Chapter 9.2: Prickly Princess

I tuned out the girls but eventually got tired of thinking solely about Kagura, so I turned my attention back to them.

Naturally, they were still engrossed in girl talk. I heard it yesterday, but damn, girls really can talk about anything and rather take offence a bit too quickly.

Well, the former is probably something to common friends.

…

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Why'd I go make it depressing?!!

I ruffled my hair at my annoying thought. I mean, it really was annoying how I still don't have any close friends.

My friends were barely past the level of acquaintances and probably said we were friends as a courtesy.

So… What was I missing? Wasn't I friendly?

And I wasn't even a stick in the mud, so what was wrong? I mean, I didn't really play games or watch

anime, but I have rather good knowledge of both of the mediums.

I definitely could hold a conversation on either of them; also, it's not like I was a weirdo. Yeah, I was just a normal guy.

Mhm, yeah. So… What am I doing here?

Yeah, I had spent my entire time thinking, but for what? Don't get me wrong, it helped me finish my food in barely 10 minutes, but I eventually got bored.

So much so that I stood up to go to the toilet after growing weary of thinking for a while.

"So uh, I'll be on my way," I stood up to use the restroom.

"Huh? What happened? Why do you wanna go? A-Are we boring you?" Suzuki asked, clearly worried that I didn't want to stay with her.

After some time of talking, she eventually moved to sit beside me and was hugging my hand; it was a rather favourable and enviable position (as a lot of boys in the cafeteria stared at me with the stink eye), but she didn't exactly include me in the conversation.

You see, I was just existing as a sort of accessory, though I know it wasn't Suzuki's fault or anything, but it was so boring that I had to spend my time thinking.

"Not at all; I just have something to do," I lied.

I have to escape this boredom before my brain explodes out of a lack of stimulation.

"Are you sure?"

"Yup."

"...Alright then."

I waved and left the cafeteria. After I left the cafeteria, I ran straight into the restroom.

I also really need to go to the freaking toilet!!!

…Let's just say my time in the restroom was well spent. Anyway, when I was done, I went to the library to pass the time.

I felt so happy that I started making lunch because it helped me save more, though that might have been motivation, since my balance wasn't exactly high.

At any rate, the library was quite large, a separate building from the class area, as big as, if not bigger than, the learning area.

It was also well air-conditioned and happened to have a snack bar.

The library itself was 3 floors—one for just normal library privileges, one for VIP library subscribers, and one for staff.

On entering, I went to the front desk and met the receptionist, a woman around the age of 25 to 30.

She had messy black hair and didn't wear makeup. She looked like someone who had just woken up, or rather, someone who hadn't slept for the past few days.

"Good morning, ma'am."

"Morning. Do you know your way around here, or do you need a tour?" she asked monotonously.

"It's my first time here, so a tour would be—"

"Oh, so you know your way around here. Then have a nice day."

"But—"

“Have a nice day,” she grinned creepily.

Talk about bad service. I was lucky enough to have already read the school map; if I hadn’t, I would be stranded. I went around looking at the different sections; they had a lot, even further dividing pre-existing genres.

An example was fantasy. Rather than just fantasy, it was divided into further categories, which were also divided into smaller categories—it was divided into 30 categories.

Whoa, this place is super big.

I stood in awe at the sight, but quickly calmed myself down.

Anyway, I eventually got a book and sat at the table closest to me, where a very cute black-haired girl with glasses was.

She had a preppy look, donning a black sweater, a long skirt, and black pantyhose; she also had a slender build.

Even when I sat down, she didn’t notice; she was completely oblivious to my presence, or so she acted. I didn’t sit there randomly; I wanted to test something.

I was reading a classic—“Crime and Punishment” by Fyodor Dostoevsky. I wasn’t reading it because it was interesting or anything, not that it wasn’t, though.

I read it because it was good at starting arguments; the arguments often started with a statement along the lines of, “If I were Raskolnikov, I wouldn’t turn myself in.”

Which then ignites the flame for arguments, which is why I audibly said this.

“If I were Raskolnikov, I wouldn’t turn myself in.”

Though when I said that, the girl remained quiet. It seemed I needed to be proactive.

“Hey, what do you think of this book? Don’t you agree with my statement?”

“Talk about an attention-seeker,” she mumbled under her breath, just enough so I could hear and enough to convey she didn’t want me to disturb her.

“Huh?”

“Nakamura-kun, or whatever your name is—I know you are seeking my attention; the question is, why?” The black-haired girl fixed her gaze towards me, trying to find my hidden agenda.

So she knows me, huh?

Now I know for sure that some people know about me, but how and why is still a mystery—especially since this girl seems closeted.

I wonder…

“Nakamura, earth to Nakamura. Don’t think you can weasel your way out of this.”

“I won’t, I promise. I was thinking of what to say. Fine, I’ll be truthful, I talked to you because... Well, I just wanted to talk,” I said nervously.

Well, that is technically correct.

“I see. Well then, ok,” she said, grinning slightly. “I mean, if you want to talk to me, who am I to stop you? So, let’s talk.”

She seems quite enthusiastic about this.

“If I may ask, how do you know my name?”

“Huh?”

It seemed she was surprised at my question, though she quickly regained composure.

“I happened to overhear your name from some people in my class. They were wondering why you were walking with Suzuki Aiya.”

Nice.

I wanted to know how much people knew about me and Aiya’s date.

The information was nothing special or anything, but I was curious. Moreover, it was better than hearing girl talk like “What’s the best make-up brand?” or something similar.

Also, with this I met someone I could spend time talking to.

“Oh ok, back to Raskolnikov. I would never turn myself in.”

“I see. Then without a doubt you’re an idiot.”

What about sugarcoating it?! Does she have no filter? …Talk about a prickly princess.

“...I feel like you just said what came to mind,” I laughed nervously.

“Yeah, doesn’t everyone do that?”

“Uh, no, not really.”

“Is that right? Why is that?”

Are you seriously asking me that?

What was common knowledge seemed like a unique phenomenon to her.

“Well, because it builds resentment.”

“I see. So you resent me?” Her voice softened as she tightened her lips and bowed her head.

“Of course not. I mean, why would I?” I replied, cheering her up.

Perhaps I judged her too fast. This girl isn’t a prickly princess—she’s actually very delicate, like a flower. No, more like a newborn kitten.

“I see, so a quick question. Nakamura-kun, will you be my friend?” She looked away with reddened cheeks.

Eh?

We literally just met! Though I don’t sense any animosity, so might as well—at least before someone comes and harms this newborn kitten.

“Sure.”

“Really?!!”

“Yup,” I nodded.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you,” she enthusiastically shook my hands with a wide grin.

Whoa, she’s really excited, isn’t she?

“So, am I by chance your first friend?”

“Huh? How did you know?”

“Well, you act like someone who reads a ‘How to Make Friends’ book,” I joked.

Why am I acting like I didn’t do the same before coming to this school?

“Nakamura-kun, are you a psychic?” She raised her left brow in suspicion.

“I am not.”

“I’m guessing it’s my expression that gave it away then, right?”

“Yeah.”

“I see.”

This girl really loves saying ‘I see,’ huh?

“Why don’t you have friends?” I asked.

“…”

I didn’t know the reason, but it was probably her mouth because it was quite prickly.

However, she was still a cute girl, so I was sure some boys would be able to handle her harsh words, so why didn’t she have any friends?

“Is it a personal reason?”

She nodded in affirmation.

“Don’t worry, I won’t pry if you don’t wanna talk about it.”

“Thanks for that.”

We continued our discussion about crime and punishment, with her occasionally giving some verbal jabs—calling me every insult in the Japanese dictionary until the bell rang.

Ring, ring, ring.

“Oh, it’s already time for class, right?” I said. “Thanks for today.”

Although your words hurt me in every way imaginable.

I silently sniffled as I stood up to drop my book and leave, but the girl held onto my shirt.

“M-My name’s Fujimoto Misaki.”

“Hmm?”

“I said my name is Fujimoto Misaki. You didn’t ask, so I thought I’d tell you anyway. See you tomorrow,” she grinned shyly.

“See ya.”

I grinned back and left for class. When I arrived in class, I noticed people sat with Suzuki. Yoshida was, of course, at my desk.

Aww, man.

Every day after lunch break, people always sat close to my desk and conversed with Suzuki.

It was very annoying, but I didn't have the confidence to talk back to the ikemen and gyarus who were friends with Suzuki.

“Guys, it’s time for class,” Suzuki noticed me standing close to the door of the classroom.

“Already?” a girl sulked. “But I wanna stay with Aiya-chan.”

“We can talk later.”

“Fineee~”

With Suzuki’s words, most of her friends—except those in this class—left for their own classes, and I promptly sat down.

“Sorry about that,” Suzuki said, her voice laced with concern. “Next time, I’ll tell them to leave before you come.”

“Nah, it’s fine.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, it’s no big deal.”

What the hell am I saying? It’s annoying as hell, but… I’m scared to anger the top of the food chain.

If they knew that I told Suzuki to send them away, they could retaliate, and I wanted to avoid that at all costs.

In the end, I was truly and utterly a coward.

“I’ll tell them just in case,” Suzuki added as class started.

Hell yeah!!!

With that done, class proceeded as usual, with me staring out the window, of course. I was thinking about that cute black-haired girl—Fujimoto Misaki.

I wondered what she did to make people not want to be friends with her.

Also, I wanted to protect her—her delicate heart invoked such feelings.

She really is like a kitten, isn't she?

The day went uneventfully until after school. After school, some boys came to me for some advice—people didn't know we were dating, but wanted to know how I went on a date with her.

While most people didn't find it weird that we went on a date (or at least didn't voice their opinions), some boys, particularly the ones who weren't conventionally attractive, wanted some advice.

They probably think I made Suzuki fall in love with me, not knowing I had no idea why she fell in love with me.

What was really surprising was how fast it spread.

Wait, if they are meeting me for advice, then they think I'm also not attractive? Does that mean I'm not seen as attractive by boys, too…?

"Nakamura-sensei!!! Where are you?!!!" some boys screamed in unison.

Oh, right, I've got other things to worry about.

I went to hide in the school garden from the crowd of boys.

Leave me alone!!!

I wanted to scream, but realised they would instantly know my location, so I ran over to the library.

Surprisingly, I didn't see Fujimoto.

Perhaps she only comes during break.

I went over to read a book—To Kill a Mockingbird. It was something to pass the time.

After 30 minutes, I went to the school gate and saw Suzuki waiting for me.

Dude, give me a break.

I broke a golden rule, which was, "Never keep a lady waiting."

“Nakamura-kun, you’re late. Do you know how long I had to wait? Meanie,” she pouted, hitting my chest with more force than I expected.

I winced a bit before speaking. “S-Sorry, Suzuki, I was uh—preoccupied."

“Fine, but there’s a punishment."

“A punishment?”

What kind of devilish punishment has she concocted?

“For punishment, you must call me by my first name—Aiya,” she blushed.

Is that it?

I stared blankly at her. I expected something more sinister—in fact, what she asked for was something I would have done anyway, after a short while.

“Was it a weird request?” she asked shyly.

Oh, it seems she took my silence for rejection.

“If you don’t—”

“Nah, I'm just shocked that it’s what you want. But I’ll only do it under one condition.”

“Huh? What condition?”

“My condition is that you call me by my first name too.”

“R-Really, that’s all? Well, if that’s what you want, then I’ll call you E-E-Eiya,” she stuttered while blushing. “Now let’s get going to our club.”

“Yeah, let’s, Aiya.”

As Aiya and I left the school gate, my mind wandered back to Kagura, and I was rehashing a former thought.

While probing Kagura for answers would be the best thing to do, I shouldn’t force her—I should let her tell me as a friend.

So unless she comes to me, I’m not doing anything. Yes, that is what I should do.

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Author’s Note:

Well, I can’t say that’s exactly right or wrong, so you do you, but I would have continued questioning her.

Anyway, remember to comment, share, and leave a review. Thanks for the chapter, and see you in the next one.