.

We couldn't break the ice between each other, making the whole interaction awkward.

"So... um, did you just get here?" I asked, trying to strike up a conversation.

He cleared his throat.

"No, I came a bit earlier than I should have." He answered, looking away.

*Argh, you idiot...*

*You were supposed to say: "I just got here!"*

*But I would instead want an honest Val than a dishonest one.*

We stood around for a bit before Val put his hand out.

I stared at his hand, looking at it with suspicion.

For some reason, I treated it as foreign and shied away from it.

"Um... aren't couples supposed to hold hands?"

I turned on my heel to clear my head and regain my composure.

Instead, I saw couples, walking hand in hand, laughing and enjoying each other's company.

*They're having so much fun...*

"Yeah, but..."

I turned to Val with a nervous frown.

"I feel... scared, Val. I don't know what to do for our first date."

He was taken aback from my little confession.
But ultimately, he smiled.

"We don't have to follow what other couples do okay? We can do our own thing at our own pace. We can take it slow or keep it fast, but at the end of the day, I want to enjoy this special day..."

He poked my nose.

"With you."

You always find the right things to say...

Never did you fail on making me happy again.

His caring charm made me giggle.

I took his hand and beamed at him.

"Okay, cowboy. I know we said we are going to do some shopping, but... let's do what you want to do first!" I suggested.

My darling tapped his chin in thought.

"Um... sure. Let's start with something easy. Do you want to walk into the City Fair? Maybe scout out something to do?"

Wait...

The City Fair is today?

Oh yeah!

I forgot about that!

We are going to have so much fun today!

Without a moment to hesitate, I gripped his hand and ran forward.

"Jeez! Monika, slow down! Let's take our time!" He complained, stumbling forward.

I kept running with him, excited about the fun and romance we were going to have together.

The Fair had many things in store for us, such as ring toss, goldfish scooping, and Senbonhiki.

"But there is so much to do here! I want to do them all!" I replied, taking in all the stands near the mall.

He groaned from my enthusiasm.

"Alright, we'll try to do all of them. Which one do you want to start with?" He asked, slowing down his pace for me.

The stand closest to us had Senbonhiki or a lottery of some sort, that has to with pulling strings attached to a treat, with some strings being fakes.

"That one." I pointed, to which he nodded.

There were two of those in the stand, so I took one, and he took the other.
We had three chances to get a treat, and if we failed all three, we got a complimentary bag of chips.

I let Val start first since he allowed me to choose first.

He carefully chose his string and pulled it, however, there was nothing attached to it.

That didn't discourage him, however, as he pulled another with the same result.

I couldn't help but laugh at his misfortune as he pulled yet again with no reward.

"Bah, Lady Luck's not on my side today. It's probably the country. If I were in Vegas, my luck would be a ten." He grumbled.

And now it was my turn.

I pulled the string down, and with it was a small purse.

_Oooh, this looks decent..._

Feeling lucky, I pulled again, and this time I got a cup of noodles.

_Eh, it's spicy combo flavor. It's worth a try._

I looked at Val and blew him a raspberry at the rewards I was getting, to which he rolled his eyes.

Finally, I pulled the last string I had and got a free ice cream pass.

_Yeah! Woo-hoo!_

I gave the passes to Val and the placed noodles into the purse I got.

"You just got lucky." He muttered, walking to another stand.

I couldn't help but grin triumphantly at my winnings.

The next stand he went to was a goldfish-scooping contest, to which I beat him easily.

My victories at each stand caused him to become demoralized and almost made him want to quit competing with me.

However, he had hoped at one particular stand.

_The gun-shooting stand._

He picked up the BB gun and checked it out, feeling the weight in his hands.

_Val looks confident about this..._

He turned to me with a smirk.

"I played a lot of shooters, Monika. I know the in's and out's of a gun. Let's see if you can compete with me." He boldly claimed.

His claim made me fire up the competitive spirit in me.

"If there's anything you can do... I can do better! I'm in it for that stuffed panda!" I countered, picking up the gun.
The gun felt relatively heavy and off for me, despite being the same thing as Val's.

"Alright, we'll see about that. If I win this, then I going to get that replica BB gun as a reward!"

I rolled my eyes at his obvious bluff.

Okay...

So is a BB gun.

I push the lever downwards to cock in another BB...

That sounds simple enough.

I looked back to Val to see him effortlessly snap to targets with surgeon-like precision.

Oh...

The stand's referee told us to get ready and pick our targets.

Val brought his gun up to his sights and readied his shots.

I tried to mimic his stance but had to make some adjustments, since I didn't know what to do.

"Start!"

Before I can fire a BB, I heard a bunch of clangs on Val's end.

I turned towards the clangs to see him quickly and efficiently fire at the targets.

His onyx black eyes demonstrated a focus that I had only seen when he was serious or taking an exam.

The way he flicked the lever at each shot and snapping onto targets with such speed and vigor, surprised me.

And before I even knew it, he was done with his side, and all with bullseyes.

"Winner!" The referee declared, bringing up Val's hand.

Being the modest guy he was, he shrugged and picked his prize.

I really wanted that stuffed panda...

To my surprise, he pointed at the panda plushie and held it close to him.

No way... He's keeping it for himself!

That no-good stinking-!

"Here."

He offered the small plushie to me.

I looked up to him in surprise, to which he had that goofy smile on.

And why would I ever think otherwise?
Even when I least expect it, he would always come for me.

I hugged him tightly, glad to have such a caring person as my boyfriend.

With Monika hugging me tightly, I couldn't help but pat her head.

She's so adorable...

Especially when I tease her.

Her chest felt firm and soft...

It was as if there was nothing to keep it in place.

Wait, wait, wait!

D-Did Monika come to this date without a bra?!

Oh man...

Oh no...

Does she like to tease me like this?

How can I counter something so lewd?!

I mean, I am very humbled by the fact that she wouldn't come without a bra for me but...

It just makes it difficult not to think about her like that!

Monika is hot.

There's a reason why she is the sweetheart of Dokisai...

I wonder how she looks without any clothes-

Gahhhh!

Get a grip, Val!

She is my girlfriend and we aren't at the level to see each other like that!

Are we...?

We did get into pretty awkward situations together in our teen years but-

No!

No exceptions!

I don't care if all that teenage passion and angst builds up to those thoughts!

She pulled away from me and noticed my shaken state.

Monika looked up to me with a flirty smile.
"You're so cute when you get flustered, darling. Now I wonder why you are so nervous all of a sudden..."

T-That smile...

Why does it turn me on so much?!  
Since when did it have the ability to do that?!  
Relax, me...

It's just a smile.

A perfect, playful, and sexy smile.

Nothing else but that.

"I-I-It's nothing! Don't worry too much about it, okay? L-Let's get some ice cream with those passes you got." I dismissed, hoping that she would forget my anxiety around her.

For a split second, she leered at me before coming to a conclusion.

"Okay..." She said, taking my arm and pressing her chest against. "Darling."

H-How in the world did she know it was because of that?!  
My arm... I can feel it being enveloped by her boobs!

She then started to walk slowly.

That sneaky, devilish girl...

Monika wants to tease me as much as possible.

Maybe as revenge for not noticing her earlier...

I don't know what I can do counter it but, I going have to try my best to ignore her warm, large boobs around my arm and walk.

For the moment, my plan worked and I felt more comfortable with the predicament I was in.

But then she countered it by resting her head on my shoulder, her shiny brown hair being accessible to me.

"I like this a lot, you know." She muttered.

I coughed a little to the side and cleared my throat.

"Yeah, me too. I like this."

Monika sighed happily and hummed as we walked to the ice cream stand.

As we continued to walk, I noticed that she continued to press my arm deeper and deeper into her chest.

There's a limit to how much I can take this!
I'll be honest, I couldn't stop thinking about Monika's boobs when I first touched them in the morning.

For the first time, I actually wanted to grope her.

And now she's practically offering me to touch her!

No...

No, I need to stay strong!

We're almost there!

I took the tickets from my pocket and presented them to the stand.

"Heeey! Wait up, you two!" A familiar voice called.

We both turned to whoever was calling us.

It was a girl with coral pink hair, with a red ribbon on top.

It's Sayori.

We both waved at her to greet her back.

As soon she got close, she tackled Monika into a bearhug.

"I knew it, I knew it, I knew it!" She chanted. "You were going to hook up with him before Christmas!"

Monika blushed and looked towards me, to which I replied with a warm smile.

She hugged her friend back.

"Well, I got the feeling that you were going to hook up with your boyfriend too, you know." She replied.

I felt someone tap my shoulder and turned to whoever was doing that.

Tom...

And he looks better now.

"Hey, Brooklyn." He greeted.

I brought my hand up to him, to which he caught.

"What's up, Hill-Top?"

We did a one-armed hug as part of the greeting.

"Two ice creams?" The vendor asked.

Monika and I turned to him and took the ice creams.

"Whoaaaa! You two bought ice cream?! Tommy, Tommy, Tommy! Can we get ice cream?!"
Tom chuckled at the bouncy girl.

"I'm worried that you're gonna go ballistic, but sure."

He then ordered two ice cream cones.

"Hey, I didn't expect to see you two around here," I stated, somewhat surprised by their appearance. "But I guess the Fair is a popular place for dates, huh?"

Tom nodded.

"Yeah, we just finished all the games over here and were about to go to the mall."

I took a small bite out of the ice cream.

"Is that so? What were you guys going to buy?" I asked, now starting to forget that I was on a date.

In the corner of my eye, I saw Monika and Sayori get increasingly agitated about something.

But I didn't much heed to it.

"Sayori wanted to get some ornaments for the Christmas tree. So I figured we can do that together." He replied.

They started to discussing something and then nodding in agreement.

_I don't like the looks of that._

Sayori walked past me as if almost hiding behind me, while Monika did the same for Tom.

"What about you? You on a date with the sweetheart of Dokisai?"

I shrugged, trying to hide how giddy I was that a beautiful girl like Monika was now my girlfriend.

But before I can reply, I noticed Monika doing something with her ice cream cone.

Her hand on the cone was slowly moving up and down, whilst staring at me with a mischievous smile.

_What is she doing?_

"Yeah, I am. So far, it's been great." I replied.

Tom wasn't exactly looking at me, but he was focused on what behind me.

I then saw Monika sticking her tongue out and trailing her ice cream from the sides.

_W-Why is she doing that to her ice cream?!_

_Is that supposed to turn me on?!_

_Hey... she starting to resemble that dream I had._

"Um... that's good to hear." Tom muttered, now looking to my side.

Monika was now tucking a lock of hair behind her ear and started to engulf a small portion of the ice cream.
The way she's doing it...

Why is it turning me on?!

I felt my face burn up when I stared at her.

When she pulled the ice cream out, a small trace of it was visible and sliding down her lips.

The small bit fell onto her chest, to which she messily scooped it up and licked it.

That's it!

"Hill-Top, I gonna go..." I murmured, walking to the grinning girl behind him.

"Yeah, me too." He replied, following suit.

We didn't give our goodbyes to each other and instead of walking beside our girlfriends.

"Sweetheart, care to explain why were you doing that behind Tom?" I asked, struggling not too embarrassed.

Monika let out a hearty laugh.

"Ahahaha! The look on your face was hilarious!"

I bit my lips and looked away.

"Argh... you're such a tease, Mon," I muttered. "But I still want an answer."

Her laughing started to die down the longer I waited.

"Ah~! Well, this is a date, right Val? So that means we have to spend as much time together! And from the looks of it, you two were forgetting about us girls!"

Well...

I have to admit, I did kind of forget about Monika.

"Sorry, I'll make sure not to do that again."

She snickered.

"You will... after you buy me lunch and admit that it turned you on!"

Aw, come on!

"Fine, yes what you did turn me on. I admit that. Now, let's finish up our ice cream and go get some lunch, alright?" I asked.

Monika laid her head on my shoulder again and squeezed my hand.

"Let's do some shopping first, okay? We did what you wanted to do, now let's do what I want to do! And I got just the thing to make things fun!"

I doubt it.

But hey, if it's time spent with Monika, then it's time used right.
"Fine. Lead the way, lewd girl." I taunted.

She responded by licking my neck.

*What the-*!

"Ah!" I yelped.

Monika giggled from my reaction.

"You got that right. I am pretty lewd, darling." She teased.

We finished our ice cream and rubbed our hands of any residue.

Once that was done and without much of a warning, she started to run towards the mall.

*I am one lucky guy to have such a lewd girlfriend.*

It didn't take long for us to reach the store that she wanted to go.

"Stephanie's Mystery."

*What kind of store is that?*

The both of walked in, hand in hand, like a couple.

*I don't see anything mysterious about this-*

*Oh.*

The store was actually a lingerie store, with troves and troves of underwears and bras put for display.

None of which looked modest.

"M-Monika?" I asked, my voice trembling with fear. "W-Why are we in a store filled with women underwear?!"

She looked to me in surprise.

"I thought you liked this sort of thing, you know since you are a pervert and all."

*That doesn't even make sense!*

I frowned at her response.

"But aren't you the pervert for bringing me in here?" I retorted.

She smirked at my comeback.

"Maaaybe~! Ooooh! Look!" She pointed at specific lingerie.

Monika then dragged me along to it.

*That's a...*  

*Santa costume?*
But that's so skimpy and revealing!

"Please don't tell me you're planning on wearing that outfit," I begged.

She slowly turned her head to me with a malicious smile.

Aw crap.

Monika took the costume and pulled me to the changing room.

"Stay here, Darling..." She enticingly requested.

My heart thumped at the idea of seeing Monika wearing such a revealing outfit.

She's pushing me to my limit already!

Seeing her play with her ice cream got me on edge.

And the fact that she doesn't have a bra on...

Oh no, what will happen?!

Despite my better judgment, I looked down into the little opening in the changing room.

There lied a brown, lacy pantie on the floor.

S-S-She wore that to our date?!

Is this whole date a booty call?!

I... I don't mind taking it up to the next level.

But is she able to handle it?

How is she so brave to wear that?!

"I'm ready, Darling~!"

I gulped and opened the door, mentally preparing myself for the inevitable show ahead.

There I saw Monika, leaning against the wall with her costume on.

No...

Way...

The small shirt she wore only reached her stomach, with her cleavage being prominently shown.

She wore red shorts that was decorated with some white "windy" patterns, which perfectly showcased both her thighs and hips.

Once I looked up to her, she was wearing a Santa's hat and had a devilish smirk.

Monika winked at me to deliver the final strike.

My breathing was heavy and erratic.
I couldn't see her as the loving Monika I know...

Instead, I only saw her as the lewd goddess of beauty.

Oh no...

She's hooooot!

"So what do you think, hmm?" She seductively asked.

And her voice!

It makes this whole setup perfect!

"Um... you're uh." I stammered, clenching my fists to prevent myself from getting carnal.

"Gorgeous."

Monika was not expecting that.

"W-What...? Did you call me... gorgeous?"

I nodded slowly, feeling the heat in my face starting to explode.

Now it was Monika's turn to be flustered.

"I-I thought you would call me cute or hot, but... gorgeous?"

Her face burned as she looked away.

"Gorgeous?" She whispered as if in disbelief.

I think I might make her too embarrassed...

Maybe explaining myself can fix that.

Or make it worse.

"Y-Y-Yeah, I like how your revealing shorts goes along with your hips and... thighs! They look perfect from this perspective. And not only that, the shirt makes your boobs luscious and exuberant. You're... fucking hot. Alright?! You're ridiculously gorgeous and I am glad to be your boyfriend!" I declared, letting out all the pent-up frustrations to her.

Monika stared at me wide-eyed, as if in complete disbelief.

My breathing was also heavy because of how much I put into that confession.

Luckily, I recovered and rubbed my head.

She still wasn't moving at all, so I called for her.

"Um... Sweetheart? Are you okay?"

All of a sudden, she started to hyperventilate.

"That... That was so hot." She whispered, rubbing her arms in a frantic fashion.

My plan completely backfired!
She’s completely turned on!

"Val... I can't keep it in anymore. I have been fighting this feeling inside of me for a very long time, and I think it finally won."

What?

Again, despite my better judgment I walked up and put my hand on her shoulder, to which she shivered.

"A feeling? What feeling are you talking about, Mon? Just calm down, alright?"

After a couple of seconds of heavy and erratic breathing, she closed her eyes and let out a deep sigh.

Thank goodness, I thought we were going to have-

Once she opened them, her eyes looked completely different.

It was if they were completely subsumed by a strange mist.

That doesn't look good.

Is that...

Lust?!

With a low growl, she pinned me against the wall, catching me by surprise.

Shit!

She pulled on my collar to bring me closer to her.

As soon as I was about to rebound, I was stopped by something.

My lips were shut by something foreign.

I felt my vision waver as I soon realized what was going on...

M-Monika is...

Kissing me.

She had her eyes closed and looked relaxed.

And so, I followed suit.

It was there that I felt great as I let the sensation rush over me.

My body started to ease up from what we were doing.

Before I could respond and kiss back to her, she pulled away, a small trail of saliva separating between us.

Monika came back to her senses and looked away.

She had this small, yet triumphant smile on her.
I only can stare in awe from what we just did.

*My lips...*

*They are tingling!*

*That felt amazing!*

*I never realized kissing could be that great!*

"Sorry." She whispered.

That stopped my thought process.

"What?"

Her smile morphed into a frown.

"I am sorry for taking things too far. I just got... really turned on when you complimented me on how I looked. And I couldn't hold myself in. Our first date was also our first kiss. Couples take around a few dates to actually start kissing, but we-no, I started it early. And it's because of how happy and turned on I got."

No...

"Monika, don't beat yourself over this. I don't mind the kiss at all! I can tell you wanted to do this for a long time since you know..."

She raised an eyebrow.

"Huh? 'You know', what?"

*Aw shit!*

*It slipped my lips!*

"Um... your body-pillow. I saw how your body-pillow was smothered in kisses from all kinds of lipstick. So, I am guessing you wanted to do that for a while now, right?"

Monika blushed to a new degree, mortified by my discovery.

"Y-Y-Yo-You're not supposed to find out about that! That body-pillow was mine to see and mine only! Uwaa! You must think I am some obsessed pervert!" She cried.

I chuckled and patted her head.

"Sure, it's a bit creepy that you have body-pillow with my profile picture, but I feel humbled. I didn't know that you liked me that much!" I persuaded.

She twirled her hair a little.

"You were my first friend and was the closest person I can share my thoughts with. Not to mention you care about me, protect me, and missed me. How could I possibly not fall for a guy like you?"

I smirked at her argument.

"Point taken, anyway. You want to buy that costume?"
She nodded vigorously.

"Mhm! I like it! And besides, if we do anything naughty, then we can have a little fun with this."

I gulped.

"Uh... this isn't any ordinary costume, is it? Everything about it screams risky."

She looked at me curiously.

"Well, yeah. It is. This costume is for role-playing during sex. Why?"

Oh cool.

...

...

Wait, what the fuck?!

That's an outfit for sex?!

"I-I-Is that why you aren't wearing any panties?" I asked nervously.

She put her hands on her hips and frowned.

"Hey... how do you know that?"

I pointed downwards.

"Oh. Yeah, we can have sex while I am dressed in this! The thing is, the shorts I am wearing actually have this-

I put both my hands up and cringed to stop her.

"Okaaay! That's a bit too much information! I'll learn about all the features of your... outfit later. Can we go get something to eat?"

She pouted.

"You're such a prude! Fine! But I swear, we going to have fun with this costume alright?"

Monika is a huge pervert and she doesn't want to admit it.

Actually, she is a lot lewder and perverted than I thought she was.

More so than me, honestly.

I guess getting to her heart reveals something she didn't want me to see if weren't a couple.

Well, in any case, I find this side of her really fun.

Maybe we'll progress to that point...

Eventually of course!
I turned around and waved my hand dismissively.

"Yeah, yeah. Sure, we'll see." I said, walking out of the changing room.

She gave a "Hmph!" as I left.

"You'll see Jones, you'll see!"

Ahhh...

I'm stuffed!

Jeez, I didn't know how hungry I really was!

Maybe all that pacing and anxiousness killed my digestive system to eat something!

"Are you still hungry?" Val asked nonchalantly.

I shook my head.

"Nope, I am full. Do you want to split the bill?" I asked.

This time he shook his head.

"I brought extra cash for this date, so I'll pay the whole thing this time. It's our first date, so it's fine."

He pulled out the pen and wrote his name on it.

After leaving the cash on the bill he got up, to which I followed.

I took his hand immediately and we walked out of the restaurant.

"Darling, you didn't have to go all out on the food. We could've gone to a fast-food chain and some burgers." I suggested.

He only shrugged.

"Yeah, maybe. But I felt like spoiling you. Take it as a means to pay you back for the all built up feelings from the last decade." He answered.

Normally, I don't like being spoiled.

But, I have to admit, I like being spoiled by Darling.

It kind of makes me feel special to him.

We continued to walk, hand in hand, to whatever was next.

And just as I thought, he's great at this date-thing.

So far nothing's gone wrong.

Well, it almost did when I kissed him there.

That was our first kiss...
And I absolutely loved it!

I wished it was a little bit more romantic by giving him more time to think.

That way he could have kissed me back.

But oh well...

We have plenty of chances to kiss today!

And I got just the perfect idea to do so!

As we continued to walk by, I saw the classic tunnel of love nearby.

I gave him a few tugs to get his attention.

"Val, Val, Val! Look!" I pointed.

He looked at the direction at I was pointed.

Out of all the expressions he could have chosen, he was suspicious.

"Since when was this here? I didn't see this when we were walking by... Wait a minute, is someone writing this whole story out for us? Cause I swear-"

I rolled my eyes at him.

"Snap out of it, Darling! Come on, I really want to go there! Please?!" I begged with all my heart.

He sighed.

"Agh, fine. But we should hurry it up, it's going to rain soon." He relented.

I cheered happily, knowing that we were in for a treat.

And because of that, I dashed towards the ride, dragging Darling along with me.

Once we made it to the ride, we were seated in a seashell.

The seashell waded through the water smoothly as it continued to enter the tunnel.

When we entered it, a soft light appeared right above us.

We looked up to see crystals lighting up the path ahead of us.

There was nothing but only us.

Just us.

I looked towards him and noticed he was somewhat nervous.

He turned around to see me as well and smiled.

No more was he nervous, but instead was ready.

We both leaned in to kiss once more.
And we did, our lips connecting to deliver the euphoric feeling from before.

It was love that swelled up in our hearts.

We felt love.

I wanted more from him, and so I wrapped my arms around his neck.

He confidently did the same, wrapping his arms around my back.

I felt him grow more confident as we kissed, as he exerted more force into all.

Since he took the initiative to make the ordeal more passionate, I also pressed onto his lips.

I put up a good fight until I decided that I couldn't keep up with him.

And so, he took the lead in kissing me, his arms trailing up and down my back.

I moaned into his mouth from how pleasurable this whole thing was.

We're...

We're making out!

I'm making out with the love of my life!

Everything is perfect!

Nothing will get in our way!

Nothing!

We released each other, our chests heaving from how long we have kissed for.

I needed a few seconds to catch my breath, and so did he.

My head rested on his shoulder, and his head rested on top of mine.

We were happy.

"That was amazing." He dreamily said, rubbing his cheek against my hair.

I hummed.

"Yeah, it was... It felt amazing." I said as well, closing my eyes to rest.

A single drop of water tickled my nose.

Uh oh...

We looked up to see the clouds a gloomy grey, threatening to soak us.

The seashell drifted closer to the exit, to which we jumped out.

Without a moment to think, we made a mad dash back home.

But regardless, the downpour started.
I hope there isn't any thunder...

*CRACK*

My heart jumped from the loud noise, but for some reason, I wasn't scared by it.

I turned to Val and saw him worried.

"You okay?" He asked while running.

I gave him a quick nod and we continued our escapade.

The rain started to drench our clothes, to the point where I felt it stick to my skin.

Knowing we can't outrun the rain in this condition, we found reprieve in a telephone booth.

We started to breathe heavily in order to make up for the stamina we lost.

"Gah, I should've brought an umbrella... never trust a particularly sunny day," Val muttered, irritated by the downpour.

*CRACK*

I felt him squeeze my hand.

But I wasn't scared.

"Don't worry, Darling. With you around, I am never scared." I declared.

He raised both his eyebrows in shock but mellowed to a smile.

"I'm glad to hear that sweetheart."

The adrenaline from running started to wear off, and I started to shiver.

He noticed right away.

"Monika! You're shivering!"

Whether I realized it or not, I was feeling cold.

"Y-Yeah, I-I know..."

Val looked around to see if he can do anything.

It was pointless, we were soaking wet and cold.

But I had one idea that can warm me up.

And it was the only way.

"Darling... let's make out," I suggested.

He was taken aback by this.

"W-What?! Right now? Monika I am trying to think of a way to stop you from getting a cold!"
I rolled my eyes.

"Think about it, dummy. If you kiss me hard enough, you can warm me up."

He bit his lip.

"Kissing alone isn't going to help you, Monika."

I sighed.

"Yeah, I know. But know this Darling. I opened you to my heart, and because of that, I opened you to my body. If you want me to not get a cold, then I want you to to everything you can to warm me up. That includes touching me anywhere."

No matter how hard I try, I really want him to touch me.

I want to know what he can do with those firm hands...

And I don't care if this expedites things...

I always wanted this as soon as possible.

"I... I... Okay. If it's the only way, then fine. Come here."

I leaned in and pressed myself against him, offering my body to him.

As we kissed, I pulled down the dress I had so he had full access to my chest.

But before we indulge further, he pulled away abruptly.

"A-Are you sure about this, Monika? I don't know if I can contain myself once I do touch you..."

To think a guy like him would want to reject this offer!

Jeez! Maybe I'll show him that I want this.

I grabbed his wrist and pressed it against my bare chest.

He gasped at the touch, and I rammed myself into his face for the kiss.

Darling's touching me!

His hand is on my bare chest!

Without realizing it, I kissed him hungrily, to the point it was difficult to breathe.

We pulled away for a second to grab some air.

In that second, I felt something off about Val's usual behavior.

He gave off similar vibes to when I had that wet dream about him.

The man growled and pushed me against the booth, passionately kissing me.

I moaned in surprise from how intense he was.

He pressed against me, I felt how aroused he was.
Wow...

He's pretty hard right now...

I felt his other hand land on my other breast, and he squeezed in tandem with one already in place.

"Mmmah!" I cried into his mouth, an intense burning passion spreading all over my body.

My hands wandered to his hair, gripping it for dear life as he kissed me.

We parted for a second to catch our breath.

I felt turned on.

My body was burning up from how serious the make-out session was.

I looked up to him and saw how intensely he stared into my eyes.

His black eyes were covered with lust and lust alone, making me shiver in excitement.

He growled again and kissed me hungrily.

This time, it wasn't an ordinary kiss.

Val wanted this to be passionate.

I did too.

My mouth opened up for him, his tongue entering and starting to fight for dominance.

We continued to fight who would invade the other's mouth, but I couldn't keep up with Val's extreme hunger and lust for me.

I moaned again into his mouth, completely lost in pleasure; a mixture of lust, adrenaline, and heat combined to keep me warm.

He massaged my boobs as he continued to French kiss me, adding to the lust I already had.

This feels amazing!

I... I can't stop the moans coming out of my mouth!

Val pulled away once more.

His hands dove towards my underwear and pulled them down.

He remarked at the stain I made in the middle of it.

"Getting excited, are we?" He huskily whispered, shivering my very spine.

He...

He pulled my panties down.

This side of Darling is completely new to me.

I never knew he could get so...
Professional to say the least.

Oh goodness...

What's he going to do now?!

Please...

I need him...

My mind was completely driven by lust, as I desperately wanted him.

He landed his hand on the booth, his hot breath tickling the crook of my neck.

Without realizing it, I felt his fingers on my womanhood.

"Aaaah!" I whined.

He laughed at my moans.

"I like that, sweetheart." He murmured into my ear.

My breathing intensified as he traced his finger up and down my groin.

"P-Please..." I begged.

He gave me a quick kiss to the neck.

"Patience. You'll get it later."

I felt his fingers enter me, causing me to cry out in pleasure.

"Ah! Ah! Your fingers...!"

My arms wrapped around his neck, holding him tight for dear life.

They slowly went up and down inside of me, my walls twitching and subtly clamping down at his fingers.

Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh...

He's breaking so many walls between us!

Yes! Yes!

I want this!

I want this so badly!

His fingers entered as much they could, and pulled in and out.

Darling's fingering me...

He's fingering me!

The hand on the booth traveled down to my breast, groping them.
I gave a hitched breath at the sudden touch.

He then upped the tempo of which he fingered me, stimulating me greatly.

"Darling! Darling! Your fingers! AAAAAH! They feel so good! More! More!"

For some reason, he stopped the stimulation.

As soon as I about to complain, he dove into me as much as he could and clenched into me.

My eyes rolled back as I felt my back arch from how euphoric I felt.

From there, he started to rub me in one of my innermost areas, letting give a deaf-curdling cry.

"YAAAAAH!"

Val continued to stimulate me and bit into the crook my neck.

I bit my lip to stop myself from giving another pleasurable cry.

He continued to nibble on my neck, moving up and down to see which spot I enjoyed best.

My erratic breathing helped him guide the path I wanted him the most, and once he found it, he bit into it.

No matter how hard I tried to keep it in, I let out a loud shuddering scream.

"AAAAH! YES! GOD! AAH!"

He stopped biting and moved up to my ear.

"You're mine. I made my mark my territory."

His husky tone made me turned on to a new degree.

_He's mine, he's mine, he's mine, he's mine, he's mine!_

Darling bit me again, groped my breast, and rubbed to a new degree.

I felt my walls clamp against his finger, knowing that I was close to coming.

"D-Darling! I feel it! I'm gonna come!" I yelled, tightening my grip on him.

And so he applied more pressure to his attacks.

His teeth sank into my flesh, squeezed my breast, and frantically moving his fingers to cover as much area as possible.

My moans became frenzied screams, as he upped the intensity of everything he did.

I felt myself convulse, my body being hit with waves and waves of twitches.

With a throaty groan, I screamed at the top of my lungs and dug my nails into his back.

"I AM COMING, AAAAAAAAH!"

I felt myself flood Val's fingers with my juices, completely soaking them.
The shock of the attack brought forth a new wave of dopamine, rolling my eyes back and opening my mouth to take in as much air as possible.

I was breathing with my tongue sticking out, and took a couple of rapid pants to recompose myself.

Best...

First date...

Ever.
I was still turned on as I held Monika in my arms.

Her face was the very definition of erotic, cheeks flushed with colors, sexually-flushed eyes, and her tongue sticking out to keep her breathing steady.

*Seeing her like that gives me some sense of what's going on, but I still want her.*

...

*No.*

That voice demanded that I stop.

*I am taking things way, way, too far!*

*First, I grope her like some sort of savage.*

*Then, fingered her until she climaxed onto my hand.*

*And finally, making things so... heated up.*

*We are progressing too far!*

*How did this even happen?*

*I know that she was cold and all, but there could have been better options...*

*Like what...?*

*Gah, she was shivering!*

*I had to this!*

*But I didn't need to go that far!*

"D-Darling..." Monika muttered quietly. "That was amazing. It felt way better than in my dream. I can't believe that you can be so good at this..."

That was my wake-up call.

"I shouldn't have done all that," I replied, looking away from her. "I took things too far."

She rubbed her head to comprehend what I was saying.

"What? How? How did you overstep your boundaries? I loved it!"

I shook my head.

"Even if you did, we are going too fast in our relationship. I'm... getting a little worried. What will happen if we-"

"Get bored with each other?" Monika asked, voicing the thoughts in my head.
I looked towards her and nodded.

"How would I get bored of you? You do know I have had feelings for you for a decade now; how's a little fun going to stop me?" She retorted.

*That's true but, this was our first date!*

"Monika, I would never get bored of you. Even if we don't get bored with each other, we're still going too fast. What if we stop caring about the romance in our relationship and skip to straight-up passion! I... I don't want a relationship like that, Monika! I want to be with you as your boyfriend!"

The perfectionist couldn't give me a clear-cut expression.

"Jeez, Darling. You're making it difficult for me to be either happy or pissed off..." She whimpered. "Listen to yourself, Val. We liked each other ever since we met right? Well in your situation, you never realized it until now, but that's not the case. Whether you knew it or not, what we did all this time was romantic."

She closed her eyes and hummed.

"You held onto me so I can sleep, carried me from Dokisai to our homes, and best of all, never gave up on me when I first came back. I trust you, Val. And I am not in it for your dick or muscles; I am in it for your heart. Don't ever forget that."

The doubts in my head vanished, preventing me from overthinking the situation.

"Y-You're right, Sweetheart. Everything we did to bring us to this moment was romance... I am sorry for saying stupid things like this. I guess I overthink things and that's what causes me to be unaware of what's going on."

She leaned in and kissed my cheek.

"It's okay, Darling. But I'll truly forgive you if... um..."

Her confident streak came to an abrupt end at what she wanted to say.

"If I do what?" I asked.

Her face burned up and looked away.

"If you would..." She said, her voice barely audible.

I leaned in closer.

"If you would... fuck me."

And that caused me to pull myself away from her.

"What?! B-But we can't!" I reasoned, now feeling her arms tightening around me.

She glared at me.

"Why not?! You said if I patient enough, then I'll get my reward!" Monika bemoaned, her arm now detaching and trailing my sides.

Her soft hand was grazing my rain-drenched sides.
"We can do it later, but not now. The rain's starting to let up, so we can go now."

She gave a cute whine at my dismissal.

"Awwww, come on! You're such a prude!"

I groaned and rolled my eyes.

"Whatever, let's get you all dressed up."

She had frowned and crossed her arms at me, hoping to dissuade me otherwise.

"Prude!"

_Monika really won't let up, will she?_

_I got myself a very lewd girlfriend..._

"Fine, what can I do to get you to stop?"

She brightened at the prospect, finding an immediate loophole to my request.

"Except, sex. As I said, we'll do that later, just not right now, okay?"

Monika whined again and pouted.

"Pleeeease? I am still turned on from your fingering!"

_For the love of..._

_She's so cute, but I have to stand my ground!_

"No." I firmly said, causing her to pipe down. "I'll do anything to get you to stop."

Monika sighed.

"It's not sex, but I guess it will do. I want you to kiss each of my boobs!"

_Huh, okay.

...

...

...

_Wait, what?!_

"K-Kiss them?!" I shakily yelled.

She smiled devilishly as my nervous behavior.

"Yeah... otherwise I want my other demand. And from the looks of it, you don't want it!"

_Fuck!

_She got me in a bind!_
Damn that vixen's head!

"Fine! I will do that, but you better not have any tricks up your sleeves, got it?"

She shrugged.

"I'll see to that, maybe. Now come, I want you to mark your territory on me."

*Possessive much?*

*I know I did that to her neck, but come on!*

With a deep breath, I grabbed her supple breasts and raised them to my lips.

She gave a hitched breath and winced at my touch.

"Y-Yeah... now kiss them. Bite them if you want."

*Now that I am close to her...*

*Her boobs are a lot like I imagined they would be...*

*They are round, not too perky, not too saggy, and the perfect size for my hands.*

*It was as if they were tailored precisely for my tastes!*

Starting with her left breast, I squeezed lightly, eliciting a cry from Monika.

"Aaah...!"

Her little cry tickled my heart and pushed me to do more to her.

*No...*

*I have just to kiss it.*

*But looking at her nipples turn me on!*

My thumb brushed against it, causing her to take in a sharp breath.

*Oh...*

*So that's what she likes.*

*I'll be keeping that as notes.*

"Where should I kiss you?" I asked, noticing the change in my voice.

Her breathing was slowed and heavy as if not being out of breath was a chore to her.

"A-Anywhere... but I want it right on the sensitive spot- on my nipples." She asked.

*That'll do.*

I puckered my lips and pressed it against her.

My lips felt as if they were kissing hard, warm pebbles,
For some reason, I felt the need to bite on them, but with great effort, I stopped myself from doing so.

I pulled away and noticed that her legs were quivering, struggling to keep her standing.

_Damn it!_

_Got to make this quick!_

Knowing that it turned on Monika, I kissed her other nipple quickly to prevent any unwarranted consequences.

I stood up and looked up at her.

"I'm uh... done. Can we go now? This phone booth is starting to make me claustrophobic."

Her eyes were permeated with something misty.

_Monica's green eyes look a bit darker and sharper than it usually is..._

_D-Does that mean that she is turned on?!_

She closed her eyes and let out an exhausted sigh.

"That's it?"

I nodded, confused as to why she was behaving so strangely.

"Jeez... You disappointed me on that, but fine, let's go."

_Whaaaat?!_

Monika pulled her panties up and adjusted her dress.

Before I put my hand to open the booth, I asked one more question.

"Are you feeling warm?"

She simply nodded.

_Monica really is disappointed at me!_

_Is it because she wanted more from me when I kissed her chest?_

_That has to be it!_

With her answer, I pushed open the booth and took her hand.

We started to run to our homes, staying under any store cover to prevent ourselves from getting any colder.

It didn't take long until we made it home, and so I walked her there.

From there, the rain started to pour, making it difficult to see anything within a few feet or so.

"Come inside! You're gonna get a cold if you stay out any longer!" She demanded, bringing her hand out to me.
I...I can't see the path back home!

Damn it!

Without much of choice, I took her hand and went into her house.

As soon as I entered, I noticed how eerily quiet it was, albeit the soft pitter-patter of the rain tittering on the house.

The heater was most likely on since the shivering cold was now dissipating.

"Is anyone home?" I whispered to her.

She nodded again.

"Yeah, just my Mom. But I think she's sleeping... Mom stayed up with your Mom for a while." Monika answered.

Her frigid tone made me shiver, even more so from the cold water on me.

_Yup, she is upset at me._

_Fuckkk!_

_What now?!

She motioned me to follow her up to her room, to which I did.

Once we entered her room, she went inside her bathroom and tossed me a towel to dry up.

I caught it and started to rub any water on me.

She then turned to look for any clothes she can wear.

_Even if she is mad, I still had fun with her._

"Monika," I called, to which she perked up. "I had fun today."

The perfectionist turned around and sighed once more.

"Yeah, me too. This was the best first date ever. Even if you didn't want to take the next step, I am still happy that you managed to warm me up."

I laughed nervously on what I did.

_Right..._

_I warmed her up._

The sudden realization of what exactly I did struck me.

_W-Wait!

_Did I do all that?!_

_I kissed her, touched her, and fingered her?!_
And I did this all in one day?!

Woohoo!

This is awesome!

"Good to hear that I warmed you up." I simply said.

Since my clothes were wet, I had no choice but to take them off.

My white dress shirt and jeans were thoroughly soaked, and it was somewhat difficult to take them off.

But once I did, I was only in my boxers.

Monika followed suit, taking off her dress in front of me, aiming to be only in her underwear.

She doesn't have a bra on.

The white dress stuck onto her when she tried to pull them off.

"Let me help."

I placed my hands underneath her dress and got ready to pull it.

"My dress is glued onto me, so I need to take it off slowly.

W-Wait!

If I do pull it off slowly, then it will like a striptease!

She put her hands on my wrists and gave me the signal to pull.

I squeezed my eyes shut and pulled upwards.

Slowly but surely, I managed to pull the wet dress up, until it finally off her.

Against my better judgment, I opened my eyes to see her covering herself from me.

What was I expecting?

Of course, she's going to cover herself up.

She caught onto my disappointment and smirked.

Aw shit...

With a swift movement upwards, she unveiled her D-cup breasts to me, jiggling from the momentum.

So... hot.

I could stare at them all day.

Monika then let out a captivated sound.

"Looks like someone's excited." She slowly muttered, lust taking over her.
In an instinct, I covered myself from her and shifted away from her.

She groaned from my apparent unwillingness.

"Seriously?! You're such a prude!"

*Is that my new title now?*

*The prude?*

"Whatever we were going to do next, I'm not ready for it just yet. Even though we had some fun in that phone booth, I think it's a big step to do... all that." I stated.

She gave me an annoyed eye roll.

"Then let's take that big step together! We did it in our dream as if nothing was stopping us! What's stopping us now? I think we are ready!"

I nervously wrung my fingers together.

"Even if my body says I am ready, I meant more along the lines of mentally ready. You have to keep in mind that you let out everything against that body-pillow of yours, and already prepared yourself. But me on the other hand... I don't have much to let out of."

She sighed and sat on the bed, her breasts jiggling along with her.

"Fine, I understand. But do me a favor and not bring up my body-pillow? I want to forget about it and focus on doing everything I do it with you instead..."

I sat down along with her.

"I won't. But give me a little bit more time, okay? I promise to be ready at Christmas Eve."

She looked up to me, her eyes twinkling with mirth.

"A-At Christmas Eve? You're a genius, Darling! It will be perfect! I'll build up with all the frustrations from today and most likely tomorrow and let it all out Monday!"

I winced when she mentioned tomorrow.

Monika hugged me tightly, her chest enveloping my arm completely.

"All I want for Christmas is you, my Darling! Oooh! I can't wait! I can't wait!"

Despite how lewd and mature she appeared, deep down she was an excited little girl.

And because of that, I patted her head.

"You're so sweet. You know that, Sweetheart?"

She laid her head on my shoulder and hummed.

"I know, Darling. But-"

Monika pulled away abruptly and pushed me onto to the bed.

She crawled up to me with a menacing glare that I have never seen before.
"If I catch you cheating on me, then I'll cut your balls off." She threatened.

My heart beat from how seductive she looked and how intimidating she was.

Nevertheless, I smiled at her.

"I would be a complete moron to cheat on you. You're one hot piece of ass." I dirtily declared.

Her face burned up from my declaration.

"S-S-Since when could you speak so vulgarly?! Is that all I am to you?"

I chuckled and shook my head.

"Of course not, sweetheart. Your personality, playfulness, and kindness entice me even more."

Her flustered frown turned to a heartwarming smile.

She then crushed me into a bone-crushing hug.

"Darling!"

I hugged her back, petting her long brown hair.

"I'll never let you go, Monika."

We were on the couch right now, watching a couple of romantic movies to pass the time and downpour.

I loved that we were now a couple, doing couple things together.

Even though we weren't a couple until today, the things we did were indeed that.

Most of the time.

"This is boring," Val muttered. "I am not having so much fun right now."

I gasped at his opinion.

"What?! I am having fun! Rom-coms are the best type of movies!"

He groaned at my retort.

"Blah! Why don't we watch some thrillers, action, or maybe even some horror?"

I shivered from the idea of horror.

"No! No horror! I hate horror!"

It was true. I had an irrational fear of anything related to horror.

He raised an eyebrow at me and then smirked.

Wait, why is he smirking?

Val swiped the T.V remote from me and started to scroll through the movies.
I immediately knew what he was doing.

"Hey! Stop! Stop it!" I cried, reaching out for the remote.

He always made sure that it was away from my reach.

And so, I resorted to pounding against him to which he merely laughed.

"Gimme the remote! Gimme!" I begged.

But it was too late, he pressed on the button and started to play the horror movie.

My body froze at the screen displayed the name of the movie.

"The Hive."

I gave a low cry from how frightening the movie title was.

Val quickly shut off the T.V and laughed.

"Oh man! That was hilarious, hahaha!" He remarked at how well he teased me.

But the teasing hurt.

Tears started to well up in my eyes and began to cry from it all.

"Monika?!" He called, horrified from my wails.

I continued to cry without stopping.

He darted his eyes around the room and couldn't think of anything to stop me from crying.

In an instant, I felt someone's arms around me.

It was him.

He hugged me tightly and went up to my ear.

"Hey, hey... it's okay. I think that the movie screen would scare that much. I'm sorry, Sweetheart." He reassured.

All of my fear and crying vanished when he said the magic word.

Sweetheart...

I hugged him back.

"Darling, don't ever do that again! You know how much I hate horror!"

He sighed and patted my hair.

"I know, I know. I thought you grew out of it, but it turns you didn't. But don't worry, I won't ever pull that off again."

Darling's sweet words tickled my heart, and so I pulled away from him.

I gave a quick peck on the lips from how sincere he was.
He was disorientated and merely blinked at me.

His lips turned into his usual dorky smile, and he kissed back.

I felt his hands trace all over my back, making me squirm from his light touch.

The kiss had lousy form to back it up, so I fell onto him and pinning to the sofa.

But I didn’t mind, as I straddled my legs on him.

It was there where he became more passionate in his kiss, his tongue licking my lips for entrance.

I felt his arms trail down my sides and move closer to my butt.

His tongue entered into a fight with mine, relentless attacking me to assert his dominance.

And as always, I fought back with everything I got.

No matter what, his endurance got the better of me, and he entered my mouth.

When Darling won, he gave my butt an experimental squeeze.

I moaned into his mouth from surprise grope.

"Mmmph!"

To return the favor, I trailed down and groped him.

He pulled away and blushed at me.

"Heeey! What's the big idea?!!" Darling complained, frowning.

I shrugged playfully.

"You touch me, and I touch you. Isn’t that fair? Besides you have a cute butt."

His blushing grew worse.

"Um... your’s too."

Val's flustered state and compliment made me giggle.

"Is that so? Why don't you touch it?" I teased.

He groaned in frustration and looked away, prompting me to laugh more.

Once my laughter died down, his phone started to ring.

With a quick swipe, he answered the call.

"Hello?"

"Val! Finally! I was trying to get an answer from you, baka! Why didn't you answer my calls?!!"

It’s Natsuki...

How did she even get Darling’s number?!
I don't like that...

Let me guess. He even has Yuri's number as well.

His phone vibrated, causing him to look at the number.

From the look in his eyes, he was getting anxious.

"Natsuki, give me a sec. Someone's calling me."

"What?! I need to talk to you! Wait-!"

He pressed a button to answer the call.

"Uh... hey Yuri."

"Valkyrie! I called you multiple times! Why couldn't you pick up? I wanted to ask you something regarding our visit to the bookstore."

He winced at the mention of the "date."

With a few button presses, he was able to join the calls together into a conference.

"Both of you called at the same time, and probably have the same intentions. What's up, you two?"

"What?! How did you get Yuri's number?!"

"I-Is that Natsuki? What's going on?!"

I was growing more and more impatient with the two trying to take him away.

Somehow Darling sensed at my anger and put a hand to stop me from intervening, knowing it would make things worse.

"You guys got my number from Tom. But I am guessing it was different times. Look, that's not the point here, I want to know why you guys called." He elaborated, his ire starting to show.

He's... getting annoyed!

Does that mean Darling really wants to be with me?

I love him so much!

"Well, I called because I wanted to see if you wanted to buy some manga with me, baka!"

"I called if you wanted to come with me to the bookstore... tomorrow, perhaps?"

Darling and I glanced at each other, knowing the two were giving clear indications of date.

My eyes begged for him to do something about this.

He stared at the phone and sighed.

"I can't."

"What?!"
"I'm sorry?"

He closed his eyes and gritted his teeth.

"I can't, because..."

Darling is going to tell everyone that I am his!

...

As much I want to hear their reactions, I can't leave them heartbroken.

They are my friends, and they deserve to be put down lightly.

I put my hand up in front of him, to stop him from telling the truth.

"Don't," I whispered. "Not right now."

He understood what I was thinking of, and nodded.

"There's a chance that I might be busy tomorrow. Aren't you guys busy as well?"

"I already finished baking the cupcakes; they're in the refrigerator."

"I finished my duties for the Winter Festival, and the decorations are all finalized."

He frowned at what was happening.

They really want him...

Was I like this when I realized that I never stopped loving him?

So dedicated for love?

"In any case, I need to tell you guys something that can't be said over the phone. It needs to be face to face. Meet me in the park near Lotus, tomorrow at 10 o'clock. It's important, I promise."

"Why can't you tell us over here?"

"I see... Natsuki, he has his reasons. So please let him be."

"Argh... fine!"

"Thanks for listening. I'll be there waiting for you guys. See you." He said, hanging up.

Once Darling hanged up, he gave a heavy sigh.

"Monika, is it bad that I am picking up on their hints right now?" He muttered.

I couldn't help but snicker despite the grave situation.

He shot me a warning glare that made much more hilarious than it should be.

"Hahaha! Yeah, it is. Somehow confessing to me makes you more open to love and all its hints." I commented.

Darling couldn't stay mad at me, so he patted me on the head.
I love headpats.

"Well, I hope I can see through some of your intentions. But keep in mind, I can't read what's going inside your head, alright?"

That's a lesson to live by.

I should take it more seriously...

"I know... So what are you going to do in the park with them?" I asked.

Darling stopped patting me and laid his head on my shoulder.

And in instinct, I took a vast yet subtle whiff of him.

As usual, he smells just like him.

Ah~!

"Maybe get to tell them the truth. But I don't know how they will take it. Both of the girls like me, but I am not in a relationship with them."

I don't want them to be hurt from tomorrow forever...

Just like how I was hurt when Darling didn't help me on that day...

What if I...

Share him?

No!

Never!

He's mine, and I will never share him with anyone!

But my friends...

They won't be able to move on!

"Monika? Is there something wrong?"

I looked up to him slowly.

"Um... well, I thought that we can... share you. I don't want them to be heartbroken when you reject them. And I don't want them to go through the same pain as I did four years ago. That's something I don't want to wish upon anyone. They don't deserve to be hurt, Darling..."

He blinked several times before tightening his gaze at me.

"No."

W-What?

Yes!

"I don't want to be shared by anyone. The pain you went through is Hell, I know. But the
consequences of being in a harem... it's not worth it. Besides, I don't see the two girls that way at all. I only want you, Monika. And no one else. That's why... I want you to come along with me."

My eyes widened at what he was saying.

"T-To come along with you?"

He nodded.

"Yeah. I am going to need you to be there with me when it all goes down. Telling them you're my girlfriend would piss them off. If you are there with me, I think they would understand if you are around." He explained.

*If that's his plan, then I'll go along with it.*

*I got nothing better than that...*

"Alright... I'll come along with you. Only because you said, you wanted to be with me. And with no one else."

He smirked at me.

"Fine by me. Let's take our minds off this. You want to watch another movie?"

I brightened up over the idea of watching another rom-com.

"Yeah! I do!"

Darling switched on the T.V and selected a movie.

After a couple of minutes of watching, he started to droop lower and lower until he fell onto my lap.

He shook himself awake and pushed himself upwards, colliding with my bra-less chest.

"Ah! Sorry, I was falling asleep!"

*I would be mad if we weren't a couple, but...*

*He touched me and enjoyed doing so.*

*Not to mention he's pretty good at it.*

*So, I don't care.*

"It's fine, Darling. You lay your head down on my lap. But you can't fall asleep!"

He yawned and agreed with my demands.

"I'll try not to."

Darling then put his head on my lap again and watched the movie with a smile.

I couldn't help but play and pet his hair as he watched.

As more time went by, I saw his eyes fighting the within in him, before inevitably falling asleep.

His soft breaths tickled my thighs as he slept.
My Darling...

I closed the T.V and laid my head on the cushion as well.

Nothing will come against us when we are together.

Nothing...

The weight in my eyes finally fell, as I followed him to sleep.

I noticed how sweaty Monika's palm was when we walked to the park.

"You nervous?" I asked.

She tried to mask it, but there was a tiny crack in her visage that told me so.

"Yeah... I am worried how on how everyone will react when they know we are a couple." She nervously mumbled.

I gave a quick peck on the cheek.

"Don't worry, Monika. I will try my best to keep them calm and easy. They are sensible girls, I know it."

The perfectionist turned around with a smile.

"If you say that you can handle it, then I believe you. Let's do this, Val."

We continued to walk, hand by hand until we saw the two chatting on the bench nearby.

The two girls brightened up when they saw me, but it grew increasingly hostile when they saw us holding hands.

Yuri stood up first and stomped towards us, with Natsuki following right behind her.

I felt Monika's grip tighten up in fear of what's going to happen.

"What's the meaning of this?!" Yuri yelled, angry about us holding hands.

"Yeah! I thought we had a truce Monika! What the Hell!" Natsuki roared, glaring at my girlfriend.

I felt a sharp feeling welling up inside of me, as I didn't like their tone towards Monika.

But I managed to crush it down and used the more rational part of my brain.

"This isn't Monika's fault, you two. I suggest that you both calm down." I warned, using a little bit of force to strengthen my position.

They flinched from my overbearing position and glared at me to a lesser extent.

"Then who's at fault then? Is it yours? Doubtful." Yuri stated, new-found anger coating her eyes.

"Yeah, no offense Val, you're a dense baka. How did Monika manage to make you head-over-heels for her?" Natsuki questioned.

Their comments threatened to get me angry as well, as they hurt a small portion of my pride.
But before I can say anything, Monika stepped in.

She had an aura of overwhelming anger that the two noticed.

"Enough!" She barked, causing the two stand down. "Val chose me because he had feelings for me from the very beginning! He admitted that he didn't realize his feelings until recently. That's why he was so cold during our last club meeting!"

The two looked down in defeat, knowing that they lost.

"So... we didn't have a chance in the first place," Yuri whispered, completely and utterly defeated.

"This is the first time where the childhood friend wins..." Natsuki spoke in a shaky tone.

Val sighed, knowing how they felt.

"Please don't get so hurt over this. You two are beautiful girls all with great personalities." I slowly said, turning to the purple haired bookworm.

"Yuri, your quiet and polite personality is something that anyone can find cute. The fact that you can keep going on about what you love in books and literature proves that you have a lot to offer. I'm sure that you would find someone easily with your personality and body, so don't worry."

I turned to Natsuki.

"Natsuki, you're a cute girl, no matter how much you try to deny it. No matter how cold you can be, deep down you have a kind heart. A heart that anyone can get to know and understand. Your pink eyes spark up whenever we speak in English or even talk about Parfait Girls. There will be someone that will love you for who you are."

I took a deep breath and looked at the two girls.

"Monika is my girlfriend, and I never realized how much she put on the line for me. She always tried her best to get her affection for me, but in the end, I would see it as what friends or "the sister I never had" would do. But when she left for Ainu, I felt something broken inside of me, and that's when I realized that I needed her in my life. I promised that I wouldn't ever let her go and I will always hold onto her. And I intend to keep that promise we made as kids."

The two girls despite pained managed to smile for the both of us.

"It's as if fate had a play in getting you together. All the emotional turmoil you went through to realize that you needed her... Yes. You two deserve to be together after all those years together."

Yuri finally said, now letting go of her feelings for me.

"That was adorable, Val. You really like Monika don't you? And the fact that you made a promise when you were kids... I have to say that is cuter than anything I have read in any manga." Natsuki added, realizing what my message was.

Monika finally stepped in.

"Girls, I hope we can still be friends... I know I have broken the truce, but I can't stop myself around him. I'm sorry."

The two directed their attention to her.

"Of course. You are one of my closest friends, Monika. I won't let this whole event get in the way of
"Our friendship. I wish you two the best." Yuri assured.

"Yeah, Monika. I saw how love could break the closest of friendships, and I won't let that get the better of me. Don't worry. I want this to play out!" Natsuki also assured.

The perfectionist smiled back and hugged them both.

"Awww! Thanks, you two! You guys are the bestest of friends a girl can ever ask for!" She chirped.

They hugged her back, making me smile at the scene in front of me.

*Even if they can't let go of their feelings for me right now, I'll make sure to be their friends.*

"You girls want to hang out? Just us girls?" Monika offered.

The two nodded.

"I'm free right now, so why not?"

"Yeah, me too! Let's invite Sayori. Let's hope she's not fucking the brains out of Tom!"

I felt my burn up from Natsuki's rude comment.

Yuri pulled out her phone and dialed her number, while Natsuki went on about the relationship between Sayori and Tom.

Monika turned around and gave me a quick kiss on the lips.

"Thank you, Val. I didn't know you would be able to say all that." She said, pulling away.

I smirked.

"Yeah, me neither. It's just kind of... came out." I admitted.

She giggled at my confession.

"Okay, not a problem! See you then!" Yuri said over the phone, turning to us. "Sayori's going to meet us at the mall so we can do some shopping. Shall we go?"

Natsuki cheered and started to walk ahead, with Yuri waiting for Monika's response.

"You can go ahead. I need to tell my boyfriend something."

The timid bookworm nodded and caught up with Natsuki.

Monika leaned in and bit into my neck, surprising me.

Her teeth sank into my flesh, providing pleasure and enjoyable pain.

I felt her mark a noticeable bite mark into my neck before I pulled her off.

"Aaack! W-What are you doing?!

Monika simply smiled and put her hands behind her back, sweetly closing her eyes at me.

"Marking my territory, like what you did here." She pointed at her neck.
That's my bitemark from yesterday...

Monika winked at me before joining her friends.

"Don't go around flirting with any girls while I am away, okay~? I'll be back to have some fun with you later!" She sang, before catching up to her friends.

Before they started walking to the mall, they stopped and waved at me.

I waved back at them, with Monika blowing a kiss in my direction.

What a girlfriend and a start to the day...

I walked home when they started walking to the mall, noticing that they were glad that it whole love situation was behind them.

They are going to have a stronger relationship now, thanks to this.

I know that for sure.

With a smile, I took my time going home.

I came back pretty late into the night, as I didn't expect to have that much fun with my friends.

Hmm, I did say I was going to have some fun with Val but...

A day or two with my friends is sometimes a better idea.

I can't spend every moment of my life with him!

That's just being clingy!

Even though, admittedly, I can be pretty clingy towards him.

Maybe I can learn to branch away from spending all my time with him.

Maybe...

"Monika? Where have you been?" My mom curiously asked. "Were you on a date with Val? Was it fun and did it go out with a bang?"

I smiled at her, ignoring the last part with her.

"No, Mom. I was hanging out with my friends. I guess I lost track of time from how much we had today." I replied.

She smiled back.

"Good to hear. But you never know, if you don't give some boys enough attention, they might get curious..."

I waved at dismissively.

"Val will never cheat on me, Mom. He isn't that type of guy! Don't worry! I can't spend every single second with him all the time! I may need some time for myself or with others."
My mom chuckled at my explanation.

"I wanted to hear that, my little girl! Good to know that you know better! Anyway, your father came back from his business trip and wanted to speak to you. He wouldn't tell me what it is, so I am a little worried."

My heart started to beat a little faster, mostly because of how anxious my conversation might turn out.

*He can't send me away to another school or academy, right?*

*I mean, what are the chances of that happening?*

"Don't worry, Mom. I will talk to father."

My mom walked up and gave a kiss on the forehead.

"If he does anything that you don't want at all, tell me. I will try to speak some sense into him, okay?"

I hugged my mother.

"Thanks, mom. I appreciate it."

After that, I released her and walked to my dad's office.

*What is going to do?*

*Is he going separate us again?*

*No, he can't do that.*

*Ainu has shut down for a while now, and it isn't opening until next year.*

*I am going to college next year...*

*Oh no...*

*If he is going to do that, what will I do?*

My hand was on the knob, nervous on what awaits on the other side.

*Here goes...*

*If there's any hint of trouble, then I am going to get Mom or Val.*

*Maybe this time they will help.*

I turned the knob and opened the door to see my dad working on some paperwork.

*He always works, even when he is home...*

*This never happened so often when I was younger.*

I cleared my throat to get his attention.

He adjusted his glasses and turned around with his office chair.
"Monika, it's good to see you again." He greeted with a small smile.

No kiss?

No hug?

That's it?

I nodded in return.

"So, how's school? Are you adjusting well to Dokisai? Is there any problems?" He asked.

I kept a steady, cold stare at him.

"School is just fine. It's easier than expected, really, so there aren't many problems. And my adjustment to Dokisai is a lot better than how I adjusted to Ainu." I answered.

He leaned back into his seat.

"Good to know. Is everything alright with Jones? There's no bad blood between you two, right?"

I clenched my fists together but released it soon afterward.

How would you know?!

You were the one to break our friendship up!

Nevertheless, I contained my searing rage and hatred for my father.

"We left off in bad terms when I left. He didn't take my decision of leaving nicely, so he was upset about that. When I came back, we spoke about what happened on that day and moved on. Don't forget that this is all your fault."

I wanted to tell him that there was more to that.

I wanted to tell him that we are a couple now.

I wanted to tell him that I love my boyfriend.

But... I didn't.

He stroked his small, trimmed beard in thought.

"There's more to that, isn't there?" Father asked.

What?!

How did he-

Oh right, Mom.

"I don't know what you are talking about," I replied, pretending to look dumb.

For the first time in a while, I saw him smile.

"Monika, I know that you are in a relationship with Jones now." He pointed out calmly.
My heart stopped at the fact.

No...

Is he thinking of separating us?

"I never thought he wouldn't finish last. Childhood friends always did finish last, but you proved otherwise. Don't get me wrong, Monika. I am happy that you found love with your best friend since childhood, but there are problems with that relationship."

NO!

He is thinking of separating us!

"W-What do you mean?" I shakily questioned.

My father let out a huge sigh.

"I don't know if that relationship is going to prove as a distraction to you, but I need you to break up with him."

...

...

...

"If you met up with someone more capable in business, then I wouldn't have any disapproval. The company needs to go on."

...

All he talks about his company!

What happened to the dad I loved?

Why doesn't be happy for me?!

It's like I am his tool!

Am I nothing to him?

...

I hate him.

He wants to tear me away from the man I love; then I hate him.

"No." I sternly said.

Father raised an eyebrow.

"No? But this is important, Monika. This company is our-"

I gritted my teeth and hissed at him.

"I don't give a fuck about your company! I don't even care if it all goes into shambles! All you go on
about is your company ever since I got older! Why don't you care about what I want to do?"

My dad was shaken by yelling but sighed at my rebellion.

"The company is what makes ends meet. The reason why I care about it so much is that it has gotten bigger as you grew up. There is a lot more paperwork that I have to do so I can earn a reprieve. That's why I am signing you up for Tadashi University. You were supposed to go there instead of Dokisai when the accident happened, but your mother got a hold of the return papers. This time I'm making sure you go there and get a good education."

He just...

Ignored me!

He doesn't care about what I want to do in life!

The fucking company is blinded him from seeing anything else!

"What about what I want to do? I wanted to open up my bookstore where everyone can read, write, and share their thoughts about literature! That's my dream job! I don't want to work on a development studio like you! I want to go my path!"

Father shook his head at me.

"I had dreams to turn my development studio into something I wanted to do, that didn't work out — everything my father and father's father will go to waste. I can't let that happen for the life of me. So you aren't given a choice, Monika. I'm sorry, but you have to go to Tadashi. And I don't want to hear anything about it!" He retorted.

My heart stopped at the turn of events.

Not again...

I don't want to leave home again.

I don't want to leave my friends behind.

And...

I don't want to leave Val ever again.

I don't want to...

The door opened behind me.

Mom?

It wasn't her, it was...

Darling...

He had a grim look on his face as if he was preparing for this very moment.

Regardless, something in me bounced in ecstasy when I saw him.

"Val!" I greeted, hugging him tightly.
He hugged me back.

"Your Mom called me over. She knew something was up."

My father was confused about the interference.

"Mr. Jones? I haven't seen you in a while. As much I want to ask how you have been all these years, my daughter and I discussing something serious. So-"

I felt Darling's body shift towards him.

"Whatever you say to my girlfriend, you say to me. I don't want our relationship to be broken because of you."

He quickly turned to me.

"That sounded pretty weird..." He whispered before looking at my father again.

No matter how dire the situation was, he was always calm around me.

I tried my best not to laugh at his remark.

"Monika, leave us alone for a bit. I need to speak to Mr. Jones in private."

That woke me up and I obeyed, leaving the room.

But before I left, I pressed myself against the wall to listen to what they had to say.

"So, Mr. Jones... tell me. What would you do for a living when you are grown up?"

My father's setting up a trap...

I can tell!

"Well, I always wanted to work with the government to help take down crime. But I also have another dream, as well."

Darling wants to work with the government...?

"That's a very honorable choice, Gilliot. Crime is an essence of society, and it can never be completely eradicated."

I felt off when my father called him that.

Gilliot?

Darling never gave his middle name to anyone except his family or me...

Even then, I never called him that.

And...

Oh no.

He fell into his trap!

"But, despite this, your interests conflict with mine. I am planning on sending my daughter to
Tadashi University. That way, she can continue her education in business. If you do advance to the point that you marry each other, then you won't have time to be together. There is too much conflicting your relationship."

_Argh!_

_You don't care about what my dreams were?!

Why are you so blind?!

"If that's the case, then... does Monika approve of this plan?"

_Darling's countering him!_

"Can you explain?"

_Yes!_

"Does Monika want to go to Tadashi University? You said that you're planning to send her there, but what she wants is the contrary. My girlfriend told me that she wants to make a place where she can show the joys of literature, or maybe become an author. Like how fun, it can be to write, read, or listen to other people's ideas. She didn't want to go to Ainu, so that means you forced to go, didn't you?"

_That was the perfect counter!_

_What will he say next?_

"In a way, yes. I did force my daughter to go to Ainu, but it is for the greater good for the company. My family-run company is the lifeblood of this family, so I am going to do whatever it takes to continue it. I took an oath where I won't let my father's hard-fought efforts go to waste. Because of that, I will be going to honor my oath. That's why I have to continue the company no matter what."

_It's the same excuse!_

_There has to be a change to this curse!_

_Why can't someone else do it if it's so much for him?_

"Even then, if you want to pursue my daughter, the interests you two share are disparate."

_No..._

_That is true; if I do get my wish, Darling won't have time for me if we do different things..._

"Not really."

_What?!_

"The interests I have with her are pretty much the same. You never let me say the second thing I want to do, and that is to start to help your daughter in achieving her dreams of spreading the love of literature. I joined the literature club that your daughter created back in Ainu, and when did I join, I felt right at home. Sharing my poems with the members of the club is fun. Because of that, I enjoyed writing anything overall. Mr. Salvato, I want you to reconsider your options. Your daughter's message is something the world needs. And I want to spread it with her."
Darling wants to help me with my dream...

He wants to be there for me when I do what I love.

He's such a darling.

I love him!

There was an exhausted groan let out, probably from my dad.

"If you really want to do that with my daughter... Then what will I do with the company? I can't work forever, Gilliot."

There has to be something that he can do...

There has to be.

"I was thinking about that all this time. Maybe we can use your development studio to help create something related to literature... E-Books?"

That's...

A great idea!

We can use the company to help us with our dream!

"There are too many E-Book companies. A development studio can't publish books. Maybe something more akin to graphics..."

Val snapped his fingers.

"Ahah! I got it! Computerized graphics in books are starting to become a trend on the internet, and since Monika's-"

"Dream is to write, read, and share ideas relating to literature then..."

They're getting along now.

"Visual novels!" The two said together excitedly.

Using...

Using visual novels as a way to combine my dream and father's development studio?

That works perfectly!

"Ah, I always wanted to use some of the studio's assets into making characters and motions, instead of abstract work. That's a brilliant idea!" My father exclaimed.

"We can work a system out with the place that Monika opens up and use other people ideas as inspiration to help create a story!"

The two men started to sprout out ideas to each other, an unspoken agreement that my father finally relented.

I decided to leave the two at it until I heard something particularly interesting.
"We should continue this conversation later since I have some work to catch up on. In the meantime, I'll tell Monika that she won't be going overseas again. But I still need someone to continue the company."

That's right...

Even though my dream is coming true, someone will have to take care of the company.

"I know it's a family-run company and all, but can't someone else outside of the family run the company?"

Hmm, that's an obvious solution.

But...

"No, unfortunately. I simply don't trust anyone well enough to give the lead to the company. It has to be someone in the family."

So does that mean...

Do I still have to go for my dream's sake?

"Well... what if I go to business school? I have strong grades in Dokisai, aced all economics classes, and I... also have a soft spot for haggling. That was my backup dream if working in the government didn't so well, so maybe I can do it. But, I don't think I can go to Tadashi, that's way out of my pay grade."

Would he do that for me?

But it's an awful amount of dedication!

Well, he did say that was his backup.

And I don't exactly approve of him doing all that to keep my dream alive.

"Interesting... you're offering the idea to go to business school, instead of letting my daughter go there instead?"

That does sound weird actually.

"Well, I was thinking of going to a college or university that is relatively close by. Not somewhere so far away. It's not as bad going overseas and leaving me- err, leaving her friends behind. But in any case, I hope we can get something out that will make her, no, us happy."

He's too sweet! Awww!

"Fine by me, we'll work something out. I guess that's all we need to talk about. But before you go, I want to ask you something related to your relationship with my daughter."

Ooooh! This is spicy!

I leaned in for a better listen.

"Do you love her, yet?"

I bit the sides of my cheeks from letting a shrill squeal.
This is something I wanted to hear!

Please say yes, please say yes, please say yes!

"Um... yes. Yes, I do. I love your daughter. I love Monika."

I broke into a mad dash outside and let out a happy scream.

"YESSSSSS! HE LOVES ME! HE LOVES ME!"

Monika’s dad chuckled at my answer.

"Well, in that case. Please take care of her, Gilliot. She's my little bundle of joy, and I... should show her that I do care about her. That's something that will come in time, especially since I started to only think about the company. Thanks to you, you saved me a couple of hairs from stress."

I smirked at his remark.

"No problem, Mr. Salvato. Good luck in your work, take care."

He turned around and begun his work again.

"Yeah, see you around. Maybe once Christmas is over we can talk more about our plans."

With a nod, I walked out of the door.

There I greeted with a surprise hug from the and only Monika.

"Sooo~! How did you go?" She asked jumpily.

What's up with her?

I hugged her back and held her in my arms.

"Pretty good so far, we are still talking about it. But the good news is that you aren't going to that university. But we still might have to go to business school."

She pulled away slightly and raised an eyebrow.

"We?"

I nodded.

"Yup. I thought that we could inherit the company and pursue your dream as well. Is that okay with you, or so should I haggle with him a little more?"

Monika thought about my offer and shrugged.

"I don't mind going to business school since Ainu drilled a bunch of preliminary skills into my head. It's going to be fun with just you and me going..." She flirtatiously stated.

Her little reply made me chuckle nervously.

"Uh... yeah. The details aren't all that conclusive, so I was thinking of talking a little more about it with him."
She kissed me on the cheek.

"That's fine, Darling. Thank you for coming by and speaking some sense into him."

I couldn't help but frown.

"If only if I came earlier..." I muttered.

Monika groaned at me.

"Gilliot... Stop thinking about the past. What's done is done, we need to look towards the future. Besides, if I didn't leave, then I think the saying... 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder.' would apply to us."

I sighed, knowing that she was correct.

Wait, what?!

Since when she did call me that?

"Gilliot?" I questioned.

She giggled.

"You never gave anyone your middle name, and I heard dad call you that... So I thought it would be another pet name for you."

She eavesdropped, hasn't she?

Oh well.

"That's fine by me. Anyway yeah, I guess you're right. Anyway, since I am here let's talk about what we are going to do tomorrow."

I put her down and let her think.

"Well... I am going to the club and help set up the decorations and treats with everyone. Meanwhile, do any last minute checks with the Winter Festival as a whole. After that, we'll all go together to the Festival, with us supervising it with some volunteers chosen by the school. And right after that... I haven't planned. Maybe we can go home and watch some Christmas specials."

Knowing her, there is something else involved with those specials.

"Alright. When it's time for the festival, I'll pick everyone up in my car, and we'll go there."

Monika was shocked for some reason, to which I raised an eyebrow.

"You have a car? You can drive?"

I nodded, somewhat confused as to why she was baffled.

"I didn't know that... maybe we can go to fun places in that."

She then smirked devilishly.

"Um... yeah. We can go to distant parts of the city if needed, I guess."
Her face flushed as her smirk turned into a seductive smile.
"I didn't mean that."

Darling's car pulled into the driveway, ready to pick up everyone for the Winter Festival.

*Tonight is the night where everything boils down on how hard we worked.*

*Hopefully, the results are worth it.*

*If the literature club succeeds in getting more than ten members, then we can keep it for the Spring semester.*

I opened the door and sat right beside the driver's seat.

"Hey, Mon." He greeted with a smile.

I smiled back and leaned in gave him a quick peck on the lips.

"Hi, Darling. Are you ready for the festival?"

He let out a shaky sigh.

"Y-Yep! Today is the big day, and I am ready! You?"

I took his hand and held it tight.

"I'm ready whenever you are."

With a nod, he started to drive.

One by one, he picked up my friends and his friends.

We were all chatting while Darling drove us to Dokisai.

*Don't get nervous, Monika.*

*You're with Val. You can do this!*

*Everything's possible with him!*

"Alright, we are here. Places people!" Darling enthusiastically cheered.

We all gave our cheers as well and took our positions.

"You two better not ditch the Miss Santa Show!" Sayori warned to both Yuri and Natsuki.

I leered at Darling to see if he would react to any of that, but he showed no perverted signs.

*Good...*

Darling and I walked hand-in-hand to check on each stand in the festival.

We got comments such as:

"I didn't expect that you two planned all this out!"
"This Winter Festival is going smoothly. We'll take it from here."

"You two did a great job sorting things out. Nicely done!"

And each stand we would get a souvenir from a job well-done.

Sometimes it would be snacks, a trinket, or even a hand-made gift for the spirit of Christmas.

We continued to walk, hand in hand, the snow now slowly falling from the skies.

"Huh... A White Christmas. I hadn't had one of those when I was younger." Darling commented.

I looked to him smiled.

"Maybe it's fate playing this whole thing out. That's why it's so beautiful." I added.

He laughed at that, to which I eyed him.

"What's so funny?" I asked, slightly offended by his behavior.

Darling continued to laugh, but not out of mockery but out of happiness.

"Haha! It's just that, out of the things in this world, I didn't know that fate would be able to tie us together. I think it's more than that, all of the work we put into the relationship finally comes down right after you came back. Look, in any case, Sweetheart... You coming back from Ainu was the best thing that ever happened to me."

My smile turned into an ecstatic grin from how cute he was.

"If you think like that then sure. And Darling I want you to know, that I will always be by your side."

His onyx black eyes were filled with warmth that sparked my heart with happiness.

As I stared into his eyes, I noticed something green between us.

We pulled away from each other to examine further what that was.

A mistletoe?!

"Awwww! Are you serious?! It was perfect!" Sayori pouted.

"Bahaha! I knew they're still working things out!" Hiro stated, proud of his guess.

Dan pushed his glasses in.

"Val's slow embrace to love kind of explains a lot. They would've kissed by now."

I was slowly growing more and more irritated by their distracting presence.

Darling also showed some of that annoyed vibe as well.

Seriously?!

We were going to kiss!

Now they made it awkward!
All of a sudden, Darling grabbed hold of me and kissed me.

I was surprised by how ferocious the kiss was, and couldn't respond in time when he pulled away.

"Happy now?" He mumbled in an annoyed tone.

Just before they were about to say something, Tom ran up to us.

"Sayori, there you are! Jeez! I thought you ran off to get some more snacks!" Tom berated, catching up the jumpy girl.

The coral-pink haired girl tapped her fingers together.

"Ehehe... well I was trying to some errands done... But that didn't turn out so good."

Their conversation was cut when a mistletoe was shown right above those two.

And in an instant, the couple kissed, or instead Sayori rammed herself into Tom's lips.

"Mmmph! Mmmph! Pah... What the heck, Sayori?!" Tom yelled, not liking that he was caught off-guard.

Yuri stepped in with the mistletoe, smiling at what she has done.

"Natsuki told me that this would be fun, and indeed she was right."

The pink head walked in with a bunch of snacks and treated in her arms.

"Well, Sayori told me to this, so I went along with it." She stated.

We all stared at the innocent looking girl.

*I always knew that girl was a beast inside.*

*A manipulative beast...*

*...*

*I'm so proud of her!*

We then shared a laugh, amused by how cunning Sayori can be.

After the laughter died down, Dan stepped in.

"Val, the boys are gonna hang out after the festival is done. You wanna come with us?"

Instinctively, I gripped his arm and pouted at them.

"No!" I answered for him.

Darling sighed, patted my head to let go, to which I reluctantly did.

"Sorry guys. I was planning on spending Christmas Eve with my Sweetheart here. We can hang tomorrow."

The three girls let out an "Aww.", despite the two's standing with us.
Hiro sighed and then smiled.
"Alright, but you better-hit first base, man. The boys are counting on you."
Darling smiled back.
"We'll see."
Tom stepped in and motioned Darling to come, wrapping his arms on the three.
"Since we aren't going to see each other until Christmas day, I want you all to close your eyes." He requested.
They all eyed his odd request and followed suit.
"Tell me what you see," Tom asked.
"It's all darkness."
"I don't see anything..."
"A world without light."
The guy smiled.
"That's my Christmas without you guys."
They all opened their eyes and said the fabled word...
"Bro..."
Afterward, they laughed it off, dismissing the touching and bromantic scene almost immediately.
We rolled our eyes at their inability to take such a thing seriously.
"In all seriousness, have a good one everyone. Let's go guys." Tom said with a smile.
Now it was the girls and us.
"Alright, everyone's invited to my house, except you lovebirds, I am so getting you back Sayori for that Miss Santa crap, so you better watch your back!" Natsuki said with a toothy smile.
"Yay!" Sayori chirped, hugging the two girls. "Wait!"
They all walked home, now starting to leave us alone.
Yuri stopped walking and gave us a meek wave before catching with the girls.
Now it was just only us.
"Sweetheart, do you think the festival was a success?" He asked.
I laid my head on his shoulder.
"I got a text from Yuri saying that lots of students were interested in joining our club, that we ran out of cupcakes. And from the looks of it, everyone enjoyed the Festival. So yeah, I think it was a success."
He sighed.

"Thank goodness. This semester was a pain in the ass and man! What a week! I never thought this week would be so different! I'm exhausted!" Darling yawned.

I giggled at his cute yawn.

"We can't sleep now! I have to give you my Christmas present!"

That woke him up.

"Oh yeah! Me too! So um..."

*The dork doesn't know where to do this huh?*

"Not right now, moron. Let's go home first."

He raised an eyebrow.

"What about the Christmas tree?"

I flicked his forehead.

"Don't worry about that; we'll celebrate it together, alone. Come on! Let's go home!"

I then took his hand and dragged him to his car.

Once we did, he drove me home.

While we went there, I practiced the fingering for the song I made.

*He doesn't know that I play piano yet...*

We got off, and I retook his hand.

"No one's home, today. Mom and Dad are renting a hotel for the night."

He smiled at me when he heard "Dad."

"Sounds like you're getting along with your Dad again."

*Things turned out better when he finally spoke with Dad.*

"Yeah... I am. Now come on! Let's go to the living room; I got something to show you!"

I dragged him to the room and sat him down in the piano seat with me.

"Um... what's going on?" He asked.

My heart thumped at what I was about to do.

*It's time to show him what I was working on for a decade.*

*My song.*

Somehow Darling caught the hint and patiently waited for me to start.
With a deep breath to calm myself down, I pressed the piano keys down and started to play the tune I made for years.

*Here goes...*

*This song is for you Darling.*

"Hm, hm, hm... hm, hm, hmm, hmm~."

"Every day, I imagine a future where I can be with you..."

"In my hand is a pen that will write a poem of me and you..."

"The ink flows down into a dark puddle..."

"Just move your hand- write the way into his heart!"

"But in this world of infinite choices..."

"What will it take just to find that special day?"

"What will it take just to find that special day...?"

I finished by ending the chord of the last note, breathing out my pent-up anxiety and frustrations into the air.

With a smile, I looked to Darling once more.

"How was it?" I asked.

Val grinned at the effort I put into that song.

"I loved it. I didn't know you can play the piano. How long have you been playing it?"

*How long did I play it...?*

"Ever since our first sleepover, that how long," I answered.

He raised both of his eyebrows.

"Wow... I'm very impressed. You kept this a secret from me all this time, right?"

I nodded proudly.

"Yup!"

Darling sighed in disbelief.

"Wow... So, every word of it was for me, right?"

I turned towards him.

"Mhm! I dedicated to you and for our love..."

*He needs to know.*
Darling loves me, and so do I.

My heart pounded at the words I wanted to say.

"I love you, Darling."

He brought me in for a hug.

Now it's your turn.

"I love you too, Sweetheart."

I hugged him back when I heard the fated words come out of his lips.

He loves me.

He always did.

"Thanks for loving me, Darling. Thank you so much."

He petted my brown hair.

"No, thanks for being so patient with me. If only I were given a wake-up call to everything you were doing. Then the dense idiot in me would've wakened up. But what's done is done."

Darling pulled away from me and showed me a small black box.

"Anyway, I got you something special."

W-What?!

I-I-I-Is that what I think it is?!

"I don't know if it's custom here but, I want to show you this."

He opened the box to reveal a gold ring with an emerald gem in the middle.

No way...

He...

He wants to be with me.

Forever.

And ever.

That's how much he loves me?!

...

"I got a ring to commemorate our commitment together, and-"

I squealed at the top of my lungs before crushing Darling into a hug.

"Gaaah! I can't breathe!"
I nuzzled his neck and wrapped myself around him.

**AHHHH!**

**I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!**

**HE REALLY WANTS ME!**

"Yes! Yes! Yes! I will marry you! I will be your bride! Make me yours and yours only!" I screamed in pure joy.

His body went limp.

"Um... Monika." He muttered. "This isn't an engagement ring. It's just a proof of our relationship. And I don't know if I am ready for marriage just yet... hehe."

My face burned up as I pulled away from him.

"W-W-W-What?! A-Are you kidding me?!" I yelled.

He winced at my reaction.

"Sorry... what were you expecting, besides marriage?" He nervously asked.

I covered my face in shame.

"I thought you were going to take my virginity and make me yours you... you fucking moron!" I yelled into my hands.

There was an awkward silence between us for a few seconds before he broke it.

"Uh... I thought we were going to do that anyway, right?"

I didn't respond to him.

He pulled my hands from my face.

"Monika, if you want me. Then I will gladly offer myself to you. Just say the words."

I looked away.

"Take me. Makes me yours, and yours only." I simply said.

He smiled and scooped me up into his arms.

I yelped in surprise as he carried me.

"Ah! Val! Give me a warning next time! You got me scared, you- Mmmph!"

He shut me up with a kiss.

This kiss was filled with passion and lust, yet it was full of love.

I wrapped my arms around his neck to kiss him back, excited for what's to come.

Darling walked up the stairs and into my room, resting me onto the bed.
He took a couple of steps back and started to unbutton his shirt.

I followed suit, taking off my dress and skirt.

Little did he know, I wasn't wearing much because I was secretly anticipating this moment today.

"Uhm... you didn't wear a bra again?" He asked as I took off my dress, letting my luscious breasts free.

I bit into my finger and gave him a playful smile.

"You never know when I might be cold again~..." I teased, shocking the man.

He shook his head in disapproval.

"And you call me the pervert. You're such a lewd girl, Monika."

I giggled sweetly from his comment.

"Maybe I am, cowboy. Let me help you with that." I offered, crawling up to him.

My body heated up when I realized how similar this whole situation was.

I trailed up his pants and pulled them, shrugging it off side to side.

There was one final article of clothing left, which was his boxers.

Without a moment of hesitation, I tried to pull it off only for him to stop me.

"Monika... are you sure you're ready for this?" He asked.

I didn't give him an answer and pulled down his boxers without mercy.

He yelped as his erection finally sprang free.

Unfortunately, it hit my face causing me to recoil back.

"Ah!"

I readjusted my vision to the manhood in front of me.

It's like in my dream.

How would that fit inside of me...?

"Sorry!" He muttered, covering himself from me.

For fuck's sake!

I need it!

My hands pushed his aside, freeing it once more.

I then examined him further.

"Wow..." I whispered. "Just staring at it makes me turned on."
His face burnt up.

"Stop saying weird stuff like that! This is my first time, ya know?! How are you so calm?!
"

I shrugged and gripped the base of his manhood.

He yelped.

"I have a very active imagination with my body-pillow, Darling. That's all I am going to say. Now shut up!"

I opened my mouth and gave it an experimental lick.

*Mmm...*

*Salty.*

As I continued to lick, my groin started to quiver with excitement, making more lustful than usual.

*This is way better than in my dream!*

*I can't believe we are doing this!*

My tongue trailed all across his, making sure all spots of his erection was covered by my saliva.

With that done, I kissed his head and gripped his side, nuzzling it against my cheek.

"This is very impressive, Darling. We are going to have lots of fun, don't you think?"

He groaned.

"I don't like how we are at two different levels here. But I hope so..."

The only article of clothing covering me was my underwear, so retreated to my bed and raised my legs.

I made sure he had a great view for my thighs, butt, and womanhood as I pulled the underwear up.

His eyes widened at the show I gave him.

"W-Wow..."

Darling’s comment made me more boisterous, as I spread my legs out and rubbed my area in front of him.

"Come on. I thought men are supposed to take the lead." I playfully teased.

He gritted his teeth and joined the bed.

"Alright, alright! I will. I am going to stop being nervous! It's just that... you're beautiful. Words can't describe how elegant you look. That's why I am so nervous."

That broke my lustful state of mind, awakening the more rational part of me.

My lips quivered in embarrassment as I felt my face flare up.

"M-Moron... I am nervous too you know! But I am looking forward to how fun it will be. You
should too!"

His eyes were now affirmed with courage and grit as stared into my emerald green ones.

"I'll try my hardest. Just know, this part is going to hurt. Are you ready?"

I gave him a swift kiss on the cheek and raised my hands out for him.

"Any pain there is in life, I can handle it with you.'

Darling smiled at me, and the same dork was now taking my virginity away.

He took a deep breath and sighed.

"Okay. Here goes... Just now that I love you, and I will never hurt you."

I beamed at him.

"I know, Darling. I love you, too. Now take me. Make your mark on me."

With a nod, he positioned himself towards me.

I felt him enter me, my breathing now beginning to become more and more ragged.

*It's the head...*

*The whole thing is not in yet!*

That is, he stopped abruptly.

"What now?" I yelled, agitated by his repeated timidness.

He winced from my yell.

"Well... I just remembered about protection. I have some condoms back home, so I was thinking-"

I growled at him.

"Shut the fuck up! Today is my safe day, now get going!" I demanded.

*Why am I so hyper-aggressive now?*

He groaned.

"Chill out! I don't want to make you pregnant yet!" He retorted, noting my aggressiveness.

I rolled my eyes.

"I want it now! Now, now, now, now!" I cried.

He put a hand up to stop my tantrum.

"Alright! I get it! I'll get moving, but... hold onto something."

I wrapped my arms around his back and held on.

Darling pressed himself against me, and I slowly felt him enter inside of me.
His head encountered some resistance, so he readjusted himself.

That's my hymen...

Why won't it stretch for him!

I need him!

His head poked my hymen, causing me to wince in pain.

My arms around his back tightened, knowing it would get more painful from here and out.

"Should I continue, Mon?" He asked, noticing my pain.

I nodded.

"If we never get through this part, then we can't have sex! I want to make love with you, Darling! So do it! Push me!"

With a determined look on his face, he readjusted himself and pushed himself in.

My hymen tore partially as I felt his thickest slide inside of me.

I closed my eyes and hissed in pain as I dug my nails into his back.

"Sweetheart, I promise it's going to get better. Trust me."

I know it will.

I know!

"I trust you. Move for me, Darling."

He nodded and pulled out a little before sliding it in again.

I felt him avoid my torn hymen as best as possible and cover more distance with each lethargically slow thrust.

My breathing consisted of a sharp inhale and exhale as he moved.

Darling's eyes focused on me, comforting me in this challenging process, and I thanked him for that with a kiss.

The pain started to fade away, and I moaned into his mouth.

He pulled away with widened eyes.

"A-Are you okay?!" He asked.

I winked at him.

"Never better. The pain is starting to go away! Don't stop, darling!"

He nodded once more and thrust again, the throbbing pain between my legs now fading completely.

I was now feeling pleasure with each love-filled thrust, and let it build up.
Eventually, it got boring, and I started to become greedy.
"Faster," I demanded.

Darling upped his tempo, my warm, wet, and tight walls clamping against his thick manhood.

After a few quick thrusts, he was able to slide in easily and out, brushing against my clit with his pubic bone.

There I used my hips to coordinate with his thrusts, achieving pleasure.

His eyes were utterly consumed by lust, as were mine as I felt him move inside me.

Darling's face came closer and closer, to the point that we kissed passionately.

My hands ran through his hair and pulled him closer.

Once we pulled away, I muttered the two words he wanted to hear.
"Fuck me."

He smirked evilly and heeded my call, and readjusted himself.

His chest right behind my back, and pulled my leg up.

I felt his other hand touch my breast.

Once he was ready, he started to thrust with a lot more ferocity.

My eyes widened at how savage the thrust and I gritted my teeth from how pleasurable it was.

Despite this, saliva leaked from a corner of my mouth.

His thrusts became more and more forceful, causing me to choke out in euphoria.

"Gah! Ah! Ah! Keep going, Darling!"

It was still rather slow, so I implored him to go a little faster.

With a growl, Darling dramatically upped his tempo.

He kept thrusting with speed and reach, hitting all kinds of places within me.

Darling then bit into the crook of my neck.

In response, I cried out in pleasure from both the surprise and hard pushes.

"AAAH! MORE!" I demanded.

It was that he got the hang of it now, so he kept pushing in.

But I yearned for something new, as the stance grew more and more tiresome.

In a blink of an eye, I pulled out of him and pounced onto him.

He growled at the loss of power, to which I kissed him.
"Let me some of the work, cowboy."

I looked to my back, my hands on my ass as I eased myself onto him.

There I felt him reach areas he hasn't entirely covered yet.

I rolled my eyes back and moaned.

"Ah..."

Darling wasn't happy with his new role and forced his way into being the dominant one.

And so, he brushed my hands aside and placed his hands on my butt instead.

Once he did that, he pushed me down to take the entirety of his cock.

I couldn't help but arch my back from how much he stuffed inside of me.

But before I can stretch myself, his hands traveled up to my back and pressed me down towards him.

There, he readjusted himself and kept thrusting in tandem with my hips.

I had this dark feeling inside of me that I was continually crushing to stay sane.

But each thrust started to break more and more of my walls to protect it.

"Come on, come on. Let it all out. Let me see the girl you are!" Darling demanded.

That's where I broke, the hazy feeling taking hold of me.

The feeling spread all over me, coating me with a new sense of pleasure.

I yelled at how amazing I felt.

"AAAH! YES! POUND ME WITH EVERYTHING YOU GOT!"

With those words of encouragement, he growled and started to pound me.

My breathing and moans became a messy cacophony for Darling.

It didn't take long that I started to lose complete control of my breathing, causing my tongue to stick out to help regain any composure I held left.

He leaned in and licked my tongue, moving in for an improvised French kiss.

Each thrust he did now, shocked my body, my walls clamping all around him.

I felt him twitch inside of me, tickling a specific spot inside of me.

Because of that, I pulled away and moaned loudly.

"FUCK! YAAAAH! THAT'S IT, DARLING! KEEP- YEAH, AH, PLEASE!"

I had no control over what I was saying, my thoughts in a complete and utter mess.

Darling put my arms around his head and slid out.
I was confused as to why he stopped so abruptly.

He moved behind me, causing me to become very impatient.

And just before I yelled at him, I felt him enter.

He's...

*He's fucking me from the behind!*

Darling kept his grip on my hips and thrust towards that one spot I liked the most.

*T-That's my g-spot!*

My moans became frenzied screams as his dick constantly attacked my g-spot.

"AAAAAH! AAAAAH! KEEP FUCKING ME THERE! PLEASE!" I begged.

His hands wandered over to my chest and squeezed them, arching my back once more.

But before I can stretch, his chest stopped me.

I heard him grunt with each thrust he did, knowing that he was experiencing the same pleasure as I was.

He stood up to which I followed, and I placed my hands on the wall to support myself.

With each thrust, I felt my legs wobble from the brutality.

I loved it.

My walls started to clamp more and more against his cock, and I felt something starting to build up inside of me.

He noticed and stopped groping me, holding me tight as he kept thrusting.

My body was pressed against his toned body, leaving me with very little space to move.

"Grk! I am about to..."

For some reason, my body loved the restricting space he gave, and the build-up went faster.

His dick started to twitch inside of me again, causing me to yell back.

"AAAAAAH! YOUR DICK! IT'S KEEPS TWITCHING! CUM INSIDE OF ME! FILL MY WALLS WITH YOUR WARM SEMEN! PLEASE!" I begged.

With a couple of thrusts, the orgasm finally came, rolling my eyes back.

He groaned throatily.

"ARGH! I am cumming!"

I felt him aggressively cover my walls with his warm seed, causing me to come harder.

I screamed at the top of my lungs from how much he came inside of me.
My legs had some feeling as I fell onto the bed, exhausted from the climax.

Darling pulled out of me, his manhood covered in both my juices and semen.

I continued to catch my breathing, both rational and irrational thoughts gaining of control of me now.

My head was on the pillow, on the verge of just sleeping instead of continuing our lovemaking.

I caught his eyes.

He was still hard, his onyx eyes told me.

"Monika... I want seconds."

Since he pleasured me, I wanted him to offer more of me to him.

My hands stretched my butthole for him.

"F-Fine... since you gave me the best first time and date, you can..."

My face burned.

"You're cordially invited to fuck my ass."

He grinned at the offer.

"And I accept your invite."

Without giving much of a warning, he inserted himself inside of me, causing me to bulge my eyes out.

"AAAAAAAA! FUCK! YES!"

He stood up, but I lay on the bed as he continued to dive into my ass.

Once he inserted his entirety of me, I felt a mix of pain and a dull sense of pleasure.

There was potential since my g-spot was there as well.

He slowly started to move in and out, the pain now vanishing somewhat quicker than before.

Somehow it stimulated my vaginal walls, with each thrust sparking it back to life.

I spread my ass out for him, so he continued to pound brutally.

His scrotum started to graze my flood clit, turning me on once more.

The pleasure of my butthole's g-spot being hit after orgasm was godly.

I bit into my lips, hoping to stifle my torn throat from all the screaming I did.

"I can tell you are trying to hold it in. Let go."

With his words of encouragement, I started to moan again.

His pounds with added swirling to cover as much of my ass, built up another orgasm.
My moans gave him the fuel to keep going in and out with speed and precision.

It didn't take long that my vagina contracted from all the added pressure in my ass.

I buried myself into my pillow and hollered at the second orgasm, my body twitching from how it euphoric it felt.

"YAAA-AAAAH! AAAH! AAH!"

My legs were wobbling significantly from the second orgasm, but it sparked something in me.

*I want to come with him...*

Darling breathed out and pulled away, not being able to climax a second time.

"Sweetheart." He called. "I want to come with you this time. I want this moment to be remembered forever."

I smiled and spread my legs out again.

"And I am going to remember how you destroyed my legs too. Come then, Darling. Let's do it one last time!"

With a nod, he inserted himself into me again.

"My pussy is very sensitive now... so please be careful." I requested, wincing as he entered me.

He thrust slowly inside of me, making sure that I wouldn't get too twitchy or hurt.

I noticed my chest followed with each thrust he did, jiggling subtly.

My breathing was a lot steadier than before, and I felt more in control.

The slow and loving thrusts were starting to become more and hasty.

All that control I had was now replaced by lust.

He upped his tempo, knowing that I wanted that.

My legs wrapped around his waist, making to sure that I am steady for an inevitable brutal attack he was building up to.

His body pressed against mine, to which I hugged.

I felt him hug me back, move close to my face.

"I love you."

My walls twitched at those words.

"I love you, so much, Monika."

They twitched yet again.

"Promise me that you will always be by mine side, Sweetheart."

I couldn't help but cry at the love we were experiencing.
"I promise! And I love you, Darling! I love you so much!"

Now he was twitching, his manhood ready to release it's second and final load into me.

I expected him to pound me, but this was better for the time being.

"I promise to be with you, no matter what! Nothing will separate us ever again. Darling! Darling! Darling!"

"Sweetheart!"

He kissed me hungrily, to which I returned.

I felt him twitch one last time before releasing the pressure inside of me.

He ejaculated inside of me, and to which I quickly replied with an orgasm as well.

I moaned into his mouth, happy that I came with him.

After a few slow thrusts, he pulled out himself out and rested alongside me.

"That... was great. I loved it."

I smiled at him.

"I loved it too, Val. Let's be forever, together."

We brought the blanket up to us and looked at the stars from her balcony.

His arm clung to my waist and brought me closer to him, caging me in his arms.

"The stars are beautiful... Right, Darling?"

He chuckled.

"Haha, yep. They're beautiful as you."

We then gasped when a shooting star rushed the skies.

Our promise...

It became true.

"A shooting star," I muttered.

He kissed me on the cheek.

"Yeah... our promise. It's true now. We will always be together, right Monika?"

I turned around kissed him on the cheek.

"We will always be together..."

No matter what.

He rested his forehead against mine.
"Merry Christmas, Monika."
"Merry Christmas, Val."

I let myself wander to my thoughts as I slept.

Fate is a funny thing...

It's what bound us together forever.

When I first came here last week, all I can think of was to avoid the love of my life.

But look at me now...

I am in his arms, sleeping with him.

We made love and made our own marks on each other.

So yeah...

Thanks, fate.

Thanks for bringing me back with my Darling.

I hope everyone is happy at this time of year...

Just like us.

Just us.

My head felt like it being pounding by a hydraulic press.

I opened my eyes and looked around.

Where...

Where am I?

My mind racked up a reason where I was, only for it to crush my head.

I coughed heavily and rubbed my temples to get a sense of myself.

Once the episode had passed, opened my eyes again.

I looked at my arms to see it was filled with wires and tubes.

For some irrational reason, I pulled them out of me, not wanting any support to live.

And once I did, the color, smells, sound, touch and taste of the world came back to me, reinvigorating me.

I am...

Alive.

I told Val to live on for me and to take care of Monika.
And that's where I thought I died.

But I am not dead.

I am breathing and thinking.

The blanket on me got too warm for comfort and so I ripped it off me.

Once I did, moved off the hospital bed and got off.

My legs felt wobbly and weak as if I have taken my first steps.

But after a couple of steps, I managed to walk once more.

Okay...

Does the world know that I am dead?

The soft light emanated from a desk nearby to which I moved to investigate.

There lied a familiar phone, with a note underneath.

That's...

That's my phone.

I picked up my phone and saw it was fully charged and had a dozen messages from everybody I knew.

But the name eluded me as they never mentioned it.

They were all eulogies of my supposed death, and it was horrifying to read.

So I was dead.

Where am I?!

There was no service, so I couldn't dial anything.

So I turned to the note for answers.

You woke up.

Your name is Frank Gilliot Jones.

You had a promising future ahead before your best friend attempted suicide.

Don't worry, he is alive and well, thanks to you.

You saved his life by going into a corrupted simulation of a visual novel from last year, called Doki Doki Literature Club.

You played through the game in your own experience and the AI of the system adjusted to your reactions.

That AI was madly in love with your alter-ego, "Valkyrie".
This identity was made to protect your wellbeing from a phenomenon known as a destabilization.
You had your fun in the simulation, believing that you were indeed "Valkyrie" but you woke up.
In the end, you completed your mission.
But you died.
Your alter-ego gained sentience and killed you to survive.
Only one can stay in the simulation and in the real world.
I tried to avenge you by killing "Valkyrie" and the AI, but I realized that they wanted to be left alone.
They were in love and forever bound to each other.
And so, I stopped and looked into "Valkyrie" to see you locked away.
I found you and revived you.
Now you have a second chance because I brought you back to life.
My name is not important, but I oversaw most of the events during the simulation.
But the important thing is...
Everyone is waiting for your return back home.
Welcome home, Frank.
I folded the paper, letting the memories surge through me.
There were clothes nearby, so I put them and got everything I needed.
As I walked out of the room, I noticed that I was in an abandoned hospital.
No one was around.
It was just me.
I checked my phone to see the date.
December 24, 2018.
Christmas Eve.
It has been 6 months since I died.
And now...
I am back.
The double doors led the way out, and so I opened them.
In front of me were a sunset and a road leading to civilization.
And there, I started my long trek home.
I'm home, guys.

I'm finally home.

THE END
I continued my journey home, trying to piece the events together.

*Tom's coma happened in June, right?*

*So that means I have been dead for six months...*

*How did I even die?*

Memories of my final confrontation with my alter-ego, or instead my simulated self surfaced.

It stopped me from walking any further.

...

*I lost...*

*I lost the fight for my life and my body.*

*Hehe, Val was apparently the stronger version of me.*

*I should feel angry that he killed me, but he has earned his keep.*

*He loved Monika with all his heart, despite how psychotic is can be.*

*Somehow, despite that insanity of that girl or... no, she is not a thing.*

*Monika is somehow a real girl and not some "self-aware" NPC in Doki Doki Literature Club.*

*In any case, I can see why people may find her as "waifu-material" or whatever.*

*He saw something in her that made her redeemable in his eyes.*

*After all that Val's done to keep his right to live, I hope he is doing well and fulfilling his promise.*

*Wherever he is.*

*I should be more worried about how everyone will react to see me alive and well.*

*Kind of like a zombie, without the necrosis and thirst for raw human flesh.*

The more time I took the time to brood, the closer I got to home.

*What should I say to Mom or Dad?*

*Better yet, what should I say to Mike?*

"Hey guys, I am alive! What do you know?!"

*No, I can't say that.*

The streets and avenues of where I lived started to become more familiar to me, as I walked home.

However, the roads started to twist in turn into flashbacks of me being in the simulation, slowly
losing control of who I am and becoming Val.

Stop it.

It's over.

All those memories came and went.

God, that happened six months ago and I need to move on.

But it felt like...

Only a few seconds ago when I fought for my life.

How am I even alive?

The note says that I was locked away within Val.

Does that mean, he didn't kill me?

No, the look in his eyes showed that he needed to kill me to survive.

It's more along the lines of that I am him, and he is me, no matter how much our personalities conflict.

God, I need to stop questioning how this miracle even happened.

Right now, I am happy to be alive.

I went inside the building and buzzed my apartment.

Heh, in the simulation I thought I lived in my old house back at Brooklyn.

Right now, it was late at night, so I doubt anyone was awake.

But it was still worth a try.

...

Nothing.

Nothing happened.

And so, I buzzed the apartment again.

...

Nothing.

I should give up.

Them seeing me alive would raise too many questions and create suspicion on who I am.

Do I look like myself?

I took my phone and activated the front camera to look at my face.
The camera displayed my face, the same look that I was born and matured with.

I am still me.

This isn't some reincarnation shit; I am alive.

With my affirmed belief to reveal myself to my loved ones, I buzzed my apartment one more time.

...

Nothing.

Should I wait tomorrow?

Where should I sleep?

It's going to be the same reaction if I show myself to anyone else.

My stomach grumbled.

I...

I am feeling hungry.

It's pretty cold outside, so I would be losing valuable body-heat if I stay out in the cold.

I closed my eyes and took a step back from the apartment buzzer.

Don't worry me, I can think of something.

If I wasn't so tired as well.

*BUZZ*

The building door unlocked, allowing me to enter the building.

Without a doubt, I pushed the door and went inside.

In an instant, I was greeted with warmth and a sense of safety.

Should I go now and reveal myself?

It's worth a try.

I balled my fists up and went into the elevator.

Okay.

Okay.

I got this.

Just tell them I can explain everything and try my best to keep them calm.

The elevator stopped at my floor, and I exited.

With each step, I started to regret my decision to come back.
I should have stayed dead.

There isn't a point of coming back.

How will you fix your relationship with your friends and family?

Will your old flame, Tracy, accept you and come back to you?

Remember what Val said?

"Can you really trust a girl like Tracy?"

What if she betrays you again?

How about your taking into consideration of how hurt your friends must be from your death?

Enough!

Just get this over with me!

Let the doubts in me flourish with inevitable rejection!

I need to see, hear, and feel the stinging pain of rejection from my family first!

With the notion of getting this done, I rang the doorbell and took a couple of deep breaths.

Even then I kept a stoic and cold look on my face, knowing that if I let my anxiety take over, then I would never know the truth ahead.

"I can do this," I muttered to myself. "Walk in, tell them what happened, and hope for the best."

The soft footsteps from the other side meant that someone was checking on the door.

"What the fuck?!" I heard my younger brother say.

Another voice roared at him.

"Michael! What did I say on using such language?!!" My mother reprimanded.

A small smile cracked at my cold visage.

"Mom, Mom! Oh my God! Look behind the door! It's him! He's back from the hospital!" Michael yelled in complete bewilderment.

My heart started to race from how anxious I was feeling.

Are they going to believe me?

Oh, God!

Please, don't think I am some sort of drifter!

"Who? Michael, Gill has been in a coma for six months! The hospital said that we would get a call if he has woken up!"

They would...?
Wait, what hospital was I even in?! 

The one I was in had no one inside!

"MOM! Please! Let me open the door for God's sake! PLEASE!"

Without waiting for an answer, my brother opened the door.

"No, Michael!!" My mother yelled.

There I mustered the most neutral look I can.

On the other side of the door, my brother stared agape, with my mom looking on from behind, equally shocked.

For some reason, their shocked faces managed to make me smile again.

Say something!

"I have a lot of explaining to do, don't I?" I calmly asked in with a joking undertone.

My mother immediately burst into tears when she realized at who she was looking at.

Fuck!

She quickly ran past my brother and pulled me inside, hugging and sobbing into my shoulder.

"My baby... My baby! You're alive! Thank the God for bringing you back! Oh, my baby!" She cried, holding onto to dear life.

It was as if she did let go; then I would disappear forever.

I looked towards my teary brother and smiled at him, something I rarely did towards anyone.

He turned his head to the doors connecting to the bedroom.

"DAD! Come here, quick! Gill's back!"

The door opened slowly as if he took the whole thing as a joke.

I took the time to bring in his new appearance.

He looked grayer as if he hasn't been eating or sleeping well, to the point he was unrecognizable to me.

No...

Dad was hit by my disappearance, no death.

With a glance downwards, I saw that my mother shared my dad's condition.

They were thumped by my death.

But as soon as he met eyes with mine, they were pained.

"Sport...? Is that you? Oh my God..." He whispered in disbelief.
My mother released me, still sobbing uncontrollably from my return.

With a simple nod, I hugged him; my height was similar to his, it was comfortable and less awkward.

I heard his sniffle behind my back.

For the first time in my life, I heard my dad choke back a sob.

"How in the world are you alive, Frank? I thought you were dead..." He said through choked tears.

That was my cue to pull away from him.

I turned my head to my brother.

"Mike, close the door. I got a lot explaining to do."

Without a moment's delay, he closed the door.

My parents took my hands and sat me down in the living room sofa, making sure I wouldn't get hurt if that were even possible.

Once they started to calm down, I explained everything, my younger brother sitting down right next to them.

I explained from how I went to save my best friend to how I got resurrected.

Of course, most of the details sounded outlandish, but they somehow understood it.

That gave me the notion that they were aware of what the machine did, so I didn't hold any details back.

When I got to the part where I woke up, that's where I started to slow down.

The details of me waking up were still somewhat spotty and strange, so I tried to fit the pieces together.

Everyone still had questions as to what has happened, but I was happy to answer them without losing touch of reality and making them sound as reasonable as possible.

My explanations weren't perfect, and inevitably my parents had some doubts about what happened, but to my surprise, they accepted me back.

I let out a large and relieved sigh, knowing that I was one step closer to fixing my life again.

"Mom, Dad, I will continue what happened later. But right now, I am starving... I don't know how long it was that I ate anything." I admitted.

Both of my parents smiled at me.

"That's right; you must be starving, my baby."

I couldn't help but roll my eyes from my mother's nickname for me at this current moment.

"Mom, come on. Stop calling me that, I am about to 19." I whined.

My dad cleared his throat.
"Your mother has every right to call you that, you are our firstborn. And not to mention there wasn't a day that went by that we mourned your death, son. In any case, we are happy that you are back in our arms."

They do want me back!

I shrugged defeated from my dad's "logic."

"Alright... fine. But seriously, I am starving. I can feel my insides starting to hurt."

My parents chuckled at my outburst and went into the kitchen to prepare an extra-large-late dinner for me.

As much as I want to help...

I am exhausted.

With the toughest part now accomplished, I laid on the sofa and looked up to the white ceiling.

Now I have to pick the pieces with my friends.

And then maybe... I can finally reconnect with Tracy.

That's what my lesson in the simulation taught me.

My memories of her taught me to go after one more time and to see if she regrets any of it.

I don't know if she is still with that asshole, but it even worth a try.

There's a chance she will take me back, and I can forgive her, but who knows?

I am still young, and I can learn to love.

Even then, the future now finally looks a little brighter.

Hopefully, it will be brighter for my loved ones and me.

That's my wish in life.

"Gill, what do you want to eat? Come over here!" They called.

With a groan, fighting off the hunger and exhaustion in me, I got off the sofa.

And I was just getting comfy!

"I'll see!" I replied, walking to them.

Everything has fallen to disarray and but I will try my best to set things straight.

After all, what's life without a little challenge in it?

I awoke to feel rather cozy and refreshed.

It was because there was someone in my arms.

My eyes opened to see the outside world to be snowing, slowly building up everywhere.
Today’s Christmas...

I felt a slight shuffle in my arms as if someone was trying to be comfortable.

"Mmm..."

I looked down to see who it was.

Monika.

She was sleeping peacefully, with a small content smile plastered on her face.

Her chest heaved up and down as she slept.

How is she so cute now?

I ran my hand down her long brown hair, straightening it.

As usual, they smell like pine trees.

My lips then shifted to a smile, knowing the events of what happened yesterday.

So we did it.

Monika and I finally did it.

The girl in my arms shifted once more, causing me to pull away.

Her arms out-stretched, grazing my cheek with her warmth.

Afterward, she immediately went back to sleep.

I need to walk a bit; my legs feel all numb from last night.

And so, I pulled away from the girl to which she tightened her grip on me.

A grip that I didn't notice when she stretched.

Because of that, I tried to pull her off, to which she tightened it again.

I gonna be crushed!

Luckily her armpit was exposed when she held onto me, allowing me to tickle her.

Monika gave a lazy groan and shifted towards the tickle, detaching the constricting wrap on me.

With one arm down, the other arm went down just as easy.

She started to cry in displeasure, shuffling to get the warmth back by any means.

To relieve this, I dashed into her closet, my legs feeling like T.V static, and pulled out the body pillow.

With that, I delivered the pillow to which immediately curled up against and squeezed the ever living life out of.

Jeez!
Now being free of her grasp, I walked to get the blood flowing.

*Hmm...*

*I feel a little bit more free than usual.*

My eyes gazed downwards to see myself naked.

*That's probably why.*

I looked around for my boxers, as it was the most unwanted article of clothing for making love, so it had to be in some distant corner of the room.

Once I found my boxers on the corner next to the bed, I walked up to it.

It was there that I noticed it was covering something.

I picked up my boxers to see a black journal underneath it.

*Monika's Journal from that day...*

*Looks like she hasn't been writing on it, that's why it's all the way over here.*

*She said she would kill me or anyone if read.*

*What's so seditious about this Journal?*

*Is there something so bad that ruins both her reputation in school and friends?*

*Oh man, I really want to open it up!*

*Should I...?*

*Or should I not?*

*It would be a breach of trust if I do open it.*

*What if Monika catches me?*

*What will happen to our relationship?*

*What will happen to her friends?*

*What will happen to her?*

*No, I should stay away from it.*

*Something's are better left unseen.*

*But whatever it is, I hope she redeems herself with it.*

In the corner of my eye, there was another journal on the bedside cabinet.

And so, I walked up to it to take a closer look, without waking up Monika.

Once I got close enough, I read it from afar.
That journal on her cabinet was actually her diary, judging by how sparkly and bright up close.

Wait...

So that black journal...

That's the Monika that hated me after that day.

She wrote all her frustrations and hatred into that.

No wonder she doesn't want anyone to see it.

But this one...

I picked up the diary, examining it closely but was careful not to open it.

This one written recently.

We sorted everything out on Tuesday.

And I think...

That's where Monika fell for me again.

Do I have this deductive analysis thing right?

Cause I am doing a lot of speculation here.

In any case, that diary is contained with lots of bright and heartwarming content.

The appearance is a dead give away, compared to that evil journal there.

Maybe in time, Monika will show me her diaries and deepest secrets locked away in them.

But for now, I am happy with this.

I pulled my boxers up and walked over the bed to cuddle with her, throwing the body-pillow elsewhere.

The perfectionist curled around me, hugging me tightly once more.

Her legs intertwined with mine and warmed me up.

But she gave a cry and used her legs to pull my boxers off.

Okay, then...

I pulled them off and discarded them away from the bed.

She gave a cute coo and wrapped her legs around mine again.

It was there that I realized that she was naked too.

And that turned me on, unfortunately.

I grew and poked her butt, so I tried to move out from her binding grasp.
Each time I moved it kept poking her, causing her to give lazy sounds of protest.

*I can't do anything with you wrapping up like a Python!*

But before I knew it, Monika let out a cute yawn before opening her emerald green eyes to me.

She rubbed her eyes to better see who I was.

That cute smile of hers came back as she awoke.

"Goodmorning, Darling." She greeted, still feeling somewhat sleepy.

I gave her the headpats she loved.

"Goodmorning, Sweetheart. You sleep well?"

Monika yawned again and rested her head on my chest.

"Stoooop... Your headpats will make me sleepy again." The perfectionist muttered, trying to move my hand off her head. "And you stop poking me with your dick? Thanks..."

My face flushed as I moved my erection away from her.

But no matter what I did, it wouldn't go down.

*Seriously?!!*

*This is the one time I need to control my hormones, and this time they aren't listening to me!*

In the end, it poked her again but it didn't bother her.

For a while, we rested in each other's arms before I got bored of it.

As a result, I felt the need to poke, touch, and graze her.

With my finger of course.

So I trailed my hand down from her head and stroked her cheek.

Monika gave a coo of appreciation.

"That's better, now that will make me sleep." She said, contradicting herself.

After a few seconds, she fell asleep again, causing me to flick her forehead.

"Ow! Heeey! Let me sleep, okaaay? A girl needs her beauty sleep."

*That's one classic excuse.*

"Rise and shine, sweetheart. It's Christmas, remember?"

With those words, she sprang back to life, her eyes twinkling with mirth.

"Really?! Then what are we waiting for? Let's go!"

She then tried to pull me off the bed, only for her to stop.
I raised an eyebrow as to what stopped her excitement.

Her cheeks flared up and she turned to the opposite side of the bed, away from me.

"Is there something wrong?" I asked.

She curled herself into a ball and covered herself up with the blanket, taking the away the only two sources of warmth.

"Don't look at me! I'm naked!"

Yeah, me too.

With a sigh, I put my hand on her shoulder to calm her down.

"Did you forget what happened?"

That question somehow managed to bring some sense into her, revealing what happened last night.

"N-No... I am just... a little embarrassed right now." She replied, still inside the ball.

What?

"Why? I thought... you enjoyed it." I muttered, feeling a bit hurt from her behavior.

She sensed the pain in my voice and turned around, her face red as a tomato.

"I did! It was the most fun I ever had with you. B-But, the way we did it was very intense..."

That is true.

I did push her to do more after I wasn't satisfied with one round.

She wasn't ready for all that.

Jeez, am I some sort of animal?

What we did was definitely not a normal first time!

"You're right, Mon. I am sorry." I apologized, hugging her.

She was somewhat shocked by my hug but nevertheless hugged back.

"Ah, don't be Darling. I am a bit embarrassed by how rough and passionate you were. It's a lot to take in, you know?"

I sighed again.

"Yeah, I know. We did a lot more in our first time than what couples do in a month, or even a year."

We held each other in our arms, replenishing the warmth that I desperately craved.

"It's those awkward moments we had as teens, remember Darling? I lost count on how many times you 'accidentally' groped me."

I groaned at her reasoning.
"Gah! It's true! You were way 'up in my face' back then! And let's not forget the times where you 'accidentally' flashed me or 'accidentally' graze my pelvis!"

She pouted and looked away.

"Those weren't on accident. I meant to do all them, moron. All of those touches were just my weird plans to get you to notice me."

So that time where she let me see her panties right before her dad called...

Was that her plan to make me more... enticed by her?

Maybe if they didn't call, then something else would have happened...

Argh!

Don't think that!

We were 14 at the time, and I'm glad I dodged that bullet!

But the possibility of that happening in such a young age...

It makes me shiver from close things could go awry.

"I see..." I replied. "Well, in any case. I want to let you know, I had fun as well. The faces and moans really turned me on."

Wait!

Why did I say that?!

Shiiiiit!

It literally slipped my tongue!

Oh gosh, I just made everything so weird!

Her eyes widened at my slip-up, apparently in disbelief of what I said.

"M-My... moaning and faces?" She muttered, shocked from my comment.

I looked away in shame, silently berating myself from what I caused.

In the corner of my eye, she smirked at me.

Despite my disgrace, I looked back at her.

Her green eyes twinkled with mischief when she's got my attention.

Without warning, she rolled her eyes backward and stuck her tongue out lazily.

To add further effect to the lewd act, she did the peace sign and moaned.

A moan that tickled my heart.

"Aaah~!"
I covered my face to hide my reaction from how erotic it all was.

*Why do I have such a hot and lewd girlfriend?!*

Because I covered myself from her, I felt her lick my neck, causing me to flinch in surprise and opening myself up to her.

"Tastes like anxiety~!"

I rubbed my neck from the lick and glared at her.

"Please don't ever do that in public! I don't know what I'll do if you do."

She kept her smug smirk.

"Oh, so you'll fuck me in public if I do that face again, right?"

**ARGH!**

Are you kidding me?!

She's twisting my words right now!

Why is she so playful?

Is she-

*BRR BRR*

Monika's phone vibrated, cutting my thoughts off.

We looked around to see where her phone was and turns out it was in her jeans.

Her jeans were on the floor next to the bed, lazily discarded from our passionate night yesterday.

She moved the blanket and moved to the corner of the bed to reach for her phone.

It was relatively nearby but was on another end of the bed, causing her to bend over.

Without realizing it, Monika bared herself in front of me.

That's where my eye started to twitch.

The curves of her ass...

It's so perfect.

Gah, get a grip!

This is the perfect time to take revenge!

She licked me and did that face!

My mind replayed the certain face again, causing me to flinch.

Argh, that face!
I was so close to being turned on completely!

While Monika looked for her phone in her jeans, I snuck up behind her.

I rubbed my hand in anticipation of what I was going to do.

*Let's see how it feels to be turned on without having the libido!*

My hand steadied itself, moving back and forth for the perfect amount of strength and area covered.

*SMACK*

"AAAH!" She screamed in surprise.

_Uh oh..._

_I immediately regret my decision._

The enraged girl reared her head to me, her eyes now containing a fiery rage.

_Yup, that was a bad idea!_

Now ignoring the vibrating phone, she lunged at me and delivered a flurry punches that were near-impossible to block.


Despite how intimidating she was, I found her outburst hilarious.

Once she was done punching, I started to laugh, raising her ire even further.

"What's so funny?!"

I put my hand up to calm her down, and to wait for me to stop laughing.

"It's just that... I didn't expect you to be so angry!" I said through my laughter.

I let out a sigh knowing that the moment has passed.

"Okay, okay. I'm sorry for spanking you like that. It's just that you looked too... sexy, and it was hard for me to contain myself, okay?"

Monika rolled her eyes and crossed her arms.

"If you're gonna do that to me without my knowledge, then that means I can't trust you when I am naked."

_W-What?!

In an instant, I clamped my hands together.

"Wait, wait, wait! No, I am sorry! I won't do that again, I swear!" I begged.

_Jeez!_

_Am I really going that far to keep her like this?_
How much of a pervert am I?

My begging prompted the perfectionist to laugh at me.

"Ahaha! Now that was perfect! I knew the pervert in you would come out! This was all according to plan!"

I raised an eyebrow and stopped my begging.

"Huh?" I let out.

Her laughter started to die down.

"Ahh~! Darling, you called me gorgeous when I was naked, and I trust you more than anything. I couldn't care less if you spanked me or not. In fact, I enjoyed it. I just didn't want you to come with a revenge plot or anything, I want to be the one winning here, alright?"

...

Not as much of a pervert as she is.

Because of her, I was at a loss for words, causing her to giggle.

"Hehe! Looks like I will be winning for a while now. Anyway, cover yourself up and cuddle with me. The girls called me to see how we were doing."

I gulped at what that meant.

"Wait... we're going to let them know that we-"

She put her finger on my lips.

"Mhm! You're mine, remember? No one will take you away, especially since you have that mark on your neck."

I rubbed the bite she made when we made love.

"What about Natsuki and Yuri? How will they take this... whole thing?" I asked.

Monika looked somewhat indifferent about it.

"Don't worry about that. They only had crushes on you, not actual love as we have. I am sure that they will be fine. Let's return the video call back."

I bit my lip in thought.

"That is... um if you are ready of course." She whispered, her confidence now vanishing.

I gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"Monika, if you want to let them know, then go for it. I won't stop you. And don't forget that you're mine as well." I assured.

She smiled and gave me a quick peck on the lips.

"Okay, if you say, Darling. Let's get ready."
The perfectionist pulled the blanket over us and hugged me tightly.

I hugged her back, wrapping my arms around her waist and back.

She rested her head on my chest and posed for the camera as she started the voice call.

With a sly smirk reflecting against the camera, she put the peace sign and waited for them to pick up.

*You're going to tease me while we talk to them right?*

*This is what I signed up for...*

*Great.*

The phone rang for a couple of seconds until Sayori picked up.

Her face was way too close to the camera, her blue eyes taking most of the view.

"Does this phone have games in it? Aw, nevermind it's gone now. Hmm... is this thing on?" The coral-pink haired girl asked.

She looked up to the screen and brightened up at the sight of us.

"Awww! You two look so cute! Guys! Look at this!"

We both tensed up when we realized who she was going to show us to.

*Crap, I hope they can take it!*

The camera panned to the two girls that had crushes on me.

At first, they were shocked by the position we were in.

I too shared their surprise as well.

But after a few seconds, they mellowed and blushed at what we were doing.

"Why is everyone looking so red all of a sudden?" A familiar voice called.

*Wait...*

*Is that-*

The camera panned towards the younger girl next to the door.

She had long purple hair and eyes, just like Yuri.

*Haru!*

*Ah man, how is she going to react to all this?!*

The young girl squinted at us, before coming to the realization of what was going on.

*That doesn't look good.*

"WHAAAAAT?!" The girl screeched. "Onii-Chan, how dare you! I didn't know that you were so desperate for love that you went for all that sass!"
I felt Monika tense up at her outburst.

"Easy, Sweetheart."

Despite my rubs to calm her down, she looked up to me and gave me a quick kiss on the cheek, furthering agitating Haru.

"Uuuu! You'll regret Sassy! Onii-Chan is mine and mine only! Get away from him!"

I felt Monika failing to keep her calm and amicable facade up, her nails digging into my flesh in order to endure the blows to her pride.

_Okaaay, I am going to have to step in._

"Haru," I called with firm diction. "Monika's my girlfriend."

Her jaw dropped at the revelation.

She then looked at her older sister and clung onto her.

The girl shook her uncontrollably.

*I think she's doing that because she thought Yuri would be her backup plan if all things fail, right?*

"Onee-chan, please tell me that's false! I can't believe it! She can't be his!"

Yuri giggled at her younger sister's refusal to believe me.

"Sorry, Haru. I am afraid that it's true. Monika and he are now together. They deserve to be a couple." She stated calmly.

_Looks like Yuri is taking it pretty well._

_Thank you, Yuri._

"It's easier to look for others than go for a guy that's already taken," Natsuki added, smirking at the distraught girl. "Besides, they look pretty cute under that blanket!"

Haru looked defeated, as she looked sullen and slumped.

But then she looked up to us with a renowned grit.

"Even if you took my Onii-Chan's virginity, I will find a way to make him mine! You'll see!" She declared, walking up to the door.

She then closed it.

"You'll seeeee!" Haru stated, the door muffling her voice.

We blinked a couple of times to process what exactly happened.

"Anyway..." Monika stepped in. "How was the party you three?"

They all brightened up at the mention of the party to which I couldn't really pay attention.

_Blah, just girl things._
It's all boring.

I felt Monika's hand shift away from bicep and moving lower.

What is she doing?

All of a sudden, I felt a shock down my shine.

My morning-wood felt like it was being held by something.

It twitched around as it was gripped, causing me to hold back a groan.

Argh!

What the Hell?!

I wanted to look down as to what was touching me, but if I did, it would create a scene.

Wait...

Monika's touching me?!

Why?!

"Sooo, we gossipped a lot about what happened with Danuja's girlfriend and how she got suspended." Natsuki put out. "According to Tom, she did blackmail the poor boy a lot."

"Speaking of their relationship, did they go far in it? Was there any passion involved?" Yuri asked, keeping up with the gossip.

"Hehe! Tommy told me that they went to tier 20! Or was it tier 23? In any case, he lost his v-card to that yandere." Sayori replied.

Well, we had to pry the information out of Dan when he was acting all giddy one day.

Sadly he lost his virginity to a psycho.

Speaking of yanderes, isn't Sayori some sort of one?

Like, she's pretty possessive of Hill-Top whenever he talks to any other girls.

Hmm...

"Since it's us girls, how was his dick game?" Monika innocently asked.

My eyes bulged out from her lewd question.

W-What?!

There's so much wrong with that statement!

And I am a guy!

I felt Monika starting to stroke my wood once she said that.

Grk!
Her hand teasing me just gets me annoyed.

Maybe that's my cue to leave!

And I swear if she-

Her hand then shifted to lower, caressing my scrotum.

Yep!

Time to leave!

"Um..." I interrupted. "Should I go? This is something a guy shouldn't really have to hear."

Saying all that without groaning was pretty difficult.

Luckily, Monika stopped her teasing and only kept me in her hands, allowing me to keep sane.

Natsuki rolled her eyes.

"Nah! It is going to be fun with a guy hearing of our comments about his game!"

I cringed at her answer.

"What?! Yuri, you have the sanest one here, right? I should be the one to leave."

"Hey!"

She shrugged nonchalantly.

"Perhaps. I don't mind if a guy is here, maybe you can give insight into the differences of what you two did."

You've got to kidding me.

"Monika, can you-"

I felt myself being cushioned by something soft and warm.

With all the willpower to not groan, I let out a shaky sigh from how pleasurable it was.

What was that?!

I glared at Monika, to which she started to smirk.

Is she suffocating me with her thighs?!

Well, I have to admit it's a smart play but come on!

"What was that, Darling?" Monika playfully asked, looking at me smugly.

Screw this, if you want to play dirty, then I will play dirty too!

My arm around her waist shifted and went to where I was, and I rubbed her near her vaginal area.

She closed her eyes and gave a hitched inhale, apparently overwhelmed by my surprise attack.
"Nothing," I replied, looking back at her smugly as well.

The perfectionist opened one eye where she scowled at me, not like how the odds have shifted.

"Two can play at that game, Jones." Her eye said.

"Show me then, Salvato."

A throat clear was heard from the other side.

"Um, are you guys okay?" Sayori asked worriedly.

Monika tightened her thighs around me, squeezing and making sure I was stimulated.

"Yeah! We are fine!" The perfectionist reassured by looking back at the screen with a smile.

You're such a dirty girl.

It's so unfair!

"Anyway, what we were saying?" Natsuki stepped in.

They lost track of the conversation, so that means I can deter it from going anywhere else...

"Don't know," I replied, hoping to avoid such an awkward conversation.

I felt Monika rub my wood in a circular fashion, allowing it to grow with more stimulation.

Arrrgh!

I can't hold it in!

"We were talking about Danuja's first time." Monika quickly replied.

To stop myself giving out a cry of pleasure, I bit my lips and started to toy with her more vigorously in return.

She started to shake slowly as a result.

I knew that Monika is a competitive girl, I made sure to keep my stamina to all this high.

"Oh yeah!" Sayori cheerily chirped, oblivious what was going on under the sheets. "So what did you guys hear?"

The perfectionist started to move up and down me, causing me to breathe a bit heavier.

"I-I wouldn't know, since Dan never really told me much about his first time," I replied.

To retaliate Monika's play, I entered her with my index and middle finger.

With that, I pinched her clit, knowing it was a week spot.

"Ah~!" She let out muffled, but loud enough for only me to hear.

Monika tried her hardest not to moan at that spot.

"Oh, I see. I kept bothering Tommy to ask Dan what happened, and we got some details!" Sayori
followed up.

*She's really turned on.*

*I can feel her drenching my fingers when I touch her.*

Instead of retaliating, Monika abruptly stopped and pulled my arm around her back towards her chest.

Once my arm arrived at the destination, she pushed my arm against her and placed her hand on me once more.

*Does she want us to get caught?!!*

Well...

*I have to admit, doing all this feels daring.*

Despite how roughly she pushed me into her chest, I squeezed lightly every once in a while to avoid breaking our cover.

"Apparently Dan's girlfriend pushed him into seducing her, so that way they both can enjoy it. Despite him not really knowing what her girlfriend was capable of, he took her during one summer night." Yuri explained.

Monika shifted gears and stopped using her hand to pump me, using her luscious thighs to her advantage.

With me completely enveloped by her, she straddled me.

By the second, I grew more and more crazed, as I really wanted to let go of any pent up sexual frustrations she put up.

"Yeah, yeah, Yuri. But let's talk more about how great it felt!"

If I was more control of what was going on, I would criticize how they were obsessing over the sexual aspect of making love, but it would be hypocritical...

Especially since Monika and I are under that spell.

Because of her new play, I also adapted; pulling my hand away from her and placing it on her hips.

That way, I had more control over the movement she was doing.

Now there wasn't much covering her entrance.

However, I controlled myself with any willpower and rationality I had left from the ravenous attack of lust; stopping me from putting it in to prevent detection.

To make do, I thrust in her pelvis and tried my hardest not to enter her aroused center.

"Ehehe... In second thought, maybe it's better not to talk about their first time. Tommy told me that some stuff is better left untouched." Sayori muttered.

The two girls whined at her cold-feet.
"Awww c'mon, Sayori! It will be fun!" Natsuki exclaimed.

"I agree, talking about that is exciting, right Monika?" Yuri asked.

Unfortunately for them, Monika had a difficult time replying and was about to break her facade.

"U-Um, I-I hah, uh, if Sayori doesn't want to talk about it then we can talk about something else..." The perfectionist managed to reply.

I don't know how much of this I can take!

With a sigh coming from both of the girls, they finally relented.

"Alright..."

"Then what should we talk about?" Natsuki asked.

Monika shut off the phone before we can give a clear answer, cutting the video feed.

With the only barrier gone from letting our frustrations out, we swiftly went to work.

I pushed the blanket away and pinned her against the bed.

My lips quickly met hers, and we kissed.

Our tongues swiveled against each other, desperately wanting to make the moment between us last for as long as possible.

I intensified our make-out session by leaning forward and being more aggressive, constricting her tongue with mine.

That elected a positive response for her, as she moaned in my mouth.

The kiss we started with was ridiculously messy when we pulled away.

Our tongues were laking saliva messily, with it flowing down our chins.

Monika bucked her hips to make sure that can she and I can stimulate each other as possible.

But now since there was no one around, I pulled her legs apart and aimed towards her center.

I looked up to her, the last remnant of my sanity quickly vanishing, to which she nodded.

And that's where we had our first round of morning sex.

My breathing was heavy and slow.

It was difficult to catch my breath from how intense Darling was.

He's amazing in bed.

I didn't have any doubts about that.

Darling yawned and rose up from the bed.

"Alright, Sweetheart. Enough laying around in the bed. Let's start the day, alright?"
I gave a lazy whine and pouted.

"Awww! I don't want to get up! I want to stay in bed with you forever!"

He chuckled from how I pouted.

"Ehehe, I don't think I can last that long. Come on, we can't stay there forever."

I pulled the blanket over my head and laid my head on the pillow.

"Well, I can! Wake me up if you want to cuddle... or spoon. Whichever!"

Before I can get comfortable, Darling ripped the blanket away from me.

"Heeey! Give me my blanket back!" I bemoaned.

I looked up to him, seeing how amused he was.

"We can do that later. On the sofa, if you would like, but we need to start the day. It's Christmas, remember?"

_Eh, I am not feeling this year._

_Well not anymore, I guess._

I shifted away from and rested.

"So what? It comes every year. You already made this Christmas the best one yet for me." I explained. "Telling me you love me, showing you that I can play the piano after all these years, and you fake proposing to me makes this year the best."

I turned to him with a smile.

"Thanks, Darling. This is the best Christmas ever."

He smiled back.

"Monika, Christmas is not over yet."

Darling walked up to me and pulled his hand out to me.

"We can make this even better than it already is... so hold onto my hand."

My eyes glistened as I stared at his dorky smile and face.

_Every day of my life will be dedicated to making the best out the time we missed out on._

_After that, we will continue to love each other._

I took his hand to which he pulled me up and holding me bridal style.

His surprise hold made me cross my arms.

"You always do this! I can walk you know?! I am not always a damsel in distress!"

Darling gave me a deadpan look and shrugged.
"Alright, if you say so. Want me to put you down?"

I nodded, to which he started to carefully place me onto the floor.

He made sure that I wouldn't fall, so he kept his warm body close to me.

But as soon my feet landed on the floor to support me, my legs failed me.

They felt completely and utterly numb, causing me to almost fall to the floor.

Were it not for Darling's strong grip around me, I would have fallen.

"Are you okay?" He asked caringly.

It's...

It's his fault!

He fucked me so hard that I can't walk because of him!

I glared at him for causing all this.

"Because of you, I can't walk!"

Darling raised both of his eyebrows in shock.

"What? What did I do to you that prevents you from walking?" He asked.

My face burned up from the cause of it.

"Um... well, you were really brutal and rough when we had sex, Darling. Not to mention, we had a fun time a few moments ago, so that makes it worse. Y-You literally fucked me so hard that I can't feel my legs!" I admitted.

I looked away from him, so I couldn't tell how he reacted.

"Sorry." He muttered.

What?!

"Sorry for being so... savage on the bed. I am going to be gentle from now on, okay?"

I can't handle the slow lovemaking others can do!

My type is fast, strong, and tough love!

It feels great and I love hearing the aggressive growls from Darling.

Something about that...

It turns me on.

"Stop it, okay? I didn't say I hated it, Darling. I loved it and I want to do more of it later. Don't ever get boring and slow. Otherwise, I'll stop having sex with you altogether, got it?"

He smiled at me.
"You got me scared for a moment."
Darling leaned in to whisper at my ear.
"I loved it too."
With his vulgar comment, I kissed him on the cheek.
"Good! Now carry me to the showers, Darling! I'm going to need help with cleaning my legs!"
He chuckled and carried me over the bathroom.
"Hopefully it won't be a rerun of what happened on the bed."

_Time started to fly after our Christmas together._

_Days we spent together felt like mere hours or even minutes._

_Eventually, it came time for the New Year._

_Darling and I were heading to ball dance with our friends._

"How do I look?" I asked him.
He simply shrugged.
"Stunning, I guess," Darling answered.
Of course, I wasn't happy with his answer, as I put time and effort into my appearance for the ball.
But I knew something was bothering him.
"Is there something, Darling?"
I saw him walk over to the balcony window and stare at the skies, the snow falling from the heavens.
"Dancing is definitely not my strong suit. I am a bit scared of it." He replied, trying to keep his mind off of his phobia.
Taking care of him was my duty as his girlfriend, so I pressed him.
"What's so scary about dancing?"
Darling pursed his lips.
"I am not scared of it. I am scared of messing it up with you."

_Oh..._

"Messing it up with me? What are you talking about?"
He turned around and gasped at me, apparently at awe with my appearance.
I was wearing a lake foam green dress adorned with floral decorations from top-to-bottom.
My hair had a green bow to the side, keeping some of my hair to the side and into a small bun.
His face deadpanned at the sight of me.

"I got such an angelic girlfriend and I don't have to moves to back it up! What if I step on your toes, twist your wrist, or..."

*For a guy, he is pretty anxious.*

And so to shut him up, I pressed my lips onto his.

Before he could kiss back, I pulled away and sighed.

"Darling, we don't have to do the Tango or anything. It's going to be a slow dance, so you'll be fine. Just follow my lead and we'll dance the troubles away," I assured.

He gave me a small, dorky smile at me.

"That was cheesy Sweetheart, even for you." He remarked.

I gave Darling a small punch on the arm.

"Shut up, you say even cheesier things! Now let's go, we're already late enough."

With his hand on mine, we made our way to the ballroom dance and gathering our friends in the process.

As usual, we all got along despite what happened Sunday, and we had a great time before the slow dance happened.

Everyone separated to find someone to dance with, while we stuck together.

I can feel Darling becoming more and more nervous.

"This is like the Prom we never had, right?"

*He's right...*

I poked his nose at his remark.

"Yeah, but only this time, it will happen. Without the crazy plans, I had in place..."

He raised an eyebrow and took my hand.

The song playing right now was perfect for this occasion, which was Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud".

"Crazy plans?"

"When your legs don't work like they used to before."

I giggled at how baffled he was.

"And I can't sweep you off of your feet."

"Ahaha! Yeah, I had a lot planned for Prom."

"Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love?"
"I can tell since you wanted me to do lots of things on that day."

"Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks?"

Darling put his hand on my hip and held my other hand.

"And darling, I will be loving you till we're seventy."

"Yeah, yeah. Right after you spoke to my dad, we would go to prom."

"And, baby, my heart could still fall as hard at 23."

"That's considering if I did succeed in it, Sweetheart."

"And I'm thinking 'bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways."

"Darling, I had faith that you would be able to talk him out of it. I never gave up on you."

"Maybe just the touch of a hand."

He gripped my hand and we started to sway slowly to the beat.

"Well, me- I fall in love with you every single day."

"Thanks, Monika. That means a lot to me. So what would happen next after all that?"

"And I just wanna tell you I am."

"After you rescued me from Dad, we would go to Prom. I would make sure that no one got their hands on you before the slow dance. And when the time came, I made sure that you would dance with me only. After that, I would confess to you and hope for the best."

"So, honey now..."

Darling was a bit disturbed by my plans and shook his head.

"Jeez, I sound like a white-knight in your head to the point where it's mildly cringy. It also kind of makes me nervous that see me like that, but... I don't know what I would have said when you confessed to me at that time."

I gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"Even if you did reject me, there is something in you that will always want to make me pursue you, and only you. I know deep down, you loved me even if you didn't know." I declared.

Darling's onyx black eyes sparkled when I told him that.

He was expressionless for a few seconds, before grinning like a dork.

"You're hopeless sometimes, Monika. I'm lucky to realize that I love you, and for you to love me back."

Now it was my time to grin like an idiot.

"Take me into your loving arms."

We continued to sway and hold each other, dancing to the slow beat of the love song.
"Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars."

"Darling... I will keep my promise forever and ever. Even if we die and get reincarnated, I want to know that I will find a way to come back to you. Even if we are thousands of miles apart, I will hold on."

"Place your head on my beating heart."

I rested my head on his chest and closed my eyes.

"Me too, Monika. I will find a way to be with you forever."

"I'm thinking out loud."

"Because... I never want to let go of you."

"Maybe we found love right where we are."

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Two Years Later...

"Jeez, Darling. You went all out for this date. What's so special?" I asked, looking around the fancy decor.

He looked nervous as if he was going to do something risky.

"Um... Well... I was thinking... that..."

I rolled my eyes and crossed my arms.

"What?"

He took a deep breath and knelt on one knee.

"Monika."

My eyes widened at what he was doing.

OH MY GOSH, OH MY GOSH, OH MY GOSH!

IT'S FINALLY HAPPENING!

He pulled out a small black box and opened it.

The ring was a simple gold ring with an emerald gem in the middle of it.

It looked similar to our commitment ring, but this was a little more decorative.

Darling looked up to me with a smile.

"Will you marry me?"

I squealed at the top of my lungs and crushed in a hug.

"YES! YES! I WILL! I WILL MARRY YOU!"

I pulled away and slammed my lips against him.
He's mine!

Only mine!

And I proud of that!

Three years later...

Monika was in my bathroom, apparently feeling sick again.

Of course, I was worried as to what's gotten into her.

And so, I entered the bathroom and saw her vomiting into the toilet.

I rubbed her back to help her let it all out.

Once she was done, she stood up and walked to over sink.

There she rinsed her mouth with water.

"Sweetheart, are you feeling okay?" I asked worriedly.

She rubbed her head.

"Not really... I don't know what's going on with me."

That's not okay.

"Should we go to the hospital? We can get a checkup right now."

Monika shook her head.

"No... I don't think it's that bad. It only happens occasionally, so don't worry."

Then what's the cause of it?

She let out a deep breath as if she was going to give me serious news.

"Val, I think I am... I'm pregnant."

...  
...
...

No way.

No way!

I can't believe it!

Monika's pregnant!

Seconds went by as I didn’t give her a response.
"Darling?"

I burst with excitement.

"You're pregnant?! I can't believe it! This is great news, Monika! Haha!"

Monika gave me a weak smile.

"Yeah, it is. I am carrying your child... That's a lot to take in."

I was unimaginably giddy from the news.

"Sweetheart, we have to tell everyone! Let's start with your parents!"

She nodded slowly, now starting to recover from her sickness.

"Alright..."

Not a lot has changed in the years besides us finishing up business school.

We still kept close contact with our friends, and it was as if nothing really changed.

I called over our parents to meet them for a surprise.

Once that was done, we got our clothes on and walked over to my car, driving back to our old homes where our parents were.

I held her hand tightly as we rang the doorbell.

Strangely enough, the door was open and we heard a "Come in!" from what sounded like four different voices.

When we made it, we found both her parents and my parents chatting in the dining room.

"Ready?" I asked with a smile.

She nodded and smiled back.

"Ready when you are, Darling."

We walked towards them, our hands never separating as we walked.

They give their greetings to us and exchanged pleasantries before we told them the news.

Her hand started to sweat at what she was about to say.

Monika looked towards them with a small frown.

I squeezed her hand to let her know that I was here for her.

"Mom... Dad..." She said slowly.

They leaned in, to hear what she had to say.

"I'm pregnant."

They took second to process the information.
The next, both of our parents lit up.

I expected Monika's dad to be disappointed or least expressionless.

But instead, he let out a shaky sigh, bowing his head in front of us.

He slowly brought his head to reveal his glistening eyes.

"That's a miracle."

What?

"It's a miracle for my daughter to be pregnant. I thought Keiko's infertility would pass onto her as well since it's genetic."

The father or rather the grandfather wiped his eyes from the tears welling in his eyes.

"This is great news, right Keiko? Our daughter is going to give birth to our grandchild."

Monika's mother was sniffling from the good news.

"I was terrified that Monika would be infertile as well, but I'm glad that isn't the case. But I want to make sure that you two get a checkup."

Sweetheart nodded, completely understanding her mother.

"Of course, Mom. I will."

Both of our parents told what to do next, we let the future take care of us and hoped for the best.

Five months later...

"What?!" I yelled, surprised by the news.

The doctor put a hand up to calm me down.

"Yes, your baby is going to be a girl. Also, it appears that the fetus is developing normally with no defects."

He continued to give me the news, I had a difficult time keeping my excitement in.

Once the doctor was done, Monika left the room with her belongings.

She too was excited as well, her lips pursed into a happy smile.

"Did you hear the news?!" I jumpily asked.

Monika raised an eyebrow but nodded.

"Well, yeah. The doctor told me right before he told you."

She then tapped her forefingers together.

"Are you okay with a girl?"

What?!
"I don't get what you're talking about! I am just happy we have a healthy child! If my child was a boy or a girl, I love them as much as I can."

Monika let out a dreamy sigh and kissed me.

I kissed her back from the great news.

We pulled away, wanting to stay civil in front of everyone.

"I'm glad my daughter has a loving father already."

**Four months later...**

Monika’s bloodcurdling screams of pain were slowly drowned out shrill crying.

The nurses quickly scooped up our baby and cleaned her.

Once she was done, the nurse handed our baby to Monika.

With a gasp, she held her tight.

Our daughter's crying came to a halt, now resting peacefully in her arms.

"I can't believe it... it's a beautiful girl..." Sweetheart muttered.

Monika handed me our baby and I held her in my arms.

I opened her covered face to look at her.

*Wow...*

Her little green eyes fluttered open, slowly darting all over my face, before closing them again.

"And I can't believe that... she looks exactly like you."

Monika shot me glare at my words.

"What? I meant that as a good thing. Still, I am a little confused why she doesn't have anything related to me..."

She smirked playfully.

"Maybe it's because I have the superior genes in this relationship."

I rolled my eyes.

"Bah, whatever. I am glad our baby is as beautiful as you. So what should we call our little Monika?"

She motioned me to come closer and to give her the baby, to which I did.

With her in Sweetheart's arms, she sighed.

"You know, I don't know what to call my daughter. What do you think, Darling?"

I rubbed my chin in thought.
Hmm...
Ahah!

"I got the perfect name. I was thinking of..."

Five years later...

Our daughter ran to get a better view of the countdown meter and the ball.

"Mama! Papa!" She called.

Darling brought his arms out to which she ran into and hugged tightly.

He then brought her up and close to him.

"When will the numbers go down? I want to see the big ball drop to the ground and bounce!" She pointed.

He chuckled.

"It will happen soon, don't worry. It looks great, right?"

She yawned and rested her head on his shoulder.

"Yeah... it looks so cool." She muttered. "If I wasn't so tired then I would play a little more..."

I walked up to him, happy that our daughter was finding the event somewhat fun.

"Darling, are you happy?" I asked.

He smiled, never dropping how dorky it looked.

"Yeah, I am. I am very happy. Everything's perfect."

I sighed happily looked up to the ball.

"Maybe visiting America wasn't a bad idea for our winter vacation. I just hope the trio back home are taking care of the bookstore. We have a club meeting at the third, and I don't want to miss that!"

He rested his head on mine.

"We'll be home before then, don't worry. Even then, Sayori, Natsuki, and Yuri can help keep the meeting going, along with Hill-Top, Hiro, and Dan. They'll be fine." Darling assured.

I moved my head up and shot him a mock glare.

"If only I can be as calm as you. It looks like you don't really care about the meetings."

He rolled his eyes playfully.

"Ah, Sweetheart, don't be like that. You know how much I love the book club. Let's enjoy the moment okay?"

"10!!"
"9!"
"8!"
"7!"
"6!"
"5!"
"4!"
"3!"
"2!"
"1!"

"Happy New Year!"

The ball dropped to the ground, confirming the new year.

"Happy New Year, Darling."

I then kissed him on the cheek.

Our daughter pouted.

"Awww! I want a kiss as well!"

To alleviate this, she kissed Darling on the cheek.

He laughed wholeheartedly from how happy he was.

"Happy New Year, Sweetheart."

We looked up at the big screen, enjoying the rest of the moment together.

---

**Fifty Years Later...**

*It's been a few months since my Darling died...*

*Everything my life has suddenly lost its charm.*

*Taste, smell, sounds, touch, sight...*

*All of it meant nothing to me.*

*I can't live without him.*

*But he told me this.*

"Live on for me, Sweetheart. I will meet you at the other side of the tunnel."
What tunnel was Darling talking about?

"Grandma, I am going to head out. Are you going to be okay?" My grandson asked.

He looked remarkably similar to my Darling, but instead of his steely onyx eyes, he had mine.

I smiled at him.

"Of course, dear. I enjoyed your company."

I then leaned him to give him a kiss on the cheek.

"I'll always love you, don't forget that."

He rubbed his cheek with a smile.

"Of course, Grandma. I'll try to see you as soon as possible, okay?"

I simply nodded and watched him leave.

My smile faded when he finally left my home.

I am the only one left.

Sayori, Yuri, Natsuki...

They all passed away a few years ago.

Darling's friends passed before them.

Now...

It's my time.

I stood up from the couch and picked up an old family picture.

It was him and I, with our daughter laughing while the camera took the photo.

There was no doubt that I missed those days.

Our daughter grew up and found her loved one not soon after.

Darling and I grew old together, cherishing every moment we spent.

Now it's time that I join him...

At the end of that tunnel.

I took the picture and sat down on my rocking chair.

Swaying and swaying, my hand grazed my Darling's face.

The smile I had when I first met him came back to me.

Darling...

...
I miss you.

... 

I miss you so much.

The weight of my eyes started to become heavier and heavier.

I'll come back to you.

My slow rocking started to come to a halt.

We will always be together.

I opened my eyes and stroked his face once more.

No matter what.

The weight became unbearable.

My eyes finally closed shut from the battle.

I felt a rush sweep over me as the world around me started to shift.

Lights flickered and flickered as I went through the tunnel.

I didn't know where I was going, but I followed my instincts.

The instincts I had were guided by something.

No...

By someone.

At the end of the tunnel of light, I finally saw him.

There he was, with his old goofy smile, euphoric to see me.

"Are you ready, Sweetheart?"

I hugged him tightly and kissed him.

Once I poured my soul into that kiss, I pulled away.

"I am ready when you are, Darling."

The world changed all around us, shifting and turning to become something new.

We were always going to be together.

No matter what.

An unknown amount of time later...

"Hey! What's your name?"
"Oh, my name's Val! What's yours?"

"My name is Monika! Wanna play with my friends?"

"Okay! Hey, do your friends want to play with mine?"

"Sure! That sounds fun! Come on!"

---

Note: There is a Valentines Special and an Anniversary chapter after this.
Today was Valentine's Day, Darling and I were closing up the bookstore early for the occasion.

Over the last few years, our small bookstore has been growing steadily as more and more became invested with our services based on reading and writing.

I had a good feeling that my message for literature was finally reaching out to the greater public.

But because of that, we have been more and more burdened to keep our quality of service to everyone, resulting in a considerable amount of paperwork and tireless nights.

Nights that left me mostly unsatisfied...

In any case, the hurricane was finally to an end, as our infrastructure has finally stabilized.

Finally, we can have little more family time then work all day.

"It's sure is good, right Sweetheart?"

I looked at the voice that called out to me.

The man that I love was smiling at the boxes he packing.

And so I continued working with a smile as well.

"What is?" I asked.

I knew what he had to say.

"Life." He said. "Life is just... perfect. I have never been any happier."

My smile morphed into a sly smirk as I looked up to him.

He got the sense to stop what he was doing and look up to me.

"How so, Darling?" I asked, teasing him.

Darling knew I was pushing his buttons, so he rolled his eyes.

"We got our dream job, expanding throughout the country, and not to mention... thousands of new members a week? This is amazing!" He exclaimed, countering my tease.

I pouted at his counter and went back to work.

"Jeez, Gill. I didn't know you cared so much about money in life."

My use of his middle name meant that I was unhappy with how successful his counter-tease was.

Because of that, he chuckled whole-heartedly.

"Aha... Aw c'mon, Monika. You knew exactly what I meant." He assured.
I gave a low whine at his reassurance.

Damn it!

It's true.

I know what he meant.

But I want to be the one winning here...

"No, I don't! I never thought you would use me for your gain! To think that you loved our daughter and me!" I convincingly pouted.

He smirked back at me, finishing up with whatever work he had left.

It was apparent that he relatively unaffected, or in fact, immune to my fake pouts.

"Look's like you saw through me... When I met you at the park, I knew that you would be the perfect girl to help me realize my dreams! By taking advantage of your Dad's fortune and your keen mind, I have become successful!" He mockingly gloated.

Oh...

He's good.

But a little threat should be able to fix up that behavior.

I stopped my pouting and sobered up to a two-faced simmer.

"Keep this up Gill, and you'll be sleeping on the couch tonight." I threatened while I hummed, going back to my work.

I always like to have an advantage...

Especially when he's on a winning streak.

Darling got the message and sighed.

"Sweetheart, you know that isn't the case, right? Not only am I happy that I got my dream job, but also I am happy being married to a beautiful goddess and having a daughter that I will protect with my life."

Argh...

He always knows what to say.

But that's what I love about him.

Darling always makes me feel loved and wanted.

I finished with my end of the work and walked up to him.

"Keep this up Darling, and I might consider letting you sleep on the bed with me." I declared, poking his nose.

He playfully rolled his eyes and leaned in.
Whenever Darling leans in, my heart always never stopped pounding.

*That always means we will never get tired of each other.*

I closed my eyes and leaned in, letting his lips meet mine.

Since we were in a public area, we hesitated to deepen the kiss and let our passion for each other take over.

Mainly since there was a distinctive chime coming from our store's back entrance.

Darling mentally groaned from the interruption.

I couldn't help but feel the same too.

We pulled away and faced whoever was coming from that entrance.

Darling wrapped his arm around my hip and pulled me into the side.

I smiled, knowing that he too was unhappy with the interruption.

The door swung open, startling us from how aggressive the push was.

Darling's grip towards me tightened from who has entered.

From the force of the push, we thought it would be a burglar or crook of some sort.

In an instant, we knew who it was.

We smiled and looked down at the little girl who was grumpy.

Her little green eyes were enveloped in a scowl, and she was frowning.

Darling and I traded glances from our daughter's sour mood.

"*This isn't going to be easy to handle.*" Darling's eyes said.

"Yeah... tell me about it..." I replied.

With a sigh, I took the initiative.

"How was school, Sweetie?" I sang, diving into a touchy situation.

She stood near the door and crossed her arms.

"Princess?" Darling calmly called. "Is everything alright?"

Instead of replying, she motioned us outside.

We both knew that it was a sign that she wanted to go home.

"Mon, we still have to file out some requisition forms," Darling whispered to me. "And we have to do them by five o'clock or else we aren't getting those shipments of books."

I didn't like how our jobs can intrude into our personal lives, but we didn't have much of a choice.

"Go ahead and get them done, I'll see what's bothering her. Save the forms that aren't important."
Besides, it's Valentine's day." I whispered back, prompting him to nod and walk away.

Now it was up to me to calm her down.

As I walked up to her, thinking up of any reason on why she was behaving so foul.

_Did Yuri's daughter say something to her?

No, that can't be it. Her daughter never says anything out of spite...

__Hmm, does that mean Natsuki's son anger her by any chance?

That isn't likely either, especially since I know our daughter is quick on her wits to counter him...

__Just like Darling and I.

_Last time I saw the group, they were all in good terms.

Still, being six years old, lots of things can go wrong.

Now, who else haven't I mentioned?

"I want to go home." She demanded, sounding somewhat hurt.

My heart stopped from the realization of what she was going through.

That pain...

_I can recognize it almost anywhere._

The pain resembled when I wanted to leave home for Ainu.

_I was...

Heartbroken.

But the pain in her voice...

It's not as bad when I had it.

No, it has to be something less extreme.

"Sorry, Honey. Mommy and Daddy still have work to do." Darling tried to reason.

It was a pitiful attempt, especially since children tend not to listen to logic.

And because of that, it didn't work.

"I don't care. I want to go home, now!" She whined.

_Something definitely happened with her and the three._

I sighed and knelt.

"Sweetie, did something happen in school?" I asked calmly, looking into her emerald green eyes.

She tried to keep up a fierce look but ultimately mellowed into sadness.
Her eyes looked defeated and troubled as she looked away.

I hated seeing my daughter so pained and devoid of any life, and so I patted her brown hair.

At times it was difficult not believing that my daughter was my long lost twin.

But I knew it was my child when she inherited Darling's silly smile.

She started to shake and rub her eyes slowly, whimpering from how upset she was.

And so I brought her in an embrace, my fingers gliding down her long chestnut hair.

The girl hugged me back tightly as if she was indeed heartbroken.

After a couple of seconds of hugging, she pulled away.

"I hate Valentine's Day." She finally admitted.

Her green eyes didn't have the same pain as before, but she indeed happier.

I raised an eyebrow at her confession.

"Why do you hate it?" I asked.

She puffed up her cheeks and looked away.

"Everyone in school today had a Valentine, except me! I felt jealous that no one wanted to be my Valentine, while everyone else had!"

**No one wanted her Valentine?**

**When Darling and I were younger, we would always be Valentines.**

**Even when I was away in Ainu, Darling never mustered the courage to be someone else's Valentine.**

**But that was because of me...**

**In any case, if she didn't have a Valentine then does that mean...**

"Even he got a Valentine... that dense idjit!" She muttered.

**Yep.**

**I have a good feeling that it's Sayori's kid.**

"How come he gets a Valentine and I don't?! It's not fair! I..." She ranted before stopping.

Her lips quivered at what she wanted to say, but she only sighed.

**That's adorable!**

**My little girl is so much like me!**

"Were you going to say something Sweetie?"

I smiled at her, causing her to blush and look away.
Although the Darling and Tom don't really pay attention to the relationship, the two kids have...

Sayori and I do.

Their relationship resembled my relationship with Darling when we were children.

"No..." She muttered, trying to dodge my question.

This is just precious!

I can't believe that I was this adorable when I was younger!

To get her to speak again, I decided to tickle her playfully.

Not only did she inherit my facial features, but she also inherited my weak spots.

And so, I dove in and tickled her causing her to giggle uncontrollably.

"Hehehehe! Mama stop it! Hehe!" She demanded.

I continued to tickle her until she relented.

"Alright! But will you tell me what you were going to say!"

As soon as I said that, my daughter quickly reversed the exchange.

Since she had my tickle spots, that also meant she knew where I was ticklish too.

I am so proud that she knows what to do!

And now it was my turn to laugh.

"Ahahaha!"

I opened one eye to see her reaction on tickling me.

"I will tell you if you won't laugh!"

If I don't laugh?

"Okay! Okay! I won't laugh!" I declared.

That wasn't enough for her.

"Promise...?"

"Yes, yes! I promise, Sweetie!"

There, she stopped her attack, allowing me to take a breath.

I leaned in and kissed her on the cheek.

"You're such a smart girl. I am so proud of you."

She brightened up and smiled with the same smile Darling has.

"I love you, Mama." She said, kissing me back on the cheek.
I smiled back at her.

"Mama loves you too," I replied, pinching her cheeks.

After a few seconds of reprieve, I looked into her eyes.

"Now, what were you going to say? And I won't laugh, okay?"

She took a deep breath on what she was about to say.

"I... I wanted to be his Valentine." She frowned. "But he already got a Valentine when I went to him. I felt sad..."

*This is a pain that I know all too well.*

*And it doesn't make sense either...*

*I expected the two to be very close.*

*Sayori keeps telling me that he talks about Sweetie most of the time, while I say to her the vice versa.*

*Something has to be up.*

I picked up my daughter and put her on a comfortable seat.

She looked up to me, her eyes showing the heartbreak she went through at that moment.

"Don't feel bad... I know exactly what you are feeling. You are feeling sad, hopeless, and a little angry... Am I right?" I asked.

I looked towards her, to which she meekly nodded.

"Let me tell you a story, little one. This same thing happened when your Papa and I were the same age as you were."

She brightened up on the prospect of a story.

I sighed and started to relive the earliest memories we had with each other.

________________________________________

It was a snowy Valentine's day.

Despite the weather, the school remained open, something that had soured my day.

*So much for our early playdate...*

*I thought Monika and I could finally catch up on some "imagination."*

*But nooo! Today had to be a school day!*

*If this were back home, the school would have been canceled!*

The doorbell rang, prompting me to hurry up on putting on my uniform.

Once I got the last of the article on, I ran to the door with my backpack.

I opened the door to see a covered up girl in front of me.
Monika...

She looked cold from the weather but ultimately warmed up from the sight of me.

"Hi, Val! Ready for school?" She cheerily asked.

Her optimistic outlook rubbed off of me, causing me to smile as well.

"Hey, Mon! I'll admit I don't want to go to school, but... if you're going then I am going!" I proclaimed.

She gave me a toothy smile.

"If that's the case... then come on!"

Monika grabbed my hand and bolted to the sidewalk, dragging me to school.

And as always, I was taken off guard by her energy and vigor.

The snow would graze our jackets and boots as we ran to school.

We continued to run until we were out of breath, eventually slowing down to a brisk pace.

"Soooo, how did you sleep?" She asked, turning to me with a smile, apparently not out of breath.

I took a few extra seconds to recuperate before I looked towards her and shrugged.

"Well... I thought the school would be closed today especially since it is snowing a lot! But it isn't!" I complained, annoyed with the situation.

Monika's smile waned into a small frown of confusion.

"Schools being closed because of the snow? I have never heard of that happening." She muttered.

Now it was my turn to be confused.

I looked to her with the same sense of confusion as well.

"What do you mean it never closes?" I asked. "Doesn't school close because of a lot of snow?"

She shook her head.

"No... It doesn't."

I sighed heavily from the revelation.

The brown haired girl then smiled at me.

"If schools back there would close because of the snow, then no wonder your country is so behind ours! Hehe!" She teased.

I pouted and glared at her.

"The mayor said that if it snows a lot, then it is dangerous for everyone! You know... because of the ice and snow and-"

All of a sudden, Monika gave me a raspberry.
"All I hear is excuses and not a lot of learning!" She teased.

I groaned from her mocking.

"Yeah, yeah. Whatever, you can go ahead and laugh all you want. I'll be home, drinking hot chocolate while watching the snow fall!"

As soon as Monika was going to make a comeback, we reached the entrance, allowing me to drag her inside.

"So what? At least I'll be-" She started to say.

I smirked and turned to her with a finger on my lips.

"Ssssh! Monika, we're at school remember?" I shushed, cutting her off mid-sentence. "We can't talk right now!"

She reluctantly stopped her attack and pouted.

Her pouting caused me to smile smugly at her.

I knew that I was pushing it at this point, but being this smug was fun.

Monika is going to get me for this, I am sure of it.

But what is going to do?

"I'll get you for this..." She whispered, sending chills down my spine.

I managed to cover up the fact that I was disturbed by her threat, but it still made me nervous.

Once we went to class, Monika parted ways with my hands and sat down on her seat.

With a deep breath, I sat down next to her, now being extra careful around her.

Jeez, did I have to tease so much?

But it was really fun though.

Argh, now she is going to planning something!

And I don't have a single clue what it might be!

Man...

This isn't going to end well...

It was now lunchtime, and so far Val had no idea what was going inside of my head.

That's a good thing.

He doesn't have the slightest clue of what I am thinking of.

My face flared up from the petty revenge plot inside of my head.

Oh, he doesn't...
Since it's Valentine's day, I wonder how he's going to react if I give him my Valentine's heart to him.

His reaction is going to be so funny!

And...

Sweet.

Adorable.

Caring.

...

That has to be the best revenge idea ever!

It's all I ever want from that!

But first thing's first.

Giving the dork his lunch.

I walked around the lunchroom to find Val.

Due to the poor weather outside, everyone was inside for today, making it difficult to spot him in the crowd.

He didn't look very prominent as he had black hair like everyone in the lunchroom save for a few lighter tones.

I started to lose hope on finding him, but all of a sudden I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Eh?"

I turned to the person trying to get my attention.

To my pleasant surprise, it was Val with his dorky smile.

"There you are, Mon! Come on, let's have lunch! I found the perfect spot for us to sit!"

I smiled back at him, despite my "petty" grudge towards.

"We don't have to get lunch, because I made some!" I cheered, grabbing his hand and letting him lead me to the spot.

Throughout the crowd, I made sure that my hand wouldn't separate from his.

I was scared of losing him in such a claustrophobic space, and because of that, I started to sweat.

We eventually made it through the hordes of students and sat down in a rather clandestine area.

Val pulled his hand away from my sweaty grip and unconsciously wiped his head against his uniform.

"Okay, Mon. What did you make today?" He curiously asked.

With a smirk, I opened the bento box for him to see.
In an instant, he gasped at the contents of the food.

I looked up to see his amazing reaction.

To say he was ecstatic was an understatement.

His black onyx eyes twinkled with mirth as it gazed at the food I made for him.

His mouth was agape with how savory it looked like.

"Whoaaa... you made Teriyaki chicken today?! That's one of my favorite types of chicken to eat, Mon!"

My smirk turned even smugger.

"Heh, I knew you would like it."

That's a lie, I had no idea he would even like Teriyaki.

In fact, I was deciding not to even use it... but my mom told me otherwise.

Thanks, Mom!

I was caught off-guard when I felt him tackle me.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!" He repeated chanted.

Being hugged and complimented by him was a win-win so I grinned happily.

And so, I hugged him back.

"It's what friends do, Val!" I mentioned, prompting him to hug me even tighter.

Yeah...

Friends.

He released me from his enjoyable bear hug and sat down on the seat to start eating.

With a sigh, I joined him in the meal as well.

We ate in relative silence and until I decided to ask the big questions.

Time to make him my Valentine...!

"Hey, Val," I called.

He looked up to me.

Oh...

I didn't expect this to happen.

"Hmm?"

It was there that I felt nervous.
For some reason, his onyx black eyes started to pierce through my very soul, causing me to choke up.

*I thought he would continue eating and listen, but instead, he's just listening!*

*That makes it harder to get my "hidden" point across!*

*He might notice something's off on what I am about to say!*

*Especially since it's Valentine's day...*

"Uh... umm..." I stammered, struggling to say something.

*Dang, it!*

*He's going to think I am weird for calling him for some reason!*

"Monika? Is there something wrong?" He asked, now turning to me.

My face started to burn up, causing me to hide it from him.

*I need to say something!*

*If I want him to be my Valentine, then I have to say something!*

As soon as I opened my mouth, I noticed a girl walking up to him.

The girl tugged the side of his uniform, prompting him to look towards her.

"Um... Val?" The girl asked cutely yet nervously.

In an instant, I glared at her for taking him away from me.

"Oh hey, Amy." The Dork replied, smiling at her. "Do you need something?"

*Amy...?*

*I have never seen her before!*

*And I don’t like how she's taking my precious time with Val away from him.*

"Well... I was wondering if you would stay after school with for me. I want to give you something." She shyly asked.

There was a dark feeling welling up in my gut from her request.

*Does she want to give him something?!*

*What does she want to give him?*

*Why can’t she give it to him now?!*

He nodded.

"Okay, I will wait for you." He answered, keeping his dorky smile on.

Instead of glaring at Amy, I glared at the boy.
He caught onto my stink eye and flinched.

"T-Thank you, Val," Amy muttered, her face turning a bright red before walking off. "I hope you'll like it..."

Wait...

"I hope you'll like it...?"

Is she going to give him her...

My heart stopped beating for a split second.

No...

She's going to give him her Valentine's?!

ARGH!

No one is going to take him away today!

Today is the day where I give him my Valentine's!

I glimpsed to the side to see the girl.

It was there that I noticed the girl was smiling and had an extra bounce to her step.

And so, I directed my glare to the moron.

He gulped from my scowl.

"U-Um, no problem!"

Stupid Val!

Why didn't he say no!

Now I have some competition!

Uuu!

What will happen if I don't give him my Valentine in time?!

I don't have the same last class as him!

...

What will happen if I don't make it...?

I noticed the boy was looking at me as if he was expecting me to say something.

But in response, I looked away and crossed my arms.

"Hmph!"

This further confused him.
"Huh? What's wrong?" He asked, baffled by my behavior.

I had no idea what was going inside of Monika's head.

_one second she was the most nervous girl I have ever met, besides Amy, and next angriest._

_What happened?_

"Nothing. You can take whatever she's going to give you." She said, now resuming to eat.

I looked at her with suspicion before starting to eat as well.

The next few moments were spent finishing up our lunches and shortly starting our classes once more.

But I knew something was off about her.

She looked dazed; like she was confused about what was real and what was not.

It was almost as if she was living in her own world.

_I am getting worried about her._

Our last class together finished up rather quickly, and I was headed to my last class.

Monika would usually say goodbye to me and say something along the lines of picking her up later.

But this time, she said nothing.

I took a glimpse at her face as she left and I knew something off.

She was utterly expressionless, no scrunched up eyebrows or curved lips.

_I think she's thinking hard about something..._

_But what?_

_What is thinking about?!_

It hurt somewhat when she didn't say goodbye, despite her incapacitated state.

And as a result, I started to brood on what was going inside the girl's head.

_I am usually good at reading guys' heads, but the mind of a girl always confused me._

_Somehow they are much more confusing than any math problem._

_After all, I wasn't really close to any girls before I moved here._

_Just what is she even thinking about?_

_Monika looked nervous about something, but what was it?_

_She was about to say what she had on mind before Amy walked up to me._

_That reminds me..._
What is Amy going to give to me?

Is it something important?

Well, I did give Amy my pen, so is she trying to repay me?

Anyway, back to the topic of Monika...

There wasn’t anything important yesterday we talked about, so this has to be about this day.

But what is it?

What’s the day today that is so important to Monika?

The continued questions in my head came to a halt when I realized the class was over.

I raised an eyebrow looked and looked around in awe from how fast the day was.

Because of Monika's erratic behavior taking up most of my brainpower, I started to pack up early and pick her up.

Whatever is going inside of her head, I need to ask her as soon as possible.

However, a familiar redhead approached stopped me dead in my tracks, by walking up to me timidly.

She was holding close to her chest and looked flustered whenever I would try to look at her in the eye.

"U-Um... I got you something." She muttered, opening herself up to give me something.

But before I could get a good look at what she gave me, I heard a gasp behind Amy's back.

That got my attention, as I stood up to see who was shocked.

Wait...

Monika?!

The brown haired girl held something in her chest, which resembled a paper heart.

But the look on her face was direr.

Her lips quivered from indecision, her eyes were glassed with tears, and everything about her body showed that she was in pain.

"Monika?" I called out.

That made the situation worse.

The brown haired girl took a deep breath and gave the nastiest glare I have ever seen, causing me to jolt backward from the recoil.

She then turned on her heel and made a mad dash out to the nearest exit, leaving me in the dust.

Just as I was about to pursue her, Amy stopped me.
For the first time, she looked serious and collected, compared to her usual timid self.

And because of that I was taken aback by her, added with the dilemma at hand.

"Wait. Don't go just yet." She whispered, getting my rapt attention. "You should give her time. Going after her like this is a bad idea."

I reluctantly decided not to pursue Monika, despite my mind telling me to do so.

Amy continued to speak to me.

"Did you get her anything for Valentine's day?"

I blinked several times at this.

...  

Valentine's day?!

Today is Valentine's day?!

No wonder she was acting so funny!

Monika wanted to be my Valentine!

Why didn't you say anything at lunch?

I would have gladly been her Valentine!

But...

She stormed out of the classroom.

And it's all my fault!

"Did you?" Amy asked.

I shook my head in embarrassment to which she sighed.

"Going in unprepared is a bad idea. Today is Valentine's day, and Monika was planning on giving you something special for today." She said.

Wait?

Was she?

No...

She...

She did.

That paper heart was a sign that she wanted me to be her Valentine.

I cradled the pen that Amy gave me.

"Oh... What can I do to make it up for her?" I asked in shame.
Fortunately, she answered my question regardless of my lack of awareness.

"Chocolates."

I raised an eyebrow at what she was getting at.

Nevertheless, she continued her train of thought.

"Valentine's day chocolates in this school are really popular since they taste delicious. I am sure Monika would love them."

*Getting her...*

Chocolates?!

"Um... that sounds really weird but-" I started to say.

Amy didn't want any of it, however.

"Val, it's Valentine's day! Of course, it is going to sound weird! But... I should apologize for how I walked up to you. I knew Monika was planning something for you, so I tried to be extra careful not to give the wrong signs. But since I was trying hard to not show any signs, that I didn't realize that I came off as nervous and all. In the end, I was still giving the wrong signals... So I'm sorry."

I tried to process what Amy said, but she spoke way too fast for me to comprehend.

"Huh?" Was all I let out.

She shook her head and pushed me out of the classroom.

"Anyway, you need to go make it up to her!"

I flinched from Amy's apparent aggressiveness and dashed outside the classroom.

"T-Thanks for the advice Amy, and thanks for giving me back my pen." I stuttered.

She smiled, giving me the go-ahead to get the chocolates for Monika.

*Would chocolates really work though?*

Once I entered the hallway, I bolted to the school store for chocolates.

*They have to work!*

*Valentine's day is perfect for that!*

When I got there, I noticed there was a crowd outside the store, barring me from getting any closer.

*The school store is never this full!*

*Everyone is trying to chocolates for Valentine's day!*

I squeezed past the excited crowd and made it to the center where the chocolates were being stored.

To my horror, the store was completely sold out, with no more chocolates or sweets being available for sale.
Wait, they might restock it today, right?

Since it's Valentine's day, they have to have at least some extras lying around...

A representative walked up to the boisterous crowd with a megaphone, to which everyone turned to.

"Attention students! We don't have more chocolates or sweets for sale today!"

My heart sank when the staff announced that my only way out was now forfeit.

Oh man!

You've got to be kidding me!

How else am I going to make up with Monika?!

I pushed myself out of the crowd and started to walk back home.

What am I going to do now?

If I can't get any chocolates then...

What other options do I have left?

I only thing I can do now is to ask her to forgive me...

My thoughts were in a flurry as I traversed the icy sidewalk.

Why did she run away from me?

I don't get why she gasped when she walked in...

Not to mention how angry she looked when she saw me with Amy...

Was she...

Jealous?

Psssh!

Of course not!

She can't be jealous, I mean, why would she be jealous?

...

Amy did look like she was going to give something important, like as if she was going to provide me with her...

Oh.

I groaned from the apparent misunderstanding that arose.

Why am I getting a feeling that misunderstandings would break our friendship?

Bah, whatever.
I need to make this Valentine's day right!

I was on my bed, feeling dead in the inside.

Nothing in life felt exciting, and I felt the strong need to cry.

For some reason, I didn't know why I wanted to do so.

*If the nimrod wants Amy as his Valentine, then let him be!*

I don't care!

But...

*If I don't care, then why does my heart hurt so much?*

Would things be different if I came to his class sooner?

They would be...

*Maybe Amy won't get his hands on him, and I would have him all for myself.*

I would take his hand and give him my Valentine's card with some chocolate I made yesterday.

*And then I would tell Amy that he's mine and only mine.*

*She won't ever take him away from me.*

...

...

...

That sounds a little creepy, me.

*In any case...*

I'll leave them be.

...

I hate Valentine's day.

*And I...*

No, I don't hate Val.

*I should be happy that he found a Valentine.*

*But where does that leave me?*

*Would I find a Valentine?*

*Knock Knock*
My eyes darted to the balcony, and I immediately saw him.

_Great..._

_What does he want now?_

_Is he going to mock me now or tell me that I will find someone?_

_I don't want any of that right now!_

...

_I just want some time alone._

I arose from my bed and walked over to the balcony.

_Just tell him to leave me alone._

_We're only friends._

_Nothing more and nothing less._

I slid open the door, and he walked in with an apologetic frown.

"Hey..." He greeted.

The boy tried to get in, but I barred him from doing so.

I then sighed.

"Val, look I just need some time for myself. I don't want to talk to you or even look at you right now. But I am happy that you found a Valentine today." I stated, keeping a stern look on him.

He shook his head.

"Monika, it was just a misunderstanding."

_Is he lying to me right now?!_

_I saw Amy give something to him!_

_She was shy before he spoke to him then was relieved right after?!_

_Does he not think that I don't know any better?!_

I balled my fists up and gave him the same scowl from before.

"Argh! I don't want to hear it!" I roared, stopping his explanation short. "Get out!"

...

There was dead silence in the room.

Everything was silent, and the only thing that was audible was my aggravated breathing.

Val was shocked from how I lashed out on him.
He was about to say something but ultimately didn't.

Instead, he pulled out a paper heart and handed it to me.

"Fine, then." He merely said before walking to the balcony.

I took a look at the heart he gave me.

"I'm sorry."

In the middle of the heart was a small Kisses wrapped in a green wrapper.

Just as he about to leave, I tugged the side of his shirt.

"Wait... tell me what happened." I requested, changing my mind.

He turned around, mildly surprised by my change of heart.

"Didn't Amy give you her Valentine?"

Val just shook his head.

"No. She only gave me a pen that I lent to her a few days ago. Amy is a really shy girl that never really speaks to any other guys like me, so she didn't know how to approach me." He explained.

Amy is kind of like me...

I was shy when I first met him.

But after a while, I started to warm up to him.

"Oh..." I muttered.

I got angry at him for the wrong reason...

My face burned from how embarrassed I was.

I looked away in shame.

"Monika?"

All this time, I was mad at him for the wrong reason!

Argh, why do I have a feeling that this will happen again?!

I should apologize to him.

"I'm sorry..." I whispered under my breath.

He perked up to what I was saying.

"What?" He asked, not hearing me clearly.

I gritted my teeth and hugged him.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry for being angry at you! I'm sorry for yelling at you! And I am sorry for not believing you!"
He hugged back and patted my hair.

"It's okay, Mon. I forgive you. You're my best friend and I am sorry for not giving you my Valentine's today. I actually forgot that it Valentine's day."

I pulled away and snickered at his misfortune.

"You tend to keep people waiting, ya know?"

He raised an eyebrow.

"Huh?"

I waved my hand to dissuade from overthinking it.

"Nevermind that. Now since it's Valentine's day, why don't we make chocolates? A single Kisses isn't enough for both of us." I stated with a sly smirk.

He nodded at what I was saying, apparently missing my subtle point.

*Sometimes I can't believe how dense this idiot can be!*

With an annoyed groan, I leaned in and kissed him on his cheek.

*Smooch*

Once I pulled away, I felt euphoric for some reason.

*W-Why am I feeling so...*

*Happy*?!

*This feels amazing!*

My eyes fixated on the Dork's expression, to which made me smile.

He looked completely stunned and was blankly staring off in the distance.

His hand rubbed the cheek I kissed him at, slowly turning to a beet red in a manner of seconds.

Because of the Dork's flustered expression made me giggle devilishly.

"Argh... not fair! You caught me off-guard!" He lamented, causing me to laugh.

In my laughter, I failed to notice him leaning into me and-

*Smooch*

Kissing my cheek...

In an instant, I stopped laughing and started to notice what he has done.

"There! Now we're both even!" He proudly asserted.

I felt my face burn from both his act and relaxed behavior.

*Why does my heart feel so...*
Fluttery?

*It's because of this moron's fault!*

All of a sudden, I felt his hand on mine, causing me to gasp in surprise.

"Alright! Enough standing around, let's make some chocolates!"

With that, he yanked my hand, leading us to the kitchen.

As we walked there, I laid a hand on my chest and let out a deep breath.

*Whatever this feeling is...*

*It always happens when he is close or touching me.*

*And I love it.*

---

Sweetie let out a dreamy sigh from our story.

I smiled at her and patted her head.

"So... did you learn anything from the story?" I asked.

Before she could give a proper response, she interrupted.

"Yeah, I did."

We turned to the masculine voice in front of us.

*Darling...*

"I didn't know you had such perfect recollection of what happened more than a decade ago."

He then sat down next to us, prompting our daughter to sit on his lap.

She laid her head on his chest and rested.

"Haha, look's like someone's in a better mood. So what did you learn from Mom, hon?"

Sweetie brightened over the lesson and smiled.

"If someone you like is ignoring you or spending less time with you, teach them a lesson they will never forget."

*What?*

Both of our eyes bulged out on what she was saying.

Darling looked to me with suspicion but was greeted with the same confusion he had.

"Hehehe! Just kidding! The look on your faces was funny!" She dismissed with a dorky smile. *But I don't like being ignored.*

...
Did some of my "yandere" genes pass on to her?!

The door chimed as someone entered the back entrance of the store.

We looked up to the peoples that arrived.

In an instant, we recognized a coral-pink and dirty blonde head, indicating that it was Sayori and Thomas.

With them was their child, hugging Thomas's arm in timidity.

I got up and hugged one of my closest friends.

"Hello, Sayori!" I greeted happily.

We then pulled away.

"Hey, Monika! It's been a while since last met up!"

Thomas walked up to Darling and did a "bro" handshake, indicating that they were still close.

"What's going on Hill-Top?" Darling greeted.

"Nothing much Brooklyn, I just wanted to drop by and say hello."

As we continued to exchange pleasantries and chat, I noticed in the corner of my eye that Sweetie was glaring at Sayori's son.

Aiyori also caught onto this and gave him a little push to say what he wanted to say.

Darling and Thomas stopped their chat to see what the two would do.

The boy approached Sweetie with a nervous and yet embarrassed stroll, mostly because we were staring at them, and cleared his throat.

"H-Hey..." He greeted.

Sweetie sighed, losing her stink eye.

"Hi."

He looked towards Thomas and mouthed something to him, before turning to Sweetie with renewed grit.

"Um... I think this might be a misunderstanding but... Miyu didn't give me her Valentine's to me. She only gave me the book she borrowed a while back. And... And I wanted to give you this."

The boy then hands Sweetie a paper Valentine's, almost identical to the one I gave to Darling more than a decade ago.

She stared at the paper heart and suddenly turned around to us, smiling with a slight flush on her cheeks.

I smiled at back and nodded at her.
Sweetie turned back to him and hugged him.

"Thank you, and I'm sorry for getting mad at you. I thought you didn't want my Valentine's..."

He then hugged her back.

"It's okay, I forgive you. Anyway..."

The boy pulled away and brought up his pinky.

"Friends?"

Sweetie immediately brought her pinky up and tied it with his.

"Friends!"

I laid in bed, tired from the overall day.

"Jeez," I muttered.

Sweetheart turned around to face me.

"What's up, Darling?" She asked.

I let out a heavy sigh and rested my head against the pillow.

"Who would have thought opening and expanding our store can be painstakingly tedious? Not only that, our daughter comes in with the same temper when you were a kid. Then we talked with our friends for a bit and drove home! I am exhausted, Monika." I ranted.

She smirked and traced a circle on my chest.

"That doesn't sound like exhaustion to me Darling. Sound like you're a little stress. Maybe a little sad too. But don't worry, I know what's the perfect solution for this!"

I groaned at the "solution" she had in mind.

"For the love of... Let me guess it's-"

"Sex! Sex is a natural anti-depressant and helps alleviate any form of tension!"

I rolled my eyes at her repeated and go-to answer.

"The amount of times you brought sex or any forms of sexual activities ever since we got together makes me think you might be a nymphomaniac Mon." I droned.

She shrugged at my harsh criticism.

"Awww... don't tell me you didn't like the morning surprises or the risky roads to heaven!" She pouted.

I turned my body towards her.

"That's not the point, Sweetheart. I am saying your libido is almost insatiable."

Monika twirled and tapped her fingers together.
"Well... it's not my fault you're eye candy... or poke me when we're sleeping."

I rolled my eyes again.

"Monika, we've over this! I can't help my morning wood, alright?! You're just going to have to deal with it!"

She snickered, baffling me.

"I am, moron! And that's by giving you a surprise!"

I groaned heavily, prompting her to laugh wholeheartedly.

In response, I turned to my side and looked away.

Once her laughter died down, she laid her hand on my shoulder.

"Aw, Darling! Don't be like that! You can't deny that you love having them!"

I frowned at her repeated attempts to tease me further.

To counter this, Monika would surprise me with a kiss in an unexpected region.

And this time it was my neck.

She bit down on the crook my neck and nibbled on my side, causing to yelp in surprise.

I shot up from the bed from both surprise and to get her to stop.

But nevertheless, she remained attached to my neck.

To further shock me, Monika started to lap her tongue on where she bit me before pulling away playfully.

In an instant, I rubbed my neck from her assault and stared at the smug Sweetheart.

"Admit it~!" She sang, tickling my vulnerable heart.

I looked away in defeat, knowing that she has won this battle.

"Alright! Your morning surprises are the best! It's true that I love them!"

She crossed her arms in victory.

"Hentai." Sweetheart simply muttered.

I glared at her playing dirty and pushing me to my limits.

"How am I the pervert? Argh, you know what?"

With a growl, I pinned her against the bed and dove in for the kill.

I aimed for her left ear and sang my teeth into her flesh.

She gave a shaky moan and curled up to me.

"Mmmh..."
It was a moan that tickled my heart and wanted me to advance to the next stages, but I remained steadfast.

I pulled away from her, knowing that I was vulnerable again.

Monika saw this through her lust-lidded eyes and smirk devilishly.

Now that I was not pinning her anymore, she moved her hands lower and lower-

"Uh, uh, uh! I don't think so!" I exclaimed, grabbing her wrist from doing anything that would wound my weaknesses.

That didn't stop her, however, as she moved her other free hand lower, trying to succeed where she had failed.

I moved to intercept her but she made sure that she wouldn't be easy prey, maneuvering all around me to elude me.

But I managed to grab her wrist, stopping her in her tracks once again.

That awoke Monika out of her lustful state.

"Prude!" She called out.

It was that nickname that never ceased to make me smirk from both its irony and emotion associated with it.

"That's me. Gilliot The Prude."

With frowned at me and decided to switch things up.

Using her legs and a strength that I fail to take into consideration, she managed to roll us over and assume the more dominant position.

Her arms were on different sides of my head, and she was smirking from the change.

"You know, for a married guy... you have a low libido."

I scoffed at her.

"That's rich, coming from a girl that used to have a body pillow of me!" I snarkily replied.

She gasped at my remark, losing her smirk.

"How dare you! Take that back!"

I smugly smiled at her.

"Take back a fact? I don't think so."

*Oh boy, I am definitely pushing it right now, but it's so fun to tease her like this!*

Instead of reacting negatively, she smirked once more, catching me off-guard.

*What's she planning...?*

"You know I am wearing nothing but a gown and panties right?"
I raised a suspicious eyebrow.

"Yeah...?"

With a small twinkle in her eye, she swiftly shifted herself and sat on my face.

"MMMPH! MMMPH! MMMPH!" I complained, causing her to readjust herself.

*What the fuck, what the fuck, what the fuck?!!*

My nose was her panties and it was all I can breathe in, thanks to her positioning.

"How's the view down there, huh Darling?"

I had a good feeling she grinning from how naughty she was feeling.

"Mmmph! Mmmph! Mmph." I complained.

She had no idea what I was saying but assumed it was good anyway.

"Why, thank you! Now let me return the favor!"

*Shit, shit, shit!*

I felt her hands shift through my boxers in an attempt to find whatever was looking for.

But I knew what just to counter her.

Hopefully.

In an extremely risky move, I opened my mouth and licked her, causing her to quiver and arch her back her slightly by sitting upright.

"Ahh! Darling!" She cried.

*Now's my chance!*

I gripped the side of the bed to move downwards, allowing me to move my head away from her groin.

Once that was done, I turned around and pinned her down to the bed once more with a menacing glare.

As always, Monika was immune to any of my intimidation tactics, as she built a high tolerance for it over time.

"Can't keep the beast down, can you?" She seductively asked.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

"Let's have some fun... later. Right now, I just wanna talk."

For the second time on the bed, she pouted.

"Awww! Come on! I want to do it now!"

I shook my head.
"But I want to do it later. Besides, it's about something you might find interesting." I replied.

She looked away and stared off.

"Fine... If you say so. This has to be good or else."

And so, I let go of her pins and took my side right beside her.

"It is. Remember our Valentine when we first became a couple?"

Monika smiled at the memory we shared when we were younger.

"Yeah... I do. I thought that was it then, but like always you... always never cease to amaze me. Or even surprise me."

February.

Valentine's Day.

A whole lot of bad memories from those four years without Monika.

But things are going to different now, especially since I am her boyfriend.

Nothing is going to get in the way of stopping us!

I am going to make this Valentine's together memorable!

Hopefully.

I was currently finishing up homework that I had for the week and was stressed out.

Maybe I should do some gaming...

Especially since this homework got my nerves a couple of times.

BOOM Infinity sounds awesome right about now, especially since I am in the mood to rip some hell-spawns up.

Nothing can beat the sweet sensation of some sick metal riffs.

Once I finished with my homework, I packed it up in my bag and turned on my computer.

This is where the fun begins.

This homework FUCKING SUCKS!

I was on my last legs with the last of the problems of the homework we had.

The patience I had from the start of the assignment was now just a crude memory, replaced by unconquerable rage.

Once I was done with the homework, I threw my bag into some indiscriminate corner and tried to calm myself down.

I really need to vent right now...
Writing in my diary would mess things up, so I better find something else to vent to.

...

I wonder how Darling vents with this homework.

*He texted me many times on how irritating the whole assignment is, so I am guessing he has a way to get rid of this...*

**Shit.**

I walked over to the balcony and checked out what he was doing.

He was on the computer doing something that he was bobbing his head too.

**Hmm...?**

Out of curiosity, I jumped over to get a closer view of what he was doing.

It looked like he was playing some sort of computer game.

*Darling never looked so concentrated before...*

*What is he even playing...?*

I opened the balcony door to get a better look at what he was playing.

Not wanting to distract him, I tiptoed up to him and looked beside him.

Upon closer inspection, the game he was playing had extreme levels of gore and violence, the kind that looked repulsive.

W-What is he even playing?!

*It looks like it's a bad influence and-*

The screen showed a creature with razor-sharp teeth being ripped apart from the top of the head, completely torn apart.

I suppressed a scream from the visceral kill.

*How does he have fun with that?!*

*That was so...*

*Inhuman!*

*Brutal!*

*Savage even!*

Out of Darling's headphones spewed some intense music that seemed to very aggressive, as if contributing to his performance in the game.

Each time he would approach a monster, he would walk up to it and execute it in the most gruesome way possible.
Snapping the neck, ripping a jaw, or even stuffing part of it inside to make the creature combust...

I was absolutely horrified from what Darling was playing.

He seemed to smile and enjoy the killing he was doing to the creatures, which made me worry about his wellbeing.

Once the level seemed to be over, I gulped and tapped Darling's shoulder to get his attention.

"Huh?! Monika?! W-What are you doing here?"

Why he is so jumpy all of a sudden?

It's just me.

Or is it because I walked in on him without saying a word that I was nearby...

"Well... um... I was stressed out from the assignment we got and I was wondering how you deal with stress. You did text me that you were very annoyed with it too..." I trailed off, trying to put up an excuse.

He blinked several times before sighing.

"Sweetheart, it would help if you would knock before you come over. Seriously, we aren't kids anymore where we can walk in each other whenever we want to! We're adults!"

I waved my hand at him to dissuade from talking any more about his complaints.

"Yeah, yeah. I am just wanted to talk to you about the game you were playing... Is it a good way to deal with stress?"

He smiled excitedly at the topic of his game.

"It really is! Something about ripping apart demonic creatures for the forces of good is just so... satisfying. I guess we men have tolerance and a hard-on for violence. This game... it really speaks to me."

That sounds a little creepy...

"Um... okay then. So what about the music?"

All I heard was aggressive guitars, drums, and things being clanged about.

What is that even called?

Darling scratched the side of his cheek.

"Well, I don't think you would like it. It's a mix of industrial, heavy, and something called Djent. Really, really hardcore stuff."

I raised an eyebrow.

"Are you saying that I can't handle hardcore metal?" I asked, with a warning tone to my voice.

He nodded with a smirk.

"Yeah. No offense Sweetheart, you don't look like the type of girl to be into that genre of games or
I puffed out my cheeks in disagreement.

"Well... it doesn't hurt to try! Who knows, maybe I might like if I get into it!"

My words furthered his smirk, causing him to shake his head in disapproval.

"Mon, I know you for a decade now. You know you're the type of girl to be into J-Pop or even boyband stuff."

I blushed at his reference from my teenage years.

"Shut up!"

He didn't.

"Ahaha! I remember you fell in love with one of the Parfait Girl's VA since he was in a J-Pop band! 'Oh Ma-Kun, Ma-Kun! I wish you'd come over to my house and sing for me! Oh, oh!' He continued to mock.

At this point, I was seething with rage and frustrated by continued mocking.

"ARRRGH! Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

I tried to land a punch in, but he gracefully dodged it with ease.

"Oh yeah, what about that plan of yours where I supposed to elope you? How cute!"

I lunged at him, to which he dodged again.

He sighed in relief.

"Ah... face it Mon, you're not the type of girl to be into that violence or mayhem. You're a little sunshine and rainbows, you know?"

I groaned in frustration from his taunts, finally giving up.

"Then change me! I want to try the game and listen to its music!"

Even though I might not like it.

How does he even like all that?

Darling yawned and stretched.

"Yeah... maybe later. Tomorrow's a school day, Mon. We might as well go to sleep for now."

Aww...

Maybe I can-

"No, Monika, you can't spend the night with me today. Don't think I forgot what happened last Saturday!"

I tapped my fingers together in embarrassment.
"B-But, your Mom was okay with it..."

He groaned in frustration.

"That's not the point! Look, I don't think I am quite ready for those Monika Mornings or keeping up with your drive just yet. Can we have a normal night? Like, you and I in our own separate beds? Maybe in our own rooms as well?"

_Seriously_?!

You're such a-

"Prude!" I whined, unhappy with his reluctance. "Fine! But I want a goodnight kiss!"

He shrugged.

"That sounds easy enough, come here."

Darling walked over to where I was and leaned in.

I smirked, knowing he fell into my trap.

And so I put my finger between his lips.

"Oh, I didn't mean my lips or anything... no, no. Jones, I am talking about my body! So you better pucker up, buttercup!"

"You know, Darling. You changed a lot in those four years where I didn't see you." Sweetheart mentioned.

I nodded a little, somewhat agreeing to her point.

"Like... listening to metal, working out, boxing, and having a spine. Well, most of the time."

I frowned at her word choice and points.

"You make listening to metal a bad thing. And I wanted to work out because Hill-Top was the first one to recommend it to me first. But the boxing is to pay homage to my Dad's hometown. He grew up in a rough neighborhood before meeting Mom, so he had to defend himself from any criminals at the time. Mom was an upper-middle-class man and grew up in a nice neighborhood. It's a wonder how they met in the first place though."

Monika stared at in great interest, apparently interested by my parents' origins.

"Anyway... that's a story for another time." I topped off. "To answer your last point, being knocked around gets annoying and is pretty taxing, so stepping up and showing a piece of my mind is something I needed to do. No offense."

Sweetheart snickered at me.

"Some taken, Dork."

It's Valentine's Day, and it's the first Valentine's Day where Monika and I spend it as a couple.
Too bad's it's on a school day.

Otherwise, we could have let loose a little more.

"Bro-Bro! Are you awake?!" My younger brother called.

I groaned, mostly because it was still early in the morning.

"Yeah, I am. Tone down the yelling, will you? Are you ready for school?"

I turned around to see him with an unsure look on his face.

"No, not really. You know what day it is, right?"

He looked up to me, petrified with fear on what day it is.

"It's Valentine's Day." He whispered.

No shit.

"Yeah, I know. Oh yeah, if Mom and Dad ask where I am after school, tell them that I am on a date with Monika."

He rolled his eyes, apparently losing fear at the change of topic.

"Got it. So Bro-Bro, any tips on surviving Valentine's Day?"

In an instant, I was hit with flashbacks of my lonely years without Monika when she left.

The weight of emotions I felt on those years ago.

Everyone I knew got a Valentine's most of the time, except me...

No, no, think about the good things!

The human mind likes to emphasize the bad, so I just need to think of other things...

I should be thinking about the fun that I am going to have with Monika!

"Val?" My brother called out to me, fazed by my lack of response.

I shook my head to wake myself up.

"Right, sorry. If you want to survive Valentine's Day, get a Valentine for the occasion.

He looked up to me with shock.

"W-W-What?! H-How am I going to do that?!"

Isn't Haru the same age as Mike?

Not only that, they are in the same class as each other so...

I turned around to put on my blazer.

"Try telling the cupid to aim at Haru. Aren't you two the same age and go to the same class?"
That caused my brother to burn up, something that I rarely see.

"Bro! Just because she is the same age and has the same classes as me, that doesn't mean I like her!"

I nonchalantly continued to button up my blazer.

"Mike, I didn't say to confess to her anything, just give him your Valentine and move on. Valentine's Day can be about friendship... although most of it is on love."

He gave me a sound of repulsion to my explanation.

"Eugh! Haru! Jeez, that girl... I guess she's kind of nice, argh! Damn it, Val! Now you're getting me all confused! Thanks a lot!" He complained now walking off to get ready

I turned around with an annoyed look on my face.

"Language!"

With a sigh, I turned and went out of my room to leave the house.

*Teenagers...*

Right outside the exit, I saw Monika waiting for me by the edge of my lawn.

"Happy Valentine's day, Darling!" She greeted with a malicious smile.

I raised an eyebrow.

"What's an Alentine?" I asked innocently.

She bit her lips in apparent anticipation.

"You'll get the 'V' later."

I was taken aback from Monika's perverted pickup line.

*Whoa... I didn't expect that.*

"In that case, I wish you a Happy Valentine's ay, too."

She smirked at the incoming joke.

"I hope I will be getting the 'D' soon," Monika said, ruining the joke a little early.

And because of that, I groaned.

"No matter how much you try to cover it up, you're a bigger pervert than I am. Perv."

She rolled her eyes and smiled.

"Maybe so. Can you blame me? Anyway, come on!"

As usual, Monika would grab my hand and we bolt it for school.

We continued to run until we ran out of breath.

At this point, Monika's palm was incredibly sweaty and it felt moist.
"Even after all the time we have spent together, you get pretty sweaty when you're around me." I pervertedly remarked.

She snickered and gave me a punch to the side of my arm.

"Shut up. At least I am not the one that allows himself to be dragged around by a girl." She countered.

*Off to a feisty start, are we?*

"Whatever you say, *The Lady Who Knows Everything.*"

She stared at me agape that I would stoop so low to win a battle.

"Agh! Seriously? Can't we go one day?! One single fucking day without you mentioning that?!!" Sweetheart lamented, scowling at me.

I shrugged.

"Eh... maybe. Anyway, are we going out after school?"

Her face shifted from displeasure to mild joy.

"Yep! Since it's Valentine's Day, we won't be having a club meeting. Because of that, maybe we can... **have a little fun** at the end of the date."

*Pervert.*

"Oh, does that include all the sexual releases during the date or build up a lot of tension between us like the good old days?" I nonchalantly noted.

She giggled.

"Vally-poo, you know I am a lewd girl with needs, right? Can you blame me?"

And just before I can counter her with a "Yes, yes I can.", we bumped into Yuri.

"H-Hello." She meekly greeted.

I merely gave her a wave, while Monika gave her a more verbal greeting.

Once that was done, Yuri adjusted to our walking speed.

Monika and Yuri spoke to each other about a movie adaptation of a book they liked, so I stood around awkwardly... with my hand being held captive.

Once there was a lull in their conversation, I decided to say something.

"Say, Yuri, sorry for bringing this up but, has Haru moved on from me yet?"

She tapped her chin in thought.

"Perhaps so, she has been bringing you up less and less, really. Why do you ask?"

With a smirk, I announced my plans.

"Well, my younger brother said something along the lines of surviving Valentine's Day, so I was
thinking if Haru has interest in him. It's just a stretch, I know and I am sorry for intruding."

"Unfortunately so."

...

Wait, what?

...

Unfortunately?

"Unfortunately?" Monika asked, vocalizing my thoughts.

Yuri played with her long purple hair in apparent embarrassment.

"Well, you know she behaved when she was around you? I think that she might behave the same way as she did a few months ago but with him."

Oh...

That isn't good.

Not at all.

"But, I am pretty sure Haru has learned her lesson by now. Not to mention, I taught her how to approach people without making them leave you. So she might tone down the... odd behavior a little."

Sweetheart and I traded glances on the spark of hope.

"Hopefully." Monika and I muttered.

I was about to ask something else related to the dilemma but both Natsuki spotted us and gave her greetings.

We greeted back, my question now being forfeit.

Not soon after, Sayori caught up with us along with Hill-Top, all the while my hand still being held for ransom.

Though I noticed Hill-Top was also in the same predicament as me.

It didn't take long for us to get to class, as we made it within a few minutes.

Everyone in class knew we were a couple, but that didn't stop the compliments for Monika from both the boys and girls from raking in.

As soon as we entered, we got the same old compliments.

Don't they know when to back off?

...

Whoa hey, that sounds a little yandere-ish.

I am getting possessive all of a sudden.
Maybe a little music can help cure that.

Since there weren't many students around just yet, and the school day hasn't started just yet.

And so, I reached into my backpack and pulled out both my earphones and phone.

Let's see here...

Oh!

Some BOOM tracks would be excellent to listen to.

I am not sure why it's so stress-relieving given how intense the songs are.

The song started with an ambient bass that gradually grew more intense, building up to a rather strong release.

"Boss! Get down! That's an enemy Monika coming your way! He can't hear us with those earphones on! Oh god, oh fuck!"

I growled at Hiro for ruining the build-up of the song I was listening to.

"Dude, I can hear you just fine!"

Failing to heed his warning, Monika pulled a chair up to me and sat the opposite end of my desk.

Without so much of a warning, she took a bud out of my ear and placed it on her ear.

"I wonder what you're listening to..."

As soon as she put the bud in, the drop hit and she shook a little.

The song continued to play as usual, albeit Monika giving me strange looks on what she was listening to.

Once the break finally occurred, she returned earbud to me.

"So... that's what you listen to? It sounds like you're going to turn into a psychopath if you keep listening to it." She critiqued, frowning at my choice of music.

I merely shook my head and continued to listen.

"See, what did I tell you? I knew you wouldn't like the song. Something along the line of Plastic Love or even some rap like (Always into somethin'), but nothing intense like what I am hearing."

She puffed out her cheeks and crossed her arms.

"Well... what song are you even listening to? Tell me about it."

I pulled out my phone to check the track.

"(The big fucking gun division). Or the rather, BFG Division. Oh jeez, this song is amazing."

Monika sighed giving up on convincing me that she could change.

"Oh fine... look what I brought you."
In front of me was a small bento box, containing the usual lunch I dearly love.

"Don't forget to wait for me." She whispered, before kissing me on the cheek.

I smiled from her affection, as she was unafraid of showing it to everyone, but the real reason was to dissuade any girls away from me with any ill intent.

*Like that will ever happen.*

"Boss, you and Monika gotta keep your shows of love at a down low! We single guys don't have much going on for this day of love, alright?"

I chuckled at his misfortune.

"Yeah, dude. It's hurting Hiro. He can't handle anything you two do anywhere." Dan mocked, walking in right about now.

Hiro groaned in frustration and mumbled something that we couldn't hear.

As we waited for the teacher, Monika turned around and gave me a seductive wink.

The teacher arrived not soon after, and we started with our lesson for the day.

While he was teaching, the door opened and in came three international students.

I was able to recognize one of the students.

The girl has blonde hair, blue eyes, and a cheery smile which resembled Monika's smile.

*Chiyoko...*

I turned to identify the other two guys, but I wasn't able to recognize them.

One of them had glasses and short, well-kept hair, while the other didn't wear any but had messy, unkempt hair.

*Weird.*

*Since when did Chiyoko come back?*

*More importantly, what are they doing here?*

"Oh!" My teacher suddenly yelped, apparently forgetting to tell us something important. "I forgot to tell you all that the program that our school signed up for!"

*Clearly...*

"As part of our coordination with the American education system, they allowed some of their brightest students to come to our school to evaluate you all for eligibility of enrolling to elite American schools! As you all know, the States have one of the most leading institutions in all fields of education, so it will be of the highest honor to be accepted to any of the schools. Fortunately, they are here to make the process easier for you."

During the duration of the teacher speaking, I couldn't help but notice Chiyoko staring and smiling at me.
I gave her a meek wave to which she waved back with a brighter smile.

Monika immediately turned and scowled at me, to which I recoiled.

"She was staring at me! It was kind of creepy, and I had to do something!" I mouthed.

Her eyes had a small sense of understanding but she still gave me the stink eye.

The school bell rang not soon after, prompting Monika to come towards me.

Oh boy.

To my surprise, she wasn't angry but was a little worried.

"I am not mad about you looking at her if that's what you were worrying. I am more worried about-"

She then looked to her side and smiled at the blonde girl.

"Hey, guys! It's so nice to you two!" Chiyoko greeted with a warm smile. "I'm not interrupting anything, am I?"

Monika shook her head.

"No, what's up?"

She redirected her attention to me.

"Well, I was hoping I can steal Val here for a moment, I got some really important business I got to speak to him about."

Sweetheart looked at me, the worried look now starting to recede back.

In her eyes, she was worried about something, but I had no idea what it was.

To ease her, I gave her a nod to which she looked back to Chiyoko.

"N-No... you aren't interrupting. Take as long as you need." She nervously mumbled.

Something's up.

Chiyoko smiled at Monika and motioned me to follow her.

Once I did, she led me outside of the classroom and into the small break room for teachers.

She let out a sigh of relief and handed me a paper.

"Congrats, Jones. One of the Ivy Leagues is interested in giving you a scholarship."

What?!

I took a close look at the paper and read it carefully.

No way...

I got accepted to an Ivy League back home?!

"Hah! The look in your face says it all, doesn't it?" She observed.
"(It sure does.)"

We turned around to the new voice behind us.

It was one of the international students that came with Chiyoko.

Now that he was closer, I was able to examine his face a little more.

"(Don't you think it's a huge coincidence meeting up with you again? I think so.)" Another voice said.

Wait, a coincidence?

How?

"(How is it a coincidence?) I asked, in English reverting to my mother-tongue. "(Do I know you guys?)"

The two guys smiled at me.

"(Two words, dude. Pink slime.)" One of two said.

My eyes widened at the realization of who they were.

"Jimmy? Gabe?"

They nodded with a small smile.

And I too smiled back, bringing my hand up to greet them.

"(It's so nice to see you guys again! How long has it been?!)" I greeted, ecstatic that I have reunited with my childhood friends.

They greeted back with greater vigor.

We spoke about how they arrived here, their grades, and what their current pursuits were.

"I am the Valedictorian at my school, Gabe here is the Valedictorian in his school, and the same applies for Chiyoko. Our schools are apart of the program involved with your school, so I guess it's all a mere coincidence that we're here. Don't you think?"

With a cheery smile, I agreed.

"Yeah, kind of is! Weird, huh? Who would thought that I would see you guys since, you know... What happened to that school anyway?"

Chiyoko tapped her chin in thought.

"That school? Hmm, I remember being all over the local news, that's how bad it was. The best thing that happened was it got closed down. The program was a sort of con and was pretty shady, and the side effects of the food tarnished the school's reputation forever."

Gabe chuckled at her summary.

"That's what happened alright. Beating up anyone to the ground because they took your pencil is some bad news."
He walked up to me.

"And let me the first to apologize to you, dude. I am sorry for yelling at you from back then."

Jim stepped in as well.

"Me too, I am sorry for getting all pissy. The food just really... aggravated me."

I patted them both on their backs.

"It's fine, guys. I knew the food has something in them that made you guys go batshit crazy. Don't worry about it."

I turned on my heel and proceeded to leave the room.

"Well, the reunion is nice guys, but my next class is gonna start soon. I'll see you all around; I got your numbers."

They waved goodbye while Chiyoko walked up to me.

"Val, I know that you and Monika are in a relationship, but I just want to let you know this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Give this chance up and you probably not going to get it again."

I nodded slowly before opening the door.

She gave me one last wave before I left.

Jeez, what's taking Darling so long?!

The more time they take, the more time I get more anxious!

I hope he makes the right decision...

As I waited outside the classroom for him to come to find me, I saw him off at a distance.

I waved at him to get his attention, to which he almost failed to notice.

His face was plastered with a blank expression, as he was unaware of what was going on.

Is there something wrong with him?

Maybe he's thinking about something?

Once Darling got close he shook his head.

"Hey, Mon." He simply greeted.

I gave him a concerned pout.

"Don't you 'Hey, Mon' me, what happened? What did Chiyoko do to make you walk around like an idiot?"

That woke him up slightly.

"Well, she gave me this," Darling said as he handed me slip of paper.
I took it and read the paper.

Although the text was in English, I was able to make out the fact that the University was congratulating him about something.

"Is this some kind of acceptance paper?" I worriedly muttered.

He nodded slowly.

"Yeah... it's located in New York, and it is one of the most prestigious colleges in the world, an Ivy League. They said that they are going to offer me a full scholarship with dorms and what not. It's hard to believe, right? I didn't even take the SAT, and I managed to get a spot in notoriously difficult school to get into..."

I gripped the paper tightly.

"D-Don't tell me you plan on leaving..." I whispered.

He leaned in, unsure of what I said.

"Hmm?"

I looked away and handed his invitation back.

"Nothing. I feel great for you... The fact that an Ivy League reserved a spot for you and you only is something..." I mumbled weakly.

Darling was worried about me and was about to say something.

And so, I smiled at him, trying my utmost hardest to give him my real smile.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, Darling. Don't miss out on it, okay?"

I failed to notice the bewildered look on his face as we continued to walk.

With each word I said, I felt a pang against my heart.

As if I was betraying everything we have built up for the... Greater good.

We approached my next class without knowing it, so I gave him a quick peck on the lips to reassure him that everything was fine.

He looked somewhat worried but sighed regardless.

"See you at lunch, okay? I'll be waiting where we usually sit outside."

I nodded at him and sat down in my seat.

The teacher arrived not soon after and called out for names, to which I responded.

Everything proceeded as usual, but I couldn't pay attention.

*Why?*

*Why does it hurt so much?*
I should be happy for him, but...

But I am not!

That doesn't make sense!

He's probably going to get a good education in a top tier college and is going to help carry out my dream.

But...

I am scared.

I am scared if we drift apart for spending too much time away from each other.

The heart goes fonder when one of us isn't around...

Darling developed feelings for me when I left.

But what will happen if he leaves?

How much would I miss him?

Or will I just forget about him?

This...

This is how Darling felt like when I was going to Ainu.

He was terrified of me leaving because he couldn't live without me...

Memories rushed by as I remembered him telling me that he hated himself ever since that day...

"So... you hated me all along?"

"Figures, I had a voice in the back of my head that told me that I was right about that day."

"Every day I would think to myself: 'Why did I wake up?' or 'What's the point getting through this day?' "

No, no, no, no!

This is all his choice!

I didn't have a choice, and I didn't want to go!

Things will be different!

I know it will!

It was lunchtime, and I was waiting for Monika to arrive.

There wasn't a lot of students around since most of the students in the school went on a field trip.

And so, I continued to think critically of what to do with the chance.
I keep asking myself if I want to go or not, but I just can't get a single coherent answer!

If I do decide to leave, I will be getting the best education, access to programs that help me get a headstart in my field of work, and have new experiences!

But...

I will be leaving Monika behind...

The promise we made.

"Never let go of me."

I would be letting go of Monika.

We wouldn't see each other for another four years!

...

I don't know if I can trust myself in reasoning!

What will happen between us if I do leave?

She and I...

We can't live with each other.

Even though I am going for free, it just wouldn't feel right!

Gah!

What should I do?!

What can I do?!

Off in the distance, I noticed Monika slowly walking up to me, rubbing her forearm as she walked by.

As soon as she arrived, she sat down with her lunch in hand.

We opened our lunches and began eating.

This feels familiar.

We're both eating quietly, have a lot in our minds, and have this weird atmosphere around us.

Didn't we do this when we were younger?

Oh yeah, right...

Valentine's day back in Kaoru Elementary.

"So..." Monika muttered, trying to break the ice between us.

I meekly looked up to her.

"H-how's it going?" I blurted out.
She looked mildly surprised before looking away.

_Damn it!_  

_What the hell me?!_  

_I know what she's thinking about!_  

_This makes me sound inconsiderate about her thoughts!_  

"Um, it's going okay... How is everything going along with you?"

_Looks like she fell into the same trap as I did._  

"It's going fine, so far," I replied awkwardly. "How about you?"

_DAMN IT!_  

"Monika, let's cut the crap." I quickly followed up. "You're worried about me leaving right?"

_There!_  

_Blunt and straight to the point!_  

Sweetheart nodded slowly.

"Yeah... I thought it over a bunch of times but I really can't make up my mind about all that."

I smiled at her, subtly amazed that we were at the same predicament.

"What's on your mind then?"

She took a deep breath and closed her box, with me following suit.

"Gill."

Monika opened her eyes and looked at me sternly.

"I... I don't want you to go. Even though it's for the greater good for accomplishing our dream faster... I don't know if I can live another four years without you. Especially since it's been three months since I came back. We still have so much to do, and you just leaving me behind, it feels... it leaves a giant hole in my heart. It'll feel like nothing's the same without you. But, I won't stop you if you do want to go. This is your choice and I won't let our relationship get in the way with what's right."

Her pleas for me stay made my heart soar.

_She..._  

_She wants me here, doesn't she?_  

Right after she said that her eyes weakened.

I saw the vulnerable and hurt girl behind those emerald green eyes.

And so, I decided to make things right.
"Monika, there's a difference between doing things fast and doing things right. If I do get our dream started soon, it won't be the same as doing it together. I believe that if we do it together, put the love and compassion to our dream rather making things efficient, then that's the right way."

Her eyes widened at what I was getting at.

"Wait... D-Does that mean you're gonna-"

I put my hands on her cheeks and leaned in.

Her eyes shook from surprise before realizing what was going on.

From there, she closed her eyes and melted into the kiss I gave her.

As usual, Monika was the one to deepen the kiss, wrapping my arms around my neck and kissing me back with greater ferocity.

However, I was one with the most control and pulled away, a trail of saliva indicating our departure.

"Yeah... I am staying. Even though some people might think it's a ridiculous idea for me to throw away such an opportunity, I don't care. My dream... no, our dream is meaningless if we aren't together to see to it."

Monika's lips quivered as if trying to find the right words to say but inevitably gave up.

The brown haired girl lunged towards me and crushed me in a hug.

"I love you!" She cried. "I love you, Darling. Don't ever leave me! I don't care what others say. I want you here with me! I know I sound selfish, but I don't want you to leave me again!"

I grinned in pure euphoria and hugged back.

"I won't, Monika. Unless it's mandatory, then yeah." I joked. "And it's okay to be a little selfish every once and a while. The fact that you don't want me to go makes me feel wanted. Thank you."

We both let out a dreamy sigh from memory.

"And here we are, happily married with a beautiful daughter. Our dream couldn't be any less perfect."

Monika rubbed her cheek against mine.

"You know, there were some times where I would wonder how things would be different if you did... go. Most of the time, it isn't pretty. But ever since you proposed to me, those instances came to a close. Never again will I think of choices destroying our chances of being here, together."

I wrapped my arm around her shoulder and brought her in, enjoying her warmth.

"Me too. I will never think about how close things were to mess up." I replied. "Anyway, you remember what happened right after? Our first Valentine's date?"

She giggled.

"Ahaha... Yeah, I do! Jeez, we had so much pent up sexual tension back then. I am surprised that we didn't get to fu-"
"Uh, uh, uh. Remember, we gotta curb our use of strong language! Otherwise, it'll spread over, and we might cuss without realizing it. You know, in front of our daughter?"

Monika bit the side of my cheek.

"Prude. I am not that much a pouty-mouth! Have some faith in me!"

I chuckled at her answer, despite my cheek being ripped to shreds.

"Riiight, sure. Mon, do you ever see yourself getting frustrated? Hoo boy, you put American truck drivers out to shame with the rosaries of cusses you put out!"

She stopped biting and hissed at me, warning me not to tease her any further.

"(Go fuck yourself.) I do what I please!"

That got my attention, causing me to look at her in complete bewilderment.

Since when did you...?

And with perfect diction and enunciation too!

But I got the just the comeback for that!

"Why don't you do it yourself, coward?"

Monika's eye twinkled with mirth as she grinned devilishly.

Uh oh.

"Gladly!"

Just as she was about to reach my boxers, I stopped her curling my legs against hers and binding her with my arms.

Sheesh.

I feel like I am the one wearing the pants in this relationship.

...

Uh...

"I don't think so, you green-eyed snake!"

She growled and tried to turn and twist about.

"Not yet, Jones! It's not over yet! Arrgh!"

Keeping Monika still was a simple task, as I still had my strength from almost a decade ago.

After a few moments of her struggling to get free, she groaned.

"Okay... I guess it is over. Let me go. I am not feeling it anymore."

Like that isn't suspicious at all.
Despite my suspicion, I released her from her bonds and moved slightly away from her.

She let out a sigh and looked towards me.

"You know... I was wondering. Why don't you want to have sex? We're married you know?"

I rolled my eyes.

"We will. But not right now. I thought that we could... you know, remember the good old days."

She dropped her head and groaned into the bed.

"Fine... what else do you want to remember?"

I smirked, knowing that she would love the memory from right after our first Valentine's day.

"Do you remember what happened right after our first Valentine's day?"

She looked up to the ceiling for a few seconds before realizing what I meant.

My smirk turned to a sly smile.

"Right... that. Yeah, I remember."

She turned to me with the same smile I had.

"That was... interesting, don't you think?"

I covered my face from how shameful the idea was.

"Aw jeez, Monika! Since when were you into that?!" I yelled through my covered face.

She laughed nervously.

"Well uh... remember that one Parfait Girl's episode about where the girls wore cat costumes because they somehow lost their clothes?"

I opened my face slightly to look her in the eye.

"Yeah...?" I muttered, not liking where it was going.

She twirled her brown hair to help alleviate some of the stress being built.

"Well, I loved the designs so much that I looked it up. And not soon after... I read a bunch of doujins about the episode, so I got a little curious about the costume and um... I discovered it was all pretty kinky."

My eyes darted towards the nervous girl and the outfit.

"You think?! The tail is a separate accessory that goes into your-"

She blushed intensely and put a hand up to stop me from talking further.

"Shut up! I know! I-I thought it was a good idea when I bought it, but then I regretted it buying it right after! The store I bought it from wouldn't accept a refund, so I am stuck with this!"
I shook my head in disappointment from her impulsive action.

"Well, nothing much we can do it about it now."

I stared at the cat-maid outfit for a few seconds, before shaking my head.

"What do you want to do about it?" I asked.

That caused Monika to look away and cover her face.

"I don't know!" She yelled. "Put it away or something!"

I raised an eyebrow at what she was saying.

What?

"W-Why me?! You bought it. You showed it to me, and now you put it away!" I argued.

She didn't respond to that.

My eyes again wandered to the cat-maid outfit, especially the cat ears.

I walked over to it and picked it up.

*How would Monika look like with these?*

*It looks innocent enough.*

With the cat ears in hand, I walked over and put it on her head.

She jumped in surprise before realizing what I did.

Monika slowly put her hands down from her face and looked over to the mirror.

"Oh... wow." She muttered while gazing at her minor appearance change.

The girl posed, checking out the addition in various forms.

Each time she did, her smile grew bigger and bigger.

"Hehe! Wow, this looks cute on me!"

She turned to me with a smile.

"Well? What do you think, Darling? Do you think it looks good on me?"

I smiled and nodded.

"Yeah, I guess. Those cat ears give an extra layer of cuteness to your already cute appearance." I answered.

She was taken aback by my compliment somewhat and blushed.

"Oh... wow. Um..."

Sweetheart looked up to me with a timid, yet look.
"Do you wanna have fun with this outfit?"

I looked at her in awe, completely taken off guard by her request.

"W-What?! Well, I... Um... I don't know!"

She raised an eyebrow.

"What do you mean you don't know?" Monika asked, somewhat hurt by my hesitation.

I looked away in embarrassment.

"To be honest Monika, doing this type of sex is a bit kinky and I don't know if I am going to be comfortable- aw fuck it. We'll try it, then."

She gave a cheer of joy before grabbing both me and the cat-maid outfit.

---

*Meanwhile...*

"Yeah, Haru? What is it?" I asked, getting slightly annoyed by her constant begging.

She had a bright smile at what she was going to say.

"Will you be my Valentineee~?"

I groaned for the umpteenth time as if I was starting to lose my sanity.

"Mikeeeey, if you just accept it then the pain will go away!" She cheerily exclaimed.

*Why of all the people did she have to be interested in me?!!*

*I thought she was into Bro-Bro!*

*Damn it!*

"Fine! Fine! I accept your Valentine's! Now, will you leave me alone?!" I yelled, my ire now being raised.

Haru closed her eyes in glee and giggled softly.

"One more thing..."

She then got closer to my ear and whispered.

"Since you didn't confess to me just yet, I won't let any other girls get to you first. I will make their lives miserable if they try to flirt with you. Not to mention, I don't know what I will do if you don't return my feelings. Okay?"

I shivered with the force of a thousand suns before reluctantly nodding.

Haru took a step back and smiled brightly once more.

"Good! I am glad we understand each other!"

But before she could leave, I glared at her.
"Whatever. Where did you learn to talk like that?" I asked, feeling a little flattered with her obsession.

She put her hands behind her hips and started to playfully sway.

"Well... I asked Yuri for some advice on how to pursue boys around my age. And then she taught me how to harness my darkest, inner-most emotions to reign supreme! Pretty cool, right?"

I blinked at for several seconds before looking away.

"Sure, I guess... see you on Monday."

*I get the feeling this is probably why Haru stopped going after Bro.*

*She really is creepy!*

*Not to mention, she learned to speak like *that* from her sister!*

*Eugh!*

"Wait! Before you go!" Haru called, stopping me in my tracks.

She leaned in and-

*Smooch*

In an instant, I recoiled back and rubbed my cheek.

My breathing hitched at the realization of what she did.

...

*T-T-T-That's the first time a girl kissed my cheek!*

*W-Wh-Why am I getting so weird and nervous all of a sudden?!

"You're so cute, Mike." She whispered. "I *would hate to see you with another girl.*"

I was still flustered by her surprise kiss and didn't reply.

Especially since she was talking in that voice again.

"Byeeye! I will make sure to text you a bit more often~!"

With that, she blew me a kiss and ran out of the classroom.

"I KISSED THE BOY OF MY DREEEEEAMS!" She yelled at the top of her lungs in the hallway.

My mind struggled to comprehend what just happened.

...

"I hate Valentine's day."

I checked the calendar on my phone for a few seconds on any upcoming events.
"Oh right... Mike and Haru's anniversary is next week, by the way." I mentioned, scrolling down for any more surprises. "I can't even tell Yuri and Haru apart sometimes... Seriously, they look alike!"

Monika giggled softly at the event.

"Haha... That's true, they are pretty identical. After all, they are twins. Anyway, it's so odd seeing them together, one tries to be distant, while the other is so touchy-feely. But in the end, they were interested in each other."

I smiled at the relationship they both shared.

"Right after they got married, Mike dropped the distant act and decided to step his game up, while Haru tries to act to the opposite. It's funny to see her act so... tsundere around him. He's basically unaffected by it most of the time!"

She sighed dreamily.

"Yeah... do you remember our wedding day?"

I closed my eyes and reminisced my happiest memory of all time.

"Of course. Why would I forget our wedding?"

[------------------------]

*Everything was perfect.*

*The scenery, the food, the cake, the outdoor decors and the overall quality of everything!*  
*I told Dad not to force to have a luxurious wedding that we didn't want but...*  
*Maybe I was wrong.*  
*This wedding might be better than the both of ideas of one combined!*  
*But being spoiled like this isn't what I want...*  
...

*Ah screw it, it's only for one day!*  

I walked over to Sayori, who was chatting with the girls about the wedding.

"Wow, Monika! I can't believe how fancy everything is! Even the plates and utensils are fancy!"

I smiled at her recurring errors.

"It's utensils, and yeah... everything is perfect," I muttered, happy on being spoiled. "It's a bit too extravagant, but oh well. It's only for one day!"

Natsuki cleared her throat to speak.

"I hope my fiance can keep up with the same standard as yours."

Yuri laughed nervously.

"Ah don't worry Natsuki. Hiroshi can pull off something. Maybe my fiance can maybe get something similar done..."
Sayori decided to jump into the conversation.

"Aw, don't say 'maybe' or 'hope'! I have a good feeling it will happen!" She cheerily declared.

*Even after all these years, Sayori is still the same cheery, naive girl.*

*And in those years, I am happy that my two best friends finally got the love of their lives.*

*They are planning to get married later in the same year as us.*

*For now, the girls are my bridesmaid, with Sayori being my best maid.*

*For Darling, Thomas is his best man.*

"I am still hoping, Sayori," Natsuki stated, now looking over to me. "Monika, are you ready to be married finally? I mean, doesn't it feel-"

"Natsuki!" Yuri interjected.

I put up a hand to stop her.

"It's okay. Right now, I am feeling overwhelmingly positive right about now. I mean, look all around us! The matrimonial site is on a beach! How romantic does that sound?!"

The girls traded glances before shrugging.

"Well... I guess you're right."

"I suppose so."

"Romantic!"

I hugged them all tightly.

"You guys are the closest and bestest of friends a girl can ever ask for. Thank you."

They hugged back.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!" I yelled at the top of my lungs.

Tom rushed up to help calm me down.

"Brooklyn! What's wrong?!" He asked, putting a hand behind my back.

I tried to take a deep breath, but it just wouldn't work.

"I am so nervous, man! I'm getting married!"

He had a deadpan look on his face.

"No shit."

I rubbed my forehead to alleviate the stress.

"Ah, shit... being married at the age of 20?! What was I thinking?! Couples usually get married five years later! And instead, I acted out of impulse! Gah! What's wrong with me?!"
Tom spun me around to look me straight in the eye.

"Brooklyn, you're losing it! Chill the fuck out! Try to remember some of the basics of breathing, first. Come on, breathe in!"

Despite my frantic state, I took a deep breath and let it out.

"Okay... tell me this. You love her, right?"

I nodded.

"Well, say it!"

"I love her!"

He gave me a small pat on the shoulder.

"Good, good. Does that mean you want to be with her forever?"

I nodded again.

"Y-Yeah! I do. I do want to be with her forever."

He gave me another pat on the other shoulder.

"Alright, do you want her to stay with you forever in holy matrimony?"

I nodded once more, causing him to flick me on the forehead.

"Then stop stressing out this! You're ready for this! And didn't she say she was always ready? Prove it to her that you're ready too!"

... 

He's right.

"Got it, got it!"

As soon as I was about to leave the beach, both of my soon-to-be-wed friends came in.

"There's the man of honor! Where were you, Boss?!" Hiro exclaimed.

I balled my fists up in determination.

"Getting ready for my wedding... that's all. What about you?"

Dan rolled his eyes and stepped in.

"Val, you forget that this is the day where it's only about Monika and you. What happens to us isn't relevant."

In our years spent together, I knew he was hiding something.

"Yeah, okay. I can tell you're pretty damn excited about your wedding too, right? Checking ours out to make yours better."

That last part is a stretch, but it's good to tease each other every once and while.
He raised an eyebrow.

Hill-Top snickered at my remark.

"Never did I think that you would break up with a yandere, to form a relationship with another one! Haha!" He jabbed.

Hiro got into the mix as well.

"But instead of a boring black haired girl, you go for the buxomest purple haired girl there is!"

He hissed at Hiro.

"You're the one to talk! You cried about not finding a 'thicc goth gf' but ended up matching with a literal pink punk rock cupcake!"

Hill-Top and I recoiled from Dan's comeback.

"Ooooh..."

Hiro chuckled whole-heartedly and brought us all in a hug.

"Gosh, I can't get mad at you guys, I never could. Who would thought if I never brought you together, we wouldn't get to this level of friendship!"

I cleared my throat.

"You mean... bromance, Hiro."

He rolled his eyes.

"Whatever. I am just glad that you're the closest people I can call brothers."

We all smiled at his declaration.

"Same."

"Me too."

"Bro..."

After that, we shared a laugh together.

As brothers...

_____________________________________________________________________

It's time.

Following Hill-Top's advice, I took a deep breath and let it out.

The salty seawater air helped me breathe in and out for one of the most critical moments in my life.

Let's get this over with!

I want to spend the rest of my life with her!

The classic "Here Comes The Bride" played in the background as Monika walked over to me.
I already saw how she looked like with her wedding dress, but right now she looked breathtaking.

Although her face was covered by a thin, white veil, I was able to make out the emerald green eyes that I called home.

She walked towards the middle where I was, holding a bouquet of roses at her midsection and faced me.

_Uh..._

**What do I do now?**

_Do I take off the veil?_

The flashes of the cameras around us made it difficult to make a choice.

And so, I decided to take off her veil.

I gripped the thin layer of fabric and pulled it up.

There I saw her, my childhood friend and love of my life, standing in front of me.

Her eyes were on the verge of crying from happiness.

Although we didn't speak, our eyes did.

In her green eyes, I saw my black onyx ones, as if she was understanding what I was saying as well.

The priest then started the script.

We couldn't pay attention at all and looked into each other's eyes.

I looked forward to the life we were going to spend together.

To go along with whatever was happening, we said "I do." whenever there was a long pause.

At last, the priest simply said: "You may kiss the bride."

And we did.

Monika threw the bouquet of roses behind her and slammed her lips into mine.

I was caught completely off guard from how ferocious the attack was, and so kissed back.

But in the back of our minds, we knew we had to keep civil for the time being, since we were in front of everyone.

Right before we parted, I asked:

"We doing it after this?"

She replied with:

"Obviously."

"You know, I have seen your wedding dress a couple of times in the wardrobe, but I haven't seen
that cat-maid outfit in... forever." I stated.

Monika smiled devilishly at the thought of the outfit.

"I still have that outfit in the wardrobe if you're still interested~!" Sweetheart seductively whispered.

Not sure of what to say, I recoiled away from her.

"Yeesh! I don't know if I want to do that type of fun in this day... um... actually."

I tapped my chin in thought.

"You know what? I guess we can do it again with that outfit."

Her emerald green eyes sparkled with joy at my consent.

"Really?!" She asked in disbelief.

I nodded slowly carefully weighing my decisions.

"Yay!"

In an instant, she bolted to the wardrobe and pulled the outfit for the occasion.

_Oh wow..._

_That was quick._

I have a good feeling that she knew where it was.

"Help me change into it, Darling."

With a small smirk, I decided to go for it.

Getting up from the bed, I helped her off the t-shirt she was wearing.

Thanks to her being pregnant with our daughter, her breast size increased slightly, yet noticeably.

As she took the shirt off, her breasts jiggled from the upwards momentum.

Monika, being her usual lewd self, placed her back against me, allowing me to take off her shorts.

I complained that she should be wearing a little modest clothing like a nightgown, but she prefers my pajamas despite the size difference.

Once she was only in her lingerie, I brought the cat-maid outfit up to her but decided against it.

As a result, I threw it in an indiscriminate corner of the room and decided to kiss her right then and there.

She pulled away in a manner of seconds, confused by my change of mind.

"What's wrong?"

I frowned at her, not really caring about the outfit anymore.

The lust that radiated around her body started to show its effect, quickly crushing the amount of
sanity I had left.

"Fuck it. I am not in the mood for roleplay right now. Let's just do it right now, it's been way too
long since I felt like this."

In the corner of my eye, I knew she was grinning from my aggressive behavior.

"That's the spirit, Darling! Come on!"

---

I let out a happy sigh, happy with the rounds we did today.

"How many was that?" Darling asked. "Three? I didn't know I can do that much!"

He then yawned.

"Well, Darling... this is what happens when we don't have fun on a regular basis!"

Now that I can think properly...

Did I forget anything?

I did tell him that it wasn't my safe day today, so I am going to get pregnant... again.

But I think he was way into heat to realize.

"Hey Darling, you know today is not my safe day right?"

He turned to me with a perplexed look on his face.

"Yeah, I know. You told me that right before I went in."

I tapped my fingers in nervousness.

"So... you're okay with me being pregnant again?"

He nodded slowly.

"Wasn't that the plan? I always wanted another kid."

Aren't I say supposed to say that?

I smiled from Darling's wish to expand the family.

"You know, I didn't think you would say that. It's typically the girls that say that you know?"

He brought me in for an embrace.

"Well yeah, I know what you mean. First off, do you want another ch-"

"Yes! I always dreamt of having two kids to love!" I cut off.

He recoiled a little from my yelling.

"It's not too late for Plan B, you know. Isn't pregnancy kind of a pain in the ass? Uh... not in that
sense, but you know what I meant. You never hear a guy say I want to be punched in the balls."

Darling stated.
I nodded.  
"Well duh, it is painful but worth it. I am giving life to another baby that will we both love! Isn't that what we both want?"

Darling sighed, giving up.  
"Okay, you and I want another baby, so let's keep the kid."  
He shifted and kissed my lower stomach.  
"I can't wait to raise another!"

I hugged him tightly.  
"Me too, Darling. But it's getting late, don't you think?" I mentioned, bringing the blanket over us.

"Yeah, I guess you're right. It's been a long day, don't you think?"

I yawned, sleep now starting to show its effect on me.  
"It really has been."

We cuddled each other and made sure we both comfortable and warm.  
"Happy Valentine's, Sweetheart. I love you."

With a giggle, I kiss him on the cheek.  
"Happy Valentine's, Darling. And I love you too, I will never leave your side."

"Neither will I, Monika. We will always be together..."

*Forever.*
Anniversary

It was a rather chilly summer night.
Darling and I were finishing up on letting our newborn's crib comfortable and were quite frankly tired.

"Phew, another day, another grind. We got a lot of work ahead of us, raising two kids, Sweetheart." Darling said, making sure our son was asleep.

From afar, I saw my child's light brown hair shine in the moonlight.

He's the same case as Sweetie.

For some reason, he was born with the same hair and eye color as me.

I thought for sure that he would look a bit like Darling this time!

He leaned in and gave our new a kiss on his forehead.

I walked to him and laid my head on his shoulder.

"Don't worry, Darling. It's the same as last time, remember? But this time, we know exactly what to do. I don't think we need to go to our parents and let them babysit our newborn." I assured.

He let out a happy sigh.

"I hope not. I want to prove that we can raise him like how they raised us. And I can't wait to see our son grow."

Darling then put his hand on my hip and pulled me in.

"It's a lot to take in... two kids. We have two kids! And... They look exactly like you."

I gave him a wary stare, to which he rubbed his head sheepishly.

"What's up with that anyway? Our kid has the same hair, nose, and even eyes as you have, Sweetheart. The only thing that carries over is my smile. His and our Princess have the same smile as me." He questioned.

I only replied by nuzzling myself on his neck.

"Don't really know, Darling. I have no idea why I have the dominant genes in this relationship." I teased.

He playfully groaned.

"Yeah, yeah. Keep telling yourself that. We both know how it is on the bed." He pervertedly retorted.

I smirked at him, knowing what he wants.
"Oh my, looks like I don't have to spike your drink with Viagra today. For once, you're in the mood to have some fun!"

Darling scoffed at me.

"Bah, looks like I forgot to give your daily anti-aphrodisiacs." He counter-teased. "I never thought you would be such a lusty girl, Monika.

I couldn't help but giggle.

"Ahaha... I said it once, and I will repeat it. You're eye-candy, and you're my Darling." I confidently stated.

We started to walk out of the room and towards ours.

"All that aura of perfection you show to everyone is nothing more than a front to how you are, huh?" Darling continued.

I pouted at him, to which he chuckled.

"You know that I am not perfect! No matter how hard I try to be all 'perfect' around you, there's always a way to mess me up! I am still vulnerable whenever you are around."

He turned around and pulled on my cheeks.

"I know that you're nothing but a hot-mess under all that 'perfection,' aren't you Sweetheart?"

Darling's grip on my cheeks was soft but firm, so I tried to pull out of it.

"Stwop wit! Lwewt mew gwo!"

He laughed wholeheartedly.

"I will, just looking at you like this really makes my day. Seriously! You look like a frog! Ahahaha!"

As a last resort, I gave him my best puppy eyes, to which he finally relented and stopped pinching me.

I rubbed my cheeks and gave him a glare, which only made him laugh harder.

"Oh, man! You're so cute when you try to be angry! I could do it again!"

I hissed at him.

"No! Do it again, and you're sleeping on the sofa! Got it?" I warned.

Darling looked amused but shrugged.

"Sure thing, sugar-booger."

I groaned at his nickname for me.

"Uggh! Seriously, Gill? Sugar-booger? You calling me that makes me sound old! Did you really have use what your dad calls your mom?"

He snickered at my reaction as if that was his plan all along.
"Okay, okay, my bad! I won't call you that anymore, and when I said that, I also felt old. Eugh..."

I rolled my eyes at him.

"Whatever, I know I still look young. We're in our early thirties, for pity's sake!"

Darling gave me his usual headpats to calm me down.

"Yeah, that's true. You haven't aged a bit, and it's kind of making me suspicious."

I put my hands on my hips and looked proud.

"You wouldn't understand! I have superior genetics, Darling! Age isn't even a concern for me!"

..."Until it is." He snarkily commented.

"Shut up."

We both laughed at our ridiculous our exchange was.

Seeing him smile and laugh with me is all I need.

As we grow old together, I hope the relationship we both share never changes.

And as we grow old, I hope we share more memories.

After all, isn't that what love is?

Being happy and experiencing new worlds together?

We stared into each other's eyes, our eye colors being reflected against our pupils.

He closed his eyes, and I closed mine.

Our lips made contact, and I instantly felt my body tingle with the ever so familiar sensation.

I melted over the simple kiss we made.

We pulled away slowly and looked back at each other.

There was love in our eyes, and we wanted to show it to each other.

He put his hands on my shoulder and leaned in.

I could only put my hand on his cheek and await my fate.

And so, we kissed again, but this time with more passion.

The sudden passion he shared with me surprised me to the point I moaned.

"Mmm."

He surprised me again when he put more force into his kiss, apparently energized with my soft moans of pleasure.
To counter his attack, I used my tongue and sought entry into his mouth.
I licked his lips to which he granted my request.
And as usual, our tongue would fight, further deepening our kiss.
My tongue did it's best to hold on Darling's relentless tongue, but in the end, as always, fell.
With a low growl, he pushed me against the wall.
I moaned again with how aggressive he was starting to become.
For some reason, it gave me the strength to fight once more.
My tongue attacked him again, to which he was not expecting.
Darling pulled away from me by a bit, and we opened our eyes to look into our eyes once more.
With half-lidded eyes, we projected our lust for each other.
However, our kissing was starting to break down.
And so, we pulled away, panting to regain our composure.
There was a string of saliva between us, which strengthened our resolve to continue our make-out session.
I grabbed his hand and pulled them to our bedroom.
Once we entered, I pushed against the bed and pounced onto him.
With that, I rammed my lips against his lips once more, and we continued.
I felt his hands wander down my back and grabbing onto my buttocks.
Because of the sudden grab, I pulled away and yelped.
"Aaah! What the hell, Gill?!!" I yelled.
He smirked, amused with my reaction.
"What? You got a fat ass, Monika. And you know me, I am more of an ass guy."
I blushed and looked away.
"Well, at least give my chest the same treatment, okay? It's been a while since we were this into the mood. I always wanted to do this ever since I was three-months pregnant..."
His eyes widened at my apparent patience for all of this.
"Jeez, Sweetheart. I didn't know you wanted to do this for so long. But with you pregnant, I didn't want to endanger our kid by doing anything risky."
I rested my forehead against his and cooed.
"Don't worry, Darling. I know, I know. While I was pregnant, it took everything I had to stifle my desires for you. Every once in a while, I would be turned on from how caring and attentive you
would be for me when I started craving for things. I really, really, wanted to make love with you again, but you know."

Darling kissed me on the cheek.

"Thanks, Sweetheart. That means a lot to me. Also, I am a bit aware of how turned on you would be. Remember when you were first pregnant? You gave me some not-so-subtle signs that you wanted to blow me."

I frowned playfully.

"What are you talking about? I didn't want to suck you off..." I flirtatiously lied. "Why would I want to lie on sucking your long, hard dick? That would be crazy!"

He cringed at what I was saying.

"Euuugh! You're killing the mood, Mon! And knock it off with the cutesy crap! It was hard not to give in with how arousing you were! Those accidental grazes you would do against my crotch and the sultry voice you would put on... woo! It took me everything I had not to give in to your desires!"

I giggled from his reaction, satisfied that I have gotten revenge.

"That's good to know, Darling. I knew you would do such a thing... Unless if I speak like this?"

His pained expression turned to one of fear.

"No... please no." Darling begged.

I took one of his idle hands and put it on my chest.

He instinctively squeezed me without realizing it, prompting me to moan, with a bonus.

"Aaah... Darling! Not so rough! I didn't know that you were that excited about this!"

To further tease him, I grounded myself onto him.

Darling was still trying his best to keep his sanity in check by looking away.

I grinned and bit into his ear, to which he let out a hitched breath.

"Shit..." He hissed while jerking upwards.

His ear warmed up as soon it realized that it was being bitten.

Once I got his attention, I pulled away and looked directly at him.

*Good.*

I bit into my finger and gave him some eyes.

"*Will you mess me up now?"*

*That should do the trick!*

Instead of Gill showing the reaction I expected, he instead let out a deep sigh and looked into my eyes.
His onyx colored eyes showed a different shade and were coated with a feeling that I knew all too well.

*Lust.*

*But why isn't he pinning me down yet?*

"Sweetheart, I was so ready to take you, but just had to say that last part." He answered. "Now, I am stuck in a weird state of being turned on and off."

I crossed my arms and pouted, annoyed with that fact that my seductive arts didn't work.

"Hmph! Since when were you so high above it all and be immune to everything I do to you?"

Darling shrugged.

"Well, not everything. You almost got me with the ear-biting and all, but your sexy talk needs work." He critiqued.

I nodded slowly.

"Hmm okay, what do think I should do?"

He then stroked his chin in thought.

"Well... try to be more subtle about what you want. Kind of like that one time where you tried to blow me while pregnant."

I groaned at his example.

"Seriously? Out of all the examples you give, that's what you are going to choose? But I get your point."

*Subtle, huh?*

I cleared my throat and whipped my head towards him.

"**Darling... I'm feeling unsatisfied right now. Could you help me pass the time?**"

He looked at me with a curious look before smirking.

"Yeah, that's a start. And to answer your question..."

In a blink of an eye, we shifted positions, with him being on top of me.

"I can help you pass the time."

He then kissed me.

With that, we started our long night of lovemaking.

---

I yawned as I stretched upwards.

*Sheesh, it's almost the end of the spring term, and I am at my last pegs now.*

*Monika's constant demands for more "fun time," balancing my social life, and having time for myself*
is pushing me to the brink...

Or at least I think that would happen, since my head pounds whenever I get stressed out like this.

Since I completed my schoolwork, I started to put my work into my schoolbag.

And to alleviate that stress is to play some video games.

Or workout.

But I really need to relax, especially since I did a full-body workout yesterday.

I am just waiting for soreness to come.

Once I put everything away and into the bag, I pulled out my phone and messaged everyone in my Melody server if they wanted to play anything.

"..."

"Anyone up for some games?"

I gave it a few minutes and noticed that Dan got on.

"RobVanDan is typing..."

"Yeah, I'll be on soon."

Not soon after, Brooklyn got on too.

"Vercetti is typing..."

"Sure what we playin"

And finally, Hiro got on as well.

"Hiro-ic is typing..."

"me too"

I smiled at how my friends came together to play something.

Wait, what are we going to play?

"..."

"Let's all get on and decide on a game cause I finished hw"

With that, I shut off my phone.

I am so going to pull an all-nighter.

And maybe, just maybe, pull a senior day off.

That is if Monika doesn't catch my hide.

I shuddered at the thought of Monika waking me up with an enraged look on her face.
Yeesh, that girl can send chills down my spines.

She could do that when we were kids, but after she got back, it's insane!

Maybe I can fake an illness?

I started to dream of a scenario of where that would happen.

*KNOCK KNOCK*

Argh, it's too early for me to wake up...

I just got in bed a few hours ago.

Because of that, I went back to sleep and ignored the knocking.

*KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK*

Uh oh...

That doesn't sound good.

"Darlinnnng! Darling, wake up!" I heard Monika yell.

I groaned and tried to ignore her calls by covering my ears with my pillow.

*For once, can she not come over?!

I need some shut-eye!

"Darling, if you don't wake up in the count of five, then I am coming in!"

*Ugh, just let me sleep!*

"Five!"

*I don't understand the point of going to school when all the exams are done!"

"Four!"

*No seriously, why is school open if there is nothing to do?*

"Three!"

*I would be just going there to only hang out with my friends, but I could that any other time and in another place!"

"Two!"

*Besides, it would give the teachers a much-needed break from the school year.*

"One!"

*School can do us a favor and close earlier than-

*CLICK*
I heard my girlfriend walk into my room and shut the balcony door behind her.

"Darling. Why aren't you awake?" She asked in a scary, cold voice.

Aw shit...

*Here goes Plan B.*

I "woke" up and sluggishly arose from my bed.

"Monika? Is that you?" I asked with a nasal undertone to show that I had a stuffy nose.

She raised an eyebrow but then tightened her scowl at me.

"Darling, are you feeling alright?" She asked back, this time dropping the voice.

*This is a good start, but she looks suspicious.*

"I don't know... and I feel like crap."

Monika immediately jumped onto my bed and leaned her forehead against mine.

She seemed to be unafraid that she could get "sick."

"Hmm... you don't have a fever. But... hey a minute! You aren't sick, are you?!"

I was stunned at how she knew in the first place.

"I don't know what you're talking about." I lied as I rested my head against the pillow.

She picked me from the collar and glared at me again.

"You think that you skip out on school all because you decided to play all night with your friends, huh?!"

*How did she know that?!*

Before I could ask her that question, she put a hand up to stop me.

"Don't bother asking, I can see the eye bags around your eyes! Now wake up, Darling!"

*Darling!*

*Darling!*

*Hey, Darling!*

---

I snapped to whoever was calling my name, which pulled me out of my dream state.

*Monika?*

She was leaning forward with her hands beneath her chin and smiling at me.

*Wait, what is she doing-*
"Argh, why do I even bother?"

"Darling! You looked!"

I sighed and gave her an annoyed look.

"Monika, for the love of all things, why can't you just walk in normally?"

She smiled, enjoying how annoyed I got.

"I don't know, why don't you open the door for me to enter?"

"Ugh, I dream a bit and play with my friends right now."

"But this works, for now, I think."

"Right... my bad." I apologized.

... 

... 

... 

"Wait a minute; what about my privacy?!" I exclaimed.

She playfully rolled your eyes.

"What do you mean, privacy? We don't have anything to hide, right? And remember what we said? We are going talk to things out and not keep any secrets between each other."

"Wow..."

"She took our talk about communication to another level."

"And that level takes away my essential privacy!"

"I don't have anything to hide, Mon. Jeez, what if I want to plan a surprise for you, or need want to have alone time?"

She shrugged.

"That sounds like a 'you' problem."

I deadpanned at her answer, to which she giggled.

"Ahaha... I am joking, silly. Just tell me beforehand, and I won't bother you."

"Hmph, that sounds fair enough."

"Okay, if that's the case, then what if I want some alone time right now?"

Monika immediately frowned once I said that.

"But I wanted to hang out with you, Darling! I finished my homework, and I was hoping to we blow off some steam!"
Yeah, by steam she means to get naughty.

I gave her some headpats.

"Sorry, Sweetheart. I planned on gaming with my friends. It's been a while, and I also need to blow off some steam."

My definition of blowing off steam is a lot more innocent than hers, that's for sure.

Monika whined from my choice.

"Awwww...! But what am I supposed to do?!!" She asked.

In all my years knowing Monika, this usually means that would ask for a favor or something.

So I can probably interrupt her thought process by suggesting something right at the spot!

"Why don't you ask your friends to hang out with you? I don't know, go shopping or something." I ignorantly suggested.

She then pulled away from my hand and crossed her arms.

"That's pretty ignorant of you to suggest, Darling! I don't go shopping all the time! You of all people should know that!"

I put my hands up in defense.

"Sheesh, I am sorry. I just thought of an idea right on the spot. I didn't have much to think." I excused.

She then smirked.

"If that's the case, then maybe you can help occupy me with something."

Aw shit... As much I don't want to say this but-

Here we go again.

"Since you are playing with your friends, could I join too?"

Oh, that sounds innocent enough.

"Um well, that's a bit of an unusual request. I'm not sure if you would want to play with four sweaty losers."

Her smirk grew more cunning.

"Oh, I didn't mean it like that. I wanted to play with you."

...

And of course, she would mean something lewd.

"Play with me? I, for one, am quivering in my boots with what you have planned." I sarcastically commented.

She laughed defiantly.
"Ha, ha, ha! You know exactly what I mean, Darling! Whenever you play something and are in the moment, then that's when I will strike! It's going to be one of those hentai vids that I watched a while back!"

I sighed, disappointed by how she fell from grace.

"Let me guess, Natsuki suggested it to you, huh?" I casually asked, aware of the manga fanatic tastes.

She nodded proudly.

"Yep! And what I am going to is going to fun! First I am gonna-"

I put a hand up to stop her from even beginning.

"Nah, I am gonna stop you there. Monika, I am not going to let you do anything to me while I am playing! And you know me! If you do get me to do whatever you want, there is not a chance that I will take over! So no!"

She pouted.

"But... But-!"

I shook my head.

"No, buts! My decision is final, Mon. Take it or leave it."

Her pout grew as she puffed out her cheeks in exasperation.

_I love it when she pouts like that._

_She's so cute, and there's no doubt about it_

"Prude!" She cried, resorting to the classic insult.

I shrugged from the name-calling.

"Yeah, that's me. The prude."

Monika whined and collapsed over at my bed.

"Alright, fine! I won't do anything to you while you play!"

I let out a sigh of relieve.

"That's good to know. Hey, why don't you ask your friends to play with you? Maybe you guys could have fun the same way I have fun."

She stood up from my bed and frowned.

"You know, I always planned on playing video games with you, Darling. But... I feel like as if I am way too far behind for any redemption." She sorrowfully said.

I got up from my chair and sat down next to her.

"Sweetheart, you do realize it's never too late to get into gaming."
"Until it is."

I groaned.

"Yeah, until it is, but you could get into games if you want. I can help you get into it, and if you don't like it, then you don't. But at the very least, you tried. And that's all that matters."

I couldn't help but stroke my chin in the thought of Monika playing video games.

_Hmm..._

_That would be a sight to behold._

When I came to, I noticed Sweetheart gazing at me with star-struck eyes.

"Darling..."

_Uh oh._

"Wait, hold on!"

She then tackled me onto the bed.

"Darling!"

I smiled as she snuggled against me.

_This wasn't really a thing while we were in middle school._

_But I remember doing this as children._

I couldn't help but pat her long brown hair.

"You look overly-enthusiastic to play," I noted. "What's up with that?"

She pulled away and smiled.

It was a smile that showed that she was indeed happy.

"Yep! You always know what to say to make a girl's heart melt, Darling!"

_I am not sure if that's true, but I guess I'll take the compliment._

We laid in each other's arms for a while before I decided to get up.

Monika latched onto me and got up as well.

"Hmm~!" She hummed while still hugging me.

I tried to get her off me, but she kept reattaching herself.

_So much for playing with my friends..._

"Mon, when do you want to start playing games?" I asked.

She didn't give me an answer.
Instead, she kept snuggling me.

"You're so warm, Val."

Um...

*I's summer!*

"And you're eye-candy... my candy."

*There she goes with the eye-candy sort of thing again.*

I tried to pull her off, this time with a little more force.

To my surprise, she showed force as well.

"No!" Sweetheart exclaimed while constricting me.

*Well, it's time to resort to the old ways again.*

Since my hands were free, I maneuvered them to her armpits.

Once I was ready, I drove my fingers in and started tickling her.

Immediately after I started tickling, her grip around me loosened considerably.

"Ah! Stop! Ahaha! Stop!" She laughed, trying to escape my wrath.

Once loosened up entirely, I was able to escape her bind.

This gave her a moment of respite.

"I won this already, Mon. Give up!"

She took a deep breath and gave her the most aggressive look.

"Never! I won't ever lose to the likes of you!"

*BZZT*

*Oh, a notification from Melody.*

*I wonder what it is.*

"Hah!"

I felt a force tackle me into the ground and scramble all over me.

*Ow...*

"You have your tickling as a weapon! But as for me, if I poke you in the right spot, then you're mine!" She declared.

*Huh?*

*What does she mean by poking me in the right spot?*
I noticed her hand diving into a place that was familiar to her.

Oh no!

If she touches me there then...

Well, I don't think I will be able to get on to play.

Everything around me was in slow motion as I raced to grab her hand out of her target.

She tried to outmaneuver me, but I managed to grab ahold of her hand.

"Gotcha!"

The brown-haired girl looked to see that her hand was indeed held captive by me.

She then gave me a smirk and leaned in.

"You do realize that I have another hand, right?"

I smirked back.

"Well, you do realize that I have another one too, right?"

In a last-ditch effort, she leaned and kissed me.

At first, I was taken aback from the kiss but soon melted into it.

Kissing her is something that I can never get enough of.

Unfortunately, her plan worked and was able to get into my boxers.

I pulled away immediately once I realized what she was doing, but it was too late.

"I won!" She cheered.

Her hand found it's a way inside my boxers and got it what it was looking for.

"What...? I don't remember your dick being so... rough."

I squeezed her hand with my own.

She pulled out my crotch immediately.

"What the fuck?!" Sweetheart yelled, horrified as to what she touched.

Haha!

You thought that was it!

I couldn't help but laugh at her misfortune.

Monika was visibly shaken but at the same time pissed off from not getting what she wanted.

"Stop laughing! What the fuck is up with your dick?!" She yelled, still traumatized from before.

I pulled my hand out of my crotch.
"Hahahaha! You touched this! Nice try, Mon, but it looks like I was faster this time."

She hung head down in defeat.

"You know why my reaction speed is on point? It's because of video games! Maybe you can improve it if you try it!" I rejoiced.

Monika then raised her head and glared at me.

Without warning, she tackled me again.

"Darling, you idiot! I thought something was growing down there!" Sweetheart yelled, aggravated from being duped.

I chuckled at her tantrum.

"Jeez, sorry. I wasn't really in the mood to do any of what you were thinking. I kind of want to play with my friends right now. Unless you want to smash." I suggested.

She raised an eyebrow out of suspicion.

"Didn't you say you weren't in the mood? What changed?"

I was confused by her suspicious demeanor.

"What do you mean? You don't want to smash?" I asked.

Monika shook her head and smiled.

"Nevermind, if you want to smash then I am all yours."

I gave her a confused nod and pulled out my phone.

"..."

"Change of plans, I am gonna play smash with Monika. I might be on later."

I then shut off my phone, so I wouldn't see the string of messages on how weak my timing was.

Right after that, I looked around for the game console.

Where is it?

As I looked for it, I heard some shuffling behind me.

What is she doing back there?

I turned around to see her stripping.

My face caught on fire.

"W-What are you doing?!" I yelled, to which she jolted.

She shot me with a baffled look.

"What do you mean, what am I doing? Aren't we getting to smash?"
We stared at each other until we both realized what our intentions were.

*Oh, she thought I wanted to smash her.*

*Whoops, I should clarify that.*

"Sweetheart-Darling."

She motioned me to go first.

"Err, Sweetheart. By smash, I meant if you wanted to play Smash! Didn't I say I was not in the mood?" I elaborated.

Monika blushed when I confirmed her suspicions.

"I know, I know... But I didn't know that we were Smash like that. I thought you had a change of heart in your sentence. Ahaha..." She nervously dismissed.

She frowned again to which I walked up to her and gave her a sweet kiss on the cheek.

"Look, I am sorry, Sweetheart. Tell you what, we can smash once we are done, alright?"

I then gave her a wink, which made her grin.

"If that's the case, then I won't have anything to stop me from dominating you!"

_She's happy again, and that's all I ever need._

I rolled my eyes at her.

"Yeah right, yeah, right. You're overthinking your pride. You know how it usually goes."

Darling then blew a raspberry at me, which made me giggle.

"It's been some time since we last played, Darling. You should underestimate me!" I warned.

He turned around continued looking for the console.

"Last time we played, you were confused about what the left and right button does! All you did on stage was taunt, and you couldn't even land a hit on me!" He stated.

I crossed my arms and sat on his bed.

"I know the controls now. And I also know how to punish your dodges!"

_Yeah, that'll show him!_

Darling looked quite impressed before putting on a smug smile.

"So you're saying you can get some good reads on my movement? Alright then, we'll see how much you have improved."

He then handed me a joy-con and hooked up the console.

"Darling, you forget one really important part. Do you remember who my dad is?"
This should make him nervous.

Jeez, it's challenging to make him nervous once he puts his mind into it.

Gill looked at me with confusion.

"What? Well yeah, your dad is the CEO of Team Salvato, right?"

I kept my grin at him.

"Yeah, but do you know what he did before becoming CEO? It's a bit obscure, but it has helped him over the years."

Darling thought hard for a moment, scrunching his nose and eyes for a bit before realizing what I said.

Hehehe... that's right!

"Wait, he's the legendary Dan Salvato? One of the best Smash players in the U.S.? And... you're his daughter?! I-I thought it was a coincidence all this time but..."

I laughed evilly at his sudden loss of confidence.

"Hahaha! That's right! After all our years growing up, you never knew that my dad was one of the best Smash players in the world!" I celebrated.

Dad's reputation as a Melee player and Project M developer was well kept.

Even Mom didn't know that he was famous before he started the company!

I looked towards Darling to which he looked visibly nervous until smirking.

"Nice try, I see what you're doing." He stated.

Huh?

"You're trying to crush my confidence by dropping a bombshell like that, huh? Your dad retired from playing Smash a while ago, remember? A lot of mechanics have changed over the last couple of years, Mon."

I remained sure of myself.

"Hmph, whatever you say, Darling. Just know, I learned a lot from my Dad while playing Ultimate with him and picked some new tricks. So you better saddle up!"

He cracked his knuckles and readied himself.

"Sweetheart, I improved as well. I am also a lot better than before. But enough, talk! Let's smash!"

The character screen popped up, and we immediately chose our characters for the 1v1.

Dad was one of the best Link players too, and he was considered to be the one to change how Link is played in the first place.

And also I kind of like playing Link for some reason.

Huh, like Father like Daughter.
"Link, huh? As long it's not Young Link then I am game."

Darling then chose his character.

It was a generic Mii Swordfighter with a predictable move set.

Once we were done picking our characters, he put the stage at random, and we started playing.

"Alright, let's see how much you improved, Mon." He taunted.

I scoffed at him in defiance.

"Whatever, let's just play the game."

Once the map loaded up and countdown ended, Darling's character charged towards me.

*Stay calm, Monika. He's going to try to get some percentage down.*

*I can throw a neutral B to throw him off.*

Link threw a boomerang towards the Swordfighter, but he was able to short hop, and air dodges it through.

*What?*

He followed up with a quick forward attack and an up-air, dealing 30% worth of damage.

*Oh, it's on!*

I inputted commands to make Link throw a down-B, retaliate with a forward attack.

The first bomb I threw hit the Swordfighter, and he was able to go through with the forward attack, dealing around 13% worth of damage.

I threw the bomb towards him again and detonated it, dealing more damage to him.

"Not bad, not bad." He commented.

Darling's swordfighter threw a neutral-B tornado at me and started up-airing me for the right amount of damage.

Once his combo was done, I started attacking him back with my dad's ingenious strategy.

*This should work! Right now it's 45%, 60%, 75% and...*

"Huh?" He let out, as he was getting demolished by my Link.

I finished off with a charge up attack, taking a Stock from him.

*Got it!*

*Practice does pay off!*

With a smirk, I looked at Darling to which he was pleasantly surprised.

"Finally, you can take a Stock. Alright, it's my turn."
His Swordfighter shifted downwards and used down-air to prevent himself from being attacked.

Once he landed, he did a quick neutral-air and dealt some damage.

Since Link took some damage, his knockback increased, which made it difficult for him to stay on the stage.

With a few well-placed aerial attacks, he knocked me down a Stock.

He looked at me with a smug look.

"This is where the fun begins."

I gave him a "Hmph!" and focused on the screen.

My Link fell and rushed to deal some damage.

Darling’s Swordfighter tried to attack back but kept being interrupted by my use of projectiles.

Once I got him to sufficient damage, I finished him off with an Up-B.

Woooo!

Only one more stock to go!

"Yep, you improved a lot, Sweetheart."

His Swordfighter shifted downwards and onto the battlefield.

"But, you still got a lot to learn."

He then rushed towards Link, to which I tried to stop him with a side B.

It was pointless, as he jumped over it and threw a chakram at Link.

The Swordfighter used a combination of chakrams, aerials, and ground attacks to deal enough damage.

Once that was done, he finished Link off with an Up-B, which was similar to my Up-B; a Spin Attack.

The character twirled his sword and hit the Link multiple times before sending my Link to the blast zone.

Argh, I only have one more stock!

Dad said always to stay calm, even if you are losing.

There's always a chance for hope!

Unless if I add in some... of my style.

I moved closer to Darling, to which he didn't notice and started nuzzling him.

"Eh? What are you doing Monika?"

My eyes stayed glued to the screen, but I was able to proceed with my plan.
I inputted my Link to charge at the Swordfighter.

From there, I kissed him on the cheek.

He was thrown off by the kiss and allowed Link to land a hit on the Swordfighter.

_Alright!_

_This works!_

"Two can play that game." He muttered.

The Swordfighter hit my Link with a neutral B tornado and threw a chakram towards him.

Without warning, he then breathed on my ear.

His hot breath on my ear caused me to be disorientated and prevented me from counter-attacking.

With a well-placed bite, I let out a moan that disrupted his play.

_I am not going to lose this time!_

_No matter how much he tries to turn me on..._

My counter in the real world was that, despite the ear-biting, I went in for a quick grope on his crotch.

He pulled away, surprised by the sudden grab, and ultimately lost his train of thought.

From there, I was able to make a counter-attack finally.

"Why you..."

My play was disrupted when he dove under my shirt and pinched me at a sensitive spot.

I let out squeak from the attack and tried to keep my head from being hazy.

"Aaah...!"

_Try to keep it under control me..._

_But it's turning me on!_

He continued pinching me there, so I bit my lips and forced my hand into his boxers once more.

Fortunately, he left it unguarded, and it was ripe for the taking.

I felt his familiar shaft in my hand and noticed it was hard.

"Urrrgh..." He grunted, trying his best to play with one hand.

His hand pulled out of my shirt and dove into my boxers.

I felt his fingers reach my crotch, to which he gripped it.

_No... no... no...!_
I squeezed my eyes shut and stopped myself from moaning from his touch.

To get proper revenge, I gripped his shaft and started to stroke it upwards.

It took everything I had not to give in move around his fingers so it can cover more area.

*If I did that, then there was no way in hell that I would come back.*

And like so, he started to put his fingers inwards.

*I really can't focus.*

*He is fingering me, and I am giving him a handjob!* 

Now it was nearly impossible for us to make a proper play against one and other, but at this point, we tried not to give each other additional attention.

The game consisted of our characters only attacking the air and randomly walkabout.

In the real world, our hands started up their tempos, which made it extremely difficult even to grip the controller.

Once the timer ran out in-game, sudden death started.

Darling and I exchanged looks, so we knew what we were going to do.

We both immediately pulled our hands out of our respective places and charged in for the final attack.

Link gave the Swordfighter a suitable forward aerial, but the attack paused for a second.

*What the-*

The Swordfighter clicked and hit back with a counter, nullifying the attack and catching the screen to turn red.

With a devastating counter-slash, Link was thrown off stage, losing me the game.

As the game loaded to show the Swordfighter doing a victory pose, Darling looked at me with a smirk.

"Told ya. You still have a lot to learn."

I was frustrated and horny, two things that made me dangerous for Darling.

So as a result, I stood up and pulled him up.

My face showed no emotion as I dragged him to the bed.

Once we were there, I threw him there with all my force, only causing him to walk there slowly.

"Sweetheart, if you wanted to do it, then I wouldn't mind. And besides, I am kinda in the mood for it now." He teased, aggravating me more.

I growled at him with my primal fury and ripped his clothes off.

"Shut the fuck up, that was a dirty trick, Darling. And now there's no stopping me."
He dared to smirk despite how furious I was.

"To be fair, you were the one who started it. I only fought fire with fire."

This only pissed me off even more.

"Grrrr! Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up! If you want to make it up to me, then give it to me!"

He only rolled his eyes and gripped my shoulders.

With that, he rolled us over with him on top.

"I had a good feeling that something like this would come up. But I don't mind."

Before Darling could lean and deliver a kiss, to start things off, the door swung open.

I gave my darkest scowl to whoever decided to cockblock my Darling.

Deborah?!

I immediately dropped my scowl.

Val's mother squinted at the both of us before realizing what was going on, to which she adopted her signature smile.

"Ah! Sorry, you two! I didn't know you had sexy times! I'll leave you two at it!"

The door slammed shut, and we could hear her yelling something along the lines of: "Val and Monika need some privacy! They're dealing with something at the moment!"

We were mortified as all the color of our faces were flushed out.

No way...

This can't be happening!

How did she-

The door opened again, and Deborah poked her head out.

"Oh! If you two are hungry, there is some leftover fries and burgers from last night!"

She then shut the door.

...

I don't think I can handle this anymore...

We just got caught by Val's mom!

And we were so close too...

The door opened again, and out came... Deborah, of course.

"Here are some energy drinks, just in-"
Darling couldn't handle the overwhelming sense of pure embarrassment and regret.

"MOM! PLEASE STOP COMING IN HERE!" He yelled, his face on fire.

His mom smirked and gave me a wink before leaving behind the energy drinks, hopefully, this time for good.

Darling pushed himself off of me and laid down right next to me.

We both let out a heavy sigh, filled with remorse and disgrace.

"I'm so sorry, Darling. If only I knew that your parents were here, then this wouldn't have happened. I wouldn't have let my emotions get loose and-"

He gave me an awkward head pat.

"Sweetheart, it's okay. There was no way that you would have known. Hell, I didn't know that they would come home so early today. Even Mike's home early too. I feel like someone's writing this and getting a kick out of us getting into this mess."

I smiled, weakly at him.

"Yeah, you're right. Whoever's writing and getting us into these sort of situations should go fuck themselves. But in any case, thanks, Darling. From now on, we are gonna have fun when there is no reason for them to be here."

He nodded weakly.

"I get it, so like when they are on vacation or some remote place. But it doesn't have to come to that. We can still do this whenever you would like Mon. This is just a one-time thing. I doubt if it will happen again. But, in any weird chance that this happens two times in a row, then we can take stricter measures."

_Hmm, that seems fair enough._

"Okay, then. I guess we can do that. For now, what do we do to pass the time?"

Darling stroked his chin in thought and looked around.

His eyes showed some interest at what he was looking at, so I turned to see.

_Oh, the console is still up and running._

"Want to play a couple more rounds of Smash, Sweetheart?"

I turned to him and smirked.

"Sure, but don't pull anything funny, alright?" I warned.

We got off from the bed and sat near the T.V.

"No, seriously. I don't want to deal with that again."

"Right back at you."

We then played a couple of rounds of Smash until we got bored.
It was a stalemate at first before Darling started to play more seriously.

*Argh!*

_How did Dad even get this good at the game?_  
*We're playing on a newer version of the game, so a lot has changed._  
*But still, it's mostly the same._

Darling and I concluded that we had potential and decided on a draw, or at least I did.

"Hey Sweetheart, wanna do Spirit Board? That can switch things up a bit." He enthusiastically asked.

I yawned and shook my head.

"Sorry, Darling... I think I hit my limit. Maybe we can do something else, like go outside." I suggested.

We both looked outside to see the weather. However, we soon realized why Darling's parents came home early.

It was raining, to the point where we couldn't see past my balcony.

"You were saying?" Darling snarkily replied.

I only rolled my eyes, but couldn't resist him a kiss on a cheek.

"Ah, don't be such a smartass. I didn't know it was raining until now!"

He chuckled at me.

"Yeah, yeah. I know, I am just busting your chops. Now, do you wanna watch a couple of movies or shows instead?"

I brightened up with the prospect of watching shows with Darling, but I had a better idea.

"Since you didn't give me what I wanted earlier... I choose!"

*Hehe... He has no idea what I am going to pick._

Darling raised an eyebrow but shrugged.

"I don't think we could have finished in that timespan, but whatever floats your boat. What do you want to watch?"

He saw the mischievous gleam in my eyes before regretting his words.

"Wait-!"

"We're gonna watch Navy Sun! The direct competitor to Parfait Girls!"

I giggled when he let out an exasperated groan.

"Gosh, seriously? Another fantasy, rom-com, harem-Esque show? Parfait Girls was pushing the limit for me, and I don't think I can watch this!"
Well, you did say that we could watch anything so...

And I always wanted to watch it with him, but then that day happened.

I gave him a short, comforting kiss to shut him up.

"Darling, I want to watch it. I... planned on watching Navy Sun with you right after we finished with all the OVA's for Parfait Girls. But you know-"

In an instant, Darling's face turned serious, and he knew what I was going to mention.

He put up a hand to stop me as if knowing how it pained me to relive it.

"I know, I know. Don't remind me what happened. A lot of bullshit happened that day. Both of our cells completely to glitch up even though there were no reported outages, I lost track of time when I needed to blow off on some stress, and I arrived a few minutes after you left. I know, Sweetheart."

Darling then sighed heavily.

"The more and more I think about it, the more I feel like utter shit. I still feel like I am a complete waste of space in this world for pursuing pleasure, instead of staying around to talk your dad out of sending you to Ainu."

I realized the situation was turning direr by the moment.

Without realizing it, I hugged him tightly.

"Don't say that...! Don't say you're a waste of space, Gill. Remember what I said to you a day after I came back? This isn't all your fault! This was mine as well! I put too much faith in you and don't forget that we were teenagers! It was doomed from the beginning and would've taken a miracle for all we planned to work!"

My grip on him faltered as I felt my eyes burn.

"So please... please don't call yourself a waste of space. Even if you think that you are one, I will always tell you that you aren't. I will keep telling you that you are my Darling and that no one will replace you. And... I will always tell you that I love you."

He gently pulled me away.

I thought for a second that he was going to argue that he was worthless.

But instead...

He wipes the tears off me and leaned in.

I felt his lips connect with mine as we met.

My eyes threatened to cry once more, but his kiss stopped them from doing so.

Darling gently pulled away and hugged me.

This hug felt different from all the other hugs he has given me.

For this, one felt that he was peace.
"Thank you for forgiving me, Monika. It will take some time for my regrets to wash away, but in time, I will be stronger because of it. And..."

I felt him tighten his grip on me.

"And I am grateful for having a friend and lover like you. So please... don't leave me."

My eyes widened at what he was saying.

In all my years being with him...

Darling is scared of losing me.

And I am scared of losing him as well.

If for some reason we separate, then we will be broken.

I hugged him back, squeezing him as well.

"I will never leave you, Darling. Never. But this also goes for you too. Don't you ever leave me too, okay?"

He took a deep breath in, showing that he has finally relaxed.

"You're mine and only mine. I will never let another man, have you. After all, we have been through. I am never letting you go."

With those words, we stayed in each other's arms for a while.

Neither of us dared to break the silence that we put up for each other, and so we laid down in bed, never separating.

The rain cleared, and the sun started to come out.

We both shifted to see the sunlight better.

The orange light bathed the outside world with its warm color.

"I love you." I heard him whisper.

Without missing a beat, I closed my eyes and rested on his chest.

"I love you, too."

We didn't know how long we stayed in each other's arms, but we knew the time had passed when an ever-growing purple tint was slowly replacing the orange light.

I wish we can stay like this forever.

But, I want to watch Navy Sun!

"Darling, do you want to start watching the show I want to see?"

He looked downwards and smiled.

"Navy Sun? Since you wanted to watch that so badly, I guess it can't hurt.” He teased.
Oooh, that stung.

It looks like Darling is back to normal.

I pouted at him.

"Well, I do want to watch it badly! And don't forget how much a yandere you sounded when you said that you would never let you go?"

He scoffed at me.

"Hah! Sure I was behaving a little possessive, but sweet lord, the lines you say? It makes my 'yanderish' statement look like a dork! And I am one!"

I sighed, knowing that I couldn't deny my possessive behavior.

There's no denying that I could be a yandere, but I love him, and he loves me back.

So that's all that matters.

"Okay, maybe you're right. But who would want to break up with a snack like you?"

He recoiled his head from my words.

"A snack?"

I nuzzled his chest and moved my way up.

"Yep! I mean, who would want to break up with a guy who's understanding, sweet, built and has one monster of a-"

"Okay! I get the point!" He quickly interrupted.

Val then rolled his eyes in disappointment.

"Jeez, how perverted can you be? You had a good thing going with me being all that, akin to some harem MC, but then you pull a fast one by saying I have a-"

"Monster dick?" I added.

He nodded, agreeing with me.

"Yeah that! Wait a minute..."

I snickered from how he played himself.

"Ahaha! I gotcha there!"

Darling shared a small laugh with me as well.

"Hah! Yeah, you did. But anyway, let's get to watching that show."

I jumped up, excited to watch the show.

"Yay! This is going to be so fun! I am so gonna use whatever they do here!"

We got off the bed and started watching the show.
There were no mentions of that "day" after that.

And even if we did, we started laughing at how ridiculous it all was.

*I guess that's the sign of recovery...*

---

*Ugh, Lotus Junior High is such a pain.*

*There's so much homework for me to do when I get back home.*

*But fortunately, there isn't going to be many classes tomorrow.*

*We get to go home early on Saturday, so there's more time for me to relax.*

*And I really need to relax...*

I stretched upwards and sighed.

*Monika's constant delusions are starting to get on my nerves.*

*I thought it would be a couple of months before she would stop behaving so weirdly, but it only grew worse.*

*At first, she was talking about how her "special skill increasing" and "choosing new perks to help boost my skills."*

*I thought that weird talk was only a way to be cool or something, so I didn't pay attention to it.*

*Next, Monika would call bread as health items and water as mana items.*

*Sure, Parfait girls had items like that, but it didn't apply to everything!*

*Ugh!*

*Now every time I see her, every single item would be covered with stickers about intelligence and fortune-telling.*

*It was weird, so I asked her about it.*

*Her response?*

*"Silly, Val. You really don't know much, do you? The government that you align yourself with can do that you. Technically by the Twilight Oath, I swore to take, you are my enemy. But since you're my best friend, you could be my spy and help me fight the system!"*

*Yeah...*

*I don't want to get into any trouble.*

*And right now she's The Lady Who Knows Everything and claims to be all-knowing.*

*Jeez, I knew watching Parfait Girls would make her all weird.*

*And the fact that she keeps watching the same episodes over and over again really makes things worse.*
I don't understand why that show is so popular with girls.

Is it because I am a guy or what?

"Ah! There you are my Supai!" A familiar voice called.

Oh boy.

I felt her tackle me from behind and hug me.

With a groan, I straightened my back and let her off my back.

Great, she's wearing that huge witch hat.

Seriously, she never takes it off.

"Hey, sis." I greeted, keeping my ire in check.

She shook her head in disapproval.

"Val, Val, Val... Didn't I tell you to call me The Lady Who Knows Everything? There's a reason why I have this mark, dummy."

Without missing a beat, she twirled around and showed me her forehead.

The English letters, "I" and "Q" were etched on there with a dark green marker.

What the heck?!

This is new!

However, she wrote the letters in reverse, so she wrote "QI" on her forehead.

Since when did she write all that?

And what is her mom even doing?!

"How does it look, Supai?"

I rolled my eyes.

"Stop calling me that, and you wrote "IQ" wrong. It's mirrored, you dolt."

She was shocked when I told her that, causing her to be flustered.

But as she dropped her guard, she brought it back up again.

"I-I meant to do that! The Lady Who Knows Everything never makes mistakes! The letters switch whenever I activate my powers! If I reveal how it is spelled, then the world as we know it will collapse onto itself and into a singularity! So that's why I must keep it sealed!" She confidently claimed.

Right...

She meant to write "IQ" while using a mirror but forgot she was using one in the first place.

I couldn't help but sigh at her.
Monika, you used to be so smart.

These delusions are just making you dumber than a pile of rocks.

I doubt that you would make such a careless mistake like this if you weren't so delusional.

Or... Even bother with doing such things.

"So... how does the seal look? I can feel the power coursing through my veins!"

I stifled another sigh, mainly because of how disappointed I am.

"And I guess it looks pretty alright, even if you made a mistake. You better not let any teachers see that, or else you're gonna be in detention."

Monika scoffed at me.

"Hah! You underestimate me, Supai! The Lady Who Knows Everything will be able to evade detection from the government's henchmen! This will be nothing! I can predict every move that they will make!"

I could only groan in frustration and gave a swift but painless whack behind her head.

*WHACK*

"Monika, stop calling me that. It's embarrassing. And also, you need to cool it with the Parfait Girls references, Mon. It's getting out of hand!" I stated.

She rubbed her afflicted area and glared at me.

"Never!"

Monika then closed her eyes and took a deep breath and started to move her hands in a circular motion.

Okay, what is she doing?

She then let out the breath and clenched her right fist.

Without much of a warning, she jabbed me with the fist.

I could only stare at her dumbfoundedly.

"Uh... Ow, I guess?"

The delusional girl then smiled and crossed her arms in defiance.

"I serve only the Twilight Oath! My justice is swift, and just! I know everything to help me take the right course of action! So no, I will never stop!"

It was getting difficult not to sigh once more.

"Whatever you say. Hey, can you use some of those powers right now and get us some ice cream? I am a bit tired of all this." I asked, pointing to the cart.

Monika then put her hands on her hips.
"I will only serve you if you will be my spy! Otherwise, The Lady Who Knows Everything answers to no-one but the Twilight Oath!"

**Sure thing, but I am sure you'll change your mind once I do this.**

I pulled out my wallet and handed her some cash.

"Would you change your mind if I paid for it?" I offered.

In an instant, her eyes shone, but she then looked away and pouted.

"My Oath states that I can't accept bribes from others."

I waved the money at her, causing her to let out a sigh.

"But if you are so willing to make an offering to me, instead... Then the Oath complies!"

She grabbed my money and ran towards the cart, with her arms flying in the wind.

*If she hits someone with that, then it will be my neck...*

Luckily this time around, she didn't hit anyone with her strange run and was able to purchase two ice cream cones without much of an issue.

When she ran back, her toe hit something, causing her to stumble.

My heart froze as I ran towards her and caught her.

I was able to catch without much difficulty, but I felt her cling onto me.

"Monika? Are you alright?"

When she pulled away from me, she was tearing up.

I immediately was worried.

"What's wrong? Did you get hurt?!" I asked, terrified that she might have gotten hurt.

She shook her head to a no and showed me a seemingly empty cone, but it looked as if it was filled with ice cream.

"My sincerest apologies. I didn't foresee this at all... If only I used my powers before." She muttered, defeated from the accident.

*Oh, the ice cream fell off.*

*Big deal.*

"Are you sure you didn't get hurt?"

Monika started to rub her eyes and shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Val." She whispered.

And so, I gave her headpats.
"It's okay, Mon. I am not angry or anything, you can have that ice cream if you want."

She pulled away from me and blushed.

"I-I can't... As an agent of the Twilight Oath, it's wrong for me to take your ice cream."

Well, I would be annoyed with her constant references to Parfait Girls, but this time it's kind of cute.

"Nah, don't worry. Consider it a gift or an offering, or whatever you would like to call it. I really don't mind at all. It's what friends are for." I insisted.

Monika gave me a meek nod and glanced at the other ice cream cone.

I saw that she was debating to whether or not lick the ice cream and claim it as her own.

"W-What if I suggested that we share the ice cream?" She asked, looking up to me.

As I looked at her, she immediately shifting her glance away, as if trying to avoid my gaze.

I shrugged.

"Sure, if you want. I don't mind at all." I calmly replied.

For a split second, I could have sworn that I saw some smoke pop from Monika's head.

"As an agent of the Twilight Oath, I will comply."

Not sure why she is so nervous and quiet all of a sudden.

With a shrug, I leaned in and gave the vanilla ice cream a lick.

At the same time, I saw Monika's eyes as she licked the ice cream as well.

She was red as a tomato and tried her best to keep her gaze off me.

We then pulled away from the sweet.

Monika hummed from how tasty the delicacy was.

"Mmm, I can feel my mana starting to regenerate from this item! Maybe this time, I will be able to foresee the future and prevent any mishaps!"

I deadpanned at her.

"So that's what happened? You ran out of mana and couldn't have the foresight to prevent your fall?"

The delusional girl nodded proudly.

Great, I think I am getting the hang of understanding her weird shenanigans.

I am just going to call her out.

"I'm still sorry for dropping your ice cream."

When she frowned, I felt a part of me become melancholy too.
And so, I hugged her and patted her long brown hair.

'Monika, listen... As much you don't want to tell yourself this, what happened earlier was just an accident. Accidents happen, no matter how 'perfect' you are. And it's okay. I am glad that you didn't get hurt."

I heard her giggle and hug me back.

"Y-You're the best, Val! Even if you aren't my spy, you are the best!"

Her giggles always tickled my heart, so I smiled as a result.

"You're welcome. It's what friends are for."

Monika then hugged me again, with an even tighter grip than before.

I tried to hug her back, but her grip was too much for me, so I patted her off.

Once she got off, I let her have another lick on the ice cream.

*Even when she is all deluded with Parfait Girls, the girl I know is still in there, intact.*

*She's always cute whenever she's happy.*

*And when she's happy, I get to see her sparkling smile.*

*That smile is something I can never get enough of.*

I took the chance to lick the ice cream, but for some reason, there was something in the ice cream that was off in texture and temperature.

*Huh?*

My tongue only felt the weird texture for a second, before it went away.

*What was that?*

*Since when did add some caramel in that ice cream?*

*I am sure that they don't add without an extra charge or something...*

*Weird.*

I looked towards Monika and hoped for that I would get some answers.

However, I was greeted with a light-headed Monika; her face was a fever-red and was struggling to stay conscious.

"I can't believe that I did that... I actually did that to Val. I can't believe it..."

*What is she talking about?*

Before I could ask what was wrong, she let go of the ice cream.

"Y-Y-You can have the rest." She said, while not keeping her eyes on the sidewalk.

I raised a suspicious eyebrow.
"Why? You barely ate the ice cream, and it would be unfair if I would have it all."

She shook her head, vigorously.

"IT'S OKAY! I-I'm fine! I think I had enough ice cream!" She reassured.

Um...

Okaaay then.

With a shrug, I took a bite of the ice cream, to which I heard Monika coo a strange noise.

"He ate it... he actually ate it. We just had an indirect..." She incoherently mumbled.

Yeah, that's pretty creepy.

What's up with her all of a sudden.

I have no idea why she's behaving so weirdly now.

Oh well, on the bright side, she isn't going to bring up anymore Parfait Girls while we walk and more ice cream for me!

We walked home without much trouble, despite it being quiet.

That was rare, but it didn't matter.

Since the next day, she was back to normal, so everything turned out just fine in the end.

It was the start of a crappy day.

A day where Darling goes camping with his friends and comes back until early tomorrow or in the afternoon.

I was laying in bed, bored out of my mind, wishing that he would somehow come back early because they forgot to pick up something.

But they tripled check everything, and it seemed like all was well.

So it luck was against me, and I stuck here, with nothing to do.

And it was killing me.

I know Darling said that he would never let go of me, but this is absolute hell on earth!

Who knew that I needed, not wanted, but needed Darling to stay alive!

Jeez, this was me from four or five years ago, when I was still in Ainu, all I would be doing is writing how much I hated Darling or be hanging out with friends.

Friends...

Damn it, why didn’t I think of that?!?

I am pretty sure all the girls are free today since all of our boyfriends are camping.
And so, I brought up the group chat and texted everyone.

"..."

"Heeeyyy, you guys want to hang out in the mall today?"

"Cinnamonfun is typing..."

"Oh! I WAS ABOUT TO TEXT THAT TOO!"

"Pink_Neko is typing..."

"Yeah me toooo lmaooo 😻😻 😻"

"Yuri is typing..."

"Strange, I was going to do the same thing too."

I smiled because of the coincidence.

We continued to type and plan out details on when we are going to meet up and which mall we were going to go.

All four us agreed to go to the mall that was the closest to us, which was the same mall where Tom and Darling took Sayori and me on our first dates.

This is an excellent distraction to getting my mind off of Darling!

I hope all goes well while we are there and have some fun like how we did like that Sunday when I came back.

As I went downstairs and said goodbyes to my parents before leaving the house.

Once I left the house, I made my way to the mall.

The trip to the mall was rather uneventful, and it made me realize that the who made it eventful was...

Darling!

ARGH!

Seriously, me?!

Can’t I go one day without my head being the clouds?

This is my one chance to prove myself that I am not clingy or possessive like I think I am!

So where’s that same determination where I kept pursuing Darling or pulling all-nighters to study for exams?!

Come on, me!

I took a deep breath and let it out, humming the song that pushed me to all through life.

Yes, yes, yes, yes!

I can win!
I feel great!

I. Can. Do. This!

With that, I started running towards the mall.

... Wait, why am I even running?

I stopped myself and took a brisk pace instead.

There's no point of running if I am going to be there like ten minutes early.

And so, I kept the steady pace until I made it to the mall.

I entered the mall and stood around the meeting place.

To pass the time, I pulled my phone and browsed social media.

The first thing to pop up while I was there was Darling's new post.

"Hanging out with the boys." The caption read.

In the picture he posted, he was fishing with Hiro while Dan and Tom were fighting each other with sticks.

Ugh, boys will be boys.

There's no changing that.

"(Um, excuse me?)" A male voice asked in English.

I put my phone down and looked to whoever has greeted me.

My gaze met a nervous, but bulky guy who was looked as if he had nearly got hit by a bus.

From the looks of it, he's a foreigner.

I gave him a usual smile to any strangers I speak to.

English huh?

I could speak English, but I have an accent as everyone does.

For some reason, my smile gave him more confidence.

Hmm, something's off about him.

"(Hello!" I greeted back in the same language.

He gave a small smile back.

"(Oh, thank goodness. Someone that speaks the same language as me! Hey there. Could you tell me where the food court is)" He asked.

Sounds simple enough.
I nodded.

"(Sure, it's in the most bottom level of this mall.)" I answered, pointing downwards. "(Take the escalators or the elevators down)."

He nodded back.

"(Thanks for your help. Say, since you helped me, do you want to grab something?)"

*That's a... weird way of saying thanks.*

I politely shook my head.

"(No, thank you. I'm going to meet up with some friends soon. But thank you for the offer.)"

He chuckled.

"(Ah, don't be like that. I treat you, come on!)" He insisted.

*Kind of not liking this guy right now...*

I firmly shook my head.

"(I am fine, thanks.)"

With that, I started to walk away.

But before I could get a meter or two ahead of him, he put his hand on the wall, stopping me from moving.

*Did he really just do that?*

"(I never saw a beautiful girl like you, with those green eyes and brown hair... You're cut above the rest, aren't you?)"

I didn't reply to him and thought of a plan to make this guy back off.

"(Come on, I'll treat you real nice. I promise I am a nice guy."

*That's all I need to hear.*

*I am sure he is a "nice guy" that won't always be manipulative, overbearing, harassing me.*

*Pff, I know his type.*

*All he wants is to fill a void in his heart and sate "his" needs by getting himself a girlfriend.*

"(I have a boyfriend. Get off me.)" I warned, now losing patience.

He looked rather surprised.

"(Oh, don't worry. I can treat you better than him. I mean, what kind of boyfriend leaves a girl like you out in the open?)"

The guy's insults to Darling pissed me off, and so I balled my fists up.

*He...*
He insulted my Darling!

"(But I wouldn't do that. I am loyal, don't you worry. I will never let anyone touch you, inappropriately.)"

My heart and body are for my Darling, and I will never cheat on him!

He is the reason why I got so far in life...

And this excuse of a man is going to take that away from me?!

I saw my friends behind the guy, getting ready to intervene, but I shot them a look that told them I got this.

The guy leaned in even more.

"(So... what do you say? Do you think I can handle such a job?)"

I smirked, now knowing this was a perfect time execute my plan.

"(Sure you can.)"

He lit up with surprise, which pissed me off even further.

"(Really?!)"

But before he can get another pathetic word out, I conjured all the anger I had and punched his gut in complete surprise.

The guy recoiled and held his stomach in.

And right after that, I drove my legs up and uppercut him with everything I got.

My knuckles connected with his jaw as they moved their way up.

I felt a slight sting when it did connect, however.

He took a couple of steps back and landed on his back.

The guy still had a little bit of consciousness left inside of him, and he looked up to me, dazed from the impact.

I shot him one of most menacing glares at him which said:

*Don't ever try to take me away from Darling.*

His head hit the floor, now unconscious.

"Oooooh! Take that, punk! KO!" Natsuki cheered.

I dusted my hands off and readjusted my hair.

"That was so cool, Monika!" Sayori cheered.

"Are you sure he's unconscious?" Yuri asked, leering at the guy.

I waved my hand at them.
"Um, let's get out of here, first. We might attract attention." I said before we left the scene.

Once we moved away from the unconscious man, I smirked at the girls.

"Anyway, thanks for the compliment, Say. And yeah, Yuri. I don't think I killed him. Darling taught me how to knock out a person with their guard down. Turns out hitting them in the jaw causes their brains to be rattled a bit, resulting in a knockout!" I explained, proud of my acquired knowledge.

Each of the girls looked at me, confused from who I was referring to.

Oh...

I called Gill, Darling in public!

My face burnt up.

"Alright, what I-I mean-"

The girls gushed over my cute pet name for my lover.

"Awww! That's so cute!"

"Darling, hmm?"

Sayori put her hands on my shoulder and smiled.

"Ah, don't feel bad, Monika! We also call our boyfriends with pet names too!"

The other two girls agreed with her.

Natsuki was the first to pipe up.

"Yeah, I call Hiro, 'Dear'!"

Yuri then stepped in.

"As for me, I refer to Danuja as 'Love.'"

Finally, Sayori jumped in, excited to share her pet name.

"I like to call Tommy, 'Cream' or even 'Daddy'!"

We all eyed at Sayori's strange choice of pet names, thinking of it as a joke.

She raised an eyebrow at us, confused as to why we were staring at her.

"What? Don't you guys know that I am sexually active with him? Come on, guys... Don't you all have one?"

I never thought Sayori would be so open about her sex life!

Darling and I have an active one too, but we keep it private.

We all blushed, which answered.

She shook her head us in disappointment, which was rare of her to do.
"Well, I guess for you two, I can understand," Sayori stated, referring to Natsuki and Yuri, as they got into a relationship recently. "But as for you? That's surprising!"

I felt personally attacked but was afraid of fighting back.

"Um... Sayori, I don't think I have one. But we still do it, from time to time."

Okay, that's a lie.

She stared at me for a while before nodding approvingly.

"Anyway, now that's out of the way, let's have some fun!" I cheered.

And we did.

A couple of hours passed, and we were at the final stages of our hang out, so we all decided to go our separate ways.

Hmm, we should all do this more often.

It's pretty refreshing of us to hang out like this, instead of having the Literature Club holding us together.

Or having dorms to in one of the most prestigious and strictest academies in the world.

As I headed towards my house, I replayed how I dealt with the situation in the mall.

Each time I did, it brought a smile on my face.

Wow, I never thought punching someone like would be... oddly satisfying.

Yeah, that sounds psychotic.

But anyway, I should get into boxing with Darling, that can connect us in the physical sense.

Maybe...

I entered my house and went up to my room.

And as I went inside my room, I was hit with a strong sense of boredom once again.

Ugh, why do I feel like there's nothing to do at home?

The fun stuff is always at Darling's house for some reason.

Wait a minute...

An idea popped inside my head as I changed into my pajamas.

I unlocked my balcony door and jumped over to Darling's side.

What if I just...

Once I was there, I bent over and unlocked his door.

Play with his games?
Darling recently did say he got a new BOOM game and was planning to play it later but went camping first.

So...

Why don't I play it?

He did say I can try out the game if I do get bored so...

I powered on his custom-built computer and waited for it to boot up.

Hmm, he's using a high-end motherboard with 2x8 DDR4 2166 MHZ RAM, not bad...

Huh? Where did that come from?

I shook my head and logged into his computer.

The icon for the new BOOM game was on his desktop, so I clicked on it.

Once I opened it, to my dismay, it was still in the middle of downloading it.

Awww, come on!

That's one game I was looking forward to playing!

With a bored whine, I rested my cheek on my hand.

My eyes wandered his desktop until I saw a suspicious folder.

What's this?

The folder was named "Homework," but it had no documents in it.

I clicked on the folder, which led to another folder, named "Secrets."

Darling said that there would be no more secrets between us.

We are going to utterly transparent with each other.

I... I even showed him my journal.

He was shocked at how dark my thoughts could get, but in the end, he understood what I was going through.

But this folder...

I had an inner conflict as to what I should do.

Do I look at it, or do I not?

...

As much I want to look into it...

I shouldn't.

Darling will show me at his own time when he is ready.
And I don't want to break his trust if I do look into it.

Because of that, I closed the folder.

With that, I laid on his comfy bed and looked at his old glow-in-the-dark stickers on the ceiling. For some reason, the stickers invoked nostalgia.

I remember...

Darling got a pack of glow-in-the-dark stickers for his 8th birthday.

He wanted to put them everywhere.

And he put it in the ceiling...

Good times.

The memory made me tired, and so I fell asleep.

...

...

...

"Monika?"

"Sweetheart? Is that you sleeping in my bed?" I heard a familiar voice ask.

Darling?

I immediately opened my eyes and saw Darling in front of me, dumbfounded from my presence.

"What are you doing in my bed?" He asked.

My heart raced once I realized it was really him.

"Darling!" I sang as I tackled him.

"Huh? Whoa!"

He caught me and spun me around, not out of choice but to keep his balance.

I squeezed the ever-living life out of him.

"Darling... You're back... I missed you so much!"

He chuckled nervously.

"You do know I was only gone for a day, right? Anyway, how did yesterday go? I heard from all three of the girls that you hung out with them and... kind of beat up a guy."

I smiled proudly from my deed.

"Yeah, I did! A foreigner tried to harass me into becoming his boyfriend, so I gave him the one-two!"
Darling was shocked that I managed to knock out a guy more significant than me.

"So it is true?! Sheesh, Sweetheart, what did you do to him?!"

I raised an eyebrow.

"The one-two?"

He shook his head.

"That's a jab followed by a cross, that shouldn't be enough to knock anyone out. Unless you're a master at finding hidden pressure points or something... Did you uppercut him or something?"

I nodded enthusiastically.

"Uh-huh! I punched in the gut and drove up my legs to do an uppercut! Pretty cool, huh?"

It took him a moment to process what I just did, but in the end, he smirked.

He put his hand on my head and patted it, to which I much enjoyed.

"That's very impressive, Monika. It took me a while to get it down, but I only showed it to you for a day... Wow, good job! I am so proud that you managed to a flawless knockout!"

I giggled.

"Hehe! Thanks, Darling!"

Darling continued to pat my head before he summed it all up with a kiss on my forehead.

"Anyway, I am glad that you managed to make do for a day without me. I could've sworn you would go feral if I wasn't here." He joked.

I playfully pouted at him.

"Well yeah! No one in this world will be the same as you, Darling! You're perfect in my eyes! No one can and will replace you since you are all mine!" I declared.

His face flared up a little, which was uncommon nowadays.

"Way to boost my self-esteem, Mon. Look, I have meant to ask you... Why did you beat up that guy? Was he harassing you?"

I dropped my pout and started to feel nervous.

"Y-Yeah, he was. The things he was saying to me... really got me pissed off. So I had to do it."

He looked bewildered at my confession.

"Sweetheart, I know you. You would never hurt anyone unless they insulted your family or... oh."

Darling realized who that guy was insulting.

He sighed dreamily and smiled at me.

It was the same smile that made my heart race from how dorky it looked.
"You love me so much that you would go so far to defend my honor when I couldn't, huh?"

He then recoiled his head and looked bewildered for some reason.

"Wait, the fuck did I just say?"

My face burned up from his words.

*How does he know what to say?*

*From the looks of it, he says it without putting much thought into it.*

*Still, it makes a girl swoon over him.*

"You said it, not me." I teased, while still looking away from him.

I felt his hand cup my chin and pull it up.

He then leaned in, kissing me.

I returned the kiss immediately, gripping the sides of his jacket and pulling him closer.

We pulled away, intending to make our kiss brief.

"You have no idea how much that makes me happy, Sweetheart. Thanks for standing up for me."

I laid down on his bed and stretched.

"Anything for my Darling, Darling."

He sat down on his bed and took off his jacket before joining me.

We laid together in silence, enjoying each other's company.

After a while, I felt him shift towards me.

"Hey, Sweetheart."

"Mm?"

"What did that guy say exactly? I want to know what led to his... divine judgment."

I shifted towards him as well and nuzzled the crook of his neck.

"Well, if you want to really know, then hold me. We haven't slept beside each other in a while."

...

"Mon, we do that every day ever since the Wednesday you came back, remember? I either go to your bed, or you go to mine. The former is mostly the case." He stated, now putting his arms around me.

I didn't say anything and continued to nuzzle, and feel his warmth all over my body.

"Darling, he started in English, asking for directions as to where the food court is. For some reason, he thought I would know English, but fortunately enough for him, I did, and I thought he was a tourist."
There was a subtle increase in his grip.

"In English, huh? Well, I guess he was lost at first since he is a tourist. What happened after that?"

He's so warm...

Mmm.

Oh yeah, right.

"Eh? Ah, he offered to buy me something in the food court. I said no because I didn't want to come off as a freeloader, and I was planning to hang out with the girls. But then he kept insisting that I come with him."

All of a sudden, I felt a spike of anger about what he did next.

Darling noticed this and started patting my brown hair to calm me down.

"He didn't touch me or anything, oh no, if he did, then he was a dead man. But he did a rather ballsy kabedon on me. He insisted again that he will treat me and say that he was a 'nice guy.'"

I felt Darling's hand stop patting me, and I couldn't blame him.

"Don't worry, Darling. I knew he was full of crap, but when I told him that I have you as my lover, he insulted you by saying that you're a bad boyfriend for leaving me unattended and can give me more than you as well as being loyal."

His grip on me tightened, and I knew he too was getting irritated.

"I really want to pay this guy a visit," Darling muttered, with a strange undertone to his voice. "Maybe then I could teach him a lesson or two on being a 'nice guy.'"

Ooh, Darling is actually getting angry.

Angry over some guy harassing me!

"So that's where I got pissed off. My friends wanted to help when they saw he was leaning closer; I told them to wait. And once they did, I knocked him out."

Darling let out a heavy sigh.

"I'm so glad that guy didn't touch you. If he did, then I am sure I would be hunting him down and-"

"Shhh. I handled it, knock it off with the yandere crap, alright? I do that." I interrupted, feeling drowsy once more.

Is there anything that I needed to ask him?

Oh yeah!

"I know, I know. I just felt overprotective. Wow, I never thought that I would have some yandere in me too."

I then pulled away from him.

"Hah! I'm kidding. It was sweet of you to care for me that much, Darling. Anyway, I wanted to play
that new BOOM game on your computer."

He raised an eyebrow; then his eyes lit up.

"Really?!!" The onyx-eyed man excitedly asked.

I shrugged.

"More or less, I was bored, so I was hoping that I could play BOOM or something. I know the game would be a bit too much for me, but I kind of wanted to give it a go instead of watching you play it. Unfortunately, that's not the reason why I talked about BOOM." I said, now motioning him to come to the computer.

Darling motioned me to sit on his chair as he stared at the desktop.

"I wanted to ask you about this."

I hovered over the folder named "Homework."

Darling's face instantly burned a bright red.

"Oh... homework? Did you look into it?"

I shook my head but clicked on the folder.

"No, but I am more or less suspicious about as to why there's a folder called... "Secrets."

He darted his attention away from me.

"I know we wouldn't keep secrets from each other and I don't think you would want to see that, trust me," Darling stated.

That...

Doesn't help at all.

"Darling, you do realize that makes me even more curious, right?"

He sighed.

"I was planning on showing you that later, but I wasn't sure when. But if you want to see so badly, then go ahead."

What's so bad about this folder?

"Darling, it's not porn, is it? You have me for that, dummy and I understand if you had urges when I was gone... Hey, could we do a-""

"N-No it's not. Jeez, Mon I never really touched pornography!" He interrupted. "It's... really special to me, and I was thinking about it a lot now."

Darling leaned in and clicked the folder for me.

My eyes widened at the number of pictures of beaches, landmarks, restaurants and-

The Big Apple.
Out of all the pictures in the folder, there was one photo that stood out to me the most.

With my hand on the mouse, I moved the cursor over to the picture and clicked on it.

**Wow...**

*So that's how Time Square looks like.*

*Drad used to go there for business meeting back when I was a kid.*

"New York City, the city that never sleeps. The city I was born in. I remember watching the ball drop at New Year's Eve when I was five or six. How could I forget the lights, the number of people gathered around, and the huge ball that drops from the One Times Square building? I... I always wanted to go there with you."

My heart skipped a beat when I realized what all these pictures were.

*No way.*

*He really wants me in his life, doesn't he?*

*I always knew that, but this...?*

*This makes me so happy~!*

"These photos... they are all for-"

"Yeah." He cut me off. "These are places that I always wanted to go with you. I want to make new memories with you by going to these places together and maybe have a great time in each of them."

*All of these places are new and beautiful...*

*He put so much time and effort into making this folder.*

*I can't believe it...*

My eyelids felt heavy and hot for some reason.

In seconds I tried rubbing them away, but instead, I felt liquid on the side of my hand.

"Monika?" He called.

*I'm crying...*

*I'm crying because of how much loves me.*

Without wasting another second, I whipped my head towards the man I love and pounced on him.

"DARLING!"

He caught me despite the surprise tackle and landed on his back.

"This doesn't look so good..."

I snuggled my body against him, ecstatic on how much we were going to bond in the future.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! I love you so much, Darling! Darling!"
He tried pushing me off, but I clung onto him for dear life.

"ARGH! I love you too, Sweetheart! But, I can literally feel my ribcage caving in! Let go!"

But as usual, I never did.

And if I did, I felt as he would disappear forever...

_Forever._

I woke up with Monika cuddling me and locking me in place.

Sure it was rigid, but I was able to sleep comfortably.

_As long as Sweetheart can sleep without any nightmares._

_Ever since she said that had a tough time sleeping without me, I couldn't help but sleep right beside her, be that it was a school night or not._

_Speaking of school nights, we're on summer vacation, and all of us volunteered to set up for the summer festival._

_I already had done my end of extracurriculars while I was in school, but the girls haven't._

_They said something along the lines of how Ainu didn't have any proper transfer of credits, so they have to do some last-minute extracurriculars for college._

_Whatever, I guess._

_I would be bored if I just lay in bed all day and watch videos._

_Oh yeah, that reminds me._

"Sweetheart? It's time to wake up. I am sure you had enough time to browse the pictures I downloaded yesterday, but come on! We're gonna be late for that summer festival setup!"

As opposed to the Monika that would always meet deadlines, this Monika was strangely different.

Instead of waking up a little, she simply shuffled.

"Mmmm... five more minutes. You're so comfy, Darling. I think I can stay in your bed with you forever."

I rolled my eyes and decided to take more extreme measures.

_Fine, if you aren't going to be responsible, then I will._

I forcibly pulled my legs to whatever bind my girlfriend put me in and swept her off the bed.

Her legs curled up against the side of my body, and she stayed latched onto my chest.

That woke her up for a few seconds before hugging my face.

Since she wasn't wearing a bra under the t-shirt, I felt her chest envelop my face.

"Mmph!" I yelled through the muffling pillows before pulling myself away. "Damn it, Monika, wake
Sweetheart whined at my repeated yells.

"I don't want toooo! And I'm hornnny! Pull my shorts down for me, Darling!"

*For the love of!*

*Man, if I were a bit younger and had less control over my hormones, I would probably oblige.*

*But the school has priority for now.*

"Yeah, you're always horny ever since we became a couple! Now wake up or else!"

She sleepily opened her eyes before smirking lazily.

"Or else what, huh? What are you going to do? You wouldn't hurt me, no, the closest thing to revenge is to tease me by using my body, right?" She sultrily taunted.

I smirked back.

"Nope! We're the bathroom and inside the shower, so...

Her eyes shot up, now fully awake.

"Wait, wait, wait, no! Don't do it!"

I turned on the shower-head for cold water and let it spray on both of us.

Monika squeaked in surprise as the ice-cold water hit her back, hair, and legs.

"AAAAH! TURN IT OFF!"

She tried to use me as a source of warmth and cover but to no avail.

Meanwhile, I welcomed the cold feeling washing over my body and refreshing me for the day.

Since I was more accustomed to the cold water, I didn't shiver.

However, Sweetheart was, and she was glaring at me while doing so.

"You're so dead." She simply said.

I couldn't help but chuckle.

"Ah, you'll be fine," I assured before giving her a pat on the back. "Your body will get used to it soon."

Once she stopped shivering, I closed the showerhead and opened the shower door.

Sweetheart was the first to get out and rubbed her head while at it.

"Ugh, yeah now I feel a lot more awake! Thanks, Darling! Looks like not giving you a Monika morning paid off just this once!" She cheerily exclaimed, forgetting that she was mad at me in the first place.

I let out a quick sigh of relief behind her back.
Thank goodness, I thought she was going to pull a fast one and make the morning even longer.

Just like after Christmas where I had to "wash" her legs.

I shook my head and gave her a towel.

"It works on drunk people, but it also works on you apparently. You're drunk in lust when you wake up, huh?"

She giggled from my tease.

"Of course, I am. Now that we're a couple and love each other, there's no reason for me to hold back any more of my urges, right?"

_Uh, there is some stuff wrong with that sentence._

"Yeah... whatever. Let's get changed."

We discarded our wet clothes and put on our uniforms without any unneeded "distractions."

_I am a little surprised that she didn't decide to twist the situation._

But I still am grateful for the off-chance that did happen.

We both went downstairs and headed towards the kitchen.

Sweetheart manned the toaster while I went into the fridge.

I was surprised when I saw two bento boxes in there.

"Um... when you have time to make lunch for us?" I asked, scrambling for any condiments I can use for toast.

_Not to mention, the boxes are pretty large, much larger than the ones we usually bring to school._

"Yesterday! Since we are going to be working and setting up the festival, we are going to be hungry!"

_Fair point._

I brought a couple of jams, butter, and cheese for us to choose.

Sweetheart chose the strawberry jam while I went for the more complex grilled cheese sandwich.

"Need any help with making the sandwich, Darling?"

I shook my head.

"Ah, don't worry about it. I can handle making grilled cheese, Sweetheart. Don't forget that we both went to those supplementary cooking classes back in Lotus!"

She scoffed at me.

"I know, I know. Jeez, Darling no need to get so defensive! It sounds like you're scared of being overtaken by a girl!"

As I buttered both toasts and put the cheese, I rolled my eyes.
"Way to sound sexist, Mon. I want to cook because I find it fun, so I could care less about being overtaken." I nonchalantly answered.

_Jeez, now that I think about it, that was pretty brutal to say._

When I came to, I saw Monika was pouting at me.

"Prude!" She yelled before munching on her toast.

_What?_

I recoiled my head from the insult she gave to me.

"Prude? How am I a prude? I didn't even talk about-"

"Focus on your sandwich, prude!"

Everything in my head was filled with question marks, along with what my facial expression was showing.

_I don't even understand what going on._

With a shrug, I went back to work with my sandwich.

Every once and a while, I would hear an occasional raspberry from Monika.

However, when I looked up, she would look as if she was still eating her toast.

_Hehe, it looks like I bruised Sweetheart's ego by a bit._

_And in turn, she's just childish._

_It's not annoying. Instead, I find it quite cute._

_There's a side of that never went away._

Once the sandwich was done, I put it on a plate before sitting down beside Monika.

As soon as I came to sit down with her, she shifted her body away from me and continued eating.

"Sweetheart, don't be like that. You know I don't mean any harm."

Monika put the toast in her mouth and crossed her arms.

"Hmph!"

_W-Why is she so tsundere all of a sudden?_

_Did my answer hit harder than expected?_

I closed my eyes and stretched.

"Alright, alright. I'm sorry for- Mmph?"

I opened my eyes to see Monika with the toast still in her mouth, was also in my mouth.

With a twinkle of mirth in her eyes, she pulled away, leaving behind some of the toast in my mouth.
I chewed on the bread with the strawberry jam, albeit with great confusion.

*Um, why did she do that?*

Sweetheart then finished up with the remaining toast.

After eating the toast, she smirked at me.

"I'll forgive you." She said. "If you let me feed you the grilled cheese you just made."

*Not sure she needs to put a "favor wall" to do all that, but sure.*

I swallowed the toast and gave her a curt nod, to which she grinned in delight.

"Yay! I can't wait to do this!"

Sweetheart picked up my sandwich and pulled it in half.

Once she did that, she put it near my mouth.

"Here, Darling. Say 'ahh'!"

With a shrug, I opened my mouth, and she fed me the sandwich.

*Mmm, I nailed the grilled cheese.*

"Yep, I still got it," I commented.

She puffed out her cheeks and decided to take a bite out of my sandwich.

In an instant, Sweetheart moaned from how the taste.

"Wow... you only made this with butter and cheese..."

*Hah! Even she's surprised!*

"I can give you the exact instructions on how to make it," I added.

Monika widened her eyes when she realized what she said, but couldn't help but sigh.

"Oh, alright. Maybe you're better than me at making grilled cheese, but I am still feeding you this."

I chuckled from her cute behavior.

"Haha! I wouldn't have it any other way."

The summer festival went off without a hitch.

Darling and I wore matching yukata colors, which was green, of course.

Instead of having my hair down, I decided to tie it up in a small bun and secured it with a rose.

As usual in festivals, we had a great time with the games.

Right now, we were winning prizes left and right from how unbelievable our luck was.

However, this time, our luck needed precision.
We were in the shooting range stand, and Darling volunteered to get the big fuzzy panda toy sold as the grand prize for beating the high score.

"Hey, Darling... how are you so good with guns? Specifically, old western guns back in the late 1800's?" I asked, curious as to how gifted he was with the weapons.

I saw him stroke his chin in thought, also a bit confused with his skill.

"Honestly, I have no clue. Maybe it's family heritage. My ancestors were cowboys and have a way with western weapons. My grandpa was a frontier enthusiast and a collector. He had a bunch of revolvers, shotguns, and lever-action for display and sometimes would shoot them for fun. I guess it's the family blood to be good at them. Or I watched my Grandpa shoot them a bunch of times." He truthfully answered.

He picked up the toy revolver loaded with BB's and spun the gun near the trigger.

I watched in awe as he performed some tricks with the weapon.

"Yeah, I have no idea why I could do this. It all feels natural for me. And that is pretty weird."

I walked up to him and kissed him on the cheek.

"Well, I don't think it's weird at all. I think that it's awe-inspiring that you are gifted with it, Darling."

He gave me a small smile.

"Thanks, Sweetheart. It always means the world to me whenever compliment me."

I smiled back.

"The same applies to you, Darling. Now, show them how an American can gunsling!"

With that, I took a few steps away from the range.

A crowd started to form around the stand.

"Whoa, hey... is that Val over there?" Hiro asked me.

I turned to him with a proud smile.

"Yep! He's good with these types of games, so he's competing for the grand prize." I boasted.

Natsuki arrived not soon after.

"There you are baka! Jeez, don't run off like that!" She yelled at Hiro. "Oh, hey, Monika!"

I smiled at her.

"Hello, Natsuki." I greeted back.

And right after that, all of our friends crowded over to see how Darling would compete to win the prize.

He continued to examine the gun and pointed at the targets as practice.

The stand manager came out and started the timer.
Darling's going against three other people!

I know he can win!

As the timer hit zero, Darling jumped into action and fired his six shots in rapid succession.

His right finger pulled the trigger, and his left palm served to pull back the lever behind the gun.  

Oh, I am guessing that's the hammer.

And he's fanning it.

So that means he's fanning the hammer.

We all cheered for Darling as he hit all the targets with decent precision.

Sure, not all of them that hit were bullseyes, but they still beat them.

The next targets came not soon after, and ahead of everyone else.

He reloaded the BB’s into each chamber and pulled the hammer once more.

In a second, he fired all six shots like before, in rapid succession.

Once all the targets fell over, another set came up.

As he reloaded, he turned his head towards me.

Our eyes met, so I blew him a kiss to keep pressing forward.

With a confident smirk, he quickly reloaded his revolver up with the BB’s and shot all the targets again, but this time with even greater accuracy.

Darling's still good at the shooting range, even after a couple of months.

The stand manager was surprised as to how Darling managed to finish so fast but reluctantly had to give up the grand prize.

He was handed the fuzzy panda bear, and he walked into the crowd and towards us.

Once we met up, Darling handed me the bear.

I hugged it the bear with everything I got and looked towards him.

"See? I have no idea what I just did, but I managed to get the bear."

Dan rolled his eyes.

"Val, come on. You knew what you were doing; the way you managed to hit your shots was amazing."

Natsuki piped in.

"Yeah! Your accuracy was like my dad's! You hit all your targets in the bullseye without missing!"

He was having none of it, however.
"No seriously, I just felt like I was in the zone when I hit the targets. I don't think I had much practice with guns in general."

And so was I.

In front of everyone, I started kissing Darling in multiple places on the face to show grateful I was. He tried to push me away, but in the end, he relented.

"Sheesh. You didn't have to do it in front of everyone..." Darling muttered. In embarrassment.

I could only giggle from how adorable he sounded.

"Darling, I am not afraid to show you how much I care about you." I declared confidently. "I could not care less about how others complain about that taboo."

Tom whistled at my retort.

"Brooklyn, you got yourself a winner." He teased, smirking at him.

His ears burnt red as he turned to glare at him.

"Screw you."

We all shared a laugh and talked to each other for a bit before going our separate ways.

It was getting late, Darling and I were walking down a forested path that felt eerily familiar.

What's up with this place?

I remember this forest when I brought over Darling for interrogation when I first came back, but...

That strange feeling is back again.

"Hey Sweetheart, do you remember the fireworks?" He asked.

Of course, I do, we always used to watch them together.

Is there any other reason to ask that question?

"Ah, but before you answer, look up."

We both looked up to the starry sky and saw the fireworks starting to pop in the distance.

However, they looked a lot more different.

Instead of the bland yellowish fireworks the city used, the ones they were using were much brighter and had different colors.

The skies splashed with green, red, blue, white, and a whole other array of fireworks.

"Wow..." I muttered, awed with the use of new fireworks.

I felt Darling pull me in close and hug me from behind.

"Some of those fireworks up there were actually old models left behind from other students. They were all disappointed with how generic the fireworks were, so they banded up and stockpiling the
higher end ones. Or at least that's what the note says. In any case, I found these fireworks while
cleaning out the festival closet and decided to use these instead." He explained as he put his chin on
the crown of my head.

I gripped his arms around and hummed.

"This is what you meant when you wanted to make new memories with me, right?"

He hugged me even tighter.

"Exactly. I want to see your eyes sparkle whenever we see or do anything new. And I always want
to remember how they look as we grow old together."

I could only sigh dreamily.

All those years of trying to get his attention has paid off.

I knew if I kept trying and trying, this all will be worth it.

At times, I tried to give up and be friends...

But my Darling keeps finding new ways to keep me interested.

I'm grateful for the chance we have together.

Because I am never letting him go.

Stay calm me; this is going to be a quick meeting.

If we get this partnership, then our sales will go up massively.

But if we don't, then it's going to be tough trying to find another partner...

"Darling, stay calm." Sweetheart calmly stated. "Dad's good friends with the manager of this
company, so we shouldn't have to stress ourselves over this."

I looked over to her.

She was wearing a black business suit with a skirt and leggings, along with having her hair in a bun
to retain a professional look.

And here I am, wearing a matching black suit and slacks.

Without a doubt, I look like a dork somehow.

I frowned, unable to stop overthinking things.

"True, but what if we slip up somehow? And do I look like an idiot?"

She recoiled from my question.

"What? No! Darling, you don't look like an idiot! Instead, you look dashing in that suit. More eye-
candy than usual... As for slipping up, don't worry, I am here to help if you mess up in any way."

I smiled from her compliments and took a deep breath.
"Thanks, Sweetheart. I always can count on you to back me up."

She gave me one last kiss on the cheek before we entered the room.

"It's what wives are for, remember? Now let's get this over with."

*Right, we got married a couple of years ago.*

*It's still so hard to digest that.*

*We're married...*

The door opened to reveal a group of people wearing black suits sitting in a circle.

*Stay calm and don't anxious me.*

One of the guys stood up and walked over to us with his hand outstretched.

"Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, hello and thank you for coming to this meeting." He greeted with a smile.

*Don't say you too, don't tell you also.*

I took his hand and shook it back.

"It's a pleasure, Mr. Fujiwara." Sweetheart answered, to which I simply nodded.

We then took our seats around the circle.

"So." A lady stood up once we sat down. "We're here today because we wish to discuss a possible partnership with Fujiwara Novels and Team Salvato, as well discuss possible benefits of being in a said partnership."

*Wait; what?!*

*That guy I just shook hands with is the CEO of Fujiwara Novels?!*

*Oh shit...*

*Did I mess up with my handshake or something?*

"Mr. Jones, would you like to start meeting first or should we?" The lady asked.

I stood up and gave her a curt nod, not wanting to spill any beans by mistake.

With my folder in hand, I walked to the middle of the room and started setting up.

*Just say what I need to say, then answer questions, and sit down.*

I looked towards Sweetheart to which she gave me a flirtatious wink, to which I smiled back.

"Okay! I want to start this meeting with the projected sales and profits if we do agree to a partnership." I started.

*So far, so good.*

I made sure my voice was audible for all to hear.
The people in the circle each nodded to the crucial points I made.

*It looks like they're interested since they are turning their bodies towards me...*

*Just need to keep this up.*

Once I was done with my presentation, I received small applause.

*Hmm, I think I did pretty good.*

I returned to my seat and let out a quick sigh.

My gaze returned to Sweetheart, to which she responded with a bright smile.

*Yeah, I think I did great.*

Next up was one of the representatives from Fujiwara Novels.

*This shouldn't take long, I hope.*

*And this meeting seems to be going well.*

*Maybe we won't lose out on that contract.*

I paid attention to the representative before she sat down once more.

*That's Sweetheart's cue to get on the stage!*

She stood up from her seat and let out a quick breath before walking up to the middle of the room.

"Hello, everyone. I want to continue the presentation."

And so she went on.

*Sweetheart's got this without a doubt.*

Everything she said or motioned was professionally done, and it made me feel a bit jealous.

*Her dad said she has innate talent on this sort of thing and along with a lot of lessons.*

*Me, on the other hand, I just to wing it and make sure I don't turn my back against them.*

Once Sweetheart was done with the presentation, the CEO then stood up and motioned me to stand up.

We did, and he each other another handshake.

"It's clear that this is going to be a mutually beneficial partnership. And so, we would like to agree on your terms."

Both of our faces lit up, but we kept it in.

"Thank you, Mr. Fujiwara." We both thanked while bowing.

Everyone started to pack up and leave the room.

"I'll need someone to sign the contract and finalize some of the details, however." He stated.
Sweetheart and I looked at each other.

I gave her a look that said "I can handle it" to which she nodded.

She moved up to my ear.

"Once you are done here, come home immediately. I got something to show you." Sweetheart whispered.

_Huh_?

_What is there left to show?_

But before I could even ask, Monika walked over to the exit and gave the CEO one more bow before leaving.

Mr. Fujiwara put his hand on my shoulder and started to walk me to his seat.

"You two are married, aren't you? Mr. Salvato has told me a lot about you two."

I took a seat right next to him, and meekly nodded.

"Yes, sir. I am married to his daughter." I courteously answered.

He bellowed, amused with the situation.

"Ah, I am glad that his daughter married such a refined man. Anyway, let's get started, shall we?"

The CEO pulled out the contracts, and I signed them while making sure to read the fine print.

Once I was done signing them, we discussed the finer points that the meeting didn't touch on and agreed on them.

We shook hands one last time before we went our separate ways.

I looked at my phone and saw the time.

_Hmm, that only took around about an hour or so._

_I wonder what Sweetheart is going to show me._

_There are no secrets between us, so what is there left to reveal?_

I walked, albeit a little confused and worried as to what would happen once I went home.

A lot has changed in the years following our graduation.

My friends, along with Sweetheart's friends, went their separate ways, but we still kept in contact.

Both of our parents agreed that we live alone in a one-bedroom apartment since they trust enough to make the right decisions.

_Yeah, I am starting to understand somewhat those memes about not being afford anything._

_We don't really have an allowance, but we are balancing between going to work and having some time for our personal lives._
So far, it's been steady, and with the deal going sweet, I think we can get a better profit.

*BRR BRR*

My phone vibrated, so I picked it up.

"Hello?"

"Darling? How did the signing go?" I heard Sweetheart ask.

I smiled, knowing that thing are looking up for us.

"Well, it's going to be great. The partnership is official."

I heard her squeal in the background.

"YES! That's great news! And you deserve a reward! Come on home, quick Darling!"

*There it is again, that surprise she is going to show me.*

*Ooh, I hope it's that new Fate annual pass. I always wanted that!*

*But wait, I don't she knows about it since I saw last night.*

"I will. I will. Don't worry, Sweetheart. I'll be there. I'll see you then."

"Bye!"

I hung up and started to quicken my pace back to our apartment.

*Jeez, I am so glad that the meeting was nearby and not in someplace deep inside the city.*

It didn't take long for me to find Home and go up the stairs.

*Okay, whatever behind this door is the surprise.*

*Here goes!*

I pushed the door open and was greeted with a fresh, rich aroma.

*Whoa...*

*That smells nice.*

My eyes widened once I saw Monika.

She wasn't wearing her pajamas, no, instead she was simply wearing an apron and cooking something on the stove.

*Just an apron?!!*

*Nothing else?!*

*And wait a minute, that was the beef I was going to save for later...*

*No wonder it smelled so good.*
I was going to use that to make some stew for us.

Her hair was down, instead of that tight bun I disliked and it swayed every time she moved about.

I smiled and leaned against the doorframe as I saw her work.

She hummed the lyric of her song as she multi-tasked.

Even if I never say it, I am so glad that I have a beautiful woman like Monika as my wife.

Hmm, that sounds a bit traditional.

Speaking of tradition...

I cleared my throat, and she finally noticed I was here.

In an instant, she brightened up once she saw me and blushed.

Her legs shuffled slightly as if she was keeping it in.

"Sweetheart?"

My wife took a deep breath and walked up to me.

"Ah! Welcome home, Darling! How was your day at work?"

...

...

...

Ooooooh.

So that's what she wanted to do.

This is the surprise she has been waiting for, huh?

But I am a bit exhausted.

And wait, now that I think about it, what's with the roleplay?

"Monika, I don't understand the point of this roleplay. What are you getting at?"

She sighed heavily.

"For the love of... can you just follow along and sit down?" Sweetheart exhaustively asked.

I couldn't help but smirk at her and sat down.

"Alright, alright, if you say so. Now, at work, I sighed the contracts and talked about some parts that weren't brought up in the meeting. Fortunately for us, Mr. Fujiwara didn't hide anything in the fine text." I explained.

She smiled once I finally followed along.

"Good, good. Now, that's out of the way what would you like? Would like me, a piece of me, or all
of me?"
...

_Uh..._

_She didn't give a choice._

"I'll like to eat whatever you're making on the stove," I answered directly. "Especially since you used the beef I was saving up."

_Yeah, I am feeling a bit hungry actually._

Sweetheart puffed out her cheeks.

"Are you trying to be a turn-off?! Come on! Can't food wait for a bit?"

I shook my head and leaned against my seat.

"Nah... for the time being I would like to eat."

Monika gave a last-resort puppy-eyed look, something which I was immune to.

_She did put a lot of effort into this, so I guess I could compensate her._

"Fine, once we are done eating, then I'll have you."

Sweetheart jumped up with excitement.

"Oooh! Really?! Do you want all of me?!" She asked, coming close to my face.

I looked away and directed my attention someplace else.

"Um, all of you, I guess."

She squeaked in happiness and skipped over to the stove, where she started to put her cooking onto a plate.

"Mon, make sure to get some for yourself, okay?" I requested.

She waved her hand, dismissively.

"Don't worry. I am going to eat a bit later. Trust me, for now, enjoy your meal." She enigmatically said.

_Eat later?_

_But by the time I am done eating, we'll have whatever happens next..._

I mentally shrugged and waited for dinner.

Once she gave me steaming plate of roast beef, mashed potatoes, peas, and carrots.

_Huh, a western-styled dinner?_

_I take it back. This is way better than what I planned for!_
"Looks very well-done, Sweetheart." I complimented while reaching up to her.
I then gave her a tender kiss on the cheek.
"Thanks for making this." I thanked before digging in.
When I started to dig in, Monika was nowhere to be seen.
I looked around to see if she went anywhere.

No, she's not even in this room.
Where did she go?
Strange...

I took a bite out of the roast beef and chewed on it.
The soft texture and juicy meat combined perfectly, just as expected with Sweetheart's cooking.
"Mmm... This is the meat I was looking to enjoy."

"Likewise, Darling."

Huh?
When I came to, I realized I felt a lot free.

Oh no.
I looked under the table to see Sweetheart kneeling.

So that's why I felt freer...
She smirked devilishly once I saw her.

"Just focus on your dinner. Mine is right here..."

OH!
That's what she meant.

Of course, she would pull something perverted like this.
"I don't think I- Argh!"
She gripped my member and stroked it.

Argh, fuck it. Just fuck it.
As always, her emerald eyes turned sinful and lusty, nothing like how they usually are.
No matter how much I refused, I always gave in to her needs or rather our needs.
She pumped me slowly, gleefully smiling in anticipation on how it will ramp up.
As usual, a handjob was pretty dull so she decided to spice things up.
"Darling, I always wanted to try this out."

She took off the apron she was wearing and revealed her beautiful, lusty body.

As usual, nothing's too extreme for my liking, which kept me in the mood.

Sweetheart tossed the apron to some corner and massaged her chest.

"I know you love my tits the way they are, so let's do something new."

Usually, I would comment on her word choice, but at this point, I simply didn't care.

She pressed herself together and slid me right in the middle of an opening.

I groaned once I felt her soft, warm pillows suffocate me.

Monika then moved her body up and down while keeping her grip on my chest.

The sensation was different and much more tender than our usual.

We kept eye contact as she kept sliding me in her pillows.

Once I was somewhat accustomed to the feeling, she winked and moved her head lower.

Her saliva tickled my head before she gave it her usual experimental lick.

I felt her tongue swivel on the sensitive part until she deemed it worthy.

Without skipping a beat, Sweetheart opened a bit of her mouth to allow a small portion me into her.

I grit my teeth at how pleasurable the sensation was.

My shaft was surrounded by pillows, while her warm tongue was licking my head.

The contrasting textures of both almost made me lose my mind.

She stopped moving her chest upwards and instead started using her chest to massage my rod.

"Mmm..."

Sweetheart started to bob her head and actively lapped me.

My breathing was already hitched as I let her do her experimentation.

Within seconds, however, I was breathing stabilized, and I wanted more.

To do this, I put my hand on the back of her head and forced her to take more of me.

She welcomed the aggressive play with an arousing moan.

"Mmm!"

As a result, she upped the tempo of her massage and bobbing.

I kept doing my part and gave her the occasional push to take in more.

However, my limit was approaching, and I couldn't keep this up for much longer.
I gently pushed her head away and released myself over her face.

She was breathing heavily at the end of it and was struggling to regain her composure.

"That turned me on, so much Darling," She said in a sultry voice.

Once she did, the aroused girl stood up and took a tissue to wipe herself clean.

We both knew we weren't done, as I was still hard.

"Now that foreplay's out of the way, take me." She demanded.

I smirked devilishly and stood up.

Once I was up, I took off any garments that would impede me.

She then leaned against the table, expecting what would happen next.

I walked over to her and lunged at her neck, biting down.

"Ah!" Sweetheart let out in surprise.

In the surprise, I slid myself into her.

Her walls clamped, acknowledging the usual invader with joy.

"As always, you never cease to disappoint me, Darling~!"

With a low primal growl, I thrust into her again, causing her to whip her head back.

"Aaah!"

To start, I kept my thrusts after that a little more gentle.

She let out hitched breathes as I moved in and out.

"Harder!"

I didn't want any of that.

"Beg for it."

As soon as I said that, I drastically slowed my tempo.

She whined as I did.

"No! Please, Darling, pound me. This is too boring!"

The desperation in her voice wasn't enough for me.

"It doesn't sound like you want me." I teased.

She gritted her teeth and closed her eyes.

"This isn't enough..."

I smirked at the incoming change of mood.
Sweetheart opened her eyes and looked crazed.

"Do it. I don't want to walk tomorrow!"

That was enough to give her one high impact thrust, to which she gripped my shoulders in surprise.

"AAH!"

I leaned into her ear.

"That's more like it."

Once I said those words, I upped my tempo steadily to which her hitched breathes turned into melodic moans.

"Yeah... yeah... Ah! Yes! This is what I want! Aah!"

I gripped onto her hips to help me get a better position on knocking her up.

My rod started hitting places that usually didn't get at first, causing her to dig her nails into my shoulders.

"Aaah! Yes! Keep going, Darling!"

She started to move her hips in tandem with my thrusts, causing her to widen her eyes in delight.

At this point, lust would have consumed her mind, turning into a hungry beast.

I leaned forward to the point of hugging her so that I can lessen my effort as well consistently hitting her walls in the right spots.

Her relatively rational expression melted into mind-break, as her eyes rolled back from the adjustment.

"That's the girl I was looking for."

As I kept attacking her with my pounds, her breathing quickly becoming more and more unsteady.

I moved my hands upwards to her back, to which she returned the same favor to support herself.

Her legs curled onto my back, lessening the distance between my thrusts and herself.

"AAAH! THERE! AAH! KEEP HITTING THERE!"

There was a spot that I kept grazing, so I focused on that one spot.

Each time I hit that exact spot, her body would shake entirely.

Her entire body heaved upwards when I shifted focus, eye-rolling once again.

I decided to switch positions by pulling out abruptly.

Her tight walls made it hard to leave her in the first place.

Once I did, she looked at me with a pleading look.

Without giving much of a warning, I grabbed her arm, pulled her off the table, and spun her around.
Right after that, I placed my hands under her knees and lifted her.

"W-We never did this position before..." She whispered.

I then prodded her a little before putting myself in.

She let out a shaky sigh as I entered her walls.

Immediately soon, after I went right to work.

Using my hips to drive the motion up, I started to hit her out of reach spots, such as her womb.

This, of course, elected a response from her.

"EYAAAH! THERE! THERE! DON'T- PLEASE, AHH!"

Sweetheart's tongue was freely flying with each thrust I placed into her.

And so, I took her tongue into mine, and we kissed.

Our tongues continued to dance around each other as we made love.

The grip around my member tightened, giving more incentive to hit more brutally.

She screamed into my mouth as I pounded everything into her g-spot.

"MMMMPH! MMAHHH!"

Her body was starting to spasm out of control, so I held her shoulders in, making sure she wouldn't move too abruptly while I did my work.

I felt her walls clamp on me much more frequently, which meant one thing.

She pulled away from the kiss and looked at me.

"I-I'm gonna come! I-I-I don't- UGH!"

Sweetheart gritted her teeth and rolled her eyes once more, her body now spazzing upwards.

I held her in place, somehow pleasuring her even further.

Her walls finally squeezed me, as they let out a rushing wave, coating me in her sheen.

"That's round one... I need more, Sweetheart."

She took the chance to regain her composure, breathing heavily from how rough I was.

"Hold on, Darling... Give me a minute, I think I am gonna faint."

I respected her wishes and slowly pulled out, despite my hazy mind.

Despite my dizzy state of mind, I had the sense of mind to put on a condom, since I was going to go raw, something I forgot to do in our first time.

She recovered in a few minutes and landed her feet on the floor.

Monika had some difficulty walking, but once she got to her spot, she put her hands on her ass and
outstretched her butthole for me.

"Here's round two, give me hell!"

I stroked myself and walked over to her.

Knowing that it might be painful at first, I slowly inserted myself into her.

She gritted her teeth as I entered her ass, but screamed once she hit a particular spot.

"AAAH! Shit! I'm still sensitive after coming, alright? Be a little gentle."

Instead of cordial like I was a few minutes ago, I didn't oblige.

So I began my thrusts to which she needed support herself with her hands.

The feeling was different as usual, but the spots to pleasure her was still a little different.

To compensate, I started swirling along with my thrusts so I could cover all of her areas.

She stopped holding her butt open for me and let me take full rein.

There was a specific spot that made her squeal.

"YAAAH! THERE! KEEP AT IT THERE! AAAH!"

So I did, causing a similar to a reaction like before.

It didn't take long for her legs to start wobbling out of mercy, but I granted none.

Her moans were fuel to keep me going in and out with speed and precision.

I gripped onto her butt and further augmented my thrusts into her.

"EEYAAAH! I'm-I'm gonna, I'm gonna-NO! ARRGH! AAAH!"

The wobbling on her legs intensified as I continued to pound her.

And so, I hugged her body close and grabbed chest to pleasure her further.

I bit into her ear to which I saw her roll her eyes back once more.

Sweetheart's breathing became ragged once more, to the point where she had to stick her tongue to regulate herself.

I kept hitting her g-spot in her ass each time I drilled into her.

"Darling... Darling... I don't think I can... GRKK! AAAAAAH!"

Her legs stopped wobbling completely, and they gave out.

As usual, she spazzed upwards, and I hugged her to make her stay in place.

Fortunately, I caught her before she could fall.

Her fluids squirted out onto my legs and scrotum, meaning she came again.
And so, I pulled out gently and peeled off the condom.

In my arms, she rested on the tabletop, motionless.

"Third time a charm? I haven't shot my second out yet." I asked, a little surprised that I was able to be cordial.

She didn't say anything, however.

Instead, she turned around and pounced onto me, pushing me down to the floor.

Without saying a word, she stroked me and inserted me into her.

She went all the way down and growled.

This is new...

Before I could say anything; however, she pushed me down and started riding me.

Sweetheart used me to support herself as she kept forcing herself down onto me.

"You're mine," Monika whispered. "You're mine. You're mine. You're mine!"

For some reason, her yandere self turned me on.

And so, I started to move my hips along with hers.

"I am never letting a girl touch you the same way I touch you. They will get their filthy hands off you! YOU'RE MINE!"

With a primitive growl, she rammed her lips against mine and gyrated her hips while I pushed in.

Thanks to this gyrating motion, I was able to cover the same spots as last time.

Her walls clamped onto me and made sure not to let go of me.

I felt her tongue hungrily go after mine, so I opened myself to her.

Once she did that, I grabbed onto her and pushed her down while she did her end of the work.

Sweetheart abruptly pulled away and moaned.

"Aaah! Yes! Ah! Ah!"

She then leaned in and played with my tongue.

I pulled her in and decided to take over completely.

Once she rested on top of me, I grabbed her and used them in tandem with my thrusts.

The least she could do was only lazily roll herself around to create some friction, but this was quickly shut down.

I grew more confident and upped my tempo considerably, causing her squeak.

"YAAH! AAAH! RIGHT THERE! KEEP FUCKING ME RIGHT THERE!"
She was talking about her g-spot, so I continued to focus my efforts there.

Her walls created much more friction than before, making it a little difficult to push in.

As she lazily rested on top of me, I looked at her mind-broken expression.

It gave me the boost to squeeze everything I got into ramming her sensitive spot.

Her body started violently shaking once I maxed out my rhythm, convulsing in pleasure each time I rocked her center.

With my added force, came at the cost of my endurance.

I felt a massive buildup of the pressure of my loins, so I grit my teeth.

"I'M GONNA COME AGAIN! AHHH! AHHH! DARLING! DARLING! DARLING!"

With a low growl, I released myself into her, causing her to orgasm as well.

She was breathlessly convulsing, and not being able to process how much pleasure she was in right now.

I pulled out and continued to release myself at her face, chest, stomach, and her vaginal area.

Her eyes were looking upwards with her tongue sticking out messily.

She spasmed every moment or so before she started heaving.

"D-Darling... there's so much everywhere. I feel so hot..."

I sat down alongside her and let out a sigh of relief, happy with the outcome.

_I might have overdone it a little._

And so, I decided to clean her up.

It took a while since I literally exploded everywhere, but I managed to get it down.

She still was dizzily looking about with a broken smile.

"That was amazing, Darling... Right?" She drunkenly asked.

I picked her up bridal style and carried her to our bedroom.

"Yeah, I feel a lot less tense now. My body feels very relaxed, thanks to you."

Sweetheart cutely yawned and closed her eyes.

"You're welcome... If you don't mind, I want to sleep."

I laid her on our bed and kissed her forehead.

"That's fine. You already had a long day, haven't you? I'll make breakfast when we wake up, okay?"

She yawned again and rested her head on the pillow.

"Okay... goodnight, Darling."
I gave her a head pat and walked out of the room.

"Goodnight, I'll be there once I am done eating."

_Speaking of eating..._

I sat down in the slightly pungent area and noticed the food was cold.

_Damn it!_

It was a starry night, and Darling has planned for something special tonight.

He insisted that I wear something nice, like a dress, so I assumed that we were going to those flashy, high-end restaurants that I was always rolled my eyes on.

_I would rather eat at some sleazy burger joint than eat at this uptight places._

_Still, if I was with Darling, then I don't mind any other places._

_Besides strip clubs._

_If that were the case, I would probably lose my temper._

_Hah, if that will ever happen, I know he's more than satisfied with my body, even if he doesn't like to say anything about._

_It's all in the way he makes love, hehe!_

We pulled up to a reserved parking space.

Darling got out and ran around to open the door for me.

"Thanks, Darling. I can tell you put a lot of effort into this. Reserved parking? Jeez, that's high class."

He sighed.

"I know, I know. You aren't one for all these dazzling things, but I wanted to spoil you before I give you a surprise."

A surprise?

_Oooh!_

_I wonder what it is!_

"Oh, this got a lot more interesting. So you're planning on distracting with all of this so you can catch me by surprise, huh?"

He laughed sheepishly.

"That's that plan, heh. But I promise that you'll like the surprise. I think you always wanted it ever since we fell in love."

_Huh?_
I thought a good idea of what the surprise might be, but dropping a bomb like that actually does the job!

"What?" I asked, now confused.

He smirked and brought me in for a kiss.

We exchanged a short kiss before walking in.

"Ah, don't worry. The more confused you are, the better." He snarkily replied.

I puffed out my cheeks from how enigmatic he was being.

We walked into the restaurant, and we stopped at the reservationist.

Darling cleared his throat and showed the man his reservation.

"Hey there, we have a reservation at table 14." Darling greeted.

The reservationist nodded and wrote down something in the book and led the way.

He motioned us to the table, and we both sat down.

"How did you even get a reservation here...?" I asked while looking around.

Darling simply leaned back onto his seat.

"One of your friends has parents that are both government officials. You can connect the dots there." He snarkily replied.

Yuri.

Of course, she's the richest out of all of us.

"I do expect her to help us with something like this. But getting a reservation? Here? That must have been tricky."

He shook his head while smirking.

"Apparently not. They are both actually pretty influential in the city. So getting this reservation wasn't that hard." He stated.

So getting a good rep is needed here?

That's pretty interesting.

The waiters came around with the food, something that was strange.

Wait, when did we order food?

I shrugged and dug in a while, keeping my table manners.

This food... it's tasteless.

What even is this restaurant?

The spun around for a second, and I was now walking with Darling to a balcony that had the perfect
view of the city.

*Huh?!*

*How did I get here?*

"Jeez, Darling. You went all out for this date. What's so special?" I asked, looking around the fancy decor.

*Argh!*

*I am not even in control of what I am saying!*

*Is this a dream?!*

He looked nervous as if he was going to do something risky.

"Um... Well... I was thinking... that..."

I rolled my eyes and crossed my arms.

The restaurant's slow American jazz was starting to get on my nerves.

"What? What's wrong, Darling?"

He took a deep breath and knelt on one knee.

"Monika."

My eyes widened at what he was doing.

*Wait I take it back, this better not be a dream.*

*Because...*

My heart started thumping uncontrollably as he rummaged his pockets for something.

*OH MY GOSH, OH MY GOSH, OH MY GOSH!*

*IT'S FINALLY HAPPENING!*

He pulled out a small black box and opened it.

The ring was a simple gold ring with an emerald gem in the middle of it.

It looked similar to our commitment ring, but this was a little more decorative.

*That ring looks beautiful, and it's everything I can ever hope for!*

Darling looked up to me with a smile.

"Will you marry me?"

I squealed at the top of my lungs and crushed in a hug.

"YES! YES! I WILL! I WILL MARRY YOU!"
I pulled away and slammed my lips against him.

*He's mine!*

*Only mine!*

*And I proud of that!*

...

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...

The low hum of my fan woke me up.

My head pounded me as I tried to push myself up.

I was disorientated on what had happened.

*What happened?*

I quickly looked down to my ring finger and saw nothing.

*No, no, no!*

*This has to be a dream!*

*We were finally going to get married!*

*Argh, why do the best things have to be in dreams?!!*

I looked at my phone and unlocked it.

*August 4th.*

*It's a before our anniversary of meeting each other.*

As soon I stared at it a little, the phone came to life.

*It's Darling...*

My mind raced as to why I didn't sleep next to him.

*Right, I came home pretty late and didn't have the energy to call or go over to him.*

*Anyway, why did he call so late?*

*It's almost midnight.*

I picked up the phone.

"Darling?"

He sighed through the phone.

"Sweetheart, you awake? I need to meet you at the park. I have to show you something."
I raised an eyebrow and looked over the balcony to look for him.

Huh?

He's not home...

Is he in the park?

"It's pretty late at night, but sure. I'll meet you there."

He then hung up without saying goodbye.

Not going to lie, it's pretty weird for him to meet up there at this hour.

And he's behaving strangely.

With a shrug, I put on a hoodie and made my way to the park.

As I walked there, I couldn't help but sigh from my dream.

We were going to get married.

We were going to spend our lives together forever...

We were going to have children and raise them with our love.

But all of it was a dream.

Maybe it will happen someday.

"Sweetheart?" I heard a voice call.

I snapped my head to whoever called me.

Darling...

"Hey, Darling. What did you need to show me?"

Instead of answering me, he took my hand and led me to the swings.

"Do you remember the day we met, Monika?"

Strange question but okay...

"Of course, I do," I answered while sitting on the swings. "I was a lonely girl who had no friends because everyone thought I was far above it all. That wasn't true at all."

He sat on the other swing.

"Yeah... I was lonely too. Remember my friends back in the United States? They were my only friends at the time, and I never saw them again until... well, you know. I just want to let you know that... I am glad that we met."

I turned to him with a smile.

"Me too. I am glad we met on that fated day. We met became friends, played with each other, grew up together, and fell in love. Childhood sweethearts becoming star-struck lovers."
He chuckled from my innocent remark and got off his swing.

"It got me thinking... in a few minutes, it will be our anniversary meeting each other. So I had this brilliant idea."

Darling went up and started to pull the swing.

As if it was an instinct, I lifted my legs and let him push me.

"What's the idea, Darling?" I asked while swinging.

The swings brought an incredible bout of nostalgia.

I felt that we were children again, meeting for the first time and getting to know each other.

"That... you're very important to me. Everything we do, we do together. And there was nothing that got in our way."

Wait...

What is he planning?

I stopped the swing by dragging my feet along the ground.

Darling took a deep breath and motioned me to follow him.

I got off my swing and did, following him into the forest we played together.

This forest...

It's all coming together now.

This is where I first brought him when we were kids.

And this is where I brought when we were in high school.

So that means...

We came across a familiar rock formation and sticks, still in place and never aged at all.

The world around started to flicker to the old days and the new.

"And because of that... I wanted to do this." I heard him say.

I looked at him and noticed he was kneeling.

My heart raced once I realized what he was doing.

"Monika."

This is what he was planning.

"Will you always be by my side?"

All this time...

"Will you always find me even when we are miles away?"
When we first met...

"Will you always love me as much I will love you?"

To when we fell in love...

"Will you always do everything with me?"

He was there for me.

And I was there for him.

Darling pulled out a small black box and opened it.

"Monika... will you marry me?"

The ring was a simple gold ring with an emerald in the middle.

Just like my dream...!

"Yes," I replied. "Yes, yes... YES! YES! I will! I will marry you!"

We then kissed.

All of the years that we spent together led to this crucial moment.

I felt the years speed by as everything finally came to close.

"I love you."

"I love you, too."

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