Reputation Narrowing Feat of Kuze Masachika made by: N-Ice



Brief explanation before the analysis: This Doc will be broken down into multiple parts that is Electoral Debate in Volume 2 and Closing Ceremony in Volume 3. These two arc's are actually connected if you pay attention and together work for the overall framework in the long run of the election to get into the council, and by the end of the road, into Raikokai.

Justification:

Firstly if you know about those arcs separately either from anime or novel you may not know why they should be together as a package so let me clear that up first:
Volume 2 Page 59

“Heh… We just need to take a different route.”

“A different route?”

“We don’t have a chance of winning if we try to fight her head-on… which is why we need to change our method of attack and appeal to the students in a different way than Yuki does.”

“…Could you be more specific?”

“Hmm…”

Masachika’s eyes wandered for a few moments.

“It’s just like when people vote for their favorite idol in a pop group. You need everyone cheering for you in order to beat the lead vocalist—to beat the best.”

“…What are you talking about? Everyone already votes for who they like the most, right?”

“Not necessarily. While the student council presidential election is a popularity contest for the most part, fans don’t need to go register for their right to vote, unlike when voting for pop groups. Everyone in the entire school *has* to vote…which means people who don’t really care who becomes the next president will vote for the ‘safest’ option. In other words, they’ll vote for the former president in middle school, who already has results and is someone they trust. To tell the truth, I did the same thing during the last election. I chose the former president…and I was honestly surprised when someone else won.”

“Yeah… Now that you mention it, Kenzaki wasn’t even a member of the student council in middle school.”

“Right? And if the same two people elected in middle school run together in high school, there’s apparently a seventy percent chance they’ll be elected again, which makes it all the more impressive that Touya won when you think about it. Anyway, he had a story that gained the support of his peers and made people *want* to vote for him,” Masachika commented as he took a stack of papers out of his bag. It was a school newspaper from last year, which had been published by the school newspaper club. He flipped to a certain page and pointed at an article inside. “See the small featured segment here?”

Kuze talked about the disadvantage Alya has in comparison to Yuki, knowing other's and by his own experience, if you aren't interested you just choose a safe bet aka the previous president. Unlike for Yuki, neutral people are bad for them and if anything are the worst type of people they could have faced. Kuze wanted to have that talk with Alya which is why he had the newspaper about Touya prepared in advance. What Touya did, is make a story that resounded in the hearts of other's and helped him beat someone who was elected the president before. Yuki already has being a council president under her belt so they have an automatic disadvantage.

And second in Volume 2 page 126-127:

It was the topic Sayaka had brought up during lunch: *Should we include teacher evaluations when accepting new members into the student council?* In other words, *Should we make teacher recommendations mandatory for joining the student council?*

Touya drew his eyebrows together, since her real reason for choosing this topic was evident. Masachika, on the other hand, simply shrugged and casually remarked:

"I doubt many teachers know who I am, and if they do, they don't have a good impression of me, so if this bill passes, I'm going to have to quit the student council."

"Not necessarily. Even if everyone votes to adopt the bill, that doesn't mean the school itself will use it… Are you really going to do this debate, though? Because I honestly don't see how it would benefit you at all."

"It *would* benefit us," Alisa clearly stated. Touya turned to her with a look of deep interest, but the burning flames of battle in her eyes made him shrink back. "Defeating her would improve my chances of becoming the next student council president. In fact, if I run away now, then I will have no chance of defeating her during the race."

"O-oh… You really think so?"

"Plus, she insulted both Kuze and me, so I am not going to be satisfied until she takes back what she said and apologizes to us."

Masachika, who was quietly burning with rage, forced a smile and

added:

"Anyway, it's not all bad. The debate gives us a little exposure before the closing ceremony and provides a chance to appeal to the students while declaring our candidacy."

"Well, as long as you two are okay with this…"

Touya half-heartedly nodded at Masachika while checking the schedule.

"Hmm… It is too close to exam week… I know it's a little sudden, but how about having the debate this Friday after school?"

"I'm fine with that."

"Me too."

"Perfect. All right, how about we make the announcement today?"

"President, allow me to make the flyer."

"Suou, are you sure?"

"Yes, leave it to me."

Yuki agreeably smiled and nodded from the office table, then shifted

When the debate is proposed, Kuze and even Alya both agreed that it's a great opportunity for them, with Kuze even mentioning how it's a needed little exposure for the Closing Ceremony declaration. Closing Ceremony itself is a part of the election only, it's a declaration to put themselves on the radar and how they plan to improve the school and regulate it (so expect for this overall analysis in the future to also become a part of even bigger framework) With this being outright stated and shown I think it should be properly understandable why the two different arc's will be getting merged

Electoral Debate Volume 2:

This feat will be broken down into multiple parts: Preparation Stage -> Opponents Strategy and Plan -> Kuze's feats in it ->
It'll also use Miscellaneous aftermaths which you will pretty much see all of it in Volume 3 aka Closing Ceremony.

Preparation Stage

First preparation: Know your foe
Volume 2 Page 128:

Judging by the past performances (which mind you, Kuze was with Yuki back then, it was 2 years prior, when he and Sayaka had a debate), Kuze was able to Predict the arguments she'll make in her debate topic and while he could counter attack them it seems he prioritised giving Alya the opportunity to also prepare for it. With this they were preparing for the soon-to-be debate. Now more to note, he would have to think through the possibilities of her arguments and narrow them down using logical reasonings based on likely conclusions and sets of observations from the previous debate he had with her, since the exam week was coming soon.

> "…Anyway, that's probably how Sayaka's going to argue, judging by her past performances."
>
> "All right…"
>
> "So how would you counter her if this was her argument?"
>
> Masachika and Alisa faced each other across the desk in an empty room after school and discussed strategy.
>
> "…And I think that's what I'd base my counterargument around."
>
> "Yeah, that sounds good to me. Very persuasive. We should still probably sort out and summarize the main points, though."



While the reasoning itself isn't really outright explained I think we've got clues how Kuze approached it (although in strict scalings this won't fly):
Sayaka is a very logical and sound person who's an expert at debates -> From the beginning Sayaka aimed at Alya as the one stealing Kuze, and although she directed the overall topic to punish Kuze and boot him from council in case he lost, we see that she doesn't hold Alya in high value and thinks her only redeemable quality is academics while obviously holding Kuze in higher ground than her:

“All right. But first, I need details on—”

“Not so fast,” Alisa interrupted sharply. “The debate is for presidential candidates to argue their issues, so I would appreciate it if you didn’t make decisions without me.”

She shot Sayaka a piercing glare, but Sayaka herself didn’t even glance in Alisa’s direction as she dismissively replied:

“Stay out of this. I am not interested in candidates whose grades are their only redeeming feature.”

“Excuse me?! Look at me when you talk to me!”

Alisa forced herself in between Sayaka and Masachika, then got right in Sayaka’s face.

“We are a team. If you plan on defeating Kuze, then you are going to have to get through me first!” Alisa snapped. Sayaka stared back at her, clearly annoyed, and quietly sputtered:

“I was simply offering you a chance to run away so you could keep your dignity…”

She then lifted her chin with scorn and continued in a deep, cold tone:

“Very well. I will crush both of you at the debate. People like you two do not deserve to run.”

The surrounding students were buzzing with confusion and excitement as rumors of this year’s debate spread like wildfire throughout the school before the day was out.

(To someone like Kuze such behaviour would be very easy to pick up on and it gets confirmed later on.) -> Meaning that Sayaka will prepare thoroughly for something that seems to be of importance to her, will rehearse her attacks and will also target Alya. Which is why from the beginning, Kuze gets Alya to make the counter arguments on his prediction by herself and simulates a small debate on her and evalutes how well she'd do with them.

This is done with Sayaka: Understanding her likely behaviour and arguments -> Not let her show off the preparations she made to defend her arguments and instead of questioning them crush them with better one's -> Prepare Alya thoroughly (which both will work against Sayaka better who didn't expect much from her and also will be of help for her promotion in the public's eyes)

Next, her partner - Nonoa.

Nonoa is no debate expert, but what she is, is the person with the most influence with network in the whole school even without using student council.

“I think this is, like, the first time we’ve actually ever talked? I’m Nonoa Miyamae, Saya’s partner.”

“Oh… I’m Alisa Kujou. Let’s have a good debate.”

“Ha-ha-ha. You’re sooo serious. You and Sacchi might actually really get along,” Nonoa said, laughing in a laid-back manner. “Anyway, I’m looking forward to it. Later,” she added before walking ahead into the auditorium.

“That was Taniyama’s partner? She was…”

“Yeah, they aren’t anything alike, appearance-wise at least. One’s a no-nonsense elite student, and the other looks like some laid-back fashionista…which she is, but she apparently uses that loud appearance of

hers to her advantage and works on the side as a model.”

“She’s a model? Isn’t that against school rules?”

“Well…it’s her parents’ company’s billboard, so that apparently makes it some sort of loophole in the rules?”

“By the way, I’ve been wondering this ever since I saw her, but her hair…”

“Oh, that? She’s a natural blond. Her grandmother was from America, I believe.”

“…Oh.”

Although she understood what he was saying, Alisa still seemed confused about something.

“Those two grew up together. While they may look and act differently, they’re actually really good friends,” added Masachika.

“Oh, so that’s why…”

“But don’t make any mistake. She didn’t get to be Sayaka’s partner just because they’re childhood friends. Nonoa was already at the top of the school caste without the help of the student council, and she has a broad network of contacts. She might even have the biggest network at this school.”

“…She definitely would be a threat during the race, then.”

“But you don’t have to worry about her today. Just focus on Sayaka.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I will.”

Masachika let out a sigh of relief after Alisa seemingly shook the thought of Nonoa out of her mind.

“Anyway, ready to go?” he asked.

“I’m ready.”

And just like that, they stepped into the auditorium, marching toward the final battle.

Kuze already had visible information on Nonoa (although because of his information gathering he does on basically everyone but about that later after the Plant Feat).
Kuze recognised her being capable and having broad network of contacts, possible the biggest at the whole school. When Alya says she'll be a threat during the race, Kuze tells her to not worry about her today, and focus on Sayaka. He doesn't deny her being a threat, he knows she will be.

> "The president and vice president of the student council currently have the right to choose who they want to join, but it is not an exaggeration to say that they allow just anyone. In fact, after surveying previous middle school and high school members, both short and long term, of the student council…"
>
> *…You've gotta be kidding me. She prepared data for this?*
>
> Masachika was astonished by how she could provide numerical data like this in such a short span of time.
>
> *Wait. This wasn't Sayaka's doing. It was Nonoa's.*

He was a bit surprised by the numerical data, that is, because there was an extremely short time before Sayaka decided to make this debate and it happening, Sayaka is straightforward so Kuze instantly recognised it wasn't premade, meaning that if it happened in such a short span of time, it's Nonoa's doing.
Kuze was already wary of her in the first place as Sayaka's partner, and this data shown to him, that Nonoa for whatever reason is actually invested and made some preparations. And Kuze could already guess what someone like her with such network would do in a debate which the result of, is decided by the audience of over three hundred students.

Masachika was never planning on fighting Sayaka. He listened to Alisa's argument before the debate, recognized she had a good chance of winning, and decided to let her handle it however she wanted to.

Masachika's opponent wasn't Sayaka. The person he needed to focus on was…

So what's she going to do?

He shifted his gaze to Nonoa, who was at Sayaka's side. Even Nonoa, who'd been acting like this had nothing to do with her up until now, was quietly staring right back at him. She then closed her eyes and nodded at him as if to apologize for something before shoving her hand into her skirt pocket.

"…?"

The change was gradual. It was a very faint rustling at first, which slowly began to spread throughout the auditorium. It wasn't long before you could hear the words *transfer student* and *outsider* if you strained your ears, while cheers and support for Sayaka simultaneously started to come from the audience as well.

Tsk! She really did it. Plants. And not the green kind. I'm talking about sleeper cells.

She was manipulating the audience. It was a strategy that only

someone with a network at school as big as Nonoa's could pull off. There were more than a few students at school who believed they were better than the rest, perhaps because they had been born into rich families. Therefore, their impression of Sayaka, the daughter to the CEO of a top corporation, was far different from how they viewed a transfer student who came from a middle-class family like Alisa. The backers Nonoa had planted in the audience were trying to stir those students' frustration, which had a high chance of pushing them to vote for Sayaka based on emotion rather than logic. But there was an even bigger problem than that right now…

Kuze already knew Sayaka will most likely be handled by Alya he from the beginning wanted to deal with Nonoa, who will make people operate on emotion rather than logic. And as we see, he outright shows he figured she'll do something of this effect as well.
And last but not least: More about Alya. Experience matters in things that involve such public events, Kuze more than anyone knows Alya is estranged from other's because of how different she and the general person thinks and takes things, she might have unlimited motivation, but it doesn't support her having no experience with the public.
Volume 2 Page 140-142:

Because of how she lived her life, Alya was absolutely not used to such a crowd of people and public speaking. Of course Kuze was used to it, but seeing how she is he started being nonsensical and lighted up the mood by fooling around like he usually does, making Alya feel more comfortable and used to the atmosphere.
After that he went to a more serious yet gentle approach by persuading Alya and making her believe only she matters and the audience is irrelevant.

Kuze's really relaxed. I have to pull myself together. I was the one who signed up for this, and I don't want to disappoint him. Relax. Deep breaths… Just keep taking deep breaths…

Alisa tried to take a deep breath, but her throat—her lungs wouldn't listen to her. She trembled nervously as blood slowly retreated from her hands and feet.

"Alya…"

"Kuze…"

She wasn't able to put on a bold front any longer. Her desperate voice strained pathetically. She was on the verge of tears, and yet she had to hold back laughter for some reason. She felt like her head was going to explode when…

"Do you really have E cups?"

"…Huh?"

It was such a random, deranged question that Alisa couldn't process what he had said. Only when Masachika glanced at her chest did she finally comprehend. She reflexively lifted up her arms to cover herself when she suddenly remembered where she was and stopped.

"Y-you creep! What is wrong with you?!"

She tried to keep her voice as low as possible when she criticized him, but Masachika immediately turned an extremely serious gaze at the audience.

"I was thinking, *I can't do anything weird in front of all these people…* But that's when I realized I couldn't be slapped for anything,

either, and there was nowhere for you to run."

He cracked a smile, then shifted his gaze back to Alisa with a strangely serene look.

"I was like, *Wait… I can be a creep, and there's nothing she can do about it?*"

"Go kill yourself."

"Heh-heh-heh. Never in their wildest dreams could they imagine the filthy conversation we're having up here."

"I really hope they aren't having any dreams even remotely similar."

"Heh… So what color panties are you wearing today, young lady?" Masachika asked with a cartoonish, repulsive voice yet serious expression.

"…! …Oops."

Alisa caught herself reflexively lifting a hand to slap him, then let out an exhausted sigh. She was starting to actually wonder if she'd made the right choice teaming up with someone like him.

"You don't have to hide that you're nervous. Who wouldn't be during their first debate? I'd actually feel better if you admitted it. Like 'I may be nervous, but I am going to do everything I can to win.'"

"…I'm not going to say that."

"Yeah, I guess I should have figured as much."

Alisa would never preemptively "make excuses" for herself like that. A perfectionist like her was probably planning to nail this speech no matter what.

"Alya, look at me."

"…?"

Masachika met her skeptical expression and asked:

"Alya, who is your enemy?"

"…Taniyama, right?"

"No. Your enemy is the ideal version of yourself. Am I wrong?"

Her eyes briefly wavered, and she nodded. "…You're right. What frightens me the most is not being able to do what my ideal self can."

"Right? In other words, you yourself are the basis for evaluation, and only you are standing behind that podium and talking. The audience is nothing more than an audience. You won't have to do a Q and A with them after you talk, so it doesn't matter how many of them there are. Right?"

"Do you really think so?"

Her eyes anxiously wandered.

"I know so," Masachika clearly declared, since he knew that being assertive made one sound more convincing to people feeling insecure.

"All you need to think about is acting like the coolest version of yourself. Don't worry about a thing. If anything happens, I will take care of it."

"…"

Alisa slowly blinked as if to absorb everything he was saying, then faced forward calmly. That was when Touya, who was serving as the chairman of the debate, suddenly emerged from the stage wing.

Both of these things were made to get Alya in her more usual and comfortable position (kind of like the bickering that they have every day), to make sure she's comfortable and can give it her all there, persuade people with her arguments etc. He masterfully manages her emotional state, facilitates more comfortable emotions Alya is used to while also engaging with them to get her in the comfortable state, and also explains to her, that she has her priorities wrong, she's a perfectionist to boot but that's the thing that places only more unnecessary expectations on herself, and to erase the audience from her mind.
With this the preparations themselves were complete (There's another one, but it'll be moreso showcased in Kuze's feat itself)

Opponents Strategy and Plan:

Let's start with Sayaka:

Volume 2 Page 144:

Sayaka knows perfectly well how other students are in this school due to it being prestigious and her being one herself. With this she bases her persuasion on how others feel, making even those who didn't really care initially think this involved them and she's got a good point, as those types are very important for the overall result in the first place, if they feel like this involves them, then they'll more likely side with her who's acting in their interest:

"I believe you all can now see what this means: Anyone can become a member of the student council as long as they come forward as a candidate. But let us look at this from a different angle for a moment. Seiren Academy is a prestigious institution with proud traditions. Is it really okay for the student council, who represents the student body, to accept anyone who asks? Including those with poor conduct?"

After presenting the objective fact, Sayaka strengthened her tone and said to the audience:

"I believe that only the gifted should be allowed to join the student council. Surely, you all feel the same. You want someone qualified to represent you and someone who can act as a leader for those of you who are part of a school club. Imagine someone who has worse grades than you and poor conduct joining the student council and immediately becoming a person of higher rank than you. This person is going to be in a position where they can tell you what to do, and they will also be the one to decide whether you have permission to do something or not. Does that not sound awful?"

Masachika immediately recognized that the audience believed she had a point they had never thought of before.

Damn. She's good.

She even got those who weren't invested in this topic because they believed it had nothing to do with them to start seeing things her way. The students currently seemed to be leaning toward the idea that they didn't care that much, but they'd prefer someone who excelled if given the choice. It was exactly what Sayaka was going for.

Again using that same stance she continues further and makes it seen as something pretty fair. While at the same time appealing to the audience with statements like "Because you matter" after pretty much pointing out why without it there may be random people joining the council. With this making the crowd cheer for her and her stance immediately.

“That is why we need to take teacher evaluations into consideration.

More specifically, students would need to get the signatures of their homeroom teacher, head teacher, guidance counselor, and principal in order to join. That way, only the best of the best will be in the student council.”

After sweeping her gaze over the audience one more time, Sayaka firmly finished her speech.

“We must create a better student council with dignity and grace! Because you matter! …Thank you all very much for your time today.”

Firstly reel them in by making them feel involved and like it also impacts them, then play even more on acting like your bill acts in their interest more than anything.
Sayaka did a brilliant job of giving out her arguments against Kuze's reliability in the current state of times, and especially since not many people know he did a lot for Yuki during the middle school presidency run. Hence her whole strategy is attacking him who's not known to be of a high level family and is known to be lazy and not care much about academics or other things. Moreover, as Kuze mentioned elsewhere, the real problem with the elections, are actually deadweight people who aren't actually invested or care about the events that transpire and would just go with whoever they like more or who the majority is going for (hence why Yuki is an even harder opposition to face as she has insanely lots of support). And, Nonoa's popularity was already explained, and Sayaka is also very popular and known as the best debater. Both are from high end families too, which is something that Sayaka also did reliance upon in her arguments.
Simple yet pretty effective in multiple ways, but as I said, it's simple, so Kuze already knew he can prepare Alya against it.
Nonoa:
Firstly she helped Sayaka prepare her arguments and amassed people to make surveys and solidify her arguments, as Sayaka wanted to make sure her attacks are airtight and won't crack
Secondly she wanted to use the audience emotions:
Volume 2 Page 149-150 (analysis made by Avalon for Nonoa): As Alya was in an advantageous position, gaining the audience's attention and votes, Sayaka found herself at a significant disadvantage. Despite the stressful circumstances, Nonoa remained calm and

collected, appearing unfazed as events unfolded according to her expectations. Even though she was somewhat surprised, she didn't show it clearly.

To counteract, Nonoa indirectly manipulated the audience using a few plants she had strategically placed beforehand in case Sayaka was at risk of losing.

- She used her influence to convince a few individuals that Sayaka was a much better option than Alisa due to family differences and prestige.
- These plants then stirred the students' frustrations, causing them to vote based on emotion rather than logic.
- This, in turn, caused Alisa to start panicking, ultimately ruining all the confidence Kuze had built in her. Alisa's inability to speak led to a commotion among the crowd, gradually undermining all of her previous efforts.

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"Ah…"

Alisa had suddenly taken notice of the audience in front of her. She'd only been able to keep a level head until now because she'd been focused solely on herself, and that was now wavering. It was painfully obvious even from behind that her body had suddenly become tense.

"…!"

The rustling in the audience grew louder after Alisa suddenly fell silent. The more she panicked and tried to say something, the harder it was for her to get the words out of her mouth.

I have to say something… Wait. What was I going to say again? … What was the question? I have to hurry… But what should I…?!

Nonoa as someone very good at understanding other people (as seen by various other feats) also figured that Alya doesn't have experience and turned the public against her. Together Nonoa and Sayaka created a synergy of both airtight logic that you shouldn't try to disprove and emotions that Nonoa can easily get access to.
Both while rather simple, definitely effective and potent in the situation especially with the advantages they have in publics eyes. I value potent strategies fairly high even if they aren't necessarily complex.

Kuze's Electoral Debate Feats:

As I already went over the preparations themselves let's move onto the other parts of this arc:
Kuze's Plan: Let Sayaka take the lead and make the arguments + Whatever line she chooses to attack first with, Alya will ignore trying to use Q and A on her, in chess terms let's say Sayaka's argument got 1 tempo
[Because he knew that Alya who has no experience will be debating, going to Q and A may only hurt them while also extremely unlikely to give them any type of edge because Sayaka would obviously prepare for any of the questions that may appear to attack her argument in Q & A. So their planned strategy here was to instead overpower her persuasion without making it as much into the debate as it would be otherwise, not letting her utilise the Q & A to reinforce her position. All of this was already prepared and talked about in advance as we saw just before, and that's also Kuze in a way Profiling the way Sayaka would think and

move, their execution here was also great as we'll see afterwards because the arguments Alya made by herself based on on Kuze's guidance was very great.]

The audiences' eyes pursued Touya's gaze as it shifted toward Alisa. Their eyes were brimming with expectations and intrigue, wondering how the rumored transfer student was going to react to such a powerful argument. Alisa quietly looked back at Touya…and shook her head.

"Uh… No questions?" asked Touya, like he was caught off guard, but Masachika waved his hand as if to tell him to move on. The audience rippled with disappointment. Everyone thought she had essentially given up, but this was actually something Masachika had talked to Alisa about and decided on from the start. Sayaka, who was a seasoned debater, would never show any weakness during the Q and A. Plus, asking the wrong question and being hit with the perfect response would make Sayaka look even better than she already did. Therefore, it would be better not to ask any questions altogether. Showing confidence and fluently conveying their opinion, especially after hearing what their opponent had to say, would be much more persuasive. That was the decision they had reached.

Everything's all going according to plan so far.

They had accurately predicted what Sayaka was going to argue for the most part. There was no problem there. The rest was up to Alisa.

-> Then she'll have a self made counter argument against and also be ready to defend it in Q and A, which gives her argument two tempo. In the eyes of the audience, their opinion will change from Alya avoiding Q and A because Sayaka was too good, to Alya just having a counter argument:

She bowed somewhat theatrically. She was confident. She was fearless, as if she was more worried about her opponent than herself. Everyone in the audience immediately realized the real reason she'd kept silent during the Q and A. It wasn't because she couldn't think of a rebuttal or a question to ask. It was because she didn't need to. The audience's opinion of her changed in the blink of an eye, for her provocative greeting was not what one would expect from a "solitary princess."

"Now, I understand that Ms. Taniyama suggested that we require teacher recommendations in order to improve our student council, but I believe doing so would accomplish the complete opposite. Requiring teacher recommendations would undermine the student council altogether. Why? Because it would strip the student council president and vice president of their power of appointment, and they are the foundation of the council."

The audience was captivated by Alisa's straightforward rebuttal, whether they liked it or not.

"The most coveted and respected positions in the student council are president and vice president, and they are elected in addition to being given numerous rights because they earned their positions through defeating the competition in a grueling election. You could say that the power of appointment is the most valuable right given to them. Surrendering that right to a teacher, albeit partially, is no different from admitting that you can't maintain dignity without the help of your teachers."

Alisa's claims resonated throughout the auditorium. Some people in the audience gasped in admiration at the sight of her dignified, beautiful appearance onstage while others grunted in deep interest when they saw how confident she was. The mood in the entire venue had changed in mere minutes, but Alisa herself didn't notice as she eloquently continued to convey her ideas.

"The students at this academy highly value their autonomy, which is exactly why the student council is granted considerable discretionary power. The president and vice president are special exactly because they can freely decide who joins the student council. But what would happen if we required teacher recommendations when selecting new members? The president and vice president would most likely no longer be able to freely

select those they feel are best for the job. They would probably lose the right to refuse students whom teachers favor the most as well. In other words, the power of authority would more or less be surrendered to our teachers. Most work done in the student council would be done by students that they favor. That sounds like a far departure from what the student council should be, if you ask me."

Masachika could sense people who were originally leaning toward Sayaka's opinion start to doubt themselves.

Perfect. She's relaxed and saying everything she wants to.

He inwardly sighed in relief when he saw how confident and articulate she was being. She was honestly doing better than he imagined. He was expecting her to be kind of awkward after seeing how nervous she'd been up until a few minutes ago, but she wasn't going to have a problem anymore.

Sayaka is arguing that the student council would improve if only the elite were allowed in, while Alya is arguing that the president and vice president should keep their powers of appointment, since that would protect what the student council stands for. These people were elected by the students for a reason, after all. Regardless, they both have a point, and I'd say they're probably evenly matched at the moment…

He was watching Alisa with evident satisfaction when he suddenly sensed a piercing gaze coming from his left and looked over. It was Sayaka. Her sharp eyes behind her glasses seemed to be saying, "You were behind all this, weren't you?"

No, Sayaka. That's all Alya. Those are her words.

Masachika didn't give Alisa a single argument of his own. He didn't put a single idea in her mind, either. All he did was predict what Sayaka was going to argue. While Alisa based her argument on his prediction, it was 100 percent all hers.

I'm not your opponent. Alya is.

As he glared back at Sayaka with his strong will, Alisa's argument came to an end, which was immediately followed by the Q and A. Sayaka hastily raised a hand to strike back.

(If you notice, Alya made a great argument that aimed at what the school made council to be in the first place. Kuze made a mental comparison of what the arguments represent themselves anyway. They are by now evenly matched, but as I mentioned it's 1 tempo vs 2 tempo)

-> And Beating Sayaka when she'll try to do Q and A of her own:

[Because Kuze didn't actually make all of the preparations for her and only predicted all of the arguments from Sayaka, Alya prepared the counter arguments by herself, because of

which she was able to swiftly answer any of the questions from Sayaka (and as mentioned before by Kuze, doing well in Q & A only gives more advantage to the defender), which only makes Kuze's preparations all the more impressive as it predicted that Alya will be in more winning positions if she'll prepare the answers herself due to Q & A and learning how to operate in a debate, rather than if Kuze babied her. Because Sayaka thought that her opponent was Kuze she was getting defeated by Alya as she hoped to gain advantage using Q & A. But Kuze also knew that the main opponent is not Sayaka, but instead Nonoa since the votes and getting the masses on your side was the most important part. So he knew that Nonoa will pull some moves while also perceiving her emotions and understanding her thoughts.]

"You mentioned that the student council president and vice president wield the power of appointment, but my research proved that in recent years, everyone who has asked to become a member of the student council has been made into a member. How do you feel about that?"

"Is there a problem with that? There haven't been any issues so far.

Even if a problem did arise, the president can take care of it or remove said student from the council. That's one of the president's responsibilities, after all."

Sayaka must have believed that Alisa would slip up if Masachika had prepared her entire argument for her, but Alisa didn't blink.

"There are those in the alumni association who believe the quality of the student council has been diminishing as of late, which is why I believe teacher recommendations should be a requirement. How do you feel about that?"

"I feel that the president and vice president should be the ones who decide that. Acknowledging their inadequacy and turning to a teacher for help is one option, but that is not something for us to decide."

If anything, Sayaka was gradually losing confidence. Her arguments were becoming less logical as time went on, perhaps because she was caught off guard by her opponent's skill.

You were defeated because you underestimated your opponent. Because you were chasing my shadow without even looking at Alya. She was your opponent, not me.

Masachika was never planning on fighting Sayaka. He listened to Alisa's argument before the debate, recognized she had a good chance of winning, and decided to let her handle it however she wanted to.

Masachika's opponent wasn't Sayaka. The person he needed to focus on was…

So what's she going to do?

He shifted his gaze to Nonoa, who was at Sayaka's side. Even Nonoa, who'd been acting like this had nothing to do with her up until now, was quietly staring right back at him. She then closed her eyes and nodded at him as if to apologize for something before shoving her hand into her skirt pocket.

-> Confirming or Denying his prediction on if Nonoa will pull through with using people in the audience emotionally and steer them up against Alya. Once she did, which also naturally meant that she prepared them beforehand (as obviously if she wrote an elaborate message as to what they should make their reliance on when stirring up the other's and do it to multiple people it'd take way too long, and in reality it took only a little bit before she fiddled with her phone shortly that they started moving, meaning they already read or heard her instructions beforehand) Kuze would confirm his suspicion about her true nature which will be useful for the future and alongside other clues made him conclude this:
Volume 4 Pages 63-64:

Through his profiling (and overall emotional understanding which he calls guts since he's not a psychology nerd) and knowing of the things like the "plants" in the debate (only thing we saw by now that was Nonoa taking action), Kuze was able to know fully well how the only real thing stopping Nonoa from action is her being lazy, he knows she wouldn't care about laws or morals in case it was more necessary to act than it is with her being lazy. And as we know he actually was expecting that attack from Nonoa, so in reality Kuze already understood that about her before seeing her be in action, because he knew what action she'll do and he knew what it'll cause, he also knew and understood her as a person really well. It was based on his personal opinion on her through his broken Emotional Perception, and the Plants Strategy from Nonoa confirmed his suspicions on her personality and how twisted she is.

His inner thoughts slipped off his tongue, and he stammered. Explaining why he was suspicious of Nonoa wasn't an easy task, and Alisa might not empathize or even sympathize with how he felt even if he did explain. To most, Nonoa was very well-behaved in spite of her appearance… Probably because of how lethargic she always seemed, she came across as harmless. Masachika agreed with this evaluation. After all, Nonoa was lazy, so she tried to avoid trouble for the most part. Masachika believed she wouldn't do anything to unnecessarily stir the pot… However, he also knew that the only thing that would ever restrain her from taking action would be if it was a pain in the ass to do. While there may have been a few exceptions, there was nothing else that could deter her for the most part. Whether something was illegal or immoral didn't matter. The only thing stopping her was her *own laziness*. If "necessity" happened to surpass "pain in the ass" in her mind, then she would take action, even if that meant going against what was legal or morally right.

And Masachika understood this through both experience and his gut instincts, which was why he couldn't help but feel wary and fearful of her. But he didn't plan on explaining that to Alisa. It would make it sound like he was talking about Nonoa behind her back, and he didn't want to brainwash Alisa into thinking Nonoa was a bad person. That was why he promptly began to make excuses.

-> And obviously countering it. Once Nonoa used emotional persuasion of the public through her plants indirectly, Kuze just went ahead and used a stronger and more direct persuasion of his own:

So now the puzzle of the whole event gets more in place: Sayaka's arguments, the Q & A preparation, making Alya prepare the counter arguments and the arguments as a whole, knowing that Nonoa is the real opponent while also analysing her based on the action she did on the debate (which he was fully right about).

[But that's not all. The arguments that won the whole debate (as we'll see later) mainly, was appealing to Touya, the current council president who a lot of people love and respect, not fitting the standards in the beginning but instead working to get better.

And that? Was also told to Alya by Kuze. And as we know that he prepared for, and predicted pretty much everything in the debate, he was already going to use Touya's success as a sort of motivation for Alya to strive for as well as a method of appealing to public to throw away their prejudice of picking someone solely based on them being part of the council before, even if it was President's position like Yuki, which is a big part of Kuze's overall framework to do Reputation Narrowing and close the gap between Alya with Yuki.]
-> Crush the emotional appeal with an even bigger emotional appeal
[After seeing that Nonoa did in fact use plants by using her connections to try and sway the audience as Alya ended up getting above Sayaka in argumentation, Kuze decided to take the stage himself. He made sure to not let the students think that Alya was scared or anxious as it was what made what she said so persuasive and instead turned it out into a joke about her speaking too much because she's always silent, and she was known as "Solitary princess" so it obviously worked. After that he proceeded to absolutely get everyone on his and Alya's argument side by making an eloquent speech about Touya, who inspired almost everyone in the school with his story, and how he'd not be accepted into the Council let alone be a president if the rules didn't work as they do now. He even made sure to interact with Touya to make them more aware of him being there and from where he was to what he became. Mind you Touya also went through the election with his story against someone who was repeating his running for the president (which statistically had 70% chances of succeeding). After using these arguments, managing everything perfectly, Nonoa and Sayaka couldn't even rebute or ask anything that's why he said the argument was settled months ago, at the same time using logical for them arguments to ensure it'll get through. That was his finishing blow that absolutely ended the debate then and there without Sayaka and Nonoa even having any hopes of recovery.]

"Ah…"

Alisa had suddenly taken notice of the audience in front of her. She'd only been able to keep a level head until now because she'd been focused solely on herself, and that was now wavering. It was painfully obvious even from behind that her body had suddenly become tense.

"…!"

The rustling in the audience grew louder after Alisa suddenly fell silent. The more she panicked and tried to say something, the harder it was for her to get the words out of her mouth.

I have to say something… Wait. What was I going to say again? … What was the question? I have to hurry… But what should I…?!

Right as her anxiety was peaking and she was starting to panic, a gentle hand suddenly patted her on the back.

"Good job. I'll handle the rest."

She swung her head around to find the person she could count on more than anyone else in this world. Masachika stood by her side behind the podium and grabbed the mic with a smile.

"I apologize for interrupting, but I'm going to be taking over from here. My partner has been speaking for so long that it looks like she hurt her throat. *Sigh…* You wouldn't have strained your voice if you weren't so quiet all the time," he joked while glancing at Alisa. She immediately pouted, and the audience erupted into laughter. After lightening the mood, Masachika decided it was time to pull the ace out of his sleeve.

I wish we could have won based on the logic of our arguments, but if they're going to try to use emotion to sway the audience, then I'm going to as well.

He didn't want to do it, but he didn't have any other choice. He had made a promise to Alisa. He'd told her he would handle things if she ever

found herself in trouble, and that was why…he was going to destroy it all, smiling every second of the way.

"So anyway, I really want to start wrapping things up, since I don't want my partner to have a sore throat tomorrow. I mean, is there really anything else we need to discuss?"

As his abrupt question caused the audience to rustle, he immediately followed up with another attack.

"I'm pretty sure this debate was already settled a month ago anyway."

"As you all know, he was a nobody and a poor-performing student up until a year ago. In fact, I'm just gonna come out and say it! He was an awkward, socially inept loser! His words, not mine. There was no way he was ever going to get a teacher's recommendation!"

"Hey?!" Touya unconsciously shouted with a half smirk, causing the crowd to burst into laughter. Masachika promptly added:

"But he worked hard. He worked as hard as he could to be a part of the student council. His grades improved, he became a better man, and he even ended up sweeping the famous Donna off her feet! Surely, there isn't a single person here who wasn't inspired by his story. A poor-performing, socially inept student has turned himself into the charismatic president of the student council you all know today. How could you not root for a man like that?!"

Masachika feverishly spoke with his hands and body before taking a brief pause to view his audience, and once all eyes were on him, he calmly concluded:

"Touya Kenzaki was able to become the president of the student council because of the system we have in place. A system that allows anyone to become a member of the student council as long as they have passion. Therefore, I must ask you all one more time: Is there really anything more we need to discuss?"

Nobody answered him. Even Sayaka and Nonoa were completely silent.

"*Sigh*… Mmm… I was a little surprised to be suddenly dragged into

the debate like that, but anyway, I would like to move on to the closing arguments if there are no more questions. Is that okay, Ms. Taniyama?" Touya took control of the stage once again.

"…"

Masachika saw Sayaka silently stand from her chair, so he placed a hand on Alisa's back and nudged her to walk back to her seat. But the moment they stepped off the podium, Nonoa screamed:

"Wh-what the…?! Saya?!"

When Masachika glanced in their direction, Sayaka was already hastily exiting through the wing. It had taken him completely by surprise, and the brief glimpse of her expression caused him to freeze. It was Alisa who ended up chasing after her, disappearing into the wing herself. A

Although he didn't expect that she'll take the defeat that badly (because he had no way of knowing yet, why Sayaka was so against Alya with Kuze partnering up), overall everything went by plan, he hoped it wouldn't come to him using this trump card, but he did, and the reason was both that it's now not as cleanly Alya's victory as their collaborative effort in the public's eyes, and that this means Nonoa is a legit threat in the future as his analysis was confirmed. He used his social skills very well to turn the situation away from looking like Alya got nervous with the audience suddenly turning on her, and lightened it up regardless.
Now following this event: Alya wanted to save some of Sayaka's reputation, as she recognised her hard working nature and passion. While Kuze, saw it as an opportunity in the future to use it as a favour (which will be expanded on in Closing Ceremony) and another trump card he could use so he readily agreed despite it mitigating not only the damage to her reputation but also lowering public's perception of how amazing Alya's win was (so you could think of it as an investment into the future from Kuze)
Let's move onto the next arc

Closing Ceremony:

Closing Ceremony will also be broken down into multiple parts just like Electoral Debate but since it's even bigger, it'll be broken down into more parts.
Yuki (will get a whole branch for herself) and Kuze (Will obviously get a whole branch for himself too)
Yuki -> Preparations and Opponent Analysis -> Keeping her headstart and advantages -> Using her unique resource (broadcast) -> Alya Manipulation and Control -> Finishing Touches in Closing Ceremony -> Context/Additional Details
Kuze -> Finding out about Yuki scheming -> Managing the damage done to Alya -> Analysis and Reasoning made on Yuki's Scheme -> Confronting Yuki -> Using his Trump Card to turn the tables -> Explanation of why Yuki had no chance regardless of what she tried

Preparations and Opponent Analysis:

Similar as to how Kuze gained information beforehand and had some ideas that he implemented before the arc really happened, so did Yuki. She took a seemingly bigger interest in Alya once she learnt that she'll be a candidate and especially when she learnt that Kuze will run with her. For this let's go through the instances where she gained insight on Alya:
Cauldron of Hell -> Alya, Kuze and Yuki all went there to get some extremely spicy ramen. And it was initiated by Yuki who wanted to learn more about Alya and spend time together: Volume 1 Page 93:

Yuki intentionally asked Alya about if she already had lunch (pretty weird thing to ask when they just bumped into each other, and Yuki with Kuze knew she was tailing them). Kuze immediately noted that to Yuki and she didn't deny it.
Kuze tried to stop Alya from coming but because of both her pride and not wanting to leave them alone she agreed to come with them, which only played in the hands of Yuki in that situation.

Yuki was all smiles both because she knew the place and because she could have fun with Alya as well (which will be shown soon)
Kuze knowing that Alya by no means would like or tolerate something that spicy made up a rule like the first time is supposed to be with the standard (in this case least spicy) dish of the menu, which Alya immediately agreed with and so Yuki followed suit. It shows that Kuze already understands that he knows Alya isn't good with spicy foods despite never seeing her eat any (which was mentioned before), along with the way she said she doesn't hate the spicy food, because of these she most likely doesn't like spicy food hence he came to the help.
But Yuki had other plans and started making chaos to show Alya she's superior between the two in being close to Kuze (which is obvious because of the talk in the SC after Kuze helped Alya and Yuki), even mentioning "Kare-shirt" which is also a bomb she dropped. There's more to come and all this was just making Alya feel jealous and/or competitive like before. She continued telling lies like Kuze being excited about it to further make the chaos there. After that, Yuki continued going on Alya's pride and hard-headed nature to make her get the food to be even spicier than it already is, while also keeping up appearances so Alya or anyone else wouldn't notice.

right.

"Yes, what a coincidence. I, uh… I saw you two together a few minutes ago, but I didn't want to interrupt your conversation…," mumbled Alisa as if she was still somewhat flustered.

That was way more than a few minutes.

The siblings thought the exact same thing at the exact same moment, but they didn't show any indication of that on their face. Masachika couldn't help but give Yuki a lukewarm glare, but she was already in her proper-young-lady mode.

"Oh, okay," she innocently replied. "Anyway, what brings you here?"

"I'm shopping for new clothes…"

"Oh, really? Have you already had lunch?"

"Not yet."

"Then how about we have lunch together? It's—"

"Hold on," interrupted Masachika. He then grimaced at Yuki's composed expression and asked:

"Don't tell me you plan on taking Alya to *that* restaurant?"

"Why not? You were really looking forward to it."

“We should go somewhere else if Alya’s going to be eating with us.”

“Why? Is there some sort of problem?” inquired Alisa as they seemed to ignore her while arguing over who knows what.

“Alya, do you hate spicy food?”

“Spicy food? I mean, I don’t really hate it…”

“The restaurant we were actually planning on going to is famous for spicy ramen, but if you’re fine with spicy food, then—”

“Stop downplaying it. Alya, I’m gonna be straight with you. *Spicy* is an understatement. It’s a restaurant that specializes in burning-hot ramen. I’ve never been, either, but it’s probably not something you can enjoy if you don’t like extremely spicy food. So—”

“Let’s go,” Alisa interjected, cutting Masachika off. Seeing her expression alone was enough to know it was hopeless to convince her otherwise, and he fell silent for a few moments.

“I really don’t think this is a good idea. There are plenty of other restaurants around here…”

“But you were really looking forward to it, right? So let’s go. Besides, I’d feel guilty if you changed your plans because of me.”

“You don’t have to come, you know?”

“Oh? Is there a problem if I tag along?”

“That’s not what I meant, but I don’t remember seeing you ever eat spicy food…”

“I don’t dislike spicy food.”

Masachika was skeptical, but he couldn’t just flat out call her a liar. That said, he had a feeling she was more into sweets than spicy food. He had never asked her directly about it, but after all the time he’d spent with her, he had a good idea of what she liked. Spicy food, though? He had no idea. He had never seen her eat anything spicy, and that was the only information he had to go by.

Well, she says she wants to go, and they probably have some not-so-spicy food on the menu as well, so…

With that mindset, Masachika decided to head to the restaurant, albeit with a bit of anxiety.

◇

“…Is this the place?”

"Yep."

Outside the shopping center, they walked a short while down a narrow path until they arrived at a ramen shop. Alisa looked up at the sign and grimaced.

I don't blame her.

But while Masachika understood her reaction, Yuki was full of smiles.

"The sign says, *The Cauldron of Hell*. Are you sure they serve ramen here?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"But it says *Hell* on the sign…"

"Don't worry, Alya. This is the place. Here, it says the name of the restaurant on the menu, too."

"…Oh."

Although it still didn't make her feel any better, Alisa nodded with a grimace, as if she was paralyzed due to shock.

"You sure you don't want to go somewhere else?"

But Masachika's thoughtfulness suddenly triggered Alisa's determination, and he was met with a piercing glare.

"Don't be ridiculous. I was only a little surprised by how unique this place turned out to be."

"Uh-huh…"

He knew there was nothing he could say to convince her once her utter hatred for defeat crept out, so he gave up and followed Yuki into the restaurant.

"Welcome!"

They were immediately welcomed by a man's well-projected voice as the pungent scent of spicy food irritated their noses.

"Gmph?!"

Masachika suddenly heard a faint gag coming from behind.

"How many in your group?"

"Three."

"All right. This way, please."

The waiter walked them over to three seats at the counter. When Masachika glanced over at Alisa to his right, she was holding her nose, with tears welling in her eyes. While Masachika and Yuki were used to the smell due to constantly eating out at spicy restaurants, Alisa seemed to be in pain.

"Are you okay?"

"Why wouldn't I be?" replied Alisa in a hushed voice, making it clear that she was just acting tough. She then tightly shut her eyes, did away with the tears, and tried to pretend like nothing was wrong as she reached for the menu…but

the moment she opened it, she froze.

"…Hey."

"Hmm?"

"I have no idea what I'm even looking at."

"Yeah…" Masachika awkwardly nodded. It made sense because with violent names like *Blood Pond Hell* and *Spike Pit Hell*, it was hard to imagine this was even food. Yuki, her hair tied in a low ponytail, then began explaining the menu as if she were a regular.

"The Blood Pond Hell is a ramen known for its bloodred soup base, just as the name suggests, and is the mildest ramen on the menu. Spike Pit Hell, on the other hand, is a spicier dish that makes it feel like your tongue is being pierced by a thousand needles, as the name suggests."

"O-oh… Well, then…"

Alisa meekly lowered her gaze toward the very bottom of the menu as she grimaced.

"What about the *Hell of Uninterrupted Suffering*?" Alisa asked timidly. Yuki immediately smiled proudly, as if she had been waiting for the question.

"It's apparently so spicy that you lose all feeling!"

"Are you sure that's not nerve damage?"

Alisa's expression fell with despair, as if she had finally realized how terrifying this restaurant really was. Masachika, by her side, also looked over the menu one more time, only to realize that even the least hot ramen was still really hot. He closed his eyes.

"I guess I'll go with the Blood Pond Hell, since the common rule is to go for the standard dish when it's your first time."

"Y-yeah, the basics are important, after all."

"Oh? You two are going to order the same thing? I guess I'll order that as well, then."

Masachika offered what help he could, which Alisa thankfully accepted, and was followed by Yuki. Thus, they all ended up ordering the same thing.

"At any rate, I was kind of surprised to see you dressed somewhat boyish today, Yuki."

"*Giggle.* I thought I'd switch things up a little, since it's the weekend."

"Really? Well, you almost look like a completely different person. You still look really good, though."

"Thank you. You look really good today yourself. It's not often I see you in something other than your school uniform. I thought you were a professional

model for a second there."

"Really? Thanks."

Masachika felt both uncomfortable and happy to be in between two girls chatting it up, but he began to break into a cold sweat as the surrounding men glared at him. The look the male waiter, who seemed to be around the same age as him, was giving him was the worst. They were the eyes a man would use only on his worst enemy, but Masachika really was surrounded by two beautiful women, so he couldn't complain. Not only were they beautiful, but they were also essentially without equal, so it was simply normal for an average-looking guy like Masachika to be stared at. It was also perfectly natural for a nerd to get excited and think, *Wait. Am I the protagonist of a rom-com?! Is this my harem?!*

They aren't fighting over me, though. Plus, I probably just look like their professional bag carrier from the viewpoint of an onlooker.

And it was just how Masachika imagined it. Everyone's curious stares faded once they realized the girls were ignoring him and chatting with each other. Even the waiter, who was glaring at him with envy and hatred, softened his gaze and went back to work…and that was when Yuki decided to drop a bomb.

"This shirt and these jeans actually used to be Masachika's."

Alisa's smile froze, and the temperature in the restaurant plummeted.

Yukiiiiiiii!!

The curious looks in the restaurant began to refocus on him. Even the waiter was looking back and forth between Yuki and Masachika as if he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

"He gave you those?"

"Yes, my family wants me to dress 'ladylike'…but I've always wanted to dress more boyish like this, so I asked Masachika for some of his old clothes."

"Oh…"

Alisa's smirk turned into an ominous faint smile as she hit Masachika with a penetrating glare.

"I didn't realize being childhood friends made two people so close. I didn't know Kuze liked dressing girls up in his old clothes, either. Interesting hobby."

"It's not a hobby."

"Yes, it isn't his hobby. It's his fetish."

"You shut up."

He glared at Yuki as if to tell her to not say another word, but she simply seemed confused.

"Hmm? But I clearly remember you being thrilled when you first saw me

wearing a boyfriend shirt."

"That never happened!"

Yuki continued to drop bomb after bomb without even a hint of guilt, creating a stir in the restaurant. Listeners took "That never happened!" to mean that he hadn't been "thrilled" when she wore the shirt. Yuki did, however, wear his old shirts from time to time. She would visit his house on a whim without a change of clothes sometimes, so she would wear his old clothes as pajamas. However, she was the one who had jumped up and down in excitement when she first put on his old clothes while shouting, *"Boyfriend shirt, boyfriend shirt!"* Masachika, on the other hand, simply rolled his eyes, but no one would ever know the truth except for them.

"…What's a boyfriend shirt?"

Thankfully Alisa didn't know what a "boyfriend shirt" was, since she wasn't into geek culture. Yuki leaned toward her with the smile of an angel and the whisper of a devil to ask if she wanted to know what it was, but Masachika promptly began to interrupt her. However, before he could even do that, the waiter came over with their ramen, glaring at Masachika as if Masachika had killed his parents.

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Three orders of Blood Pond Hell."

One glance down at the ramen before her sent Alisa rearing back with a grunt as she choked a bit. The eye-burning steam apparently didn't do the dark-red soup, which was living up to its name, any favors. The spicy food–loving siblings, on the other hand, smiled and grabbed their chopsticks.

"We should hurry before the noodles get soggy."

"Good idea."

"Y-yeah…"

Masachika and Yuki dug into their noodles without a moment's hesitation while Alisa timidly slurped up her first bite.

"Mmmm! This is delicious!"

"Yeah, it really lives up to its reputation."

The siblings smiled with clear satisfaction after their first bite, but when Masachika glanced at Alisa…

"…"

…her entire body was tense, and her eyes were opened wide as she continued to chew without even blinking. Her left hand on the table was clenched ridiculously tight and trembled.

"You okay, Alya?"

"Al—"

Right as Masachika tried to stop her, Yuki spoke up as if to get the first word out and cut him off.

"How is it, Alya?"

Alisa's wandering eyes suddenly focused at the sound of her future campaign rival's voice. Her fighting spirit was summoned, bringing life back into her body as she even managed to smile.

"It's delicious."

"Oh, that's wonderful. I am so happy to hear that you love spicy food, too."

Yuki innocently smiled back at Alisa's somewhat ghastly, fierce smirk. She then held out a condiment to Alisa while still innocently smiling.

"This restaurant has something called Demon Tears, which can make the food even spicier. Would you like to try it?"

Yuki was basically attacking a fleeing enemy. The corner of Alisa's lips twitched. By the way, Demon Tears were a type of seasoning, and its official name was *Even the Evilest of Demons Get Tears in Their Eyes*. It was an original blend created by this restaurant.

Stop torturing her! Alya doesn't even have any HP left!

Masachika was inwardly shouting when he came to a startling realization.

Oh! There was no way for Yuki to have noticed, since Alya was complaining in Russian.

Once he realized that oversight, he leaned in to whisper into Yuki's ear… when he realized something else. While Yuki might have appeared to be smiling innocently, there was a sadistic fire burning in the depths of her eyes.

She's doing this on purpose?!

As Masachika shuddered, a pale-white hand reached for the condiment.

"All you need are a few drops for it to taste amazing."

"Wait! Alya?! I really don't recommend doing that!"

But his warnings were in vain, for Alisa took the lid off the container, grabbed the tiny spoon, and scooped some of the dark-red liquid, which she then sprinkled into her ramen. And a few seconds later…

"…?!?!"

The restaurant was filled with Alisa's voiceless screams.

To put it in a tldr: Yuki figured that Alya is a perfectionist and has lots of pride as well, a headstrong person who even if knows she's not fit for something will try to force through by sheer will, and also saw how much she cared about what Kuze thinks.
We later see her already having a formed understanding of Alya soon after during the card game:
Volume 2 Page 96:

She easily called her bluff's, made bluff's herself and such things outright

“Pair of jacks.”

“Heh-heh-heh. Full house.”

“…!”

The student council was throwing a welcome party for Masachika and Ayano after school. After having a rather early, light dinner in the school cafeteria—which was open at night as well, although with less on the menu—they took the party over to the student council room, where they enjoyed snacks and soft drinks while getting to know one another. They were split up into two groups: Masachika, Touya, and Chisaki were sitting at the office table, and the other four were playing cards on the guest sofa. It was mainly just Alisa and Yuki playing, though. Things had been awkward between them when the party first started (it was more like Alisa was purposely keeping her distance from Yuki), but thanks to Yuki actively trying to talk to her, Alisa gradually started to come out of her shell. Now they were having a friendly game of poker.

“Fold. I’m out,” Alisa said with a bit of a huff.

“Oh, you are? I only had a high card, but it looks like it pays to bluff sometimes.”

“Huh?!”

“Oh my. That’s too bad, Alya.”

Each one of them had been given a bag of snacks, which they were betting with, but Yuki was crushing her peers, perhaps due to being far more experienced. Around 80 percent of Alisa’s snacks now belonged to Yuki. Maria giggled at the sight and was immediately met with Alisa’s scornful glare. Meanwhile, Ayano was wearing her usual blank expression while indifferently dealing the cards as she stood between Alisa and Yuki. Surprisingly, she was a natural at dealing. It must have been her love for serving others.

She also intentionally deceived Alya with her wording and sort of challenged her already: Manga Chapter 37-38 + Volume 2 Page 39:

Yuki used a clever wording which isn't a lie but mislead Alya into thinking she loves him romantically, to more-so sell it she says she loves him more than her parents too. For Alya there's really no way to tell that Yuki actually meant the family's love in that situation. Using that "forwardness and openess" of admitting how she feels towards him, she also made Alya feel as if it'll be unfair to not give a serious answer too. So with that Yuki also gathered information too, as she uses a direct statement that she was honest so Alya should be clear too.


IT IS ONLY THE FACT THAT HE DIDN'T CHOOSE ME
THAT'S REGRET-TABLE, HEH.
THUMP
YUKI-SAN...
UHM...
ABOUT KUZE-KUN, DO YOU...
THUMP



TL/N: There is a crucial distinction to mention here: In the previous chapters, Alya always said 好き, which can change its meaning between 'like' and 'love'; meanwhile, Yuki uses 愛, which only means 'love' and is usually used in love between romantic partners or close family.


I LOVE MASACHIKA-KUN MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD.
Y-
YOU LOVE HIM...?
YES. MORE THAN HIS MOTHER AND MORE THAN HIS FATHER.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, ALYA-SAN?
...HUH?!


...DO YOU LIKE HIM?
BLUSH
WHA-?!
PUSH
WELL?
DO YOU LIKE HIM THEN?
...!


FWAM
I ALREADY STATED THAT I LOVE HIM!
NOW ANSWER ME CLEARLY!

“What about you, Alya?”

“Huh?”

“How do you feel about Masachika?”

“I—I…”

She reflexively tried to say that he was just a friend, but Yuki’s unblinking stare made her panic and look away. She wondered if it was really okay to give such a noncommittal answer after Yuki had honestly told her how she really felt.

“Kuze…is my friend. A very d-dear friend…who means so much to me.”

Although Alisa was still looking away and now blushing, she eventually managed to squeeze out those words…then immediately, she felt her whole body flush, and she began to fidget. That wasn’t enough to please Yuki, though.

“Do you like him?”

“Hng?!”

The candid question made Alisa grunt and meet the other girl’s gaze. Yuki looked her straight in the eye and began to approach her, but Alisa instinctively retreated. Yuki, however, didn’t stop and kept marching forward until Alisa’s back was up against the wall. There was at least a twenty-centimeter height difference between Alisa, who was really tall, and Yuki, who was petite, so Yuki had to lean her head back and look up to face her. And yet it was Alisa who felt small.

“So? What is it? Do you like him?”

“Saying that I like him…would be… It’s more like…”

“I told you that I love him, so you have to tell me exactly how you feel, too!”

“M-mmm…”

Yuki’s relentless questioning was more than someone who wasn’t used to talking about boys and love could handle, forcing Alisa’s brain to overheat. She couldn’t think straight anymore, and the only things that ended up moving her lips were her stubbornness and feelings of rivalry toward Yuki.

“I don’t know…if I have feelings for him like that…but…! I-I’m not going to let you have him!”

Yuki slowly blinked, then stepped back.

Yuki already got to analyse Alya, and also make a feeling of rivalry towards her. Initially she'd use it slowly but surely to get more advantage in the race, but, Kuze suddenly got sick and Yuki didn't let that chance slip by.

When Kuze went off with sickness, she wanted to make sure he's out of the game for longer:

perfect ladylike expression was a different her—one with a menacing sneer like nothing Alisa had ever seen before, making her eyes widen in disbelief.

"You casually stepped foot into my territory as if it wasn't even a big deal. Don't you think you are being a little naive? In fact, you are being so careless that I just had to warn you myself." She snickered, blissfully narrowing her eyes in a cold glare. Although the ominous smile sent a chill down Alisa's spine, she began to deeply ponder Yuki's proposal. And then it hit her. What Yuki said about her being a guest was a lie. What she was really inviting Alisa to do was to come on her show to argue it out.

"Did you finally figure it out? *Giggle.* This is not an invitation as a friend. This is an invitation as a rival. You should have been wary when I asked you to do this when Masachika was absent."

"Don't tell me that was your plan all along?"

"Of course it was. I figured this was a wonderful opportunity to destroy you while your strategist was gone."

Her smile didn't break when any of those foul words slipped off her tongue. However, the utter shock of seeing her friend act like this roused Alisa's rebellious spirit.

"In other words, you think you can do whatever you want to me if we play ball in your court."

"Yes, of course. Obviously, I didn't need to warn you of my plan, but I figured I wouldn't need to resort to surprise attacks if you were alone. Furthermore…"

Yuki paused for a second, looking at Alisa with a contemptuous smile.

"You can't make excuses if someone challenges you to a fight, and you lose fair and square, right?"

"…! It sounds more like you're underestimating me."

"Oh my. Do you not realize that you are already dancing in the palm of my hand? I believe I am estimating you just right."

"…!"

Yuki's taunting completely altered Alisa's way of thinking. The woman in front of her wasn't a friend who she worked together with on the student council. She was an enemy who needed to be defeated.

"Oh. Of course, you can rely on Masachika if you want to. You could even ask him for guidance when you deliver the medicine to him today." Yuki smirked smugly, perhaps having sensed Alisa's change of heart and realizing she didn't have to hide it any longer. Alisa knew she was being taunted, but her

pride still wouldn’t allow her to depend on Masachika after being insulted like that.

“That won’t be necessary. He’s sick and needs to rest, so I’m not going to bother him. No matter what.”

“Oh my. Are you positive? Surely having his assistance would only benefit you.”

It was as if her eyes were saying to Alisa, “Go cry to Masachika for help because you’re not going to get anywhere without it,” and that made her snap.

Through her understanding of Alya and the fostered feeling of rivalry which she only fanned, she made sure that Alya won't allow herself to rely on sick Masachika, and won't even think of mentioning to him that the medicine is the one Yuki bought. (This part will be revisited with another angle of explanation that's more towards the planning itself rather than the preparation)

With this ensuring she understands Alya, ensuring Alya feels what she wanted her to feel towards her, and that Kuze is kept at a distance out of the game (for which she even stationed Ayano to take care of him while he's sick)

She also using her understanding of Kuze read his mind during his feverish state and made him overexert himself while he's having sickness (which just shows how much she was trying to buy time of Kuze being isolated as she knew better than anyone how impressive he is)

then I definitely prefer a blindfold over the eyes more than a mask over the mouth. If Alisa were actually blindfolded, I'd look and feel like a criminal, and I don't even want to talk about the fanfics that would be written about her, and what am I even thinking about anymore?

Masachika's nerdy imagination ran wild as he put his mask on, standing in a bit of a daze and swaying slightly.

"Kuze? Are you okay?" she asked with a worried expression.

"Now I get it… You get a sense of guilty pleasure *because* it seems bad. It's the thrill of doing wrong. I guess that's just another thing that makes blindfolded heroines better."

"…You're definitely not okay."

"…I agree."

Feeling embarrassed by her pitying gaze, Masachika decided it was best to take Alisa to the living room before he said anything worse.

"This is the sink, and this is the toilet. And that…don't go in there. That room over there is my room… And this is the living room. Just put your stuff down wherever you want. Oh, and there's some water and barley tea in the fridge if you're thirsty. Grab a cup and help yourself. Any questions?"

"I'll let you know if I have any. Anyway, you really should lie down and get some rest."

"Yeah, I think I'll take you up on that offer…"

He was quick to agree, since simply standing was hard enough for him, and he headed back to his room. After collapsing onto his bed, he reached to move his smartphone out of the way…and it suddenly started vibrating. Another text message from Yuki popped up on the screen.

> Stop imagining Alya in a blindfold.

"What the hell? Is she psychic?" muttered Masachika, wondering how her timing could have been so perfect, unless she really could read minds. His phone suddenly vibrated once more.

> This isn't mind reading. It's just love.

"How do you say something like that without dying of embarrassment?"

> How do you complain to a phone like that without dying of embarrassment?

"You little…! There's no way you're *not* reading my mind! Damn esper!"

(Also don't mind Kuze's thoughts, as genius as he is, he's sick and, he's also written as human pretty much always, which I love about his character).

Keeping her headstart and advantages:

Although I already mentioned it, I'll go over the specific part about using her advantages and headstart since for Yuki it's crucial.
Keep Kuze at bay via Alya -> Play on Alya's feeling of rivalry
Now on pages 154-156 of Volume 3, further, we see because of Alya's explanation what actually happened. Yuki got Alya to give Kuze medicine and she told Alya what medicine to get. It was in fact helping against cold as we saw earlier but Alya just didn't know some side effects of it. Yuki intentionally avoided going there herself and got Alya to go there. Once that was settled, Yuki asked if she'd like to participate in the guest afternoon announcements, to talk about a debate that happened recently. It's very likely to be the only big thing that happened this year by the candidates before the candidates even went public to declare running and why they do it, so it's very much natural too. But Alya didn't want to go there for reasons she didn't want Yuki to know... So instead she got Alya to be there as just a guest, nothing more. And, some exposure by itself isn't bad, and it all seems natural, so Alya accepted the proposal. Just as Yuki wanted her to.

in shock.

"Kuze?! What are you doing here?!"

"I heard from Ayano that Yuki was up to something, so I came."

"Oh… How do you feel?"

"My fever's gone, so don't worry about me. More importantly, what happened?"

He sat at his desk so that he was facing her, and she bit her lip, lowering her gaze.

"…I'm sorry."

"Alya?"

"I messed up. You went through so much to help me, and I failed! I…!"

Her voice cracked, tainted with regret, and her clenched fists trembled in her lap.

"Okay, okay. Take a deep breath. Can you tell me exactly what happened?"

He spoke in a soft, soothing voice to calm her down until she eventually began her explanation.

◇

It had all started the day prior, before morning homeroom. Alisa and Yuki were facing each other in the student council room after Yuki stopped by Class B and asked her if they could talk.

"Alya, I know this is sudden, but do you think you could stop by Masachika's house after school and give him some medicine for me?"

Although Alisa was puzzled by the sudden request, Yuki continued with a hand on her cheek in a troubled manner:

"Masachika has a fever right now and can't get out of bed."

"Wait. Really?"

"Yes. Normally, I would be more than happy to stop by and take care of him, but I unfortunately have business I must take care of today, so I was wondering if you, his partner in the election, could go in my place?"

"Oh… Sure, I can do that."

Despite feeling kind of annoyed at being asked by Yuki to help him, Alisa accepted the job, since it would have bothered her more if Yuki decided she had no choice but to go herself. Yuki then pulled a sheet of notepad paper from her pocket as though she already knew Alisa would accept.

“Thank goodness. This is the name of the cold medicine he usually takes, along with his address. Are you sure it’s okay?”

“Of course.”

Alisa took the sheet of paper, feeling frustrated that there was yet again something she didn’t know about Masachika.

“All right, I’ll stop by his place after school,” she promised. She was standing up to go back to her classroom when Yuki suddenly stopped her.

“Oh, Alya? There is actually one more thing I would like to ask you before you go.”

“…? Go on.”

“If it is okay with you, I would like for you to join me as a guest for the afternoon school announcements.”

“Huh?”

Yuki intertwined her fingers, clasping both hands together.

“As I am sure you know, during lunch once every two weeks, I, as the student council publicist, give reports on what the student council is doing, has done, or is going to do. Therefore, I thought I should discuss the debate from two weeks ago tomorrow, and who better to have as a guest than you, Alya?”

“T-tomorrow?”

“Yes. I believe it would be a great opportunity for you to leave a good impression on more students, since you won the debate. Think of this as a postgame interview in sports. They almost always interview the winner, right?”

“I guess…”

Alisa hesitated. She wasn’t sure it was her place to discuss what happened at the debate. The negative comments going around school about Sayaka had been contained thanks to Masachika’s and Nonoa’s efforts. Even though there were still some students who had a problem with Nonoa putting plants in the audience, Nonoa didn’t care in the slightest, and there was nothing Alisa could do anymore to help, either.

Would it really be okay to stir things up again after they worked so hard to get everything under control?

She never planned on announcing her victory to begin with, but would it really be right claiming it was a no contest? Would making it a no contest actually end up making things worse, as Masachika suggested when he talked about the victor pitying the loser?

Yes… I should be careful about what I say.

Masachika and Nonoa were far more social and good when it came to

relationships, and she didn't want any shallow thoughts of hers to destroy the outcome they created. Only after coming to that decision did Alisa decide to convey how she really felt to Yuki.

"…I apologize, but I don't feel like I actually won that debate. That's why I don't plan on doing any winner's interview, let alone bringing up something that is already long over."

"Oh my. Is that so?"

"That's so," Alisa said with a nod. Yuki leaned back as though she was shocked before eventually smiling confidently.

"Then how about you join me during the show as a guest, and we can simply not talk about the debate?"

"Huh?"

"This will be the last student council report of the semester, so I thought maybe we could make it a little special. So? Will you do it?"

"S-sure, if that's the case…"

"Wow! Really? Thank you so much!"

Yuki clasped her hands in front of her face again, and Alisa nodded back.

Except Yuki already did know, she's too smart not to notice what was happening, and she also understands Alya well. Combined with her popularity it's no wonder she got that info. Using that, she started taunting Alya herself. Even after talking about why she knows that they tried to make it seem like their victory didn't count, she talks about Kuze being able to spin the information around if needed. She also calls him the strategist, probably figuring out that Kuze played the main role in the debate. Pretty much all of it, was to make it clear that Yuki doesn't view her as someone worthy or dangerous to her, as if she's crying to Kuze for help. As we know, Alya was born talented, and hates it when people think she's just lucky to be born capable, not recognising the amount of effort she puts into everything. Alya wants to be the perfect version of herself and to improve herself, to be good enough. Yuki knows it that's why she attacks it. So Alya not informing Kuze when she gave him the medicine, was not an accident, but Yuki understanding Alya to a great degree. She also played a villain, and got Alya to stop viewing her as a friend but start seeing her as a rival for this event, even letting Alya figure out what was happening. And it wasn't her ego, no, it was what she'll use later on to completely disarm Alya.

perfect ladylike expression was a different her—one with a menacing sneer like nothing Alisa had ever seen before, making her eyes widen in disbelief.

"You casually stepped foot into my territory as if it wasn't even a big deal. Don't you think you are being a little naive? In fact, you are being so careless that I just had to warn you myself." She snickered, blissfully narrowing her eyes in a cold glare. Although the ominous smile sent a chill down Alisa's spine, she began to deeply ponder Yuki's proposal. And then it hit her. What Yuki said about her being a guest was a lie. What she was really inviting Alisa to do was to come on her show to argue it out.

"Did you finally figure it out? *Giggle.* This is not an invitation as a friend. This is an invitation as a rival. You should have been wary when I asked you to do this when Masachika was absent."

"Don't tell me that was your plan all along?"

"Of course it was. I figured this was a wonderful opportunity to destroy you while your strategist was gone."

Her smile didn't break when any of those foul words slipped off her tongue. However, the utter shock of seeing her friend act like this roused Alisa's rebellious spirit.

"In other words, you think you can do whatever you want to me if we play ball in your court."

"Yes, of course. Obviously, I didn't need to warn you of my plan, but I figured I wouldn't need to resort to surprise attacks if you were alone. Furthermore…"

Yuki paused for a second, looking at Alisa with a contemptuous smile.

"You can't make excuses if someone challenges you to a fight, and you lose fair and square, right?"

"…! It sounds more like you're underestimating me."

"Oh my. Do you not realize that you are already dancing in the palm of my hand? I believe I am estimating you just right."

"…!"

Yuki's taunting completely altered Alisa's way of thinking. The woman in front of her wasn't a friend who she worked together with on the student council. She was an enemy who needed to be defeated.

"Oh. Of course, you can rely on Masachika if you want to. You could even ask him for guidance when you deliver the medicine to him today." Yuki smirked smugly, perhaps having sensed Alisa's change of heart and realizing she didn't have to hide it any longer. Alisa knew she was being taunted, but her

pride still wouldn't allow her to depend on Masachika after being insulted like that.

"That won't be necessary. He's sick and needs to rest, so I'm not going to bother him. No matter what."

"Oh my. Are you positive? Surely having his assistance would only benefit you."

It was as if her eyes were saying to Alisa, "Go cry to Masachika for help because you're not going to get anywhere without it," and that made her snap.

Pretty skillfully using whatever advantages and opportunities she had to get ahead while Kuze was out

Using her unique resource:

Volume 3 Page 160-162:

After that, Alya pretty properly prepared for their showdown, perhaps she'd even give troubles to Yuki, but, Yuki wouldn't give her any chances and will destroy her. That's why, after acting as a villain before, now she looks apologetic, and even her expression matches it very well, for someone as perceptive as Alya. Yuki befriended Alya early in the series even before they got into rivaling candidatures, so Yuki used that, as if she regrets her words yesterday, and asks to still be friends with her. This by itself, is only a hit on Alya psychologically but wouldn't be enough normally. That's why, Yuki started talking about the reason she wants to become the Student Council President. And what's fascinating, she didn't lie about a single detail, making her story be as genuine as it can be, because it is. The only part that's a bit false, is that her brother isn't "dead" gone, but "ran away" gone. But obviously the first is what the natural assumption would be, especially given how serious she is. Her words and goals did resonate with Alya mainly because they weren't actually a lie. Such a strong reason did make her waver, but as if that wasn't enough, Yuki noticed the time was coming and they were about to get their mics turned on. Knowing that Alya wouldn't be able to answer instantly, she dealt the finishing blow: Asking why does ALYA want to become the President but also not giving her time to collect her thoughts from that question and also not giving her enough time to answer as well. With this, she turned Alya's determination towards her rival, into Alya pitying her friend and her conditions, respecting and understanding the weight of her goal while also having her own goal get under question for herself. All because Yuki understood her pretty much perfectly, Alya stood no chance. And as she's more socially capable, it's obvious who won in their "showdown".

"Ha…ha-ha… Are you sure *you'll* be okay without Kuze's help?"

Alisa implied that they both relied on his help, but Yuki didn't even blink.

"Of course I'm sure. At any rate, I hope you work as good alone as your title suggests, Solitary Princess."

"…! I'm not going to lose to you!"

Although Alisa was essentially baring her fangs, Yuki confidently cackled back.

"I am looking forward to tomorrow."

And just like that, out of nowhere, the two beautiful princesses were going to battle it out face-to-face the following day. Soon after that, Alisa began to prepare for their fight. She checked the questions from other students in the suggestion box and imagined which contribution would be brought up during the radio show. Even while taking care of Masachika, she tried to remember as many of Yuki's radio show announcements as she could and simulated likely topics and responses in her mind as well. And then…after school the next day, she headed to the broadcasting room, having done everything she could to prepare in such a short time.

"Are you here?"

She knocked on the door before stepping into the room, where Yuki was already waiting for her.

"Good afternoon, *Alya*. You're here early."

"…Yeah. I'm looking forward to it."

"Me too."

Alisa raised an eyebrow at the fact that Yuki was back to calling her by her nickname again, but she sat next to her friend and rival, still ready for battle. That is, until something completely unexpected took her by surprise.

"We still have time before the announcement starts, so… Alya?"

"What?"

"I'm sorry."

Yuki suddenly turned to Alisa and bowed deeply, shocking her.

"Wh-what are you apologizing for?"

"For the way I acted yesterday."

Her voice was heavy with regret, her head still deeply bowed.

"It pains me to challenge you like this out of nowhere, especially since you are such a wonderful friend. I had to act overly aggressive so I wouldn't hesitate and change my mind, but after going home last night and reflecting, I realized what I did was wrong."

"…"

"I know it is selfish of me to say this, but I do not want to lose you as a friend, so…do you think you could forgive me?"

"I-it doesn't matter anymore. Please lift your head," replied Alisa, uncomfortable. Yuki then looked up and glanced at Alisa's expression.

"Does that mean…you forgive me?"

"Y-yeah… It's fine. You're really serious about this. That's all, right?"

"Thank you so much! Oh, thank goodness."

Alisa was honestly not completely satisfied with Yuki's selfish apology, but when she saw the smile on Yuki's face…she didn't have it in her to complain anymore. Yuki's look of relief, as if a weight had been removed from her shoulders, made Alisa smile softly as well.

"I am truly sorry. I know I am making excuses, but there is a reason I have to become the student council president, no matter what," confessed Yuki with a grave expression, tightly clenching her fists in front of her chest. Alisa, who had an idea what that reason was, slightly sympathized with her and almost reflexively asked:

"Did your family tell you to become the student council president?"

The reason she asked went back to when she first joined the student council and Yuki opened up to her. She didn't think much of it at the time. She thought, *Well, everyone's family is different* and *It must be rough being constantly pressured by your family like that*, but…

"Well, that is part of the reason."

Yuki's eyes wandered as if she didn't know how to say what she wanted to say, but after some hesitation, she gazed right at Alisa and revealed:

"I had an older brother."

"What?"

Alisa was caught off guard by the unexpected confession, since she had always heard that Yuki was an only child. Yuki looked away from Alisa's wide eyes, stared off into the distance, and eloquently continued:

"My brother was always much more talented than me, so my parents and grandfather expected so much from him. They believed he would make a wonderful heir to take over the Suou family one day…and I looked up to him very much as well."

Her gentle expression almost appeared to be reflecting the memories of a past dear to her when all emotion suddenly faded from her face.

"But now he's gone."

"…!"

Yuki's tone suddenly changed. What she was saying… Alisa was at a loss for words. He was *gone*? Did that mean…?

"Therefore, losing isn't an option for me," she uttered, gazing right into Alisa's eyes, inevitably piercing her heart.

"I have to live up to my family's expectations in his place. That is the responsibility he left with me."

"…"

A strong sense of duty and a firm will could be sensed from her bold declaration…but she suddenly smiled.

"…But everyone has their own problems and their own reasons for doing something, so I don't know why I am saying all this. I apologize." Yuki smiled, looking apologetic, as she bowed again.

"H-huh? No, it's fine," replied Alisa, trembling. Yuki lifted her head and revealed a vacant, forced smile as she announced with a mood-lightening sparkle in her voice:

"Oh! Look at the time. The show is about to begin. Are you ready, Alya?"

"…I'm ready."

"Ready"? Alisa wasn't mentally prepared to do anything. She even forgot what she was doing there in the first place, and she turned to face the microphone almost unconsciously.

"What about you, Alya?" asked Yuki, getting Alisa's attention.

"Huh?"

"Why do you want to become the student council president?"

The words pierced Alisa's already anxious heart, and her mind went blank. When Masachika asked her the same question long ago, she was able to answer immediately. She told him it was because she wanted to be the student council president. That was it. But after hearing about Yuki's situation, Alisa suddenly began to feel her reason was far too insignificant.

"Oh, we really are out of time. Shall we begin, Alya?"

"Huh? O-oh, yes. Let's."

Even after reflexively replying, there was a part of Alisa still vaguely trying to remember what she was about to do, but by the time she did, it was far too late. The microphones were already turned on, and the program had already started.

Volume 3 Pages 162-163:

From the beginning Yuki, the more well known one with experience in this, was at an advantage, and with Alya's psyche and determination being at an all time low, she wavered even in the introduction, as she was trying to remember what she planned on doing, and at the same time filled with thoughts about the conversation before. But the pace was too fast for her to have time for this, so she didn't solve either of the problems and embarrassed herself. And once that happened, it only made her have another train of thoughts about

exactly that, while trying to stay composed and thinking she has to beat Yuki, she, of course, remembered what happened just before and naturally questioned her own reason for wanting to win against her and be the Council President. Yuki's victory in here, was already secured.

started.

"Hello, everyone. This is your biweekly student council announcement with me, Yuki Suou, student council publicist, here to update everyone on what the

student council has been doing these past two weeks. And guess what? I have a very special guest with me today, since this is the last announcement for the semester. Say hello."

Alisa found herself lost in Yuki's well-flowing, eloquent voice until it was her turn to speak. Yuki shifted her gaze to Alisa, who nervously faced her microphone…but she had completely forgotten what she'd planned on saying.

"Oh, Alisa Kujou here. Ah! I'm the student council accountant… Uh… I'm happy to be here with you today."

Her stiff and awkward introduction embarrassed her to the point that she could feel her back get warmer.

"Oh my. Alya seems to be a little nervous today. But there is nothing to worry about! I doubt there are that many people listening to this announcement today! I know that isn't something I should admit, though," Yuki promptly chimed in, but Alisa could feel that even her cheeks were getting hotter now.

Pull yourself together! You have to beat Yuki! And how are you going to do that if you need her to hold your hand and help you like this?!

She tried scolding herself, but it wasn't only that. Up until a few minutes ago, she was driven to defeat Yuki, but that drive had almost completely faded.

Why do I want to win, though? If anything, I…

There had to be a reason she wanted to win. A reason that was hers and hers alone. A reason to become the student council president.

No…! I can think about that later. I need to focus on this announcement right now. Uh…

Alisa understood just how important this announcement was, and yet Yuki's question was all she could think about. Why *did* she want to become the student council president? She would surely not be able to defeat Yuki if she couldn't answer with her chest puffed out proudly, but it was like an obsession slowly pushing Alisa into a corner.

"…I suppose that would be the gist of it. What do you think, Alya?"

"Huh? O-oh, uh…"

But the broadcast didn't stop, and the more Alisa panicked, the more difficulty she had trying to think, which consequentially caused her to trip over her words as well.

She used the broadcast to make the difference between her and Alya only seem to have widened more than before as the student body got a chance to compare the candidates side by side.

Alya Manipulation and Control:

To put it into a coherent manner of Yuki's steps: Firstly slowly brew Alya's jealousy towards Kuze, her running partner, being closer with Yuki than with herself -> Turn it into sense of rivalry -> Use that sense of rivalry to keep Kuze and Alya isolated -> Make Alya feel a certain amount of malice towards her for looking down on her -> Completely shake her by saying “truth” (which is just making Alya assume the interpretation of her word) of her brother and family situation and make Alya feel like her reason isn't enough -> With her getting Alya who's not experienced yet even if after Electoral Debate, out of her rails, starts “rescuing” Alya after indirectly putting her under the fire -> Completely shaking her state and resolve while also limiting Kuze’s interference later by making Alya still see Yuki as her friend
Volume 3 Page 164:

As we see, all of this is in fact confirmed by Kuze who knows Yuki better than anyone. In fact as we see, she also knew that if Alya, who only was beginning to open up to people, would know about what Yuki was after and her attack, she'd stop trusting people. Limiting Kuze from actually telling Alya what happened and what Yuki did, which Yuki can use in the future for another attack as Alya didn't get to know what she did wrong aside from lacking confidence. That also limited the information he could get from Alya to understand what Yuki did and plans in the future

"What happened after that was…more of the same. I couldn't gather my thoughts, and I didn't get a chance to recover mentally, either, as she toyed with me. Yuki essentially had to dig me out of each hole I made for myself after everything I said…which wasn't much, since I was having trouble conveying anything," she admitted, her voice tainted with bitterness and self-scorn. She ground her pearl-white teeth.

That's cruel…

That was the first thought that popped into Masachika's mind as he quietly watched over Alisa, frowning uncomfortably at how diabolical Yuki's psychological warfare was. First, she took on the role of a sinister villain, challenging and taunting Alisa to fire her up. Then, on the day of the challenge, she did a one-eighty and tried to elicit sympathy right before the announcement, shattering Alisa's will to fight. And as if that wasn't enough, she also told Alisa that she was fighting to become the president to live up to her family's expectations, since her beloved older brother was now gone, then almost immediately switched to asking Alisa what she was fighting for. And because Alisa was a serious and sincere person, she fell right into Yuki's trap. Perhaps the silver lining here was that Alisa was so sincere that she had no idea Yuki was trying to make her doubt herself. If Alisa, who didn't have many friends to begin with, ever knew these were calculated moves Yuki used to defeat her, she probably would stop trusting people, at least somewhat. Perhaps that, too, was part of Yuki's plan.

Wait… Maybe Yuki knew that Alya wouldn't notice. Maybe that was part of her plan.

She maintained her friendship with Alisa, helping her every time she tripped over her words while simultaneously trying to throw Alisa off her game. *My sister meticulously planned this terrifying attack*, thought Masachika.

Volume 3 Pages 165-166:

After this we see that viewing it as a challenge and pretty much everything that Alya was seeing, feeling etc was already prepared for and planned by Yuki, and she knows her weak spots perfectly, that's why she attacked them. She also made it seem like she was cunning (which she was but in a different way) and wanted to separate them, whilst Alya wouldn't do anything differently if Kuze wasn't sick. Kuze had to slightly lie to Alya here about the shift of balance not changing much when it did, in fact. But what he didn't lie about, is that the actual main goal this whole time, was the closing ceremony. For Yuki to get an advantage there with Alya, the representative not being at her best. All of it was planned pretty amazingly, the warfare, keeping Kuze sick to make Alya fired up even more, the broadcast. And it was needed for the Closing Ceremony to go as planned as well.

“You’re doing exactly what Yuki wants. So you weren’t able to say the things you wanted during the announcement that Yuki hosted. That’s it? Since when did that become a ‘challenge’?”

“What do you mean?”

“Yuki said she was challenging you, or at the very least, she made it seem like it was a match. That’s why you thought it was a competition. Am I wrong?”

Alisa blinked for a few moments with her head bent forward before slowly leaning her upper body back. After making sure she pulled herself together, Masachika continued in a matter-of-fact tone:

“Wanting to win is important, but you can’t let that obsession take you prisoner. It’ll give you tunnel vision, and you’ll miss important details, so be careful.”

“‘Important details’?”

“Yep. Like…what’s the headliner?”

After she shot him a puzzled look, he shrugged and continued:

“Fighting head-to-head in these sudden death matches is not what you do. You’re the kind of person who puts everything she has into fighting with everything she has, regardless of who her opponent is. You analyze your rival until you are satisfied and ready, and the results simply follow. Right?”

“I suppose…”

“Thinking about your opponents and their problems is a distraction for people like you. Of course, the existence of an adversary could give you motivation, but you don’t need motivation. You can keep motivated all by yourself. In other words, worrying too much about your competition for whatever reason only gets in your way and keeps you from giving one hundred percent to whatever you’re doing.”

“…”

“I get it, though. This is the first time you’ve gotten so worked up that you completely lost your sense of composure, right?”

“Yes… I suppose I did get worked up now that you mention it…”

Alisa appeared to be deep in thought, as if she had an idea of what he was getting at.

“Listen. Change your mindset. Yuki wasn’t trying to use today’s broadcast to achieve dominance over you. She was trying to distract you so you wouldn’t be able to give it your all at the closing ceremony when you give your speech,” suggested Masachika, purposely taking an assertive tone.

“…!”

"Am I wrong? Today was a half day, so there were hardly any students who stuck around to listen to the announcement during lunch. If she wanted to get the upper hand during one of these announcements, she would've done so when the whole school was around to hear."

"But…didn't she decide to do this because you were sick, and you weren't coming to school today?"

"That's part of it, but you would have accepted a challenge from her to fight one-on-one even if I hadn't been absent, right?"

"…"

"So I know I'm repeating myself, but change your mindset. There's no need for you to do things her way. Something this insignificant wouldn't even count as a preliminary skirmish compared to the closing ceremony speech. You were a guest during today's announcement, and you weren't the best talker in the world. That's all. No big deal. None of our schoolmates even knew you two were duking it out, and there weren't that many students who heard the announcement. Plus, nobody's going to care about, let alone remember, what happened today if you put on a good show at the closing ceremony in two days."

He spoke earnestly, his eyes boring into hers. However, even Masachika himself knew that everything he said wasn't completely factual. It was most likely that there had been a shift in the balance of power between Yuki and Alisa after today's announcement. This was their first time publicly clashing, after all, and Masachika had naturally assumed their first altercation, which would draw a lot of attention, would be the closing ceremony. However, Yuki's surprise attack proved him wrong. Right as people were starting to find themselves impressed with Princess Alya after the debate, this happened. *She got us*, thought Masachika, who'd wanted to go into the closing ceremony with Alisa's popularity still on the rise from the debate. Nevertheless, having Alisa change her mindset was what was most important right now. Because he believed taking care of this was imperative after unintentionally learning that her mental state greatly affected how much of her true potential she could tap into.

"So the headliner would be the closing ceremony? And the announcement was more like an opening performance? Is that what you mean?"

With this she successfully pulled off a fast one on sick Kuze, played Alya like a fiddle, played with public's opinion, restricted Kuze's information source and also what he could do as well as she could without him damaging Alya's development all the while still being a close friend in Alya's mind.

Finishing Touches Closing Ceremony:

And of course, the finishing touches. The speech itself: Yuki approached something that the students would love to be used - Their own suggestions, she gave a speech as a natural leader while making reassurance of already having experience as a president and knowing

she can use the suggestion box properly via the broadcast. I won't make much of an analysis here since it's pretty properly shown and explained:

There were also people who tried to assess the situation calmly. Yuki stood on the stage with all kinds of gazes on her. Yuki's performance was displayed on the screen above the stage, and the audience began to get a little excited.

"Thank you for the introduction. My name is Suou Yuki, and I serve as the public relations officer of the Student Council as well as the former Student Council president of the junior high school division of Seirei Gakuen. I plan to run for Student Council president next year. Therefore, I hope to receive your support."

When Yuki bowed lightly with a graceful smile decorating her face, cheers from the students came from all corners of the hall. She responded by nodding lightly and slightly lowering her tone of voice.

"Now, I would like to tell you a little about my vision. If I succeed in becoming the Student Council president, I have a goal, which is... to make a school that reflects the opinions of the students. Ara? There must be many who think that that's more normal than you think, right?"

Yuki suddenly asked with a slightly ignorant tone, making the audience laugh lightly and made the atmosphere more relaxed. After that, Yuki took out a large box from under the podium and showed it to the audience.

"Specifically... like this suggestion box. This thing has been installed in the school for many years... I'm sure, only a few people have ever used this service before. Actually, I've brought it up many times in the lunchtime activity report broadcast, but I feel that there aren't many real problems or requests in it. I think that's because many people think, 'There's no point in writing to the suggestion box because it'll never be realized,' right?"

When Yuki asked a specific question, the students reflected on it and nodded in agreement. After seeing that the students were convinced, Yuki began to mention her reasoning.

“However, this is not unreasonable. After all, for most of the members, it’s their first time doing Student Council work. In fact, a company employee needs to spend their first year learning their job, but Student Council members only serve for one year while their term expires. Therefore, it would be difficult to listen to students’ requests and make them happen. What’s more, somehow for some reason this year... Yes, for some reason! We’re lacking Student Council members from 1st year students, you know?”

Yuki’s deliberate way of saying that made the students laugh.

“Whose fault is it?”

After laughing out loud while following up with the senpai who were also Student Council members, Yuki cut to the heart of the matter.

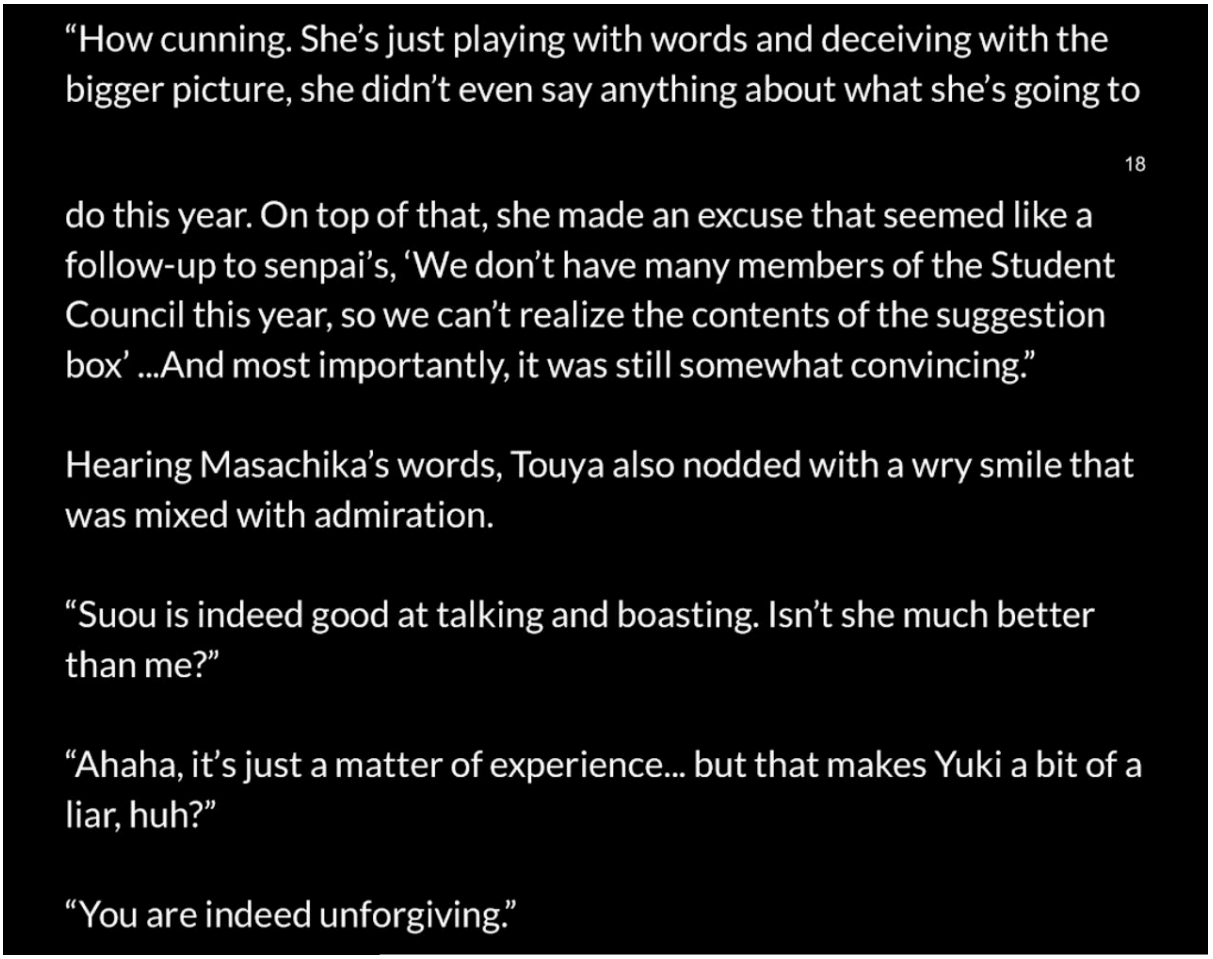
“However, when I become the Student Council president later, I will try to fulfill the requests made in this suggestion box.”

Yuki emphasized this very clearly and continued.

“More precisely, I will try to fulfill at least one request from a student per month. And with those results, I will start realizing bigger requests. For example, changing the sports festival, or adding more events and time for school festivals, or also extending the free time for school field trips. Maybe it would also be interesting to create new events on Halloween and Christmas, huh?”

For most of the students, the sweet promises that were being offered caused unbearable excitement. Some of them even muttered “Can it really be realized?” because they doubted it. However, Yuki herself answered in the affirmative. After looking around the audience with a strong smile, Yuki declared.

“I believe that only I am capable of doing this, having served in the Student Council for two years in junior school while still serving in high school. Besides that, I intend to prove it through my future work. For your attention, I thank you very much.”



With the follow up being another party aka Ayano rather than Yuki herself, speaking about her benevolence and how hard working she is, which everyone knows is true in all sorts of ways, to show even more of how impressive, capable and fitting she is as a candidate.

“How cunning. She’s just playing with words and deceiving with the bigger picture, she didn’t even say anything about what she’s going to

do this year. On top of that, she made an excuse that seemed like a follow-up to senpai’s, ‘We don’t have many members of the Student Council this year, so we can’t realize the contents of the suggestion box’ ...And most importantly, it was still somewhat convincing.”

Hearing Masachika’s words, Touya also nodded with a wry smile that was mixed with admiration.

“Suou is indeed good at talking and boasting. Isn’t she much better than me?”

“Ahaha, it’s just a matter of experience... but that makes Yuki a bit of a liar, huh?”

“You are indeed unforgiving.”

No, it was probably just Masachika's imagination. In any case, Ayano, who usually kept a low profile, stood on the podium with her bangs open, causing many male students to say, "Who is that pretty girl?" and even some girls shouted, "Kyaa~! Ayano-chan is so cute~!" In fact, despite her appearance, Ayano was quite popular as a mascot among the few girls who knew her.

"My name is Kimishima Ayano, serving as general affairs within the Student Council. In my private life, I am a servant of the Suou family and serve Yuki-sama as her personal maid."

The atmosphere in the gymnasium at that moment could simply be described as "?!!!" due to the shock of the audience. A mysterious beautiful girl suddenly appeared and claimed to be Yuki's personal maid.

For most people, the information they just heard first hand was too much to process, but the crowd didn't stop Ayano, as she continued,

"Next year, I plan to run for election together with Yuki-sama. I will use my experience as Yuki-sama's servant since childhood, and support her. Yuki-sama is a wonderful person who deserves to be called well-behaved and talented. I am confident that she will lead the school well as Student Council president."

Ayano continued to speak without hesitation as if she was reading a script. But, the way she spoke without the slightest hint of acting or exaggeration, as well as the straightforward look in her eyes, gave a strange sense of truth to what she said. Somehow, the audience could tell that she was only telling the truth. And in fact, Ayano is only telling what is true for her.

"Yuki-sama has always been a top student at school, and her English has already reached the level of native speakers. Recently, she has

been learning Chinese and has reached a level that allows for daily conversation. She also shows great talent in piano, flower arranging, karate, and many other activities. She is truly a person who is full of many talents. Even so, Yuki-sama was never arrogant, and was always considerate of those around her. Even for servants like me, she always gave precious gifts every year on my birthday."

Then Ayano closed her eyes, raised her chin slightly and closed her lips tightly..... Apparently, she had intended to put on a satisfied face... but her expression didn't change at all. Seeing Ayano's satisfied face (?) several girls shouted in a shrill tone. As if carried away by the atmosphere, laughter began to spread around the audience, saying, "That girl is kind of interesting too, huh?"

While blinking her eyes slightly at the unexpected reaction, Ayano then proudly and... perhaps enthusiastically talked about Yuki. The audience also listened to Ayano's story, because of the unique atmosphere that she brought.

"Well, it was bound to turn out like this." Masachika muttered to herself while listening to Ayano's speech from the side of the stage.

"Yuki's persuasive speech was backed up by her achievements back in junior high school. And Ayano further emphasized it from the point of view of a servant who has served her since childhood..."

Masachika gave a high rating after conducting an objective analysis of the two rivals. Then, she looked back at Alisa and said.

"This was a perfect speech. She's trying hard to attack first and trying to achieve a landslide victory."

Masachika calmly admitted that the situation was quite difficult, but Alisa asked with a look that didn't show the slightest bit of anxiety.

"...But, we'll be able to win it, right?"

This also got properly explained and showed with me not needing to contribute much.

Context/Additional Details:

Some context: Kuze caught a cold, while Closing Ceremony was closing in, with the broadcast obviously also being close in. And Yuki decided to act while it's her best chance.

Volume 3 Page 124:

After Kuze got sick, he obviously texted Yuki, his sister, to notify her. And Yuki who's a childhood friend for Alya, told Alya about his sickness, and she was the one who gave Alya the medicine to give to Kuze. All of it seems natural for Alya, as they are obviously close, and she obviously did as asked without any suspicion. Kuze himself, may at times be wary of Yuki who's cunning and also their current rival, but since Alya is the one who brought the medicine it obviously got his guard down, Alya didn't say that Yuki told her what medicine to buy, so even there it was all covered for Kuze to not be suspicious.

He felt a lot better already, perhaps thanks to the medicine. While his senses were still slightly dulled and his mind foggy, it might have been because he slept too much. When he looked up at the clock, it was already past eight, which meant he had been in dreamland for over five hours. It became clear to him that he had snoozed way too long after he added in the hours he had already slept that morning.

Alya must have already gone home…right?

But before he left his room to check, he grabbed his phone out of habit and curiously raised an eyebrow. There were two messages from Yuki displayed on his lock screen: Did you order a maid? and Sent you a ticking time bomb. BOOM! ☆

Masachika instantly started to worry. His gut twisted as he opened the door to his room…and he immediately imagined himself in a different world in an attempt to escape reality…because two beautiful young women were

quietly…oh so quietly glaring at each other in the living room.

I see… So this is what a cold war is like. I had no idea Russia and Japan were about to go at it again.

Only his absurd imagination was keeping him from breaking down, but he was too loud when he opened the door. The two girls in the living room looked over in his direction and greeted him, dragging him back to reality whether he liked it or not.

"Kuze, are you sure you had enough rest?"

"How do you feel, Sir Masachika?"

One was Alisa, and the other was a young lady who usually always had her hair down sloppily covering her face at school but now had it neatly tied up, exposing her face, and was fully equipped (?) in a maid uniform: Ayano. Incidentally, her maid uniform was frilly, like one of those so-called maid uniforms you would see in Akihabara, but this wasn't the Suou family staff's official uniform. This was something she wore because Yuki wanted her to. The Suou family staff's official uniform was far simpler. They didn't even wear those frilly headbands. Ayano only ended up with this outfit because Yuki went straight to her grandfather and demanded, "Young women should wear cuter clothes!" Her grandfather reluctantly agreed but only if Yuki promised Ayano would not dress like that when they had guests over. Therefore, Ayano's maid uniform was something Yuki fought for. That was how much it meant to her.

Which we see in Pages 150-151 of Volume 3. He knows that Ayano can't outright lie to him, and that's part of why he wasn't suspicious. The pill itself did help but also made his mind more foggy and made him sleep more which was needed to stall time as I said before. Only after a few days when he started feeling less sick did Kuze notice that something is wrong with the pill which by itself is quite good considering he was sick. So, with using Alya and Ayano, the 2 whom he trusts the most aside from Yuki (who he may be suspicious about due to the elections), to drop his guard down even more while he's sick, stall time, and make his mind more unclear so he'll not figure it out faster than she wanted. This was done simultaneously while Yuki was attacking Alya

He stared hard at the pill in Ayano's hand before suddenly realizing what was most likely the problem. The previous day, Masachika was out of it due to his fever, so he hadn't really thought much about it, but he recognized these pills.

"Is everything okay?"

Ayano tilted her head, her expression blank. And yet she looked almost nervous.

"Ayano, show me the box you got this medicine from," he quietly demanded, staring right into her eyes.

"…"

Panic…could not be seen in her eyes, but she wasn't able to immediately answer him, either. Her quiet hesitancy only solidified his suspicions.

"Ayano."

"…As you wish."

She closed her eyes in resignation before returning with the box the medicine came in. And after checking the front and back of the box, he was sure of it.

"Ayano, this medicine makes you sleepy, doesn't it?"

"…Yes."

It all made sense now. No wonder he slept so much. He wasn't sleep-deprived. It was simply one of the cold medicine's side effects. Mystery solved. But what he didn't know was why Ayano was making him take this medicine, which Alisa had bought, when she knew it made him sleepy. Furthermore, *who* chose this medicine?

"Ayano, you know this medicine makes me really sleepy, right? Why didn't you warn me?"

"…"

"…"

She didn't answer his question but instead dropped to her knees smoothly and bowed.

"You have my sincerest apologies."

"…"

"What I did was unforgivable. I should have never made you, my master, take medicine that has such strong side effects. Please punish me however you will."

She kept her head perfectly lowered over the carpet as she apologized.

"Ayano, was Yuki the one who told Alya to buy this medicine?" he quietly asked.

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"…"

His question was met with her silent admission, for she could not sell out her master (Yuki) or lie to her master (Masachika), either.

"What is Yuki scheming? Let's assume she didn't want me to go to school today. Why would that be?"

"…"

But Ayano maintained her silence, ready to take the fall for her master. Masachika sighed, then softened his tone.

Volume 3 Page 154:

Once Kuze recovers we see the **aftermaths** of Yuki's scheme, that is, making people's expectations of Alya waver and have them mentally compare the both of them by getting them to see the contrast in their abilities. Of course this also put to question Alya's previous achievement where most of the time she was doing everything herself in the eyes of people: Outarguing the seasoned debater Sayaka, to be precise. Of course what didn't help is the fact that Alya wanted Sayaka's and Nonoa's reputation saved so in the end less credit was given to Alya and Kuze already, and this only made it worse. Thus, the gap between them has already significantly widened while Kuze was out with a cold.

"Where are Alya and Yuki…?"

He panted heavily as he changed into his school slippers and decided to check out their classroom first before heading to the student council room. He swallowed some of the phlegm in his throat, and as he walked briskly toward the classroom, he heard three guys passing by talking excitedly about something.

"Man, the noble princess is such a good talker—very fun to listen to and unlike anyone else."

"Princess Alya did a really good job, but they're just on different levels, ya know?"

"I thought Kujou did a good job at the debate the other day, but she's not really good at improvising, it seems. Like, at all. Did she memorize some sort of script before the debate last time?"

"Yeah, I bet she did."

"Totally."

They continued chatting as they passed by, seeming not to notice him at all, and anxiety began to swell in his heart once more.

What? "Improvising"? "Script"? Don't tell me there was a debate… No. There's no way they'd decide to do a debate on the one day I'm gone, especially not the following day.

But he didn't have enough information yet to produce an answer. What he did know was that while the details were unclear, it was obvious that Yuki did something to put herself above Alisa in popularity.

Dammit! I can't believe I let my guard down! I was an idiot to think nobody would make a move before the closing ceremony… Dammit!

He beat himself up over his own carelessness and peeked into the classroom…where he found Alisa sitting alone at her desk.

"Alya…"

When he opened the door, Alisa, who was staring in a daze at her desk, lifted her head, and when she saw that it was Masachika, her eyes opened wide

The reason I put these separately is because they are in the beginning but by themselves they don't really make as much sense or why they are so effective so I decided to firstly explain them thoroughly then put them at the end to show more-so the natural flow of the events at the beginning of when it's really "starting" and how natural it looks alongside some additional details.

With this I'll be concluding Yuki's part of Closing Ceremony: A very solid and prepared Scheme with good preparation process, good ability to latch onto unexpected advantages/headstarts she gets and prolonging/strengthening their effects, great manipulation, ability to read and assess both people and situations, her leadership and persuasive ability as well as how meticulous she is in trying to cut off Kuze's options even when he'll get back on his feet.

Starting now with Kuze as I finished talking about his opponent - Yuki.

Finding out about Yuki scheming:

Volume 3 Pages 149-150:

Kuze was suspicious beforehand and concerned with how Alya was acting but as Alya didn't admit to anything (and as explained how it got concealed from him on Yuki's part of the analysis), he didn't think of it more, while he had a fever, on too. But once his fever was out, he became sharp again, the first thing he noticed is the pill, he immediately noticed what pill it was which he didn't before due to fever, it's the cold medicine that also as a side effect makes him really sleepy due to his constitution. To confirm that he asked Ayano to bring in the medicine box, and in the end he was right. And all of the mysteries like how sleepy he was and how much he slept, how weak he was, how foggy his mind was, were solved. And this time, aside from just thinking that Alya brought him that medicine, now he thought, "who chose it" as well, which already got him to understand the situation, and that while Alya brought it, it wasn't her choice to get this medicine specifically. And while he knew that Ayano can't lie to him, Kuze started interrogating her, but when she didn't answer to his question, he understood that the answer was Yuki. Simply enough: She can't lie to him outright, but she also can't give out Yuki. So when faced with that question, she couldn't answer as both choices would go against one of the. Through this he understood he is right. To note, using the anime, the pills really look just like any normal pills, so, it's kind of normal he didn't notice anything while he had a fever, but it's still incredible that, right after getting off of the fever, he was able to notice the type of pills they are, connect it to him feeling sleepy this whole time, Alya's strange behaviour and how Ayano is always with him, while also the interrogation. So he already understood that Yuki is doing something behind the scenes, or already did. That's why he immediately rushes to school despite him still not being fully recovered and the weather.

“Oh, 36.7 degrees Celsius. My fever’s basically gone.”

“I am so glad to hear that. What would you like for breakfast? Rice porridge or udon?”

“Let’s go with udon.”

“As you wish.”

After thanking Ayano for her kindness, Masachika headed to the bathroom to rinse his mouth and take a quick shower, then changed into a new pair of pajamas and returned to the living room. The udon’s broth was rich and delicious enough for him to easily finish half an extra helping. His body was finally starting to feel better by the time he had finished eating.

“Phew… Thanks a lot, Ayano.”

“I am glad you liked it, and I am glad you seem to have your appetite back.”

“Yeah, I’m basically back to normal. Even my sore throat feels a lot better already.”

“I am relieved to hear that. However, you should still rest today, just in case.”

“Yeah, school’s already over anyway.”

When he looked at the clock, it was already 12:35 PM. While it’d usually be lunch around this time, today was a half day, and while the student council members had to meet the following day to discuss the closing ceremony and prepare for it, they didn’t have a meeting today.

“Here is your medicine.”

“Oh, thanks…?”

All of a sudden, Masachika felt like something was off when he saw the medicine and the glass of water being handed to him.

Hmm? Hold up. Something doesn’t feel right.

It felt as if there was something extremely important right under his nose, but he couldn’t figure out what that something was, and his instincts weren’t allowing him to ignore it, either.

This pill…?

He stared hard at the pill in Ayano's hand before suddenly realizing what was most likely the problem. The previous day, Masachika was out of it due to his fever, so he hadn't really thought much about it, but he recognized these pills.

"Is everything okay?"

Ayano tilted her head, her expression blank. And yet she looked almost nervous.

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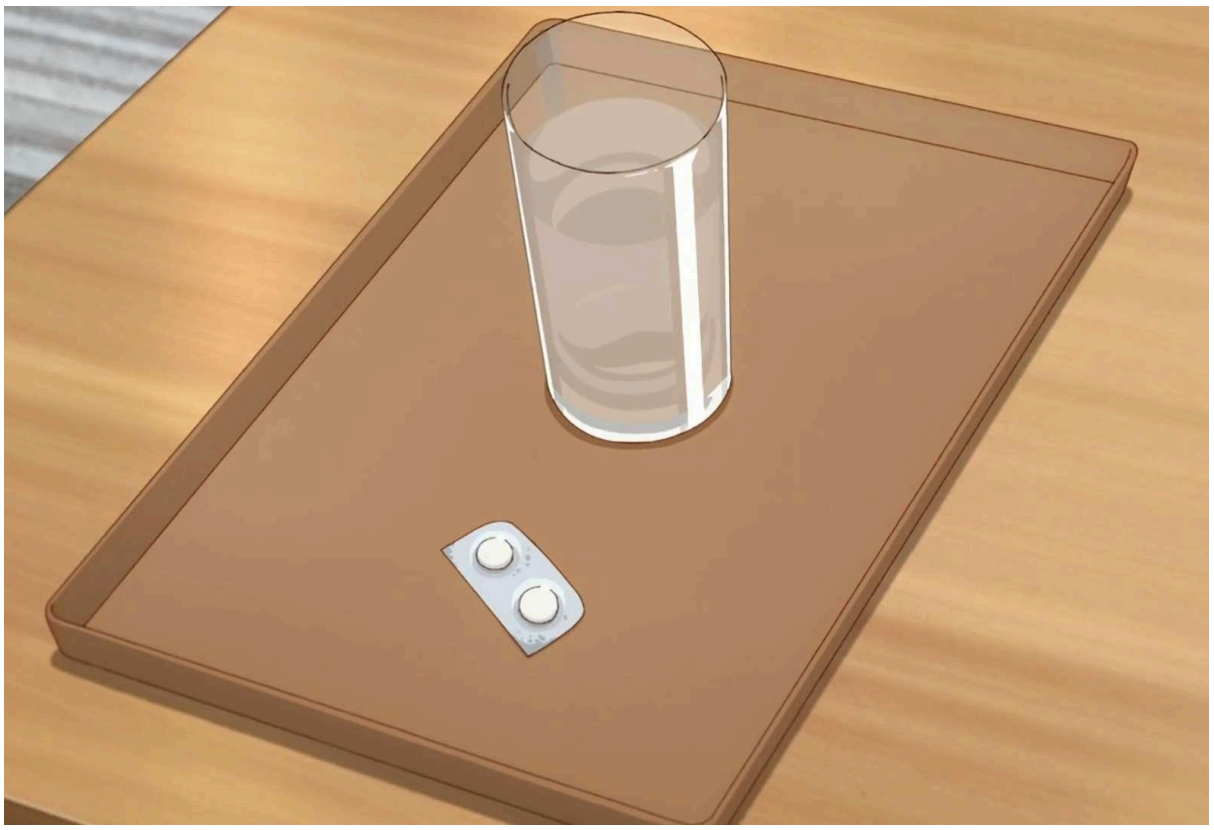
"You have my sincerest apologies."

"…"

"What I did was unforgivable. I should have never made you, my master, take medicine that has such strong side effects. Please punish me however you will."

She kept her head perfectly lowered over the carpet as she apologized.

"Ayano, was Yuki the one who told Alya to buy this medicine?" he quietly asked.



With this he was able to understand that the perpetrator is Yuki, Ayano is acting on her order's and Alya's concerning behaviour also being of note, this is a necessary first step to starting anything in countering Yuki.

Managing the damage done to Alya:

Although him managing Alya and understanding Yuki's goals and scheme happened at the same time, I'll focus on them separately:
Volume 3 Page 164-165:

From what Alya told him: Kuze understood all of what Yuki did, her plan and actions, as well as the psychological warfare on poor Alya. While Alya is normally sharp and very intelligent, she's also innocent and inexperienced in relationships, so, she's not prepared for someone like Yuki playing with her mind.
Through understanding Yuki and piecing together the clue's of the plan, he also understood that, Yuki intentionally threw Alya off the game but acted as if she was helping her the whole time, thus maintaining their friendship and making Alya more frustrated. But at the same time, as she intentionally got him out of the picture, he understood that she didn't want him to tell everything to Alya, as she knew that he'll understand, it'll lead to Alya growing distrust in other people, thus stunning her growth, and also making it less likely she'll win in the election. Telling her that, here, is pretty much the same as shooting yourself in the leg while running towards a goal. But he still couldn't let her be so down in the negativity, so he redirected her.

But Kuze also can't let her be ignorant about this whole thing and what was wrong with her line of thinking. He pointed out the spot that Yuki intentionally attacked: Alya's competitiveness. From the very beginning it wasn't a challenge but Yuki made Alya see it as such. So, Kuze points out her mistake in this part and how Yuki made her vision of the situation narrow and tunnel-like. Both Yuki and he understand Alya to a T, so they both knew that, she can be motivated by herself. So, making her think more about the opponent, is, what instead will throw her off her game. So through understanding both Alya and Yuki, he pieced together all of Yuki's attacks on Alya, and he also saw through he actual goal: Get Alya to perform badly in the Closing Ceremony. This was her sole goal, which make sense after what he says next:

That's cruel…

That was the first thought that popped into Masachika's mind as he quietly watched over Alisa, frowning uncomfortably at how diabolical Yuki's psychological warfare was. First, she took on the role of a sinister villain, challenging and taunting Alisa to fire her up. Then, on the day of the challenge, she did a one-eighty and tried to elicit sympathy right before the announcement, shattering Alisa's will to fight. And as if that wasn't enough, she also told Alisa that she was fighting to become the president to live up to her family's expectations, since her beloved older brother was now gone, then almost immediately switched to asking Alisa what she was fighting for. And because Alisa was a serious and sincere person, she fell right into Yuki's trap. Perhaps the silver lining here was that Alisa was so sincere that she had no idea Yuki was trying to make her doubt herself. If Alisa, who didn't have many friends to begin with, ever knew these were calculated moves Yuki used to defeat her, she probably would stop trusting people, at least somewhat. Perhaps that, too, was part of Yuki's plan.

Wait… Maybe Yuki knew that Alya wouldn't notice. Maybe that was part of her plan.

She maintained her friendship with Alisa, helping her every time she tripped over her words while simultaneously trying to throw Alisa off her game. *My sister meticulously planned this terrifying attack*, thought Masachika.

"It's so frustrating."

When he returned his focus to the strained, weak voice in front of him, Alisa was still frowning and clenching her teeth, her fists trembling.

"I can't believe how easily I let myself get worked up like that… I was so confident when I took her up on her challenge, but in the end, I couldn't do anything—"

"Okay, that's enough. You're moving in the wrong direction with your thinking," observed Masachika, and he clapped his hands to snap her out of it. Alisa lifted her head to look at him.

"…The 'wrong direction'?"

“You’re doing exactly what Yuki wants. So you weren’t able to say the things you wanted during the announcement that Yuki hosted. That’s it? Since when did that become a ‘challenge’?”

“What do you mean?”

“Yuki said she was challenging you, or at the very least, she made it seem like it was a match. That’s why you thought it was a competition. Am I wrong?”

Alisa blinked for a few moments with her head bent forward before slowly leaning her upper body back. After making sure she pulled herself together, Masachika continued in a matter-of-fact tone:

“Wanting to win is important, but you can’t let that obsession take you prisoner. It’ll give you tunnel vision, and you’ll miss important details, so be careful.”

“‘Important details’?”

“Yep. Like…what’s the headliner?”

After she shot him a puzzled look, he shrugged and continued:

“Fighting head-to-head in these sudden death matches is not what you do. You’re the kind of person who puts everything she has into fighting with everything she has, regardless of who her opponent is. You analyze your rival until you are satisfied and ready, and the results simply follow. Right?”

“I suppose…”

“Thinking about your opponents and their problems is a distraction for people like you. Of course, the existence of an adversary could give you motivation, but you don’t need motivation. You can keep motivated all by yourself. In other words, worrying too much about your competition for whatever reason only gets in your way and keeps you from giving one hundred percent to whatever you’re doing.”

“…”

“I get it, though. This is the first time you’ve gotten so worked up that you completely lost your sense of composure, right?”

“Yes… I suppose I did get worked up now that you mention it…”

Alisa appeared to be deep in thought, as if she had an idea of what he was getting at.

“Listen. Change your mindset. Yuki wasn’t trying to use today’s broadcast to achieve dominance over you. She was trying to distract you so you wouldn’t be able to give it your all at the closing ceremony when you give your speech,” suggested Masachika, purposely taking an assertive tone.

“…!”

Kuze left out the public's shift in perception, he left out how Yuki fully manipulated to salvage their connection too which was pretty needed, he in the end decided to persuade her and change her mindset which Yuki was taking advantage of.

He let Alya figure out at least bits of the things that were going wrong by herself, like getting worked up and obsessed over winning, then he told her that Yuki's real goal wasn't even the

broadcast, treating it like it wasn't important and just a distraction even if in reality it put them at more of a disadvantage than before
Volume 3 Pages 166-167:

Kuze continues explaining to Alya: If Yuki wanted to assert dominance -> She would do it during an event where most students are, which is obvious. But there were barely any, that day. Alya thought it was because he got sick, but it wasn't the case. In fact, Yuki made Alya believe that, because, both he and Yuki know, Alya would accept a 1v1 regardless if Kuze was healthy or sick. She just used it to provoke Alya further.
There was a slight shift of balance in their favourability, but, he decided to conceal that, as it wasn't a very important detail right then, and it's better to get Alya's attention and focus, on Closing Ceremony.
And, as a finishing touch, to understanding through small clue's what Yuki did, Kuze understood an important detail: Yuki wanted Alya to be depressed, sad etc. But Alya was frustrated, that's something Kuze easily noted, as a difference from what Yuki wanted, which means, not everything went perfectly for Yuki, gladly enough. So, with this, he dissected Yuki's actions and intentions with razor sharp accuracy, to the point of understanding what emotions Yuki wanted Alya to feel, and how it was the as Yuki hoped for in that department.
All this, and the things before, he's practically seeing through everything presently, and he changed Alya's mindset, at the same time.

"Am I wrong? Today was a half day, so there were hardly any students who stuck around to listen to the announcement during lunch. If she wanted to get the upper hand during one of these announcements, she would've done so when the whole school was around to hear."

"But…didn't she decide to do this because you were sick, and you weren't coming to school today?"

"That's part of it, but you would have accepted a challenge from her to fight one-on-one even if I hadn't been absent, right?"

"…"

"So I know I'm repeating myself, but change your mindset. There's no need for you to do things her way. Something this insignificant wouldn't even count as a preliminary skirmish compared to the closing ceremony speech. You were a guest during today's announcement, and you weren't the best talker in the world. That's all. No big deal. None of our schoolmates even knew you two were duking it out, and there weren't that many students who heard the announcement. Plus, nobody's going to care about, let alone remember, what happened today if you put on a good show at the closing ceremony in two days."

He spoke earnestly, his eyes boring into hers. However, even Masachika himself knew that everything he said wasn't completely factual. It was most likely that there had been a shift in the balance of power between Yuki and Alisa after today's announcement. This was their first time publicly clashing, after all, and Masachika had naturally assumed their first altercation, which would draw a lot of attention, would be the closing ceremony. However, Yuki's surprise attack proved him wrong. Right as people were starting to find themselves impressed with Princess Alya after the debate, this happened. *She got us*, thought Masachika, who'd wanted to go into the closing ceremony with Alisa's popularity still on the rise from the debate. Nevertheless, having Alisa change her mindset was what was most important right now. Because he believed taking care of this was imperative after unintentionally learning that her mental state greatly affected how much of her true potential she could tap into.

"So the headliner would be the closing ceremony? And the announcement was more like an opening performance? Is that what you mean?"

"Basically. It looks like she wanted to throw you off your game…but things probably didn't go exactly how she planned."

"…?"

Alisa blinked.

"She was probably expecting you to be depressed because you couldn't

perform how you wanted to during the announcement, and she wanted you to stay depressed during the closing ceremony. But you're frustrated, not depressed. Which means everything's going to be okay. We can simply use that frustration as motivation. So stop letting it bother you," he commanded with a confident grin. He quietly looked her in the eye, and as if his will were conveyed to her, she suddenly closed her eyes and exhaled deeply before collecting herself and facing him once more.

"…You're right. Thank you."

"…Oh, one more thing. While it's fine to be frustrated, don't let the rivalry get the best of you. She wants you to become overcompetitive and obsessed."

"In other words, I need to forget about what happened for now and focus on giving the closing ceremony everything I've got, right?"

"Yep, sounds about right."

"Okay. I'll make sure to change my mindset… And I'm sorry. I'm sorry for running into battle all by myself like that."

Alisa lowered her head, and Masachika grew unbelievably restless because it was extremely rare for Alisa to ever bow.

"No, uh… I mean… It's my fault, too, for getting sick during such an important time. I'm sorry."

"It isn't your fault you got sick."

"But this never would have happened if I didn't let my guard down. I failed to predict that Yuki would ambush us like this. I was being naive thinking she wouldn't go all out before the closing ceremony. I thought it wasn't going to be *that* big of a deal, since it's just the closing ceremony. I got too comfortable, and I hate myself for that."

"I didn't see it coming, either. Besides, I should have gone to you first, instead of letting my pride take over like that."

"You were only looking out for me because I was sick and—… Let's just do better next time, okay?" suggested Masachika, aggressively scratching his head. Although clearly not 100 percent happy with his conclusion, Alisa nodded in agreement. A slightly awkward air filled the space between them for a few seconds until he cleared his throat and added:

Kuze then assures her: Yuki miscalculated, Alya wasn't destroyed or depressed, rather, she was frustrated, something that can very easily be turned by her into the motivation and strive to improve on this mistake. In the end he fully managed to make the Broadcast and Yuki's effort become water under the bridge, of course big part of why it was so easy and effortless to do, in comparison to how much Yuki did to make her state get to this stage, is because Alya is naturally motivated and mentally resilient even if she has holes in her resilience when she fails her own expectations or if it's coming from someone dear to her. What matters, is that Kuze got to not just mitigate the damage made by Yuki, instead he even got to turn it around and let Alya use it as both fuel and ways to improve herself and her mindset so she'll be even better than before. Although he wasn't happy with himself for letting his guard down

because of his sickness, he decided what's done is done, and it's better to deal with it instead.
It's important to note that Kuze despite not being satisfied with how it played out as he got comfortable, still remained confident and like his usual self for Alya to not overthink even more.
Volume 3 Pages 171-172:

After that he continued managing Alya, seeing how down she still was, and damage controlled what was done to her after Yuki's psychological attack, persuaded her to get back to being proud and confident, as her reason is more than enough, and it's her own reason. It doesn't have to be better than Yuki's, and he already knew Yuki's reasons but chose Alya anyway. Which in turn got her cheered on and she even started laughing, although it was embarrassing for him, at least this matter now was fully resolved (this step was why at the end of Yuki part, we see Alya not being anxious at all and being rather confident and composed if anything)

Inade Masachika lean away.

"A-are you okay? You still look a little gloomy," he promptly exclaimed. Although he was mainly trying to change the subject, Alisa instantly froze.

"…"

Alisa slowly sat back down in her chair.

"What's up? Is there still something bothering you?"

After a few moments of silence, she quietly muttered:

"…I didn't have an answer."

"For what?"

"Yuki asked me why I wanted to become the student council president…and I didn't have an answer for her."

She hung her head low, clenched her fists tightly over her skirt, and bitterly explained:

"Yuki is running in the election for her family's sake… She is determined to do it for them… But… But I… I am doing all this for myself, and I started to think that maybe that wasn't a good enough reason… I didn't know what to say to her! I didn't have any answer for her!"

Alisa raised her fists before her chest, enduring the pain in her heart.

"I embarrassed myself in front of Yuki, and I'm frustrated that I wasn't confident enough to give her an answer…"

Masachika fell silent when he saw her bite her lip with a lowered gaze… because he, too, once felt the very same way about his reason for joining student

council. He decided to help her run for student council president because he'd felt guilty about tossing his responsibilities to Yuki, and he became the vice president by kicking each and every one of his opponents down. And that was why he had suffered for so long…and that was why he was painfully aware of how Alisa felt.

But…

But he had someone who laughed away all his pain. He had someone who believed in him and was kind to him.

"Alya…"

And now it was his turn to give back. Just like those kind people who were there for him, it was now his turn to be there for Alisa. He was going to keep the promise he made her that time when he said he would be there for her and support her dream.

"Keep your chin up, face forward, and look at me!"

Alisa jumped when he shouted and looked up, pressing her lips together tightly as Masachika stared right into her eyes.

"So your reason for becoming student council president isn't as good as Yuki's? Who cares? Did you forget? I know why Yuki wants to become the president, and I know why you want to as well. And guess what? I chose you."

Alisa looked as though she'd been completely caught off guard.

"I told you already. You're already someone people want to cheer for and support. I know your beauty—how passionately devoted you are and how you always put a hundred percent of yourself into everything you do. I know how you live true to your heart. You deserve to be rewarded more. You deserve to be cheered on by your peers and loved."

He could feel his body flush as he spoke, but he ignored it because he knew he had to speak from his heart if he ever wished to reach Alisa's. Moreover, his gut was telling him that he *had* to tell her how he really felt right now or bear the consequences.

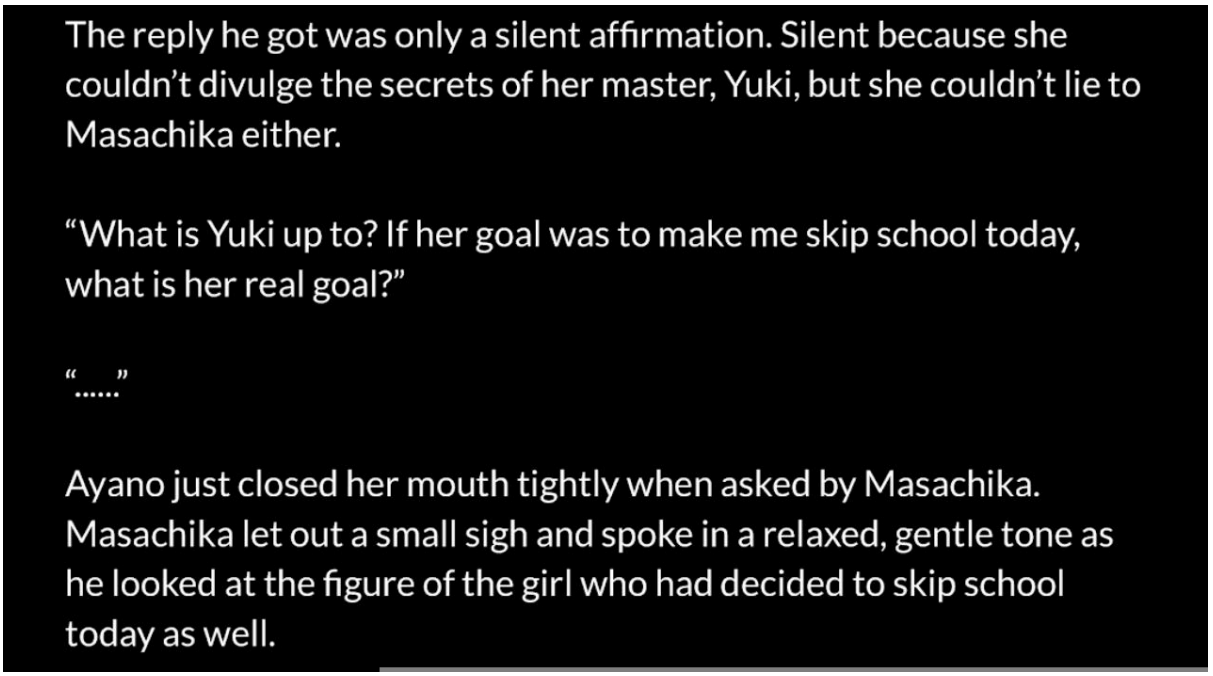
"That's why…you need to keep your chin up. You need to face forward, puff out your chest proudly, and be yourself. You don't have to worry about a thing. You are every bit as charming and attractive as Yuki. Trust me."

It was at this moment he realized his back was sweating profusely. The urge to writhe in agony and slam his head into his desk was strong, but he fought through the impulse and continued to look her in the eyes. After appearing stunned for a few moments…she placed a hand over her mouth and started to laugh.

And after dissecting Yuki's plan, her aim and the slight detail that didn't go according to plan, he starts talking about the next thing that they should focus on now, after understanding everything… but, how did he understand and dissect Yuki's plan, her aim and even the details, is what I'll be focusing on now.

Analysis and Reasoning made on Yuki's Scheme:

Similar to the Electoral Debate, although it's more solid and visible in some parts how he figured things out, it's still not outright explained unlike the Quiz Game.
But unlike Quiz Game here I'll be using P (Premise) + P (Premise) = C (Conclusion, be it likely or solid one) and sometimes a specific C + P = C(whatever number it is), and sometimes conclusions themselves when combined can form another conclusion too.
P1: The medicine, confirmed by the box is one that has a strong side effect of making the person who takes it be sleepy
P2: Ayano knew about this medicine (as she was his maid before too)
P1+P2 = Ayano knew that the medicine has an unusually strong side effect of making the person tired and foggy with their consciousness (C1)
P3: Ayano cares deeply about Masachika Kuze both as his ex maid and as childhood friends
P3+C1 = It's exceedingly strange for Ayano of all the people to not stop Kuze from taking medicine with strong effects and even give it outright (C2)
P4: Ayano was still a loyal to him maid, and considered him a master (which he also already noticed before)
P4+C1+C2: Ayano knew that the medicine has strong effects, and she isn't malicious towards him, even instantly apologising, in this case she was acting on orders. The one to who it would be beneficial - Yuki. Yuki is the perpetrator (C3)



P5: The students are praising Yuki, while also giving credit to Alya for doing her best
P6: At the same time they say that her ability to improvise is nonexistent and say there's a difference in level between them
P5+P6 = An event happened with which Yuki shook the balance even more to her side (C4)

While panting as he changed his shoes, Masachika pondered on where he should go and decided to go to class first, then to the Student Council room.

Swallowing the sticky saliva stuck in his throat, Masachika walked quickly to his class. Then, he heard three male students walking from the front and chatting excitedly about something.

“I knew that Suou-san was really good~ Although I know that, her speaking ability is on a different level.”

“Even though Alya has also done her best, you know~ But yeah, the difference in level was really different.”

“When I watched the debate last time, I thought that Kujou-san was quite good too, but as it turned out... it seemed like she had no ability to improvise at all. At the debate the other day, I think she was just speaking according to a script?”

“Ah~ maybe there’s some truth to that~”

“That seems to be the case.”

As Masachika passed by the three students who were chatting without paying attention to his presence, he felt that his bad feeling was growing ever so larger.

(What were they talking about? The ability to speak? Perhaps, a debate?! No, there’s no way they should be holding a debate on this day...)

He didn’t have enough information to find the answer. However, despite the lack of details, Masachika could deduce that Yuki had done something that resulted in the ranking between her and Alisa.

(Damn it, I was caught off guard! I thought nothing would happen before the closing ceremony of the end of the semester... I didn’t expect that she would arrange something at a time like this!)

Masachika looked into his classroom as he gnashed his teeth

(now comes Alya's explanation, we see it from her point of view so we can be sure this is exactly what she's explaining to Kuze, just the parts from her pov)
P7: Yuki figured out about Yuki and Alya erasing their debate result
P8: Yuki looking down on Alya right after that and revealing some of her intentions (some being the key phrase)
C3+C4+P7+P8 = Yuki wanted Alya to be aware that the broadcast will be sort of a showdown between them, and that Yuki thinks Alya is too weak to contend against her, and she outright shown and revealed those things, far from Alya figuring it out herself (C5)
C3+C5 = Yuki made Kuze stay away at bay with the medicine while challenging Alya and looking down at her, all at the same time. Which shows she wants to isolate them, while also reel Alya in to want to both prove herself and settle the rivalry (C6)

“Uwaah, thank you very much!”

Alisa unconsciously nodded at Yuki’s plea as she brought her both hands in front of her face. She smiled innocently and squealed with delight, but suddenly, Yuki lowered her tone of voice and said,

“Even so... from the looks of it, it seems like Alya-san and Masachika-kun are really serious about wanting to erase your victory in the debate, right?”

“!! Looks like you can understand us well...”

“Of course. Lately, there are rumors circulating that Nonoa-san committed an offense in the debate. I can see why you guys are doing that. If you really care about the fact that you won the debate, Masachika-kun would have done a better job at manipulating information.”

“.....”

Alisa immediately fell silent as her intentions were completely guessed right. As if taking advantage of her mental state, Yuki suddenly changed her laughing manner.

“Fufuu, geez... seems like Alisa-san is taking this thing for granted, huh? Giviing up on your own victory in the debate... do you really intend to defeat me?”

“What...?”

The atmosphere around Yuki instantly changed, and a completely different face peeked out from behind her perfect Ojou-sama-style face. Alisa’s eyes widened at the sight of Yuki wearing a frightening smile that she had never seen before.

“What’s more, I didn’t expect that you would just accept my invitation without feeling any caution at all... aren’t you too careless? Because you didn’t feel alert at all, *fufufu*, I unknowingly gave you a warning.”

P9: Yuki doesn't just outright seem to make Alya feel challenged, she even tells her to her face that she's aiming for her deliberately while Kuze is out of the game temporarily, and even reveals that she's been playing Alya for a while

“You finally just realized it? *Fufuu*, don’t let your guard down just because you think it’s an invitation from a friend, okay? It’s an invitation from the opposing candidate in the election campaign... with Masachika-kun on sick leave like this, you should be more cautious when approached.”

“Don’t tell me... you’re targeting me on purpose?”

“Yes, I thought I’d take this opportunity to make an attack as hard as possible on Alisa-san since you’ve lost your precious benefactor.”

While not changing her smile, Yuki said something cruel. Alisa was more than a little surprised to see the other side of her friend, but she managed to respond to Yuki’s words.

“In other words... If I’m alone, you’d do whatever you like?”

“Well, I didn’t bother to give you this warning, but… If Alisa-san is alone, I don’t need to feel surprised. Moreover...”

After a moment’s pause, Yuki looked at Alisa with a mocking gaze.

“You wouldn’t make excuses if challenged and defeated from the front, won’t you?”

“!!! ...Seems like I’ve been underestimated, huh?”

“Ara ara, even though you’ve already been played by me for a while, but you still dare to say so... huh?”

“!!!”

After hearing Yuki’s insulting words, Alisa completely changed her thought process. The person in front of her now was not a friend who

worked with her in the Student Council. She was an enemy that had to be defeated in the election campaign.

Perhaps sensing the change in Alisa’s thought process, Yuki finally said with a grinning smile on her mouth, without bothering t

P10: Yuki was openly provoking Alya hinting that she relies on Masachika a lot, clearly to him who understands both her and Alya, to the fruit of her trying to prove that she alone is a worthy opponent too
P9+P10 = Yuki WANTED Alya to commit to the showdown by herself isolated and be forced by her pride to do her best in the process against a rival (C7)

“Oh, of course, you can count on Masachika-kun, you know? You can ask his opinion when delivering the medicine for him today.”

...She realized that she was being provoked. However, Alisa’s pride did not allow her to rely on Masachika after being told this.

“I don’t need it. I’m not going to burden Kuze-kun who is currently resting.”

“Ara~, are you sure? You don’t need to hold back, you know?”

Her words and the look in her eyes, clearly containing the intention, “You can’t do anything alone, so hurry over there and cry to Masachika.” After hearing her words, Alisa gasped and retorted her provocation.

“*Fufufu*, Yuki-san is alone this time around as well... Are you going to be okay without Kuze-kun’s help, as well?”

The intent behind Alisa’s words implied, “You also equally rely on Kuze-kun, don’t you?”, but Yuki didn’t waver at all.

“Yes, of course. I hope that Alisa-san can properly live up to the expectations worthy of the nickname “Loner Princess,” okay?”

“Ugh! I definitely won’t lose...!”

Yuki just smiled casually at Alisa who was glaring at her with a clear fighting spirit.

“*Fufu*, I’m really looking forward to tomorrow.”

Thus, the face-to-face competition between the two “Beautiful girls of the same age” was suddenly held. After that, Alisa prepared for her battle against Yuki.

She checked the contents of the suggestion box first to predict which suggestion will be taken. In addition, she remembered as much as possible about Yuki’s activities in the past, and carefully plan
what kind of conversation would happen. And... after school

P11: Yuki suddenly threw of Alya's competitiveness, before acting as her opponent during the election and now as her friend.
P12: In the process, revealed to Alya about her lost brother and the responsibility she carries for her family, while making Alya question her own reason
P11 + P12 + C6 + C7 = Yuki is trying to throw Alya off, shake her balance and make her feel insignificant (especially if we remember about Yuki constantly showing Alya that she knows more about Kuze than she does including during this event) aka break her spirit (C8)

“While there’s still time before the broadcast time starts... Alya-san.”

“What?”

“I’m really sorry.”

Suddenly, Yuki bowed deeply towards Alisa. Alisa widened her eyes at Yuki’s unexpected behavior.

“What is this... apology for?”

“I want to apologize for the way I treated Alya-san yesterday.”

With her head bowed, Yuki spoke in a tone full of regret.

“Even to me, it feels really painful to challenge my precious friend in such a shocking manner... I took an overly aggressive approach to dispel such doubts in me. Yesterday at home, I rethought my attitude and reflected on it.”

“.....”

“I know that this is a very selfish request... but, I don’t want to lose my friendship with Alya-san. Please... Are you willing to forgive me?”

“Alright, it’s fine... please raise your head, okay?”

Because Alisa said she felt uncomfortable, Yuki raised her head slightly and looked at Alisa.

“That means... Are you willing to forgive me?”

“Umm, yes... I forgive you. That apology just now shows how serious you are, right?”

“Thank you very much! Aah, I feel relieved.”

To be honest, there was a part of Alisa’s heart that felt “Why are you apologizing now?”. However, when she saw Yuki raising her h

“I’m really sorry... not that I want to make this an excuse, but I have my own reasons why I want to win the Student Council president election.”

Yuki said that with a serious expression while squeezing her fist in front of her chest. Alisa, who knew the reason, reflexively asked with a sense of mild sympathy.

“Is it because... your family told you to become the Student Council president?”

That was what Yuki had told her when she had just joined the Student Council. At that time, Alisa said, “Well, everyone’s situation at home is different. It must be hard being under such pressure from your family.”

“Well, there’s that reason too, but...”

After letting her gaze wander as if she wasn’t sure what to say, Yuki looked straight at Alisa and said.

“I have an older brother.”

“Eh?”

Alisa was shocked by the unexpected confession of Yuki, who usually claimed that she was an only child. Avoiding Alisa’s wide-eyed gaze, Yuki spoke softly with eyes that seemed to be looking somewhere far away.

“My brother is much more talented than me... both my parents and grandfather had high hopes for him. If it were my brother, I’m sure

that he would be a good heir to the Suou family... I also have a lot of respect for him.”

Did that gentle gaze remind her of their precious past? Yuki spoke about her brother with a gentle expression, but suddenly her gentle expression instantly changed.

“That’s why, I can’t lose.”

Yuki spoke while looking straight into the eyes of the silent Alisa. Her words pierced Alisa’s heart.

“In order to replace my brother who is no longer around..... I have to fulfill my family’s expectations, because that’s... the mission I have left to do.”

“.....”

She proudly declared that with a voice that conveyed a sense of determination and strong will. Yuki then suddenly relaxed her expression.

“...However, everyone has their own circumstances, so there’s no point in saying that. I’m sorry for telling you something like this.”

Yuki lowered her eyebrows and laughed, as if she said something unnecessary, then lowered her head again.

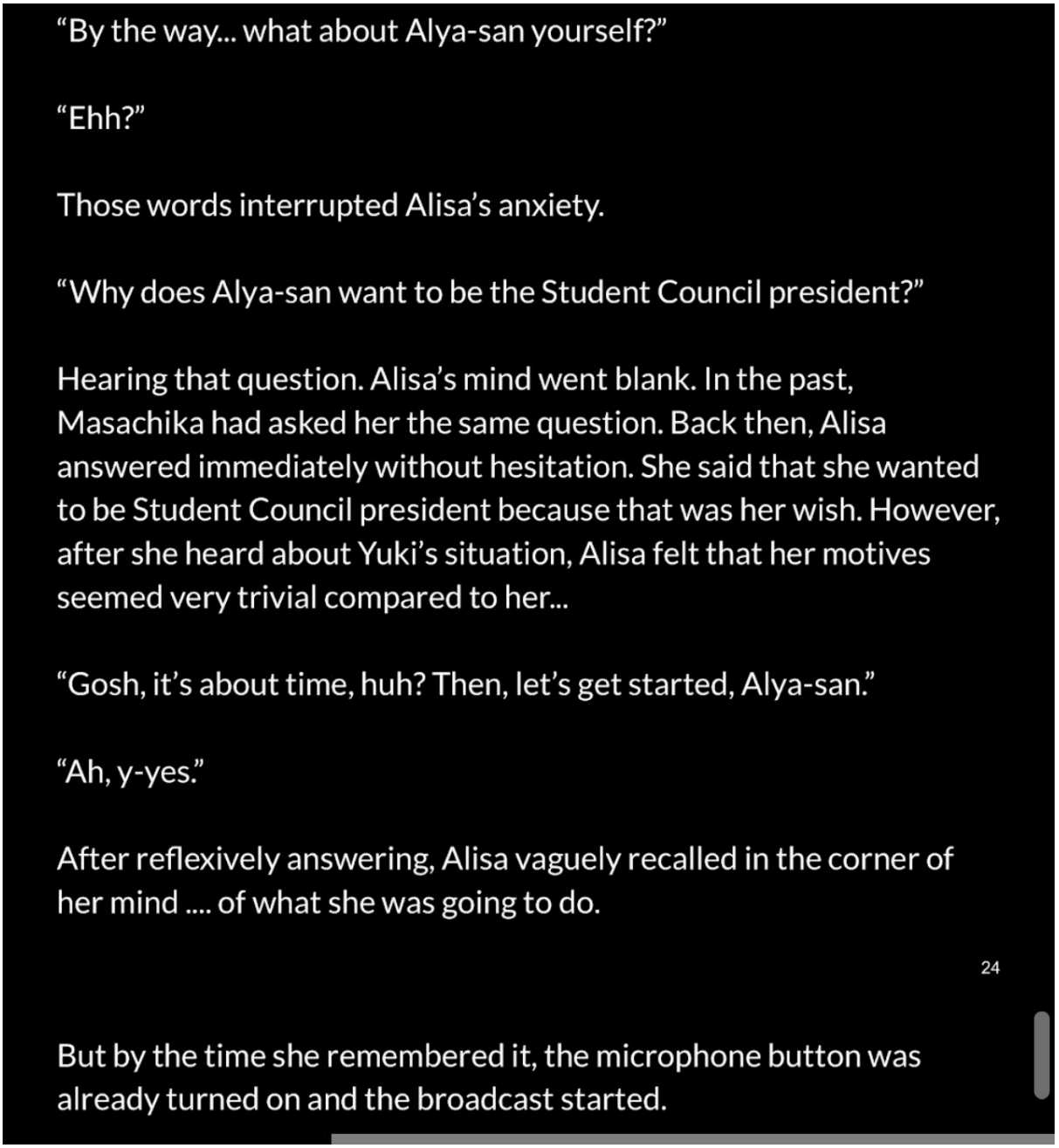
“N-no... I don’t mind.”

When Alisa replied with eyes trembling with anxiety, Yuki lifted her head with a fragile smile and spoke cheerfully to change her mood.

“Oh! It’s time. Alya-san, are you ready?”

“...Yes.”

Let alone preparation, what Alisa had in mind right now was not even thinking about that. Alisa then half-consciously turned her head to the microphone, as she couldn’t think of what she was going to do. Then, Yuki asked question to her.



P13: Yuki then started helping Alya during the broadcast when Alya had difficulties
P13 + C6 + C7 = Yuki wanted Alya to still hold Yuki dear and consider her a friend who just has difficult and understandable motive, all the while challenging her, looking down on her and all the while stay separated from Kuze
From all this we can understand that Yuki DOES want Alya to feel depressed while also be obsessed over winning but also be unable to hold grudges on her (C9)
C4 + C8 + C9 = Yuki wanted to gain an advantage over Alya while Kuze was away, shake her spirit and confidence and make her overthink about the broadcast to doubt her ability while still wanting to prove herself. Which means her goal was elsewhere (C10)
P14 + C10 = Yuki is aiming for Alya to get weakened and mentally drained before the Closing Ceremony while Kuze is away (Main conclusion)

As a result, the sentence that came out of her mouth was the most awkward greeting that she had ever heard. After saying that, Alisa felt that her back became hot with embarrassment.

“Ara ara, it seems that Alya-san is feeling a little nervous. Don’t worry! Not many people will be listening to this broadcast anyway! But, I don’t have the right to say that, do I?”

Yuki quickly helped her up, and Alisa could feel that not only her back, but her cheeks were also hot.

(I have to be firm! I’ll definitely beat Yuki-san! Where will I put my face if the opponent I want to defeat is trying to help me with my carelessness!)

Yes, Alisa was trying desperately to scold herself... The fighting spirit that she had to face Yuki a few minutes ago had completely disappeared.

(Back then... why? Since the beginning, why did I want to be...)

Why did she want to be the Student Council president? There must be a reason. She should have her own reasons that are no less than Yuki’s.

(No! Now is not the time to think about that, I have to concentrate on this ongoing broadcast... uh, uh...)

Alisa realized that this broadcast was so important. But now, Yuki’s question earlier was still ringing in her head.

Why do you want to be the Student Council president? If Alisa couldn’t answer that question with pride, she would never be able to beat Yuki. That kind of obsession slowly pushed Alisa into a state of limbo.

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“—That’s what happened~ what does Alya-san think?”

“Eh? Well... umm...”

“After that... everything fell apart. Without being able to calm my mind and regain my spirits, I kept being tossed about... I couldn’t

speak as fluently as I wanted, and made Yuki-san constantly help me...”

While saying that with a tone of voice that was a mixture of bitterness and self-mockery, Alisa clenched her pearly white teeth. While silently watching her figure, Masachika muttered in his heart.

(Uwahh, what a sneaky bastard.)

That was the first impression that came to Masachika’s mind upon hearing Alisa’s story. Masachika couldn’t help but twitch his cheeks from the power of Yuki’s sly mental attack. When she challenged her to a match, Yuki behaved like a villain, which fueled Alisa’s rebellion and fighting spirit. And then, on the day of the match, Yuki changed her behavior to make Alisa empathize with her, making Alisa’s fighting spirit, which was previously passionate, suddenly disappear.

In addition, Yuki also made sure to use the excuse of her motivation for the school broadcast match, as if to imply “I will fight by carrying the hopes of my family. What about you?”

She was very careful to include such a chilling question. Because Alisa had an honest nature and was always serious, she fell into Yuki’s trap.

The unfortunate thing was that Alisa was too honest to realize that she was being set up by Yuki. Alisa, who didn’t have many friends to begin with, and Yuki’s words and actions today...well, maybe Yuki wasn’t too serious about it... but if she knew that Yuki’s actions were done with certainty and calculation, Alisa might develop a sense of distrust towards people.

With this, even without thinking about Alya's shift in demeanour, we can see that Kuze from that information can and DID figure out Yuki's aim, what she wanted to accomplish through this whole scheme in terms of Alya's behaviour and emotions and her ultimate goal, you just need to be very precise and attentive to details and think through them.

Confronting Yuki:

Now, he wants Alya to grow still, and he also wanted to crush Yuki here, to do that in the best way available to him, he confronted her.
He starts talking about seeing the Closing Ceremony as an opportunity for her to showcase how hardworking she is (which is one of her main attractive traits as a person, aside from things like her natural beauty). In the meantime he decided to check if she's disillusioned with Yuki, to find out she's not. And after thinking it over, he decided not to reveal to Alya what was happening fully, to not stun her growth or ruin their friendship, it should stay in silence.

of your opponent's skill set."

"…Yeah, I never expected Yuki to attack from the rear like this, so I suppose I could consider this a good learning experience, since I won't be making the same mistake twice," she said as though she was trying to persuade herself of that as well.

"…Are you disappointed?" asked Masachika in a somewhat worried manner.

"Huh?"

"Are you disillusioned with Yuki after learning these are the kinds of things she does?"

Alisa slowly blinked for a few moments before shaking her head.

"No, I'm not disillusioned. While it was a surprise attack, Yuki challenged me head-on. I don't have the right to blame her when I only have myself to blame for losing."

"…All right. I'm glad to hear that."

He let out a sigh of relief after learning that Alisa and Yuki were still friends, but at the very same time…

Yeah… It looks like she still hasn't realized that Yuki basically used psychological warfare against her.

Alisa seemed to truly believe Yuki only acted overly aggressive so Alisa wouldn't change her mind, and she seemed to not realize that even *that* was all part of Yuki's plan to throw her off her game. In actuality, it was all a well-calculated act, but in Alisa's mind, Yuki's behavior and question messing her up was purely coincidental.

It wasn't a coincidence, though. She knew that would happen, which is why she did it. But I'm not sure if I should tell Alya that…

On one hand, if he decided to be completely honest with her, it would most likely destroy their friendship. But on the other hand, he would need to explain to her what happened to make sure she wouldn't make the same mistake again. Masachika began to inwardly debate with himself when…

"Kuze? What's wrong?"

"Oh… It's nothing."

He saw the innocent look on her face and decided to keep quiet. Besides, strategizing was his specialty. All he had to do was handle the things Alisa wasn't good at for her.

Volume 3 Pages 178-181:

After already setting hus move for the Closing Ceremony (will be explained later), Alya and Kuze started getting ready for giving the speech on the Closing Ceremony, with Alya even asking for the advice as she sees the difference between her confidence on the debate the other day and how Kuze brilliantly checkmated his opposition there. With this preparation being talked about, Yuki and Ayano got there (most likely to investigate on how Alya's looking), but the results weren't as Yuki thought they'd be due to Kuze's interference. Alya

was in fact confident now, and at the same time didn't seem even frustrated or mad, but seemed to have seen it as a lesson, and not only that, she declared head on that she'll win, which genuinely surprised Yuki. But Yuki wouldn't just give up without a fight, she decided to reveal that her brother isn't dead, he just ran away, obviously something like this is very serious and it happened right after she praised Alya. Just as she hoped it would arouse emotions in her, which was her next resource of shaking up Alya. In the first place Yuki didn't even think about disclosing that information, but, because of her good mental state opposing to what she was planning for, she wanted to throw that last resort card in. But Kuze was not having none of it, so he stepped in before Yuki could do any damage

It was after school on the following day. Each member of the student council was preparing for the closing ceremony in between meetings relative to their position. They ran throughout school in groups of two to three with copies of the closing ceremony agenda in hand. After Alisa and Masachika finished those responsibilities, they began to practice for their upcoming speech on the stage in the gymnasium.

"Thank you all for your time."

Although they didn't have a microphone to practice with, Alisa finished giving her speech and was showered with Masachika's applause from below.

"Perfect. Just do what you did here tomorrow, and we're set," he advised, walking up the steps to the stage, but Alisa's expression suddenly clouded with anxiety.

"Yes… All I need to do is remember what I practiced…"

"Are you worried? You had no problem speaking at the debate."

"That's because I was focused on my own inner world… But there are going to be a lot more people at the closing ceremony, right?"

"Yeah, I mean…everyone at school has to be there, so this gym's going to be packed," he replied honestly with a shrug, since he felt there was no use sugarcoating it for her. He then brightened and replied:

"But that doesn't change what you have to do. It doesn't matter how many more people there are. You just need to focus on how you're going to speak and __"

"I don't think that's going to be enough. I figured that much when I saw you speaking at the debate the other day. There's a distinct difference between self-righteously regurgitating memorized talking points and speaking directly to the people. This speech is my chance to greet everyone, which is why I need to look them in the eye when I speak. I want to speak *with* them, not at them," she said with a serious gaze at the floor below the stage before turning her eyes firmly

her usual blank expression.

"Oh, you two are done with your work for the day, too?"

"Yes, everything went smoothly."

Their exchange may have sounded friendly, but there was an unusual tension filling the space between them. Yuki slowly walked toward Masachika with a hand over her mouth, her head tilted.

"*Giggle.* Is everything okay, Masachika? That look on your face is scaring me."

"You've got a lot of nerve saying that. Getting rid of that proper-young-lady facade and going full mask off, huh?"

"Oh my. Me? *Giggle.*"

She widened her eyes and smiled a perfect ladylike smile, but the light behind those eyes was cold and distant. While most people would shudder at the terrifying sight, Masachika simply shrugged and looked back at Alisa.

"See? This is the real her. I know I've said this before, but don't be fooled by her act."

"O-okay…"

"Oh dear. Alya? *Giggle.* Did I disappoint you?"

But Alisa slowly shook her head.

"No. I was a little surprised, but I haven't become disillusioned."

"Oh my…"

"We still haven't known each other that long, after all. It's only natural for there to be sides of you I don't know about yet."

"…"

"Besides…you were serious when you said you still wanted to be friends with me, right?"

"…Yes, of course."

"Then everything's okay." Alisa nodded with ease, catching Yuki by surprise.

"Plus…I was able to reexamine myself thanks to you."

"…What do you mean?"

Yuki's fake smile faded, although she was still tilting her head. Alisa then stared her straight in the eye and declared:

"You asked me why I wanted to become the student council president the other day, and you will get that answer. Tomorrow. I'll also receive far more support from our fellow students."

Staring at Alisa, Yuki blinked in genuine confusion for a few moments

toward Masachika. “Hey, how do I converse with the audience like you do?”

She really is always trying to improve herself, he thought in admiration as he scratched his head.

“I mean…it’s kind of something you just have to get used to doing for the most part. But first, you need to make sure you can perfectly say your speech without glancing at your script. After that, all you need to do is watch and see how the audience is reacting, then change your tone and how long you pause. Maybe even stick a few jokes in between your lines, but make sure you stay focused.”

“…”

Alisa frowned after hearing his advice, and Masachika realized he was demanding far too much, so he smiled and added:

“But this is your first time, so don’t expect to be able to do everything perfectly. Like I said, it’s something you have to get used to doing. So all you need to do this time is keep your chin up and confidently say your piece.”

“…Is that really going to be enough?”

“Trust me. Consider this practice for the upcoming election. I told you yesterday. Remember? We don’t want to provoke Yuki or excite her because she’ll try to trip us up.”

“…!”

Those words suddenly made Alisa realize she was unconsciously feeling pressed that she had to beat Yuki, and she was dumbfounded.

“Alya, do you want to know a little secret to relieve tension and get the audience’s attention?” he asked, lowering his voice and gently patting her on the shoulder to calm her down.

“A secret?”

“Yep.”

He whispered into her ear as she raised a brow, and ultimately her jaw dropped. She then appeared to be in deep thought.

“That’s…”

“Easy, right? And it’s very effective as well.”

“…All right, I’ll give it a try.” Alisa nodded with an expression of utmost seriousness. Masachika looked at her confidently…and all of a sudden, a voice called out to them from the wing.

“Are you practicing for tomorrow’s ceremony?”

Their eyes simultaneously darted in the direction of the voice, only to find Yuki with her usual curated smile and Ayano standing behind her, bowing with

before dissolving into laughter.

"*Ha-ha-ha!* You really are a sincere, wonderful person."

"Wh-what's that supposed to mean?"

Alisa appeared embarrassed by the unexpected praise, but Yuki continued without even a hint of shame:

"I was only speaking the truth. I am really happy to be your friend, Alya."

"…!"

Alisa swiftly looked away as though she couldn't take anymore bonding, which only made Yuki smile more.

"And because you are so wonderful, I have something I would like to tell you," revealed Yuki.

"…What is it?"

"I told you my brother was gone… I never said he was dead."

"Huh…?"

Alisa looked back at her with a blank expression and saw Yuki's mischievous grin.

"He ran away from home, and while he cut ties with the Suou family, he is still very much alive and well."

"Wh-what?!"

Alisa's face turned bright red as fury rippled through her for being led on like that. She shot Yuki a piercing glare, which Yuki parried with a cool, refreshing smile of her own…until Masachika swiftly jumped in front of Yuki, cheerfully smiling as well.

Volume 3 Pages 181-182:

Kuze stepped in and started cheerfully and with a bright tone speaking with Yuki while closing in, of course in a way that would make her suspicious. In fact, what Yuki doesn't know, is how deviously calculated his behaviour is right now, and how she's getting led into the trap right at this moment. It'll be seen afterwards but, I'll explain now:
This is a bluff he made specifically for Yuki before the decision on who'll go first or who'll go last. To see it clearer: He got her attention on himself fully, by his unusual attitude, which was also scary to her as she knew how capable he is (she never beat him in anything), was used as a way to direct her attention on him. But, this move didn't just do that, it also also got her to think he wanted that so she got he attention back on Alya and that's what he wanted.
While it seems like nothing changed: But it's kind of a double misdirection, direct misdirection and the second is how he knew she'll think and it indirectly directed her to Alya and she thought Alya is vulnerable again so she can crush them, but this is a miscalculation, in the end by Yuki, induced by him.
He terrified them with his behaviour and his words, while having a cheerful and smiley face and the tone of his voice. But that's not all, he wants her to be focused on him and not Alya... Or so Yuki thought. What she didn't know was that, he also thought this part through, it was a bluff of a bluff. It seems like a bluff from Yuki's position but it's actually not, and seems like a misdirection but it's actually not.

"Oh, thank goodness. I was worried this was going to destroy your friendship."

His smile was unnaturally joyful, which made Yuki immediately cautious, reverting back to her usual archaic smile.

"Oh my. You make it sound as if our friendship has been damaged in some way, Masachika."

"No? I mean, I think you're a punk for what you did, but what's new?"

He spoke with a bright tone and mirthful smile as he approached Yuki and Ayano. Alisa watched anxiously from behind, but Yuki's smile didn't waver, even when her brother was standing right in front of her.

"Wait… Could it be? Are you angry that I waited until you were sick to attack?"

"Not at all. Striking when your opponent's down is only natural in war. Plus, giving me the medicine without me noticing took a lot of talent. Beautifully done."

"Why thank you. What an honor," she replied, and yet she got chills from her brother's smile. And Ayano, who was glancing in his direction, was no different. Cold sweat trailed down their backs, for there was something eerie about the bizarre energy Masachika emanated. As he continued to exude intimidation, he cheerfully went on:

"It's a weird feeling. Hard to describe it, to be honest. It's like…wanting to pet your cute little dog that is biting you but also wanting to discipline them so they never bite you again. Know what I mean?"

Yuki, however, didn't joke about the frightening things her brother was saying. She even set aside her usual noblewoman facade after seeing just how serious his eyes were—something she hadn't seen in ages. All she felt now was a tinge of fear and exhilaration, which manifested in the form of a fierce smirk and sparkling eyes, and as a result, Masachika's sneer grew even more sinister as well.

"If I were to give some advice, though…," he began, looking down at Yuki without any humor. "You took a bite, so now you better clench your jaw and not let go."

The ambition glowing in his stare was proof enough that he hadn't been driven into a corner, and it was at that moment that both Yuki and Ayano realized they had stepped on the tail of a sleeping lion.

Ha-ha… I think I got them a little worried, but maybe I didn't go hard enough.

There was no simpler declaration of war, but that worked out in Yuki's favor as well, since she had wanted to fight him head-on. Her fighting spirit rose with her elation as she quivered with excitement. Ayano began to quiver as well…but where she was quivering will forever remain a secret.

And that small crucial detail will make a whole lot of difference during the time they'll be choosing which one goes first:

If he didn't do this move, Yuki would go last to see what her brother may do, or go in for the kill and go first. But first one would hardly be a possible position to win against Yuki with so much better reputation because of her previous years as Council President and being unbeatable in elections as well as the move she pulled during the broadcast (normally, that is). So he influenced her thoughts. What changed from this, I'll explain towards the end, as it'll be easier to explain after his plan for the Closing Ceremony will be explained.
So now let's move on to it:

Trump Card:

Volume 3 Page 174-177:

Soon after Nonoa and Sayaka entered their classroom, and while he did remark how Nonoa is like a carnivorous plant, he still will use this opportunity to counter Yuki in the upcoming closing ceremony. And while the flow of the conversation was in-going, it became obvious that Sayaka wasn't pleased with how her reputation was saved. It's not that she disliked it, on the other hand she felt displeased because she didn't want to owe them anything, that's how Sayaka is. That's also why she wanted to apologise to Alya and Kuze.
That's why when Sayaka was about to leave and to save her pride would announce on Closing Ceremony that she lost, it wouldn't be a bad promotion but it wouldn't be enough. That's why by the pretext of it not something that should be wasted time on, on the Closing Ceremony, and that there's a better way to repay Alya's good faith. That's where the upcoming move on the Closing Ceremony will show itself. And to finish it with the nail in the coffin, he got Sayaka cornered because she does understand the value of Alya. But, what we see, is that now he isn't aiming for the draw, no, he's aiming to crush Yuki, because of this opportunity and also because of the small detail that didn't go as planned for Yuki, or well, Alya being frustrated not depressed.

But the door to the room suddenly opened, drawing their eyes toward it.

"Knock, knock."

The apathetic voice was followed by the door rattling open, revealing Nonoa, who barged into the room with Sayaka, who politely bowed once, behind her. Both Alisa and Masachika were surprised by the unexpected visit.

"Oh, I knew you'd still be here… Wait. Kuze? I thought you didn't come to school today."

"I actually just got here…"

"Oh? Anyway, good timing," replied Nonoa, unfazed by their reactions, and she plopped herself down in Hikaru's seat…straddling it in front of Masachika.

"Nonoa, that's bad manners."

"Eh, who cares? It's just us in here."

Nonoa ignored Sayaka's scolding and rested her elbow on the back of the chair before cradling her chin in her palm. Her eyes were half-open with her usual unmotivated expression, and her legs were spread wide open…right in front of Masachika.

…And this is probably why she never became one of the school's so-called princesses, for better or for worse.

From Masachika's point of view, Nonoa was popular enough and obviously good-looking enough to be counted as one of the princesses of his grade, and the only reason she probably wasn't included with the likes of Alisa and Yuki was because she felt far more obtainable than them. If Alisa and Yuki were like stars in the sky, then Nonoa would be more like a flower beautifully blooming from the earth.

…She'd definitely be one of those carnivorous plants, though.

He added that one last zinger before slightly raising his guard and asking:

"So… Need something?"

"Hmm? I don't need anything. Saya's the one who wanted to talk to you."

"Oh…"

Masachika shifted his gaze to Sayaka, who was standing behind Nonoa. After her eyebrow briefly twitched, she let out a deep breath, then gathered her resolve and straightened.

"I know this is late, but…I wanted to apologize to you two…for not only the debate but for being rude as well. You have my sincerest apologies."

Nonoa watched Sayaka bow deeply to them before slightly lowering her own head, albeit while still sitting.

"I'm sorry, too. Like, it was totally my responsibility to stop Saya. I knew she stepped out of line, and I did nothing. I know it's a little late for begging, but do you think you have it in your hearts to forgive us? We'll make it up to you, of course."

Nonoa put her hands together in front of her face and winked, and Sayaka continued to bow. Masachika looked over at Alisa.

"I don't have anything against them, so it's up to you, Alya."

"Well…she already apologized for what she said to me, so I don't care anymore, either. And Miyamae didn't do anything she needs to apologize for."

"I'm, like, pretty sure bringing plants to a debate is something to apologize for."

Nonoa tilted her head inquisitively, but Masachika waved dismissively.

"That's just strategy. Since when do the losers apologize to the winners anyway? Come on."

"Ha-ha… Yeah…"

"…You were the ones who forfeited your victory."

Sayaka lifted her head and stared hard at Masachika. It was clear by the look in her eyes that she figured out he was the one who asked Nonoa to squash the rumors about her.

"It was bothering Alya, so I did what I had to do. That's all. Besides, it was Nonoa who actually did everything, so don't blame us for what happened." He shrugged. He wasn't going to accept thanks for helping her, and he wasn't going to take criticism for the hit to Nonoa's reputation, either. Put simply: "If you have a problem, bring it up with Nonoa, not me." Sayaka easily picked up on what he was trying to say, but she turned her gaze to Alisa next.

"That still doesn't change the fact that you two were looking out for me. The fact that you didn't bring up the debate during the announcements proves that. Am I wrong?"

Alisa stared Sayaka right back in the eye.

"…Who knows who would have won if we had waited for everyone to vote.

I didn't want to declare victory when it wasn't a hundred percent certain that I earned it. That's all."

Sayaka stared hard, observing Alisa as if she were trying to peer into her soul, but she eventually lowered her gaze with a begrudging smile and nodded.

"…I see you are a woman of great pride," muttered Sayaka before turning on her heel. She walked to the classroom door and went to open it…but stopped.

"…But I am a woman of great pride as well."

Masachika immediately realized what she was up to.

"Hey, wait. What are you planning?"

Sayaka looked in his direction and replied:

"I will not bend the truth just for the sake of my reputation."

"So you plan on announcing you lost? During one of the school announcements? Wait… At the closing ceremony?"

She looked away as though she was unable to answer him, so he stood out of his chair.

"I'm sorry, but as a member of the student council, I can't allow you to waste valuable time at the closing ceremony with something like that. If you want to pay Alya back for her good faith, then there's another way you could do that, you know."

"…'Another way'?"

And after Masachika explained what that way was, not only Sayaka but also Alisa stared in astonishment. Even Nonoa raised an eyebrow.

"…Are you being serious?"

"Completely serious. Are you okay with that, Alya?"

"S-sure…"

"Nonoa, you said you'd make it up to us, right?"

"Uh… Yeah, I guess I did say that."

After seeing Alisa's puzzled nod and Nonoa's half smirk, Sayaka turned to face him.

"It's not like I'm going to cheer you on or support you," she argued as if she was suppressing various complex emotions while staring at Masachika and Alisa.

"Yeah, I know."

"…And I still think you should have run alongside Yuki Suou."

"Really? But you can at least recognize why I chose Alya, right?"

Alisa and Sayaka stared each other down for a few moments before Sayaka finally closed her eyes.

"…Fine."

After seeing Sayaka's slight nod, Nonoa grabbed the back of her chair and leaned way back.

"Whoa. Really? All right, I'm in, I guess."

She slid back in the chair and casually bobbed her head up and down.

"Thanks. I'm counting on you two." Masachika firmly nodded in return before facing Alisa, whose eyes were wide in disbelief, and exclaimed:

"See, Alya? This is the effect you have on people. We're going to beat them now."

"Huh…? We are? W-wait. I thought we were going for a draw."

Masachika curled his lips fiercely at his partner, who was still utterly confused by the sudden turn of events.

"We're not going for a draw anymore. We're going to finish what they started…and crush them."

Alisa gasped at his declaration, Sayaka silently resettled her glasses on her nose, and Nonoa smiled gaily.

Kuze used the favour from Sayaka to make her inclined to agree to help in light of it, rather than staying in debts that's the investment from that time back in Volume 2 I was talking about.

But Nonoa was onboard too. Why would she be you might ask? Because it's exciting now, she's interested in Kuze already, and that is because of the plant strategy of hers. I didn't mention it before since it wasn't directly involved but now it is for persuasion towards Nonoa, so let me delve into it too:

Volume 3 Page 18:

In the dark auditorium that was so packed with students a few had to be standing, in such a huge crowd Kuze noted and saw everyone who were her "plants" even by their names and classes (now those were pretty much random students from many various classes so you can argue that Kuze also knows pretty much everyone in the school and has the information on what class they go to, which shows just how much social connections he actually has)

"And? Why are you telling me all this? I'm your enemy, you know?"

"'Enemy,' huh?"

"Don't tell me you didn't notice I had a few plants in the audience to stir things up."

"Yeah, I know. Konda from Class A, Nagano from Class C, Satou and Kunieda from Class D, and Kinjou from Class F, right?"

Her eyes widened in astonishment, but her grin grew.

"…Seriously? You found every one of my plants from the stage in that dark auditorium?"

Volume 5 page 162:

This is the buff for when Kuze knew all the plants in the dark auditorium. 130 is a bit under 20% of the whole student body and it was said that most of the students were there during

the Electoral Debate, so we have surely over 325 students in the auditorium there, and Kuze was able to pin point every single plant of hers in that huge auditorium with dim lighting.

[Perception, Observation]

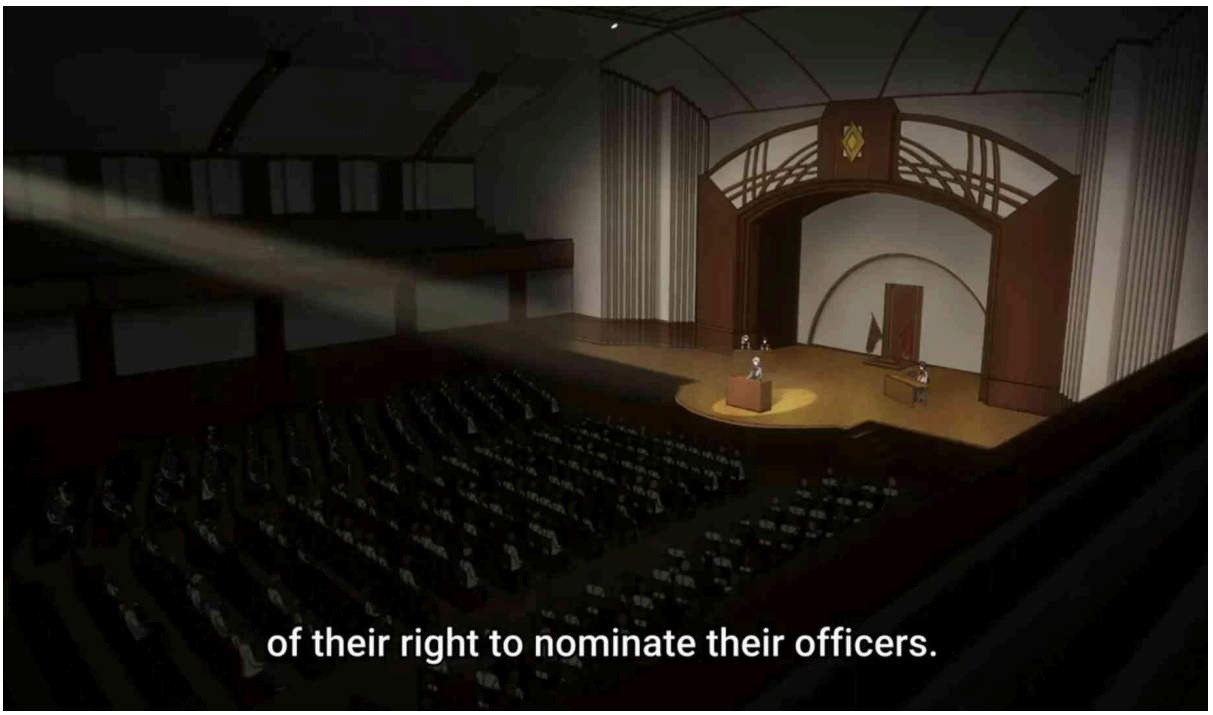
Hmm… I was honestly expecting there to be a distinct, bigger difference in support…but maybe they liked her indifferent reaction. Some people like it when celebrities are cold and blunt, after all. Anyway, I'm glad I was wrong.

Masachika was pondering the audience response while clapping when he noticed the influx of spectators was starting to die down a little. It was already a huge crowd, perhaps because two of the most beautiful student council presidential candidates at school were about to duke it out, but the fact that it was lunchtime seemed to help as well. In fact, most students in the crowd had some sort of snack in hand, as if they wanted something to watch while enjoying their meal.

There's not an empty seat left. Counting the people standing in the audience and those outside the venue peeking in, then you'd have around 130 people watching.

In other words, a little under 20 percent of the entire student body was currently here. While there was no way all of them were going to watch the entire show, there were still more than enough people here for details to quickly spread to every single student in school.

(Light shining in their eyes btw, that's how dark it was from their pov too pretty obviously, and Kuze was able to note all 5 Leo out of over 325 that were whispering to others to instigate against Alya, which only took a few seconds to fully spread around and be untraceable unless he did notice them all pretty much instantly)



So through that distance with so many students and the dissonance spreading like wildfire, Kuze showcases pretty ridiculous capability in both perception and observation to know the exact people involved who started it, despite people whispering amongst themselves constantly anyway. Sadly the exact way isn't explained to us but there's just a few possibilities:

1. Lip reading (tacky)
2. Using Emotional Perception for malicious intent (consistent with his ability)
3. Nothing those that looked down at their phone when Nonoa sent the message and started whispering something to other people

In all of those, the reality remains the same of how ridiculous it is, even the psychopath Nonoa who doesn't usually care about anything or feel any excitement got shocked and it makes sense now why she was supportive of the idea.
Volume 3 Pages 191-194:

Alya began her speech after Yuki, and, started off by talking in Russian, which got the public hooked at something they didn't see before, a trademark she can use, and Kuze already planned for her to use that and knew how the public would react. But funnily enough, even this move has multiple purposes: Help Alya -> Change the atmosphere created by Yuki and hook the audience who's thoughts may have still been occupied by Yuki.
Help Kuze's case -> Once his turn will come, he'll use this as a way to show how honest and straightforward she is. He revealed that he asked her to do this, and she just did. Which was used, as one of her more attractive and admirable traits, which people will now notice aside from her capabilities and looks.
Afterwards, she continued speaking from heart, without any falsification, her real self, which shines brightly just as Kuze wanted. But of course due to her low experience she still got anxious, that's when Kuze, intentionally on Russian, told her "keep your chin up" (it was more like don't drop your nose, but same concept), which reassured Alya, and she even used the time Yuki bested her and the current time to showcase her flaw, which normally wouldn't be a good look, but in this situation it was, as she talked about her resolve to

improve and become her ideal self. Which was one of the things she now was advertising, so, this does help her case and make her seem more honest (which she is), and it'll later on be more fortified by Kuze, of course.

Alisa took to the podium in front of the still extremely excited student body. Only after the silver-haired young lady was projected onto the screen did the audience begin to focus on her. It seemed about 50 percent of the audience was interested, 30 percent was indifferent, and 20 percent felt bad for her. Most of the students were already captivated by Yuki's speech, and there were hardly any students left who were expecting anything from Alisa, let alone wished to support her. It was as if she were standing alone in a foreign land with no one to help her. While the audience's eyes slowly began to focus on her, she opened her mouth and said:

"Спасибо за представление. Я казначей ученического совета Кудзё Алиса. На будущий год я планирую выдвинуться кандидатом на выборах председателя совета. Прошу вас поддержать меня."

Her Russian greeting came out of nowhere and with great force, leaving almost every student dumbfounded in their seat. They all stared at her now as she suddenly fell silent and slowly blinked.

"…My apologies. It seems I was so nervous that I started speaking in

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Russian."

The crowd erupted in laughter. *The* princess Alya seemed to be joking around, but she said it with a completely straight face. "Yeah, right!" "Wait. Is she joking?" The crowd went wild, trying to figure out if she was joking. Alisa inwardly sighed in relief, since they'd reacted just as she and her partner hoped they would. This was the secret Masachika had taught Alisa the day before to hook the audience within the first ten seconds.

"First, speak in Russian. This should help relieve some of the tension when your turn comes around, since Yuki and Ayano are going to go before you. You're probably going to be pretty nervous during the ceremony, and you still might be somewhat traumatized after what happened during the afternoon announcements, whether you're aware of it or not. So speak in Russian first until you're completely calm. I mean, it doesn't matter if you say the wrong word or stutter in Russian, since no one's going to understand anyway, right?"

Alisa secretly smiled to herself, relieved that it turned out exactly how Masachika said it would. Then after taking a deep breath, she faced the microphone once more and continued.

"Allow me to introduce myself again. I am the student council's accountant, Alisa Kujou, and I am planning on running for student council president next school year."

But even after taking a deep breath, it still took a lot of courage to say those next words. She was hesitant. She was still wondering if it was really okay to say

"However, if there is one thing I am proud of…"

Alisa placed a hand on her chest, swept her eyes across the audience, and clearly declared:

"It is that I can work harder than anyone else."

This was one thing she could say with confidence. This was something she knew wasn't a lie.

"My entire life, I have always worked hard to achieve my ideal results. The fact that I have maintained my position as top student in my grade since my transfer should give you an idea of how hard I work."

That was when Alisa suddenly started to feel a bit out of breath, and she realized how awfully shallow her breathing was. Nevertheless, there was no time to worry about that. She couldn't pause. She had to keep talking to her audience.

"Furthermore, I was chosen as the ladies' MVP during field day last year, and I received first place for my class's shop during the school festival…! That was a team effort, of course."

I can hardly breathe! My legs are trembling. I'm having trouble hearing anything… Or perhaps I'm not allowing myself to hear.

"Yes, there are traits and experiences that I would lack as the student council president…"

Alisa suddenly had a flashback of what the audience said during the debate and of her performance during the afternoon announcements. The more she thought about how she *had* to keep talking, the more it felt like her throat was being ripped apart.

I knew I wouldn't be able to do it. Speaking my heart to the audience while looking them in the eyes? Me? The girl who always ran alone, never opening up to anyone? The world looks hazy. My legs are trembling, and I can hardly brea

—

Keep your chin up

"Не вешай нос!"

As those Russian words suddenly slipped into her ear, Alisa could feel her five senses sharpen until she realized that she was looking straight down.

Did he just say that in…Russian? Don't tell me he practiced just for this moment?

The instant the thought popped into her mind, she felt the reassuring gaze of someone watching over her from the wing, and at that moment, everything seemed so ridiculous to her. She couldn't help but crack a smile because of how overprotective her partner was. Alisa lifted her head and saw a small commotion

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in the crowd along with the quizzical looks on their faces. She could…hear

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And while she didn't get as much applause and support as Yuki, she didn't have to. What mattered is to show her as a person to the audience, and going a different path from Yuki was a correct decision by Kuze and Alya because doing the same wouldn't help them win against someone like Yuki who has more followers. This will also help her in the future as people will be more aware of those qualities and notice them more, too. But of course, that's not all, because this event's flow was prepared a lot by Kuze in many ways, but he had one last thing to do, deal the finishing blow.

Before Alisa realized it, she was no longer afraid to show her true self, no matter how imperfect. No longer was she thinking about the speech she wrote. Her expression conveyed relief as she faced the audience to open up her heart to them.

"What I can promise you is this: I will continue to work hard to become the ideal student council president, and if I feel like I am not fit to become the president before next year's election…then I will pull out of the race."

She smoothly lowered her head.

"Therefore, please watch over my progress and feel free to point out whatever you think it is I may lack. I will use your input to become the president you want. Thank you all for listening."

Her speech was followed by scattered applause after she removed herself from the podium. While it was far from enthusiastic, the applause was warm and encouraging. Alisa bowed deeply once more before exiting the main stage. Masachika breathed a sigh of relief as he watched and analyzed the situation.

It looks like they really liked her for the most part. She did very well, especially when you consider how Yuki instantly won over the crowd before Alya even got a chance. It looks like taking her speech in a completely different direction from Yuki's really paid off in the end.

Volume 3 Pages 197-201:

He was the last to go, just as they wanted.
Actively Kuze was throwing around jokes and interesting statements to firstly get the public fully engaged, of course even making them laugh with his laid-back jokes. At the same time, he reminded them that he has no less experience than Yuki as well, and mentioned working behind the scenes. Now, while usually it wouldn't work, they were already engaged into their Duo's speech, by Alya's brightness and his attitude. This, will also help him later on with his reputation (which also additionally helps Alya. Don't forget, main goal is to become Council President, not just winning this event. In Volume 6, we see that it's noticeable how different people started treating him, for example). Then continued in the same way as Ayano was praising Yuki, he praised Alya, as someone who chose her over Yuki. Even revealed that she did the Russian part as he asked, just to further prove his point as I talked about before, which was to help his case. And then he criticised his own argument because it wasn't complete yet. He then started talking about something that is a problem even more than what Yuki brought up, the low amount of the members in the council from the first years. Something that has been there since forever. So he even got Alya, Sayaka and Nonoa come

out together as proof of his words, something that the public absolutely loved, way more than Yuki's proposal by itself.

"Yeah, I've got this."

As he headed toward the podium, he glanced back once more at Alisa…and the other two behind her, and smugly declared:

"Time to win this show."

Once he stepped into view, every student locked onto him, seeing as he was the last member of the student council to go. He took his time, slowly walking to the podium, and when he finally reached it, he gazed out over the crowd with a confident grin.

"Hey. I'm student council member Masachika Kuze, and I plan on running with Alisa Kujou during next year's election. Oh, and one more thing…"

He paused, then dramatically swung his arms out and struck a pose. His left arm hovered under his chest with his left hand supporting his right elbow, and he held his right hand straight up in front of his face, closing his eyes. It was a pose only a narcissist with glittering eyes would make, and he was, in fact, sporting a leering grin like one before looking crookedly at the crowd.

"The vice president and true power behind the throne during Yuki Suou's reign in middle school…was me."

The crowd's reaction to the long theatrical pause between sentences and the overdone acting was…

"Pfft!"

"…"

"Okay…?"

…varied. Some laughed and some wondered what was wrong with him, but most people had had no idea. "Oh, he was the vice president?" they said. Masachika blinked a few times in what appeared to be confusion, tilting his head at the lukewarm responses, which he'd actually expected.

"Hmm? Did I just bomb?"

His bold statement made even more people start to laugh. He then cleared his throat, put his puzzled feelings behind him, and continued:

"Anyway, I was Yuki Suou's vice president in middle school and did a lot of work for her behind the scenes. Now, I know what you're thinking: 'Wait. Then why isn't he going to be running with Yuki for next year? Is he cheating on her? He must be cheating on her!'"

The laughter continued to travel like a wave across the crowd.

"'Why,' you ask?!" shouted Masachika, slamming his hands against the podium and silencing every last bit of laughter. He then sharply observed the crowd as they stared, eyes wide.

“Because I dumped her! I dumped Yuki’s sorry butt, so it’s not even cheating!” he declared with a completely straight face. The audience exploded with laughter once again, and some even jokingly hurled insults at the stage: “You’re an asshole!” “Slow down there, man!” And just like that, the rising tension from moments ago had vanished. Masachika raised a hand to calm them, then lowered his voice into something more composed.

“Now, why did I dump Yuki and decide to go with Alya, you might ask? Well, before I answer that, I need to ask you all something first. My fellow students, what kind of person do you think deserves to be the president of the student council? The most gifted student? *I* don’t think so. I think you have to be someone who, above all, attracts others… Yeah, I know what you want to say. ‘That sounds like Yuki to me,’ right? I know, I know. Just hear me out first, okay?”

His playful remark brought some laughter back into the crowd in addition to dispelling any doubts that arose.

“First, we need to talk about what specifically makes someone magnetic, and that is someone who is genuine, someone who listens to others’ opinions, and someone who works hard. They’re the kind of person you look at and say, ‘Wow, they’re working really hard, so I should work harder, too!’ And most importantly, they have a pure heart. They will not hurt others to satisfy their own selfish desires. If anything, they will put others’ wants before their own. People tend to gather around selfless individuals like that, and I think people who are able to get along with most of their peers deserve to become the student council president.”

After offering a coherent explanation, Masachika slightly changed his tone and asked:

“With that in mind…how did you all feel about Alya’s speech? I hardly had any say in it, by the way. Oh, except for the Russian bit in the beginning. I put her up to it because I honestly thought it’d be hilarious.”

His confession was immediately followed by voices of surprise mixed with laughter in the crowd. “Was it really necessary to admit that?!” “That was your doing?!” Masachika waved his hand dismissively.

“There’s no way Alya would have done something like that on her own… Anyway, back on topic. When I heard Alya give her speech from the stage wing, I was honestly like, ‘Wow, awkward…’”

The crowd began to buzz somewhat after he criticized his own partner’s speech.

“But at the same time, I felt she was genuine and extremely straightforward. Wouldn’t you all agree?”

After a good portion of the audience nodded in agreement, he approvingly nodded back and continued.

“Alya is an honest person. She’s genuine. She isn’t going to present herself as something she’s not or claim she can do something she can’t just to get people to like her and vote for her. And she’s a hard worker, as she mentioned herself. She’s extremely flexible and willing as well, to the point that she used the ridiculous hook I suggested to get the crowd laughing,” he said in a joking manner, but his gaze narrowed seriously after that.

“Those are the traits that drew me to her and the reasons I want to support her. That is why I chose Alya over Yuki, and that is why I want you all to do the same as well.”

He looked at the crowd before almost immediately adding:

“But, well, I guess it is pretty hard to put your trust into one guy’s personal opinion. I’m sure some of you are thinking, ‘Sounds like a matter of taste, if you ask me.’”

He shrugged and nodded at them as though these hypothetical skeptics had a point, then raised an index finger into the air.

“But let me tell you something. Not an opinion. A fact.”

After pausing and waiting for everyone to focus on him…he played his trump card.

“Once Alya becomes student council president…Sayaka Taniyama and Nonoa Miyamae will be joining the student council as well.”

The hard-to-believe announcement was followed by a brief moment of silence until a stir quickly rippled through the audience.

“We have already received their firm commitment. Can you all believe it? Once rivals during a fierce debate, and yet they are now talking about creating a new student council together. Alya has done something that Yuki and I couldn’t back in middle school.”

Masachika glanced over at Yuki in the wing as the audience sat in bewilderment and doubt.

“Yuki mentioned a few moments ago that she would be the only one who could change the school thanks to her experience over the years in the student council, but is that even true? In addition to Alya, you get Sayaka and Nonoa, two talented former members of the student council who were Yuki’s most formidable opponents in middle school, and you get me—someone who has just

as much experience in the student council as Yuki. So I ask you: Do you really believe she is the only person who can change this school?"

Students in the crowd exchanged glances as though he had a point, but Masachika wasn't done yet.

"Think back to what Yuki said during her speech: We don't have enough first-year students working in the student council this year, so we are severely limited to what we can do. But how does a lack of first-year students even limit us this much? The answer is simple: Any second-year student who could have helped already dropped out of the student council after losing in the election. Only one pair of talented individuals running for student council president and vice president ends up staying in the student council while first-year students, who lead the next generation, slowly drop out after each debate. This has been true every year there has been a student council as far as I know, and this is why the student council always suffers from short-staffing."

It was a hard truth known by all, but it was so normal to them that nobody actually thought deeply about it.

"But if we had more second-year students contributing in the student council, then surely we could stably manage it without being influenced by uncertain factors like first-years, right? And only a student council centered around Alya can do that. As student council president, she will be able to create a dream team of former presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and to me, that is the ideal student council."

Numerous students expressed excitement over his plan of having former rivals join and run the student council together. Their eyes sparkled at the dreamlike idea, which had never been done before. And yet Masachika still wasn't finished.

"Of course, Yuki and Ayano are no exception. When Alya becomes president, I am going to have them join us as well. After all, you heard Yuki. You saw how passionate she was about reforming the school. Even if Yuki did lose the race, I am sure she would be *thrilled* to help us if it meant making the school a better place!" he suggested with a smirk, bringing not only laughter but also assurance, since people now knew that no matter what happened, Yuki would be on their side. In the midst of their laughter, Masachika overdramatically bowed humorously one last time.

"I apologize for how long that was, but we need your help if we are going to make this the best student council you've ever seen. Thank you all for listening."

But the final surprise occurred the moment he stepped down from the

podium. While he began his journey back to stage right, Alisa emerged from the wing…with Sayaka and Nonoa in tow.

"Hmm? Is that…? What the…?!"

"No way?!"

"Hey, look!"

"Whoa! Seriously?!"

The biggest surprise of all was proof of what Masachika had claimed. Alisa, Sayaka, and Nonoa stood together side by side before bowing once more to the crowd. They were instantly showered with explosive applause and cheering. The students had no idea what the agreement between Alisa and Sayaka actually had been like, but that didn't matter. Two candidates who they believed would never work in the student council had now joined hands with Alisa and Masachika, and that fact alone was enough to get people excited.

"Alya, you earned this applause," he said to Alisa by his side.

"…!"

He heard her breath catch in her throat and made a conscious decision not to look at her. The four of them began to return to the wing, but the applause and cheering did not end, and it was just as impressive as the reception their rivals received.

But that wasn't all, he used Yuki's own passionate speech against her. Because there's only 2 choices: She was either lying in her speech about doing things in best interests of the students and school, so she won't join the Council, but that'll just make her popularity and support plummet. And the other choice she has is to join, and do what she said she'll do but with Alya as the president, instead. Her popularity may even be above Alya, but this is a harsh hit, because even Yuki's followers will be conflicted here: Yuki + Ayano or Yuki, Ayano, Alya, Kuz, Sayaka, Nonoa and maybe more. There's almost nothing that Yuki can give against this even further on in the future, but of course this won't just win the whole election campaign. While, basically, using Yuki's own speech to corner her even more, at the same time leaving her no choice but to either suffer a great loss later on, or for the public to think it would be fine if she's not the president after all, he also set things for the future of both his and Alya's reputations.

Pretty much no matter what speech Yuki would give, it would either be used against her if it's good like now, or if it's not she'll be completely outshadowed and blown out with the amount of support Kuze got on the other hand for him and Alya. That's why he said that he'll crush them (Yuki and Ayano) instead of the draw, because with that opportunity of using the favour from Sayaka and Nonoa, he'll completely overshadow Yuki's speech, and even use it against her if not being able to overshadow it. There's no doubt that while Yuki one upped him when he was sick, and completely played with Alya, she got completely crushed with no chance to win in the Closing Ceremony itself as Kuze understood her thoughts, her goal, the details of her plan etc etc.

Only 25% even normally as a chance that Yuki will come last, even lower if you remember that Kuze also directed her thought train and predicted it fully as well, and even in the small, very small chance, that Yuki would of went last, she'd just be forced to make a meek and weak introduction and try to somehow in the future dissolve the incredibly strong speech and

hooks made by Kuze before attempting to try and declare why she'd be a good president, and try to win over Sayaka with Nonoa too. Basically just a doomed situation regardless.

Why Yuki had no chances regardless:

Volume 3 Pages 185-186:

After Alya guessed incorrectly in the heads or tails, Yuki had the right to choose to go first or last out of the two of them. She thought that she saw through him, and in a very quick thinking manner, in span of around 5 seconds thought through many variables and the possibilities to arrive at a conclusion that he was just bluffing. It wasn't his usual style since he normally pulls the strings behind the stage. So she thought it was a bluff on his part, and that Alya is weak, she found it out herself and tested it herself. That's why she was sure that going first here will give her an advantage. To get as many applause and support from the beginning that they wouldn't even bother with her. As she believed they go in for a draw seeing their position, she decided to go in for the dagger, abandoning thinking about the safest option of going last. But she didn't know that, her thoughts were already influenced and manipulated by Kuze, who knew she'll be thinking like this. That's why Alya grinned (probably after turning away from Yuki), because it was going just as Kuze wanted.

Now a clarification: If Alya got the coin right... Well obviously they'll choose the turn they want.
But even if Yuki were to choose, it wouldn't honestly change much, and I'll explain why, later. Although going last was best for Kuze and Alya, his strategy was so resilient that, even if Yuki went last, his win is already predetermined.

Maria removed her left hand, revealing the number 100. Yuki, who had been watching Alisa's expression the entire time, noticed her briefly frown.

"Tails. All right, Yuki, do you want to go before or after me?"

"Hmm…"

Yuki placed a hand on her chin as Maria and Masachika quietly watched her.

It would have been great if we won the coin toss, but whatever… Let's just see how much of our plan she can see through.

Yuki focused on her own thoughts while her brother stared.

Normally, going last makes you stick out more and gives you the advantage…but if I go first and impress everyone so much that they won't even bother clapping for Alya, then I could destroy her. On the other hand, going first usually means you become the standard for the rest, which will get you at least the bare minimum amount of clapping, so it would be difficult to absolutely crush Alya if I make her go first. She and everyone else could even use that as an excuse. "Oh, she went first, so give her a break." Stuff like that… Maybe I really should choose to go first? That was what I was planning on doing anyway. But…

Yuki tried to analyze the situation from a different angle.

That's only if I wanted to absolutely crush her to the point of no return, but now that my brother's serious about this, maybe it'd be better if I tried to win in the safest way possible… Which means going after her would give me the edge. I should probably see how he is planning to fight first before striking…

That was when Yuki was suddenly overcome with a feeling that something was off. The way her brother was acting a moment ago…and the way he was clearly trying to taunt them…

Now that I think about it…he was really trying to scare us…which is unusual for someone who normally pulls the strings from the shadows to get things done… Was that all an act?

Her gut told her she was right the instant the thought popped into her head. She swiftly looked at Masachika and put on her thinking cap.

If that was all an act…then what is he after? He acted like he was angry that we tricked him and made it seem like we were going to fight head-on. But he really doesn't plan on fighting fair and square. And…! He's trying to distract me from Alya! That's it!

It hit her like a divine revelation from the heavens as she stared hard into her

brother's eyes. While she couldn't read his poker face, she could tell she was approaching the truth.

Yes… I got so caught up with my brother that I almost lost sight of things. It's Alya I'm after…and she isn't that mentally strong from what I can see. Plus, she is probably still traumatized from yesterday's announcements that we did together, since she was having a really hard time talking. That was why I was planning on forcing her to go after me at the ceremony. The pressure would crush her.

Once she remembered her original plan, she realized that Masachika was trying to distract her with something else, but that was over. She'd seen through his little trick.

He is going for a draw! He wants Alya to go first so she doesn't have to feel pressure while still getting at least the bare minimum amount of applause! Which means I am sticking to my plan and going first so I can dominate!

Around five seconds had gone by while Yuki reached her conclusion with her extraordinarily quick thinking.

"I would like to go first, please," she announced to Touya, seeming smug.

"All right, then. Suou and Kimishima will go first, followed by Little Kujou and Kuze."

Alisa silently nodded in agreement with the terms and slowly grinned.

Volume 3 Pages 202-203:

And in the afterthought, Yuki was able to understand that Kuze read and understood every single of her move, and read her perfectly. He was one step ahead the whole time, to which, Yuki was absolutely glad.
But one thing I wouldn't agree with, is that she thinks that she'd win if she didn't decide to go in for the kill and think they would be passively going for a draw.
While there was no chance she'll go last actually as explained, even if she did, there wouldn't be much of a difference. Alya and Kuze would crush them even more than currently, especially Alya herself, as the reason she didn't get a lot of enthusiastic applause is because Yuki went before her and stole the attention, so here she'd just get more attention by herself and overshadow Yuki, and even if not, then Kuze would still get so much more hooks and support, that Yuki's next speech would be stale in comparison. Kuze's actions also wouldn't change, still using Nonoa and Sayaka. One slight difference he could make, that would be simple to think of, and be still very effective, is just use him being her "childhood friend" and also the fact that she's fighting with her all, to essentially do the same thing as before. A good and passionate speech from Yuki would mean she indirectly would also agree that she'll join the council if she'll lose, or else she lied. And a bad one... Would just get badly overshadowed which would be even worse. From the start she had no way out of this situation, from the moment Kuze intimidated her, it was all set in stone.

To make matters worse, her brother was now serious about this because of what she'd done. *So this is what they mean when they say, "Too much scheming will be the schemer's downfall," huh?* thought Yuki, grinding her teeth when Ayano suddenly bowed before her.

"You have my deepest apologies, Lady Yuki. If only I had done a better job of—"

"You didn't do a single thing wrong, Ayano. This is on me. I went overboard with my schemes and ended up misreading my brother."

She shook her head, cutting Ayano off.

Yes, I should have chosen to go after Alisa instead of reading too much into it. If I had done that, none of this would have happened. I assumed she would have passively gone for a draw. No… My overconfidence tricked me into believing that was her only option. I thought I would be able to win if we fought head-to-head, even if I was up against my brother. And my arrogance led me to believe his threats were merely bluffs, which made me confident I could easily crush them.

He saw right through me…and correctly predicted every single move I made.

He'd seen it all coming and still purposely made a big deal about threatening them. Yuki most likely would have been extremely wary of him if he hadn't had done that. "Strange. He's acting far too calm. What is he scheming?" she wondered.

It appears my dear brother was one step ahead of me the entire time… Ha-ha-ha. He really is amazing.

And yet, despite losing, Yuki felt oddly refreshed. Of course, she wanted to win, but at the same time, she didn't want him to lose. She wanted the brother she'd looked up to and respected since childhood to be just as amazing as she remembered him.

They stared each other down for another few seconds until Maria spoke up, snapping Alisa out of it. Yuki watched Alisa talk with Maria and Masachika with Touya as her lips twisted into a bitter smile.

"You got me," she muttered.

It was a battle she could have won. The disparity between their achievements and popularity alone was enough for Yuki to win, but she still went out of her way to crush Alisa in their skirmish during the afternoon announcements. It was only natural that she would win, and yet it somehow ended in a draw. No. While they received essentially the same amount of applause, Masachika's and Alisa's speeches had better hooks and were something people would be talking about the next day. So even if it sounded like a draw right now, Yuki, in reality, had just suffered a loss.

"Wow, I honestly wasn't expecting them to get those two to help out," muttered Chisaki in admiration.

"…Yes, that was definitely unexpected," agreed Yuki. It was completely unexpected…and it was most likely a consequence of Yuki's actions as well. The afternoon announcement—the battle she dragged Alisa into to break her mentally and hurt her chances in the election—ended up becoming what led Masachika and Alisa to asking those two for their help.

I went too far…and it ended up highlighting her integrity…

With this I'll be concluding this analysis, with Electoral Debate and Closing Ceremony. In the future, I'll add more for the overall plan of the Reputation Narrowing and overall winning the election, but those two are finished.

Incredible result in the end by Kuze in both arcs despite pretty solid adversary in Electoral Debate and incredible performance by Yuki in Closing Ceremony.

Yuki and especially Kuze, shown great ability of using and integrating new and unexpected informations/advantages they suddenly get into their schemes, and also to make potent schemes regardless of situations with many layers to them. Thank you for reading this analysis.