







## **Monologue**

I love fun things.

I love everyone's smiling faces.

There is almost nothing more wonderful than—fulfilling dreams.

That's why I thought idols who offer fun times and smiles for all—were important people who became objects of worship like gods or angels.

However, I didn't know.

The idols I met at Yumenosaki Academy, by no means, had the beautifully decorated doll-like image I respected.....

They were life-sized crying, laughing, raging boys living out their youths.

How many tears did I have to make them shed in order for them to fulfill dreams—.

## **Introduction**

Built on a hill looking out over the ocean is Yumenosaki Academy.

It has a history of turning out numerous young boys, overflowing with talent like shining stars, to the world of show business, generation after generation.

You have just transferred to that Yumenosaki Academy as a female student in a special position.

You were invited into the school, where young male idols enjoy their youth, as a producer to guide them with care.

Everyone has an interest in you.

You're bursting with a revelry full of happiness unheard of in your everyday life.

Even while you're being manipulated by great idols.....

You're pursuing a sparkling dream with them.

You're forming irreplaceable bonds.

Enjoy the ensemble of youth the idols you meet at Yumenosaki Academy play to your heart's content.

## **Start**

Spring.

The cherry blossom trees were just beginning to flower, and the season was still unpleasantly chilly. Due to some minor family issues—I transferred to the private Yumenosaki Academy, a school where high school student idols enjoy their adolescence. Just making it to class on my first day of attendance was exhausting. Since their enrolled idols were like the golden eggs among the treasures of the world of show business, their security was extremely strict, even my hand bag was thoroughly searched. It was possible that if just the contents of my wallet or make-up bag had been rifled through, I would have brushed it off as “inevitable”, but to reach the point of thoroughly checking inside my mouth, past my molars, I understood—this was definitely a prison for beautifully ornate beings.

Either way, I wanted to be in an exciting environment, up until now, I spent my days drifting through an overwhelmingly ordinary atmosphere—ever since long ago, I didn’t have much confidence, my voice was quiet, and I lived my life alone without joining in with the crowds. Since I was transferring, I could cast off my plain boring self. I don’t need to be the main character, or the heroine. However, I wanted to dive into an interesting story where I could be something like the supporting role.

Once the steps of my transfer had been completed, that adolescent wish of mine was being concealed deeper and deeper within my heavy heart, like thick rain clouds, as I headed toward the second year classroom A I was to be a part of.....

At this point, I felt as though it had vanished.

Even at this school, all I could do was live out my gray colored youth as if I were being driven away toward the darkest—smallest, stagnate trash heap.

I gave up on it, and was no longer expecting anything—.

However, the moment I opened the door to the second year classroom A.....

“Yahoo☆ So you’re the transfer student everyone is talking about!”

The world was filled with light.

I was standing alone covered by heavy rain clouds in the pitch black darkness, but it was like my sorrows, my regrets, everything had all been blown away—by an extraordinarily cheerful and optimistic smile that was as bright as the sun. It was at that moment I understood—and experienced it first hand.

Aah, so *this* is an idol.









Stunned, I forgot to breathe.

I timidly looked ahead.

“I totally broke the door☆!”

The one who opened the door with all his strength, and jumped out like a puppy waiting for its beloved master—was a boy with cute looks and soft eyes, wearing the blue Yumenosaki Academy uniform blazer. He had unstyled hair that stuck out wildly. His blue tie indicated he was a second year student. His mouth opened wide was by no means unsightly, smiling ear to ear, his face was as bright as a miracle. His eyes sparkled as if they were full of stardust, like the *shoujo manga* heroines of old.

Feeling as though I would fall backwards from my bewilderment, this boy who seemed to be my classmate, caught me in his arms with ease—he was stronger than he looked. He brought his face closer and closer to mine as I admired him, then introduced himself as if he were proposing marriage.

“I’m Subaru Akehoshi! Akehoshi as in *Venus*, and Subaru is written in *katakana*! It’s easy to remember, isn’t it~♪”

“Are you all right?”

After introducing himself, he stood me up straight, and looked at me with his pure eyes.

Close, close, close, his face was so close.

Since I had attended an all girls school up until now, I wasn’t used to being touched by the opposite sex. The boy named Subaru Akehoshi, who couldn’t keep still for even a second, grasped both my hands, shaking them up and down, left and right.



“Since we’re classmates and all, we might as well get along! Let’s be friends! Nice to meet you~☆”

This Yumenosaki Academy that specialized in idols, only had boys enrolled at the moment, so even though I was nervous about being the only girl in this garden of men, everyone else here were idols. I felt as though I could never get used to it, but at the very least, it would take some time—I worried about that sort of thing. I may have been able to hold onto my hopes because of this warm and welcoming mood though. It would be nice if we could get along, we would be classmates from now on after all. Thinking that, I also smiled as amicably as I could. Once I did, Subaru-kun nodded happily.

“Good, good!”

For some reason he suddenly knelt to the ground, lifting both his hands up high.

“In that case! This may be sudden, but, please lend me some money.....!”

“That’s way too sudden.”

As if to cover Subaru-kun’s bright smiling face and his eyes full of hope, a boy with a cool demeanor made an entrance. He glared annoyed at Subaru-kun who was still on his knees, then greeted me apologetically.

“Don’t suddenly demand money when you first meet someone. Don’t you have any manners, the transfer student must be at a loss as well, right?”

His voice was calm, but his tone was harsh like a piercing knife. He was such a pretty boy. If Subaru-kun was a natural, brilliant beauty, playful and cheerful like a small animal, then this boy was a dark beauty, carefully handcrafted by a master artisan, like a painting or sculpture. He had glossy black

hair, and almond shaped eyes. His pale skin looked cold to the touch as if he were sculpted from ice.

“Sorry, transfer student. Ignore whatever he says, Akehoshi is an idiot.”

His stoic face that contrasted with Subaru-kun’s, seemed to be exhausted as he let out a sigh.

“But, well.....there are a lot of idiots at this school, so I would like you to understand it’s not like there are *nothing but idiots* here.”

“Don’t say such cruel things, Hokke~, you’ll make the transfer student’s first impression of me settle on me being an idiot~”

“Don’t call me Hokke~”

“Huh~? Your name is *Hokuto Hidaka*, so *Hokke~* should be okay☆”

Ignoring me, the two of them argued noisily for some reason. I couldn’t really tell if they got along poorly or well—but, it felt as though there were no reservations between them, so they must have been friends.

“By the way, let me introduce you, this is Hokuto Hidaka! You can call him Hokke~☆”

Subaru-kun recovered with ease, forcefully placing his arm around Hokuto-kun’s shoulder—the boy who gave off such a cold impression. Subaru-kun really did have an enchanting smile that made his face shine.

“He’s my friend! Sadly, he’s the type of friend that won’t lend you money.....!”

“Don’t add on unnecessary information.”

Hokuto-kun sighed as he used the palm of his hand to continuously try to push away Subaru-kun who was glued tightly to him.

“Sorry, transfer student. I would appreciate it if you didn’t misunderstand. On top of being an idiot, Akehoshi is unusually fixated on money, but he’s a good guy. Also, he can’t read the mood, and gives people weird nicknames.”

“Following up with stuff like that is just knocking me down completely, isn’t it, Hokke~!? Praise me more! Or lend me some money please.....!”

“I’m not lending you money.”

Hokuto-kun dealt with Subaru-kun as if he were used to it, then questioned him wearily.

“You’re not poor or anything, so why do you want money so badly?”

“I like money and jewels because they’re shiny~☆”

“What are you, a bird? Aah, maybe it’s because you’re *bird-brained*.....?”



“Ooo~kay, that’s enough of that~♪”

Suddenly, a clear, soft—comforting voice resounded. Feeling nothing but overwhelmed by their back and forth without interjecting, I looked toward the voice, feeling as though a savior had appeared.



One more boy made his entrance as he winked kindly at me in that state. While the first two to show up had quite the impact—or more like, they each had distinct personalities on opposite ends of the spectrum, the first impression I had of this boy was, *aah, finally someone who seems normal has arrived.*

At first glance, his plain looks gave me a much needed sense of security. He had stylish glasses, and a charming natural smile. Peeking out from his pocket was a rather old-fashioned smart phone. Hanging from it was a mascot strap from a certain amusement park I saw often and was well-acquainted with. He had the flaxen hair of a child from a well-to-do family, without a single split-end in sight. However, this boy was an idol—when I got a better look at him, he had an exceedingly handsome face. He actually seemed to be embarrassed by it though, and turned his face away as if to hide it. He came between Subaru-kun and Hokuto-kun nonchalantly.

“Don’t be afraid, okay~?”

He waved his hand at me, treating me like a small animal.

“You guys didn’t start talking to the transfer student to show her some weird act, right? Wasn’t there something you wanted to ask her~?”

His eyes sparkled like jewels behind his glasses for just a moment as he spoke about something unusual.

“Ooh, that’s right! You said something good, Ukki~! As expected from the *Master of Talk*, your brain runs at high speed!”

Subaru-kun nudged his elbow into the stomach of the boy with glasses.

“Is it your glasses? Does wearing glasses raise your *Talk Power +50*?”

“That’s right, that’s right. Once I take off my glasses, I don’t know a thing—huh? What was.....my name? Transfer student, do you know?”

“Of course the transfer student wouldn’t know, Ukki~! This is the first time you’ve met!”

“Since Akehoshi-kun set up the joke, I thought I had to play dumb♪”

“I like that about you, Ukki~☆”

“I love you too, Akehoshi-kun~♪”

“It’s creepy when you two get along so well.”

Perhaps losing his patience with Subaru-kun and Ukki~kun (another nickname, of course), Hokuto-kun pushed the two of them aside—and let out another sigh. Still unable to get a single word in since earlier, he turned back to me apologetically.

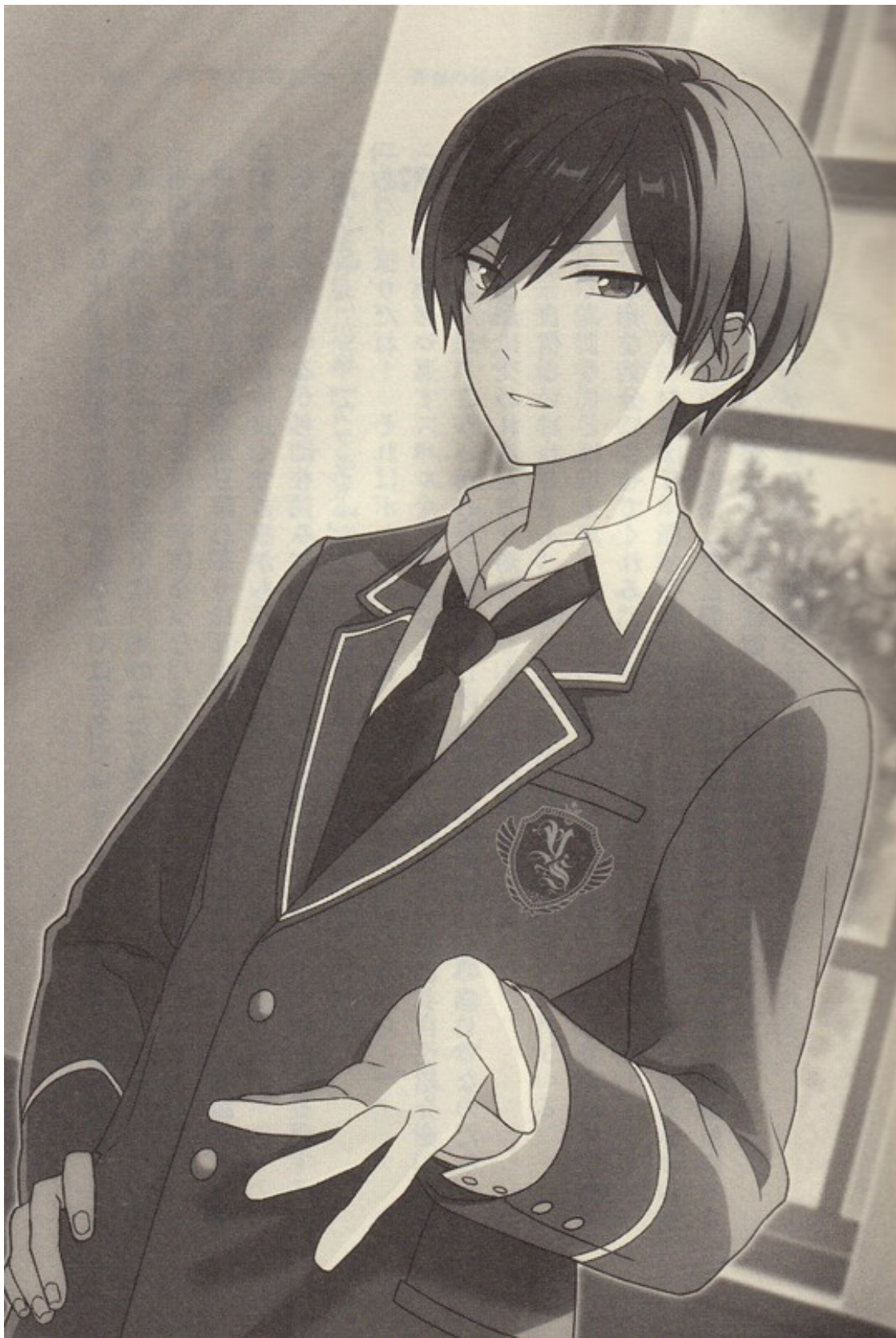
“Well, whatever. Since we’re not getting anywhere in the conversation, I’ll explain various things to you.”

“You’re so formal, Hokke~! Join us, on this giant wave of stupidity.....☆”

“That’s right, this is your only chance to join the big wave, Hidaka-kun!”

“Shut up, you pair of fools.

Hokuto-kun coolly cut them off without looking back at the two making a ruckus behind him.





“Hmph. First, let me introduce myself.”

Come to think of it, I still hadn’t been given any information aside from his name.

“I’m Hokuto Hidaka. I’m the class representative of this second year class A.”

He certainly did give off the impression of a class representative. When I nodded in affirmation, Hokuto-kun looked at me as if he were at a loss.

“The teacher asked me to look after you. That’s why if anything is troubling you, I would like you to consult me. I will do my best to make use of my position as class representative.”

I lowered my head slightly at his uniform tone, and matter-of-fact speech. Once I bowed in response—like a robotic child, the other two that Hokuto-kun was desperately trying to keep behind him, pushed their way back to the front.

“Let me join in, on this wave of self-introductions.....☆”

Paying no mind to the fact I almost fell over, more like, almost pushed over—I was pursued by sparkling eyes full of energy.

“I’m Makoto Yuuki, nice to meet you! You can call me Ukki~!”

Finally confirming his name, this boy in the glasses seemed to be called Makoto Yuuki-kun. Incidentally, the boys of Yumenosaki Academy seemed to go by their real names, and not by stage names, at least within the school.

They had normal names.

They were normal boys around my age.

When I unconsciously let out a smile, Makoto-kun also seemed happy. For some reason, it felt like a nice, harmonious atmosphere—maybe I *would* be able to get along with everyone in the second year class A. As I thought about that, they all spoke rapidly to say what they wanted to say first.

“Since his last name is *Yuuki*, he’s *Ukki*~, also, he’s kind of like a monkey!”

“Ah, that’s an act! That was my idiot act, wait a sec, I’ll show you!”

Once he had an opening, Hokuto-kun coldly butt into Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun’s banter.

“Introduce yourself properly, Yuuki.”

The excitement from this trio must have been an everyday thing for them. I wondered if I would be able to join in one day. I didn’t have much confidence in myself though—.

I figured I could do my best to try. Somehow, I felt as though I had come to like these guys. They were fun, and made me feel happy. Of course, they were idols after all. They were a positive driving force that brought people cheer.

“Right, right~. Let’s see, I’m a member of the *Broadcast Committee*. My position is to gather various information, so if there’s anything you want to know, ask me!”

Perhaps out of habit, Makoto-kun winked playfully at me. He beat his chest as he guaranteed to be a reliable source for whatever I didn’t understand.

“I can tell you anything, from about the numerous exams, to even who the teachers are sleeping around with♪”

Even though Yumenosaki Academy was a school for idols, it had clubs and committees like a normal school. Basically, idol life seemed to be first and foremost, then things that developed their artistic skills, and even things not particularly exciting—were discussed in the student handbook. It seemed as though club activities were compulsory, so I would have to pick one at some point too. Getting used to the school was my first priority, so there was no need to rush into it, our homeroom teacher, Sagami-sensei, told me.

“I’ll introduce myself too~☆ Even though I did it earlier, I’ll do it over and over again!”

I had started to let my thoughts wander, but suddenly Subaru-kun came close to me with a wide smile on his face.

“I’m Subaru Akehoshi! If Hokke~ is the *class representative*, and Ukki~ is a part of the *Broadcast Committee*, then I’m the *money hungr*—”

“Stop talking, Akehoshi. You’re making things complicated.”

He put his hand against Subaru-kun’s smiling face and pushed it away as I wrote down the information they gave me with my mechanical pencil into my memo book in order to sort it all out. Hokuto-kun looked at me as if I were some strange creature. It was a habit of mine to take notes. Since I’m bad at talking, the least I can do is try to properly grasp the words other people are saying. I make sure to listen and pay attention in order to make my assertions. I’ll grasp them precisely, take notes, and sort it all out in my head. Before I can make an informed remark though—the conversation will go on and on, and end without me saying anything at all. That’s why these guys I met first today talking so much actually helped me out. Even though I’m slow, and haven’t said a word, everyone is still speaking to me. Hokuto-kun smiled at me, tilting his head as I felt accomplished.

“Well, whatever. This is normal, us three hang out together often. It’s unfortunate I have to consider



these idiots my companions, but we have our reasons.”

Hokuto-kun probably didn’t hate this mood as much as he let on, his tone was gentle.

“To be precise, there’s one more of us—one more guy we hang out with. Well, we can introduce him to you later. He’s in a different class, another time should be fine.”

“Hey, hey, it’s sad to leave just Sari out~! Aren’t we all friends!? Wait here, I’ll go get him☆”

“Don’t get him. I’m begging you, stop making things more complicated.”

Instantly starting to run off somewhere, Hokuto-kun grabbed Subaru-kun by the collar of his shirt as if he were used to doing so, and stopped him. It was like an owner annoyed by their puppy trying to run off on its own during a walk.

Still, I wondered who *Sari*~ was.

Since Subaru-kun seemed to have a tendency to give people strange nicknames, *Sari*~ probably wasn’t his real name. Was there one more unique individual like these three—well, in a school like Yumenosaki Academy, that may have been obvious. There’s probably *no* normal boys here. They were idols after all.

“Well, whatever.”

Without noticing my inner distress, Hokuto-kun spoke to me in a uniform tone until the end.

“Homeroom time is soon. I would like to continue our conversation during lunch break. Please make yourself available, transfer student. Sorry for bossing you around on your first day of transferring.”

He stood directly in front of me.

He looked right at me—with a seriousness that almost made me flinch.

“We have a favor we would like to ask you. It’s something we can only ask of you. You probably have no obligation to do so, but we would like you to spare some time for us if you could.”

I realized it wasn’t just Hokuto-kun, both Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun were watching me closely. Considering how just a little while ago they were so noisy as they laughed wildly and talked foolishly, they were unusually serene at that moment—it was as if their lives were depending on me. Their desperate behavior left a strong impression on me.

“We leave it to you, transfer student.”

At the same time Hokuto-kun spoke, the morning bell rang.  
My life at Yumenosaki Academy had barely begun.



The sound of an unruly bell rang out from somewhere.

“Therefore, it is now lunch break, transfer student ☆”

“It’s a mystery what you mean by *therefore*, but just as Akehoshi-kun said, it’s lunch break, transfer-chan!”

Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun ran up to me while I was slumped over lifelessly. Getting a somewhat late start, Hokuto-kun let out a grand sigh from the seat next to me. I stopped putting away my textbooks, loose-leaf paper and pencil box, watching the two of them run around me for whatever reason, in a daze. I lifted my limp body as if my spine had been pulled out.

There had been no leniency or consideration for me at Yumenosaki Academy from my classes or the students around me just because *I'm transfer student~*, or *because I'm a girl~*.....I was caught in a whirlwind of classes someone like me, who attended a typical all girl's school up until now, wasn't used to like dance and singing, and even classes like the history of idols, and business management (we even had classes like that), and it exhausted me. On top of it taking me some time to figure out what sort of class it was (there were a lot of classes that had unknown significance to me), there was a parade of subjects I had never seen or heard before. Unable to follow any of it, all the topics the teacher spoke about felt like the words of another world. To make matters worse, since this place was a school for idols that applied themselves diligently for the fast paced world of show business—and wasn't a compulsory education, they could mercilessly eliminate the dunces who couldn't keep up. No one would be kind to me in that sort of environment. Everyone was doing their best to diligently pursue their dreams, which made me feel fired up again. Thinking about that, I stood up to head to the bathroom. I was going to wash my face—if I didn't adapt some way or another, I had a feeling I wouldn't be able to survive even my first day of transferring.

“Oop, we're not letting you go anywhere! Listen to what we have to say, transfer student!”

I was tottering toward the classroom exit when Subaru-kun stood in front of me. He blocked my way, smiling proudly.

“This is a required event! Fwahaha, are you annoyed? You must be annoyed!”

“I don't think she's all that annoyed, Akehoshi-kun!”

Makoto-kun, who was doing his best to keep up with Subaru-kun, made a sullen face.

“.....ah, this is an idiot act! Got it, Akehoshi-kun!”

“Kukuku! If you don’t want to listen to us no matter what, I’ll take off my glass—”

“Stop, you idiotic duo, you’re troubling the transfer student.”

Perhaps unable to keep quiet any longer, Hokuto-kun reprimanded them as he stood up after neatly putting away his textbooks and other belongings. He approached them with steps as unusually precise as a machine, and roughly pushed Makoto-kun and Subaru-kun aside.

“Aahn, that’s no good, Hidaka-kun! Join us, Hidaka-kun, this is a chance for the idiotic duo to be reborn as an idiotic trio……!”

“I don’t need a chance like that.”

Hokuto-kun skillfully pushed the struggling Makoto-kun to the side, then gave me an apologetic look as I stood still, unsure what to do.

“Enough, even if it’s just for thirty seconds, shut your mouths—I’m begging you. Hey, Akehoshi, I’ll give you ten yen.”

He then reached into his pocket as if this was a daily occurrence, pulled out a ten yen coin, and handed it to Subaru-kun. Immediately, Subaru-kun grasped the ten yen coin in both hands, jumping up and down before kneeling onto the ground.

“Hokke~……no, Hokuto-sama! I am your loyal dog, Hokuto-sama! I absolutely won’t talk unnecessarily for thirty seconds☆”

“You sold out for ten yen, you’re cheap, Akehoshi-kun! Akehoshi-kun not acting like an idiot is the

same as taking away my hands and feet.....!"

Makoto-kun looked at Subaru-kun pitifully. Instantly the two of them quieted down. Hokuto-kun smiled satisfied.

"Good, good. Stay quiet like that."

Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun did as they were told without a word.

" ....."

" ....."

For some reason, they even went so far as to put on straight faces. It was a huge difference from their boisterous emotions from earlier.

"It's actually pretty creepy when you guys don't talk."

Even Hokuto-kun's face tensed before turning back to me once again.

"Whatever. Sorry for all the commotion, transfer student."

Aah, Hokuto-kun still seems to want to continue the conversation.....I wanted to go to the bathroom, but since he was blocking the door, I couldn't get by, and was rather troubled.

"If you have other plans, I'd like you to give those priority. However, if you're free, I'd like you to spare some time for us during this lunch break. Please, we're counting on you."



“?”

Hokuto-kun tilted his head when he saw me glance toward the hall.

“Here, I’ll give you some *konpeito*.”

He pulled out the colorful sweets from somewhere, and handed it to me the same way he made Subaru-kun take the ten yen coin. Hokuto-kun’s finger tips were unnaturally cold. Being right next to someone like me, who wasn’t used to being touched by the opposite sex, made my heart race— For some reason, Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun were writhing, still silent.

(.....!? I want to butt in with a joke! Or actually, I want to explain to the transfer student the set up behind Hidaka-kun’s *konpeito* joke~!)

(Stop, Ukki~! If we talk now, he won’t give us the ten yen, right!?)

(But, Akehoshi-kun! This is a precious standard joke coming from Hidaka-kun, we can’t miss a chance like this~!)

(I understand how you feel, Ukki~! But I’m going to resist, for the sake of my ten yen! In other words, for the sake of my soul.....!)

The two of them watched me confused as I wondered what sort of conclusion Hokuto-kun was coming to in his mind. He mumbled in his ever unchanging monotonous voice.

“Why are you guys squirming? Do you have to pee? You shouldn’t hold your pee, it’s not good for your health. That’s what my grandma tells me.”

(Grandma!? Damn it, we even know the connection between Hidaka-kun's *konpeito* and his grandma! It's our chance to complete at least one joke~!)

(Calm down, Ukki~! You just have to resist for thirty seconds, hang in there!)

"What's with you guys, seriously.....?"

Hokuto-kun tilted his head at the two of them whispering to each other, as I wondered if holding in your pee was bad = I could go to the bathroom—but when I tried to go out into the hall, my arm was suddenly grabbed.

"Well, whatever. Anyway, lunch break isn't very long. Honestly, I'd like to take up much of your time showing you around the school after classes."

Hokuto-kun continued the one-sided conversation while still grasping my arm.

"You have plans too, right? It pains me to restrict our time until after class. Time is money, is also what my grandma tells me."

"Money!? We're talking about money!?"

"Don't talk, Akehoshi. I won't give you the ten yen."

"Ah, wait! That didn't count just now! It didn't count, it didn't count!"

Hokuto-kun warned Subaru-kun, who lifted his face with sparkling eyes, then drew closer to me.

"Well, whatever. If you have the time, I'd like you to join us after classes, but.....first, why don't we

show you to the cafeteria during lunch break. My grandma always says, you can't fight on an empty stomach."

He seemed to somewhat realize how I felt, but with the way he was just pushing me to listen to what they had to say, he didn't really seem to have any intention of listening to *me*.

"Or, did you bring a bento? Well, you're free to bring it to the cafeteria, so you should eat with us there."

Hokuto-kun nodded to himself, then finally asked for my input.

"So, let's head to the cafeteria. Do you have any objections?"

I wasn't sure how I felt about his way of asking, but—my only input of: *I'd like it if you didn't pressure me*, was difficult for me to say. As I opened and closed my mouth hesitantly, the amount of time Hokuto-kun had set aside to listen to my input seemed to have ended. He readily made a face that seemed to think I had no objections, and continued to drag me out to the hall.

"The cafeteria is this way, I'll show you.....you guys can talk now. By the way, make sure to breath."

Hokuto-kun, who seemed to remember something, called out rudely to the other two.

"Pwah!? We could have breathed, you should have told us that sooner! We could have suffocated, you murderer! You're cold-blooded, Hokke~! *Cold.Blooded!*"

"Why did you repeat yourself like a Mongolian king? You sure have a free-spirited way of thinking, you're as sharp as ever today, Akehoshi-kun! I totally respect you.....☆"

“Give me money instead of respect.....!”

“I’m going to leave you two behind, okay~?”

Hokuto-kun said nonchalantly to Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun’s rather noisy and frivolous exchange.



“Now then.”

Hokuto-kun spoke as he walked with the uniform precision of a machine.

“Sorry for walking and talking. But, let me explain in summary about Yumenosaki Academy.”

Perhaps thinking I would run away if he let go, Hokuto-kun had been grasping my arm the whole time since we left the classroom. I looked around in wonder as I desperately tried to keep up with Hokuto-kun’s long strides. It was my first day of transferring, so everything was shiny and new. The interior of Yumenosaki Academy was so spacious it was like the residence of some royal family with its splendor and abundance of ornamentation, and was so clean there wasn’t a single speck of dust. Everything was sparkling—as expected from a school for idols. The grounds of the all girls school I had been attending was around the same size, but it wasn’t this gorgeous.....It kind of made me feel like a commoner who had wandered into a grand ball. I was extremely terrified of leaving footprints, or breaking something. Even the students we passed in the hall must have all been idols—they were all handsome, and seemed to be sparkling. It was seriously blinding, and made me dizzy. Then there was me, a roadside pebble thrown into a box of jewels. Thinking I shouldn’t look around so much, I kept my eyes on Hokuto-kun’s back. Perhaps sensing my gaze, Hokuto-kun looked over his shoulder at me, and slowed his pace.

“Feel free to ask me anything, you don’t seem to know much about our school, transfer student.”

Hokuto-kun spoke in his flat tone, not the least bit annoyed by my dawdling.

“Really~?”

The one who interrupted was Subaru-kun, taking the lead for some reason, like a dog in the middle of a walk. He skipped as he walked, every once in a while turning around exaggeratedly. Subaru-kun’s exuberant movements one after the other made Hokuto-kun wearily knit his brows.

“Yes. She seems to have transferred here due to some circumstance or another. She’s probably in a situation she was just dropped right into without an adequate explanation.”

I agreed internally with those words.

Yes, yes, that’s right.....I don’t know a thing.

I was anxious because of this feeling of being thrown into another world. I gave a forced smile to Hokuto-kun who was looking at me with worry. I was all right. I’ll get used to it quick, so I won’t become a burden to everyone. I won’t get in the way.

“I can sympathize with your current standing, and it’s my duty as class representative to look after transfer students. So if there’s anything you don’t understand, I’d like you to rely on me at anytime.”

“Me too, rely on me, rely on me☆”

“Me too! Information gathering is my specialty, I’ll tell you lots of things, like stuff you’re *better off not knowing*, and will end up regretting~♪”

The three of them said something to cheer me up in their own way. Feeling somewhat thankful, I



smiled and lifted my face. Even Hokuto-kun must have been impressed, but then spoke as if to tease them.

“I’ll tell you this first. These two are idiots, so I wouldn’t get close to them any more than you have to.”

“Hey, hey! What are you saying all of a sudden, Hokke~, don’t keep the transfer student all to yourself! So mean, I want to play with the transfer student too.”

“I’m concerned by what you mean by that. But, the transfer student really doesn’t know her left from right here, so don’t talk and confuse her needlessly.”



Irritated by Subaru-kun’s excessive clinging, Hokuto-kun switched moods—and returned to his stoic expression again.

“Well, whatever. Let’s change the subject, and resume explanations.”

I had the general gist of things, but I politely let him review from the beginning.

“Yumenosaki Academy is a school to train so-called *idols*.”

He was going into detail, starting from the major premise.

“Actually, performers that are pros making their debuts, and idols in the making aiming for their debut are enrolled here.”

Subaru-kun and Makoto-kun, who had been quiet, probably out of boredom, chimed in.

“It’s like a vocational school. In other words, I guess it’s kind of like there’s no one here who doesn’t have plans to become idols completely~?”

“In the idol department anyway. There are of course ordinary people in normal departments, and other majors too.”

Coincidentally, the normal departments and what not were strictly separated from these grounds. Moving between the school buildings was restricted, so it really was like a prison. The idol department could almost stand on its own. I wasn’t sure how much the other departments interacted, but—with the way things were, mutual isolation was most likely.

“There’s also those who are *inactive* here.”

As Hokuto-kun checked on me putting together the facts of my homework and the knowledge he provided me like I would in class, he gave me a detailed explanation.

“There are also those who have made their debut, but haven’t continued to work as idols presently. Isn’t that right, Yuuki?”

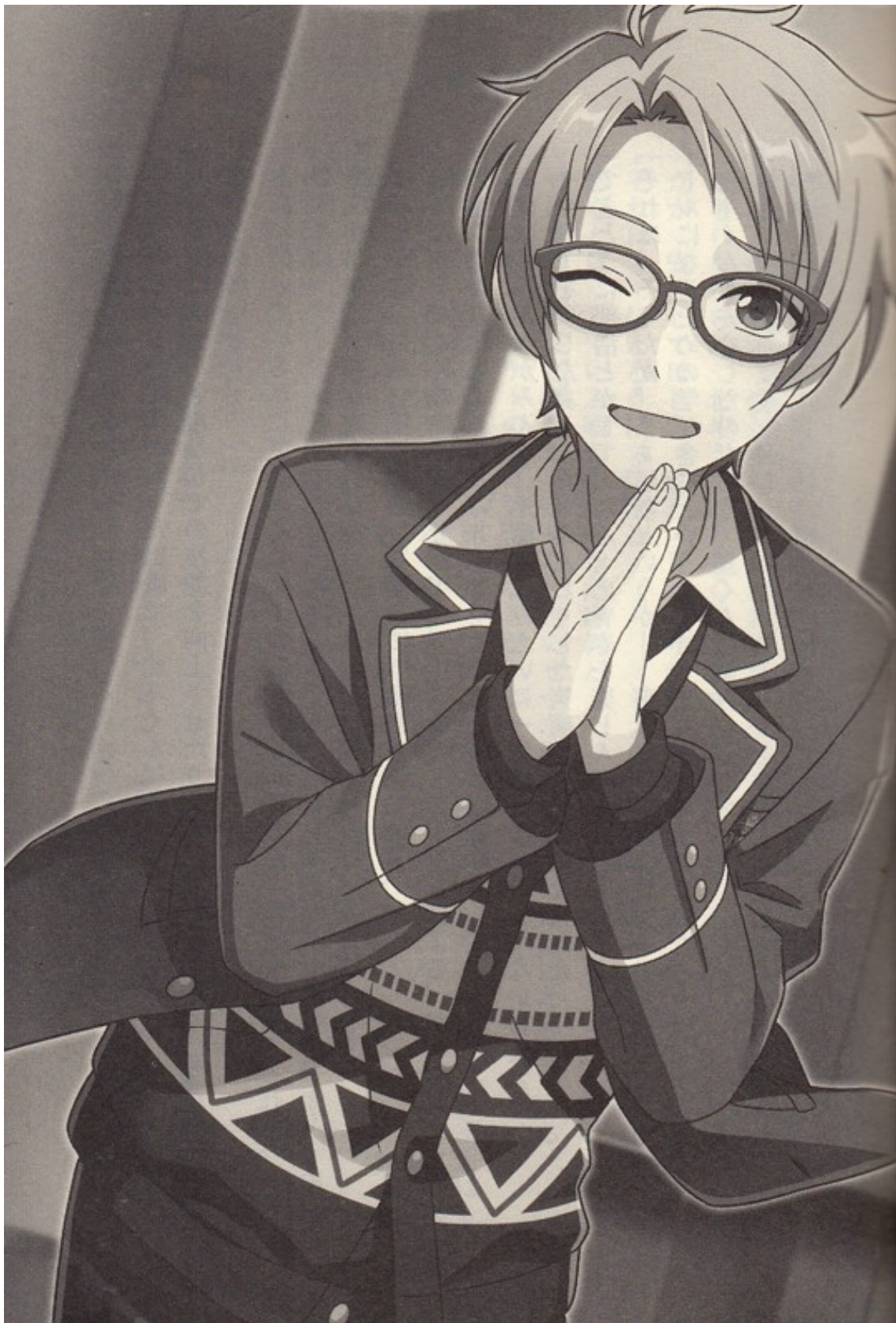
“Ah~, sorry. That’s a sensitive subject for me, so I’d really appreciate it if you didn’t go into it, okay~?”

Makoto-kun, who was always smiling calmly, for just a moment, went completely blank.

He was like a doll. With glass eyes that saw nothing—

I felt a chill as I shrank back. Leaving only unusually strong feelings, Makoto went back to his carefree smiling face.

*Just what was that about*—I stared at Makoto-kun closely. He was cheerful on the surface, but I suppose everyone has something they’re holding on to.



Hokuto-kun made a slightly embarrassed face, then returned to their conversation somewhat forcefully.

“Yeah, sorry. Anyway.....”

“There are pro idols, retired ones, or ones currently on hiatus while continuing to be a fixture in the world of show business—there are also students registered in the idol department who hope to become idols one day.”

Come to think of it, our homeroom teacher, Sagami-sensei, seemed to have graduated from Yumenosaki Academy as well. Since I wasn’t that knowledgeable in that area, I didn’t really understand, but I remembered once my mom knew the name of my homeroom teacher, she got really excited—so he seemed to be a legendary idol that swept the nation during her generation.

“If you were to consider Yumenosaki Academy’s idol department something like a business office—it won’t seem so detached from reality.”

Hokuto-kun continued to speak in his formal, old-fashioned manner.

“This school advances our skills as idols, establishes connections, and introduces us to work in the world of show business—”

Perhaps pleased that I was listening so intently, Hokuto-kun continued the conversation steadily.

“In short, the system, environment, everything, is arranged for our growth as idols.”

It really was almost twisted and maddening how thorough they were.

“The students in our idol department in this *school to be idols, responsible for idols, for idols*—study hard everyday in order to become better idols.”

“Ahaha. Not everyone gives it their all like Hidaka-kun though.”

Makoto-kun, whose mood had gone somewhat back to normal, interjected with a gentle smiling face.

“There are those who participate in club activities randomly, and easy-going people enjoying their youths, aren’t there?”

“That’s true. Well, in all appearances—Yumenosaki Academy was certainly founded on the premise of being a school for superior idols.”

Hokuto-kun was probably also relieved, so Makoto-kun smiled back at him.

“Every facility and class are all for the sake of training superior idols.”

I had already realized that more than I needed.

“Transfer student, you came from a normal high school, right? In that case, there must be plenty of *idol specifications* at Yumenosaki Academy you aren’t used to.”

Hokuto-kun proclaimed reassuringly, a little too late.

“But, I’d like you not to worry. I’ll make sure to support you.”

I—really appreciated that.

There didn’t seem to be any time for romance or anything.



At the very least though, I thought I should make Yumenosaki Academy a happy and precious place for myself.

“Mhm, mhm, Hokke~’s explanation is becoming more like a lecture~♪”

“Akehoshi, why are you reacting like, *this is my first time hearing this!*.....you should have a little more interest in things outside of money-making.”

Hokuto-kun shoved Subaru-kun a little as he nodded in understanding. Watching such a harmonious scene, I started to laugh from the heart at some point.



We walked down the hall.

“We’ll be arriving at the cafeteria soon.”

Hokuto-kun explained the things we saw like a guide, telling me things like, “that room is~”, “that student is~”, but he spoke with a tone as if he were reporting the news.

“I’ll give you a proper tour after school.....first, it wouldn’t be a bad idea to show you the classrooms, cafeteria, and later, the nurse’s office.”

Come to think of it, they were headed to the cafeteria. Things had been so hectic since morning, I had forgotten my hunger, so my stomach began to growl a little.

“?”

My face turned red, but Hokuto-kun just tilted his head, and continued to speak.

“You already know where the staff room is, right? You’ve just transferred, so you’ve probably already been there to greet everyone.”

When I nodded, Hokuto-kun looked at me like I was a small helpless animal, and smiled.

“If there’s anywhere in particular you would like to go, you should ask the teachers in the staff room, or feel free to call me on my phone. If I have nothing else pressing to attend to, I’ll come rushing to you within five minutes.”

There was something a little off about him, but he really was a good kid—he was reliable. I smiled happily as Hokuto-kun took out his smart phone and approached me.

“If there’s anything you’re unaccustomed to, I’ll do all I can to assist you as the class representative. I don’t mind if you call just to talk either, so I’ll give you my number, write it down.”

He told me, but I realized then I had forgotten most of my things in the classroom. I had been dragged here somewhat by force after all. I wasn’t sure what to do until Hokuto-kun handed me a memo pad. He must have been telling me to take notes with it. I accepted it gratefully. I wrote down the phone number and e-mail address Hokuto-kun told me with the pen I also borrowed from him. Seemingly amused, Subaru-kun peeked down at my hand.

“Ah, I’ll tell you my number and e-mail too! Let’s see~, moneyextortion@.....♪”

He really was a dog-like child.....

I frantically jot down Subaru-kun’s email. Getting a somewhat late start, Makoto-kun watched us enviously.

“Akehoshi-kun’s e-mail changes often, but it’s always something that sounds like a sketchy salesman. The ones that are like, *let’s make a fortune together*☆”

“Ahaha~, they’re easy to remember, right?”

Subaru-kun laughed cheerfully as he pushed Makoto-kun’s back, making him stand right in front of me. Maybe it was his way of making sure I took down Makoto-kun’s email too—or maybe it was simply physical affection, I’ll never know. Boys were a mystery.

Even though we just met, and haven’t spent much time together, the atmosphere was totally lax. I was still holding back, but—these boys held nothing back *at all*. Confused, but not upset, Makoto-kun bashfully told me his phone number, which I also took down. It was my first day transferring, but I already knew all of these male idols’ e-mails.

“Transfer student, I’ll say this just to be on the safe side. For the time being, we would appreciate it if you kept our phone numbers secret from anyone outside of the idol department.”

Hokuto-kun said as if to intimidate me as I got excited for no reason.

“We’re all idols here after all. If our personal information were to be leaked, it would cause trouble for us.”

That may have been so. I didn’t even think of that. They were all idols.

It felt like something as trivial as an e-mail written on a memo pad had transformed into a terrible weapon, which scared me a little. There may have been people willing to do anything, even kill, to acquire these few lines of text—was it really okay for me to have such an outrageous thing with such potential? As I panicked, Hokuto-kun and the others continued to talk boisterously.

“Akehoshi, you too, don’t go selling the other idols’ phone numbers on net auctions, okay?”

“Hey now, even I wouldn’t sell my friends’ personal information.”

Subaru-kun waved his hand uninterested.

“By the way, about the net~, it’s all through bank transfers, right~? I like real money that sparkles, so it doesn’t tempt me much☆”

“Well, if there’s anything troubling you about *that sort of thing*, you can ask me about it. The internet is my area of expertise~♪”

Makoto-kun gave me that bit of advice as he winked.

“Hm. While we’ve been making idle chatter, we’ve come pretty close to the cafeteria.”

We had reached an area where the radiant sunshine shone down from outside. There was something like shoe cubbies lined up there. This morning I had come into the school from a different location—so there seemed to be entrances and exits all around. For some reason, there were a large amount of totally worn out shoes scattered about.

“The corridor we’re walking down now goes outside part of the way. The cafeteria is right next to there. Since going through each entrance takes longer, most students use this short cut.”

We were using this one at the moment, so there must have been one more entrance. On top of being excessively huge, Yumenosaki Academy was constructed in a complicated and mysterious way, which seemed like it would take some to time to get used to.



Halfway through the corridor—Subaru-kun opened a door that led outside as hard as he could, and jumped out. The hem of his uniform, and his hair as orange as the sun fluttered in the wind.

“Yaaay~! What great weather~, the whole world is sparkling☆”

“Akehoshi, don’t go jumping around all of a sudden. What are you, a dog? At least change your shoes.”

Hokuto-kun picked up a pair of outdoor shoes on the floor near by, and threw them at Subaru-kun who was running around. Subaru-kun caught them skillfully, and began to change his shoes. The weather really was nice—it was overflowing with brightness outside. By contrast, it made the interior of Yumenosaki Academy dark and gloomy. I was narrowing my eyes from the brightness when Hokuto-kun nudged my shoulder.

“You too, transfer student, look. Take off your indoor shoes here.”

As I took off my own indoor shoes, Hokuto-kun explained one of the many local rules.

“You can use any of the outdoor shoes lined up here whenever you like. You can pick the ones in your size, and change your shoes.”

This must have been the result devised by the students who were annoyed by how huge Yumenosaki Academy was, and having to go through each entrance. However, since there were only boys in the idol department, the shoes were all men’s shoes. I wondered if I could find my size. Well, any would do. I wasn’t such a germaphobe that touching shoes someone else had worn was an issue. This sort of



thing gave it that all boys school feel. Hokuto-kun looked down at me curiously as I rummaged through the scattered shoes.

“Hm. Your name isn’t written on your shoes, transfer student, so I feel like they’ll get mixed up with the others.”

“Ah~, she just transferred, so her things don’t have her name written on them yet, right?”

Subaru-kun, who seemed to be pretty lonely when no one went after him, put his hand on the door and looked at me amused. Reflecting the sunlight, Subaru-kun’s eyes shone unbelievably bright.

“How nice, shiny new shoes☆ Why don’t you trade with me?”

“Transfer student. I have a permanent marker, so you should write your name on your indoor shoes with this.”

Hokuto-kun had taken out a permanent marker at some point as he used the palm of his hand to hold back Subaru-kun trying to come in with his outdoor shoes. It was like a magic trick. A memo pad, *konpeito*, a ten yen coin, there seemed to be various things inside of his pockets. Makoto-kun also seemed impressed, muttering as he changed his shoes.

“You’re seriously well-prepared, Hidaka-kun, you’re kind of like *Dor\*emon*, aren’t you.....?”

“Actually, he’s like a *mom*~☆”

Hokuto-kun made a disgusted face at Subaru-kun’s remark as he blocked him from hugging Makoto-kun.

“Who are you calling a mom. It’s my duty as class representative to be prepared to handle any situation.”

Hokuto-kun was pretty proud of himself.

“Don’t move, transfer student. While I’m at it, I may as well write your name on your shoes.”

Hokuto-kun approached me as if he couldn’t ignore the fact I hadn’t picked any shoes yet since I was watching their exchange. He had the permanent marker from earlier in his hand.

“Mom~, my name isn’t written on my indoor shoes either, write on mine, write on mine ☆”

“Don’t call me mom. Hm, your feet are pretty small, transfer student—”

Partially ignoring Subaru-kun stomping on the ground like a spoiled child (?), Hokuto-kun caressed my indoor shoes gently.

“Even if I didn’t write your name on them, I have a feeling they wouldn’t get mixed up with the other shoes.”

He then immediately crouched down—

“Well, just in case, I’ll write it. Being well prepared means no worries later.”

He began to write my name on the indoor shoes at my feet as I continued to stand there. Surprised by the unusual feel, I let out a strange sound.

“Don’t move, transfer student, the letters will skew.

.....your skirt is blocking my view, it's in the way."

When Hokuto-kun went so far as to put his hand on my skirt as if it were natural, perhaps no longer able to ignore it, Makoto-kun chimed in.

"Hidaka-kun. I know very well that isn't your intention at all, but doesn't that kind of look like sexual harassment?"

"Hokke~'s a perverted old man~☆"

"Am I a *mom*, or an *old man*, at least be consistent."

Hokuto-kun grumbled annoyed at Makoto-kun's remark and Subaru-kun's heckling.

"Hmph, it's done. Now then, let's go, if we dawdle, the meal tickets will sell out."

Once he finished hastily writing my name on my indoor shoes, Hokuto-kun immediately stood up. I also changed shoes quickly, and went outside when I was beckoned. Due to the back lighting, I couldn't make out what sort of expression he was making.

