



K - ONE YEAR LATER:

CHAPTER 6: RIKIO KAMAMOTO'S QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (BY SUZUKI SUZU)

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

A year has passed since then.

"Hey, are we dating?"

Rikio Kamamoto's words instantly froze the previously peaceful atmosphere of the dining table.

The smile of his father, who was in a good mood after drinking alcohol, faded, and his mother, who was always kind, looked at Kamamoto with a confused face. And then his childhood friend, Nunohashi Ayumi, who was sitting next to Kamamoto and trying to serve him food wearing an apron, froze in the air of the room and couldn't move at all.

Kamamoto was the one who was surprised by her reaction. He even thought that he had said something weird.

The sight of Ayumi helping the Kamamoto family with dinner and sharing with them had become a daily sight. They were originally close to each other like family, but after last year's decisive battle with "Jungle", they started to go back and forth with the Kamamoto family. Ayumi was on good terms with his parents, and they often ate together, so she didn't really care, but...

It all started when the topic of marriage came up a lot recently.

A friend's sister got married, this type of ceremony is popular these days, wedding rings are inexpensive and should last a long time, etc. Not only Ayumi, but also Kamamoto's parents were eager to bring up the subject.

Kamamoto was just listening to the story; he ate quietly without thinking about anything. Will Ayumi turn 17 or 18 this year? Marriage is still a long way off, and she'll probably be single before then, but he wondered if it's just the girls who get excited.

The weather turned weird when his mother touched Kamamoto on his shoulder,

"Stay strong too, okay? I won't forgive you if you make Ayumi cry."

He wondered why she said that.

Huh? He thought. Why would he be making Ayumi cry? She is a childhood friend who is almost like a little sister, and although he has protected her from being bullied by the bad guys in her neighborhood, he had never made her cry.

And his father, who was sitting at the dining room table drinking beer, was making fun of him.

"That's right, you! Don't fool me! If you do something like that, Nunohashi's old man will beat you up!"

"I'll kick you out of my house too! If you're so inhuman, you're not my son anymore!"

Then Ayumi, who was sitting next to Kamamoto, interceded with a smile.

"Okay, father-in-law and mother-in-law. Ri-chan doesn't do that. For a long time, he's always been by my side."

"Is that so? Well, it's fine if Ayumi says so."

"Please take care of this boy, Ayumi-chan. Even though he looks like this, he is a bit careless. Keep putting him in his place."

"That's... Ah, Ri-chan, you'll eat more. Do you want a large portion?"

His doubts kept piling up. These three seemed to know a truth that he did not. To confirm that, Kamamoto opened his mouth...

It seemed to be related to what he said at the beginning.

Beyond that, he didn't want to remember too much. The crockery flew with a roar, the father grabbed Kamamoto's head and rubbed it against the tatami, and he bowed. His mother's face turned bright red with anger, and Ayumi gently wiped away her tears with the edge of her apron, but she still wore a stubborn smile.

He dragged himself away from his furious parents, which was how Kamamoto finally rushed to the HOMRA bar.

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Kamamoto asked with a serious expression after he finished telling the story.

"So what's the bottom line? Are you and Ayumi dating?"

"I do not know!"

Bando slammed his fist on the counter and yelled.

"What are you doing, Kamamoto-san, are you selling a fight?! I buy it, no matter how old you are, there are good things and bad things about it!"

"No, it may not be like that... Did I say something wrong?"

Bando's mouth opened wide and he was speechless, and began to tremble. His eyes were so full of murderous intent that he could tell even through his sunglasses.

"It's frustrating...! Why does such an insensitive bastard have such a cute childhood friend and I don't have one? Why does God allow such an imbalance?!"

Seeing Bando cry, Kamamoto scratched his head in embarrassment. Chitose, who was sitting next to Bando, muttered in amazement.

"You shouldn't consult with Bando..."

"Is that so? I'm sorry, Bando."

"Don't apologize, it will make me miserable!"

"Kamamoto. Don't insist."

"Oh, sure..."

He didn't quite get it, but Kamamoto decided to leave Bando alone anyway. He asks Chitose who was lying down.

"Hey, what do you think, Chitose?"

Chitose shrugged, stirred the coffee lightly,

"No, I don't know either. I don't even know Ayumi-chan."

"I see... Well, that's right."

"Well, there were times when I didn't know if we were dating or not. I've said the same lines as Kamamoto. I got beat up most of the time."

After saying that, Chitose laughed. He is playboy enough to compete with Kusanagi in "Homura". In fact, he must choose who to consult with. Asking Bando about women is the same as asking Yata about math problems.

"But those kinds of things usually happen, well, they happen after you've done something. Kamamoto, you didn't mess with Ayumi-chan, did you?"

Kamamoto responded sullenly.

"Obviously not! She's not like that, she's like a little sister!"

"Don't be mad at me, I just wanted to confirm. So, well, if you're doing nothing, is your relationship nothing? I don't know what the other side thinks."

"How are you like this? Chitose..."

With a voice that echoed from the depths of hell, Bando rebooted. He looked at Chitose with eyes that looked like burning flames and brought his face close to him.

"I know, recently there's a girl with good feelings! And besides! She's not like you! Are you saying that you're seriously dating?"

Unusually, Chitose's face suddenly turned red.

"Eh?" Kamamoto thought unexpectedly, stepping aside. Kamamoto knew it, but judging by Chitose's reaction, it seemed like a serious relationship.

Chitose said he was a playboy, but he was a womanizer at best. He should have repeated it over and over, just to spend the night together, but what kind of exchange did he have in mind?

Chitose turned his head away as if to hide his embarrassment from him.

"I don't care; it doesn't matter what kind of relationship people have."

"Not good! You're Chitose... if you're a womanizer, that's fine! It's fine if you take women around! It's good! I'll envy you too much!"

"You're such a scum..."

Chitose said that since he was quite shocked, while Bando fell on the counter and started crying.

"Tell me! No, I'm sorry, please tell me! I might find it useful...!"

"Ah. Well, that's fine."

Chitose said that as if he had lost his mind, and then started talking about his encounter with the woman.

That person is a teacher. She is also a primary school teacher. She was invited by an acquaintance to a joint party, and she was sitting across from him. She had just arrived as an escort and, to begin with, she did not seem very enthusiastic. No matter how much Chitose tried to talk to her, he couldn't help but give in to half of her saying, "This isn't good.", and changed the target from her to another girl.

But when they got to the second party, the colors began to change.

Arriving at the second party together meant that there was a certain expectation. Chitose, of course, joined in, but was surprised that the girl was there. Chitose, who was sitting next to her in the karaoke room, asked playfully.

"I thought you were going home because you didn't seem too keen on it. Are you targeting someone?"

The girl showed a small smile as she drank a prepared cocktail.

"You."

"What?"

"I want to know more about you."

Chitose had no idea what the girl was thinking.

After the second party, Chitose and the girl appeared as couples made up and broken up. Normally he would have gone straight to the hotel, but for some reason, he didn't feel like it. They entered a bar and talked there. It was Chitose's story, just as she requested. What kind of work did he do, where was his family's house?

Having said that, Chitose suddenly stopped talking.

"...And?"

To Bando, who urged him to go ahead, Chitose said bluntly:

"When I woke up, I was sleeping at the girl's house."

"Oh, you!"

Bando suddenly stood up and grabbed Chitose by the neck.

"What the hell did you do to her, idiot?!"

"No, I didn't! No, I was so drunk I don't remember! I didn't!"

"Okay, calm down, Bando. And then?"

As Kamamoto pushed Bando away, Chitose took a deep breath and rested his chin on the counter.

"Well, that's it. When I woke up, she was there and she was making coffee. At the time, she was wearing a suit. She told me to go ahead because she had schoolwork to do, to put the keys in the mailbox, and then..."

Chitose's face gradually turned red and he turned around again.

"...She patted my head like I would a child. And she said: See you later."

"....."

Bando pursed his lips and calmed down. He looked at Chitose questioningly.

"That is all?"

"That is all."

"How about a date? Go out to eat, go out to play."

"The other side seems to be busy, so we have lunch twice..."

Kamamoto and Bando muttered in unison.

"Are you dating her?"

"I don't know, not even me!"

This time it was Chitose's turn to stand up and shout. Holding his head, he squats on the spot.

"If it was another girl, the story would move on more easily, but come on! Somehow, when I'm with that girl, I can't speak properly. I'm going crazy! She seems to enjoy listening to my story. I can't go any further than that. I would love to go out with her! But what will I do if she rejects me?"

"Ah.", Bando exhaled in surprise.

"You like that girl."

"That's right! Is it bad?!"

"No... But, I never thought that I would hear a story like that from you..."

"Oh, no! That's why I didn't want to talk about this!"

Showing his frustration, Chitose sat down violently on the stool. He looked at Kamamoto with angry eyes.

"It's all your fault, Kamamoto! Because you bring stories you don't understand."

"Huh, I...?"

"Listen! It's not whether you're dating or not that's important! It's whether you like her or not! She likes you and wants to be your lover one day! So what about you?!"

It didn't matter what they said,

"I really never imagined such a thing..."

"Then imagine it now! You're already at that stage!"

As if to distract the embarrassment from him, Chitose slammed his hand on the counter.

"From what I've heard, there's no doubt that Ayumi-chan likes you. So what about you, Kamamoto? Do you like her as a girl, or don't you see her that way? Make it clear!" Otherwise, nothing will progress!"

Bando shook his head slightly.

"Oh...that's the sincerest comment you've made today..."

"Shut up! I don't want someone who doesn't even have a date saying that to me!"

"Eh?! You know, there are good things to say and bad things to say!"

Chitose and Bando started an ugly fight. Even facing them, Kamamoto remained silent and deep in his thought.

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In the park at night, Kamamoto absentmindedly sat on a bench.

When he was a child, it was the park where he often came to play. Swings and children's games in the sandbox. The seesaw was removed when Kamamoto was in high school. They all seemed very small compared to his memory. It was enough to make him feel like he was a giant.

No. In fact, he was getting bigger. Much more so than when he innocently played around here back then. So it may not have been an illusion that you tend to have.

As he toyed with such a ridiculous idea, he suddenly noticed a figure approaching him.

It was a ride.

She had a large paper bag. Peering out from there, Ayumi timidly appeared.

"S-sorry, Ri-chan. I'm late."

"Oh, no, it was me who called you. By the way, that's..."

"Ri-chan, you liked the "Usagian" taiyaki, didn't you? We were halfway through dinner, so I was wondering if you were hungry."

"I'm hungry! Thanks, Ayumi!"

Ayumi sat next to him and offered him a taiyaki. After receiving it, Kamamoto ate it all in just two bites. Ayumi offered more taiyaki, and Kamamoto ate it, offered it to him, and ate...

When he received the fifth, he finally came to his senses.

"No, no, no. I didn't call you for this. It was fine though."

When he tried to stop her, she made a sad face and lowered her head. Kamamoto scratched his cheek. It was hard to do, but he had to find a way out somehow.

Ayumi suddenly raised her head and looked directly at Kamamoto's face,

"Sorry!"

She yelled that and bowed her head again.

Kamamoto blinked. Why did Ayumi apologize? She hadn't done anything that required an apology.

However, Ayumi seemed to have a different opinion. She clutched the paper bag so tightly that she crinkled up and lowered moist eyes.

"It's my fault that uncle and aunt got mad. Ri-chan, uh, recently, I've been visiting your house all the time, so they misunderstood what I was to you. Ri-chan, even you didn't understand."

"Oh..."

"But it's also my fault. Um, it's really hard to say..."

Ayumi squeezed her eyes shut and her ears were bright red as she strained her voice.

"Honestly! There was a hole! I was trying to fill it up!"

"Yes.", she yelled.

Kamamoto involuntarily looked around him. A park in the middle of a quiet residential area. It was a voice as loud as he had never heard before, so much so that he couldn't help but groan.

Ayumi's complexion changed rapidly. With trembling lips and tears in her eyes, she exhales.

"I don't want to intentionally deny that uncle and aunt didn't get it right, so, um... I thought it would be nice if I could feel this way before I knew it. I got scolded... I'm embarrassed and I'm sorry... that's why..."

"A while ago..."

Kamamoto silently interrupted Ayumi's words.

"I was talking to my friends at the bar, because I don't know anything about that kind of thing. I asked someone who knew about it: what does it mean to be in a relationship, what kind of person should you date, etc. Well, that kind of history."

"....."

Ayumi looked scared at Kamamoto's profile. Every time she blinked, tears fell down her cheeks.

"Well, I really don't understand if we're dating and not, but that guy told me that, it seems that the important thing is whether I like you or not."

A childhood friend with whom he grew up as a family.

There was no doubt that she was an important person. However, as a member of the opposite sex, as a girl, he never thought of it strangely. All Kamamoto had was "Homura's" companions and his appetite, and Ayumi was in the same frame as his family.

"So, well... I thought about that too. About you. I never thought about that before, but when I thought about it, I wondered..."

Ayumi's already small body shrank even more.

"I probably like you."

With those words, it seemed that even her breathing had stopped.

However, Kamamoto spoke in a relaxed tone.

"Even a little while ago, you brought me taiyaki when I missed dinner. For some reason, I thought that was really cool. I'm sure you understand me well."

"Ta-taiyaki..."

Ayumi looked down. Deep, as if she wanted to bury her face in a taiyaki paper bag. Her shoulders were trembling slightly. Just when he was about to worry if she was alright, she said in a thin, trembling voice:

"Um... Ri-chan..."

"Eh?"

"I'm really... happy... but... would you like to be a little more romantic?"

Even if she said that...

Kamamoto scratched his head and thought for a moment before uttering a line that he had seen in a drama.

"So, Ayumi. Under the premise of marriage, go out with me."

"Yes!!"

Ayumi yelled, raising her head, her eyes shining and taking Kamamoto's hand.

Kamamoto didn't know if that was okay, but he let her shake his hands.

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"...And?"

A few days later, at the HOMRA bar.

Yata finished listening to Kamamoto as his eyebrows arched.

Kamamoto nodded firmly.

"That's why I decided to get married. I hope you'll support me."

"....."

For a moment, everyone was speechless and looked at Kamamoto's face.

At the bar were Yata and Kamamoto, along with Akagi, Bando, Chitose, Dewa, Eric and Fujishima, the main members besides Kusanagi and Anna. It all started when Kamamoto told them that he had something to talk about, but they never thought that he would drop a bombshell on them like that. They were all so desperate to chew on the facts that they couldn't say anything.

Meanwhile, Yata sighed deeply and touched Kamamoto's shoulder.

"Congratulations."

With that single word, something collapsed.

"Wow, are you serious?! Congratulations, Kamamoto!"

"Congratulations, Kamamoto-san! Oh, you're getting married...!"

"Congratulations!"

"Bando, that's not a congratulatory face at all, huh."

The members congratulated Kamamoto all at once. They tapped him on the shoulder, grabbed him around the belly, and began rubbing his head. Despite receiving a typical harsh blessing from "Homura", Kamamoto still laughed, "No."

"I think there is still a long way to go. Ayumi also wants to go to university. I also have to work hard."

It's not that he was particularly depressed, his attitude was that he was talking about the future that would come naturally. Bando and the others felt as if frightened by the adult atmosphere that was emitted from the big smile.

As everyone made a fuss, Yata laughed weakly.

"I mean, you, you get married suddenly, I'm sure there's a little more than one stage. It's too sudden."

"Eh. Is that so?"

"Do you have something like that, well no. Congratulations again, Kamamoto. Come to think of it, you are the most determined of us."

Kamamoto laughed "Hehe." and he rubbed his nose.

"Oh, but even if I get married, I'll still be a member of "Homura"! Of course I'll take good care of her, but, you're all important partners too!"

"Kamamoto...!"

Excitement spread among the members. Akagi winked at Fujishima, they walked around the counter and began lining up Kusanagi's precious sake.

"If that's the case, then let's go! It's an engagement celebration party!"

"I'll tell Kusanagi-san later. If he asks what happened, he should be able to forgive us."

"Oh! That's right!"

Everyone raised their fists in delight at the commander's order. They each emitted a red aura and yelled, of course,

"No Blood! No Bone! No Ash!!"

After the call, there was an outburst of laughter. He opened the bottle of whiskey, poured in sparkling water, and just as he was about to start doling out...

The PDA's dial tone sounded at the same time.

One was Kamamoto's PDA and the other was Chitose's PDA. The members, who were about to get excited, looked at the two with their glasses in their hands. The two left the words "I'm sorry." and received the call from the PDA.

"Oh, Ayumi? What's wrong?"

"Hi?! It's me, but what is it?!"

"Huh? Really? Is that so? Ah... I see."

"Eh, really? Yes, that's right! Yes, then..."

"Okay, then I'll go there right away. Oh, oh... See you later."

"There I come! I'm definitely coming! Wait a minute, I'll be there soon!"

And then, they both hung up at the same time.

The two of them looked at the group of people standing together without even blinking.

"Umm... I'm sorry! I'm sorry for saying that! I got a call from that girl."

"Ah, I'm out of here too! Thanks for everything!"

Then, without looking back, they triumphantly walked out of the HOMRA bar.

The remaining men were silent for a while. They couldn't even move. Yata, Akagi, Bando, Dewa, Eric, and Fujishima stared at the doorbell that was still shaking with eyes that seemed to stare into the distance.

Of course, Bando was the first to act. He gulped down the extremely thick highball, which was made in a roughly 1:1 ratio, and slammed it against the counter while he screamed as if he was vomiting blood.

"I wish I was dead!!"

That day saw the most frantic party since the start of the HOMRA Bar, and Kusanagi, who arrived the next morning, was furious like a raging fire, but that's another story.

Continued in chapter 7: "Memory Night".