White. Looking up and down, all you can see was white. Along with the cold temperature that could be felt would tell your instincts one thing. Snow. It is now in the middle of December in the world and the people in Sorano Academy where filled with cheer despite the cold weather. That is because, unlike usual schools, Sorano Academy celebrates the worldwide holiday known as Christmas before Christmas Eve, just like it would during a cultural festival.

**Tech Society ~Everyday Society~ Christmas Special**

Inside one of the classrooms along the merry first year halls, there were a group of students wearing gloomy faces in contrast to the cheerful atmosphere.

“Ugh… It’s time. The Christmas Festival is almost here. And that means one thing…”

“Another crazy plan that our seniors planned would happen, am I right?”

Kiryu nodded to Kotoharu’s follow up. It was only a few months ago when they did an extremely dangerous scheme during their first time organizing an event on the cultural festival.

To recall, the Information and Technology club were tasked to make a cyber-themed maze for the festival. But their seniors had bigger dreams and brought the entire school and everyone in it into a massive cyber-reality maze where they had to find the exit to end the game and escape.

It was something like being trapped in a VR-game and forced to play for your life, except that your real body is in it and it was all caused by a high-schooler’s whim. There was no override system and there was a time limit before everything in the game gets *deleted*.

Apparently, according to other seniors, that wasn’t the first time our club did something that crazy. In fact, other clubs even do crazier things. The seniors just laughed it off and somehow wished freshmen luck as if it was a tradition.

For the current freshmen, Kotoharu and Kiryu are having it hard to take in.

“Why did we join that club in the first place? In fact, why did you drag me in there with you just because your sister said so?”

Kotoharu started grumbling and threw an angry glare at his friend.

“You just said my reason. My sister forced me to.”

“Siscon”

“Speaking of siscon, it’s kind of hard to tell if it’s the younger or older sister right? They’re both under the incest category but younger sisters and older sisters are just two different things.”

“Don’t try to drag me into your weird trivia world. Wait, don’t you find that topic disturbing or insulting at all?”

“Sasaki is my older sister, but if you’re talking about siscons, I’m more in the younger sister type, so Sasaki is out. And as you know, my preference are girls the same age as me or at most 3 years younger.”

“I didn’t know you had this perverted side in you.”

“Men talk more openly about their preferences to their friends.”

“And where did you get that from?”

“From this manga.”

Kotoharu can’t help but feel disappointed by him. But on the bright side, it had lightened his spirits from the fact that they would be doing something crazy later.

To liven the atmosphere, another figure joined in the group.

“Yo. What are you guys talking about?”

An elegant and slender girl with waist length silver hair grabbed a nearby chair and sat in reverse, leaning her stomach to the back of the chair.

“Oh, it’s you Shino. This guy just ranting about how he is into little girls and other perverted things from the manga he just read.”

“Oh.”

Kotoharu said so in a sarcastic way and Shino followed by smirking at Kiryu. Of course, they were just messing around.

“Hey. I never said I was into little girls, I said 3 years younger at most right? And that I have no interest with older sisters!”

“Your sister would be sad if she heard that you said you don’t like her.”

“I never said that!”

“So you like her?”

“As a sister, of course. But we were talking about preferences, as in types of girls you like.”

“I was never part of that. You were the only one talking about your ‘preferences’.”

And so the mindless banter from the three continued. Until a person came in their classroom slamming the door.

“Kiiiiryuuuu!!! Kotohaaaru!!! It’s tiiiiiime!!!! Oh Shino, you’re here too! Good. Now you three, come with me!!!”

A page has been wasted on some nonsense and it is finally time to move to the plot with Yukino barging in with a voice that could rival a stereo.

Hearing her announcement coming in, how could they not, the two boys started trembling as Shino remained energetic as usual. It was now time to go to the club room and they would be forcefully dragged there regardless if they were willing to or not.

“OOH!”

Only Shino gave a cheer and started walking through towards the door, as the two were dragged by their collars along the hallway like bags.

“At least I can save energy from walking and continue contemplating on my life.”

It wasn’t known who exactly said that but both of the boys had the same feeling.

Let us skip time a bit into a week later with a montage.

Sorano Academy celebrates Christmas just like a festival with stalls and party games throughout the day, gift exchanges in each clubs and classes, lottery events, and a massive feast in the gym at the end of the day. But unlike other festivals, this is closed to the public and only students and staffs may participate. There are some invited guests too but they are usually just relatives.

Of course, there will be people that will want a unique and unforgettable event unlike any other as if this school-wide celebration was not enough.

The Information and Technology club is one of those *people*.

“Okay people, let’s split up for now and enjoy ourselves! We’ll meet in the clubroom later at three! Anyone that is late will be wearing a costume until the end of the day!”

“OOH!”

“oh…”

The other two girls Sasaki and Shino cheered while the boys Kouta, Kiryu, and Kotoharu just followed along. If Yukino was not so preoccupied by her own excitement for today, she might’ve reprimanded the three for being unenergetic but that didn’t happen.

“Well then, I’m signing up for the lottery. What about you two?”

The reliable, or rather, plain Kouta inquired his juniors.

“I’ll be with Shino viewing the stalls, then maybe sign up for the lottery later.”

“Then I’ll be joining…---“

Before Kiryu can complete his sentence, a blunt sound of a fist hitting the back of his head was heard. After which, Kiryu dropped dead on the cold snowy ground. It might just be an illusion but the snow nearby Kiryu’s body started to dye black.

“Kiiirrryuuu~ You’re coming with us.”

A short girl with long blonde hair stood on top of Kiryu like it was her prey.

“Oh. Kuromi-chan. What are you up to?”

“The guy in our dunk booth blacked out from the cold so we need a replacement.”

Kotoharu started the conversation as if his friend was not dying(?) while Kouta was still not used to the scene that these freshmen converse through normally thinking: ‘These guys are already crazy before entering this school?’

“Harsh. The day just started too, he already blacked out?”

“Weell… We were kind of practicing with the booth earlier this morning so he has been soaked ever since.”

A dunk booth in the middle of the freezing winter would just be an execution for the guy in it. Silent prayers were sent to the unknown guy that was placed in that position… and to Kiryu too.

“Hmm… So what are those guys planning this time?”

Seated in his comfy office chair, Toshiro Makuro sipped on his mug as he observed the festival that was about to start through the window facing the courtyard.

“Should you really be worrying about that more than the fact that there are other groups too that will do some crazy antics today?”

The one that answered him was a person that Toshiro was not expecting to be here in the student council office at this time. Rather than the person being here, he was definitely not expecting that this person would be wearing a revealing Santa girl costume that could already be considered as erotic.

“Pffft-“

“Laugh and this blade will go through your neck.”

Seeing that a katana-like sword was already nearly touching the skin of his neck, Toshiro held his breath and backed away slowly.

“Haa. Still, for you to be wearing that. Are you trying to seduce me, Anzu-chan?”

“When did we become close for you to start using –chan when addressing me?”

“Ara, so calling you by your first name is fine?”

And the blade was again near his neck. Realizing that this was going nowhere, Anu Mamiya gave up first as she sheathed her blade with a sigh and went on with the task on hand.

“I’m here to report on the disciplinary committee’s activities on the first hour of the festival.”

“A workaholic as usual. You might just succeed the position of being the DC chair.”

Not liking the words that came from the student council president’s mouth, Anzu ignored him and continued with what she was to report.

“As of this morning, before the gates opened, we have apprehended 6 students causing trouble, dissolved 3 stalls selling Class 4 to Class 5 Christmas themed technology, and finished off the uprising of Santabots, Elf droids and Reindeer mutants from the Biology and Computer clubs.”

“Hoh. That was quick. As expected of the Disciplinary Committee.”

Toshiro faked sounding to be impressed since this was to be expected. Selling classified information and unregistered/illegal technology has been a norm in this academy and there will always be people that will try to make some sort of seasonal creations that would go wrong, so Toshiro was not really that amazed.

“The day just started and you’ve already taken care some of the big incidents. So, what do you think these infamous guys would be doing this time?”

Toshiro turned his seat and gazed upon the bunch from the Information and Technology club that was entering the gates.

“Them again?”

“…”

“Right now we have no leads on their plans as usual. But if I were to make a speculation, it’s not gonna be pretty.”

“Right?”

“Their president, Yukino Akayuri, seems to be more anticipating than usual so we are already preparing ourselves for a quick response.”

Talking about the Information and Technology club as if they were a natural disaster, in fact they are, Anzu remained composed as Toshiro broke into a laugh.

“Hahaha. As expected from you. Well, then let’s just see where this goes. So before anything else, why the costume?”

Muffled cries were unheard outside the festivities. It was later rumored by the Journalism club that there was some sort of murder incident in the student council room that the disciplinary committee were covering up. While that was happening, an article was published into every bulletin board that after investigating, there was a certain Santa girl that was delivering punishment to bad boys which caused an uproar amongst the male population within the school.

“A sadistic Santa girl huh?”

“That’s what the rumors said though. Do you know anything about it? Shino? Hey Shino? Stop gazing at those chicken skewers as if you don’t have a bag of cake already!”

Kotoharu reprimanded the silver haired girl that had her mouth watering in front of a stall.

“I don’t know anything about that. Why do you ask?”

“Before he got dragged away, Kiryu asked me to investigate her identity since he was got curious. Since it might be his final request in life, I might as well do it for him.”

“I see… Why me though? I’m not interested in rumors and such. Especially if it’s about Santa. He took away Jack Frost from the spot light so I hate anything about him.”

“Well, since you are part of the event committee, I thought you guys might’ve investigated it or something.”

“Nothing of the sort. Speaking of which, yesterday, Anzu-senpai got mad at us for voting her to be this year’s mascot. Apparently, she’s gonna be Santa so I didn’t bother to check. I don’t want to see senpai as a fat man with a beard.”

From that statement, Kotoharu’s mind went ‘CASE SOLVED!!!?!’ and smiled wryly at Shino for not realizing.

“I doubt they would let a girl be an old man.”

“First BAAALL!!!”

With a deafening echo of the ball hitting the target ring, the seat that Kiryu was on suddenly collapse causing him to fall into a tub of ice cold water. The water had ice in it, the tub was exposed to the cold winter wind, and they stripped off Kiryu’s winter clothes leaving him with his regular thin uniform.

It was a clear execution and there were no helpers to assist him from getting out so Kiryu had to save himself from the cold watery grave.

“Gwaah! Ha- ha- Are you- trying to- kill me?!”

“Tch. He got out.”

“I heard that!”

“Okay. So that’s how you do it. Who wants to go first?”

With the festivities finally starting, so Kuromi ignored him and announced to the line in fron of her with an energetic salesgirl voice. But for the other students who were not used to seeing this kind of *torture*, especially from the first years gave their concern.

“Umm… Is he gonna be alright?”

“Don’t worry. He signed up for this so that you can enjoy this unique experience!”

Kiryu wanted to shout out “The unique experience is happening to me! And since when did I volunteer?” but his words didn’t come out since he had to brace himself from the customer that quickly acknowledged and threw the ball given to him.

Seeing the sight from afar, Ayumi can’t help but smile helplessly.

“Yohoho Ayumi-chan!”

“Ara, if it isn’t Shino. What brings you here?”

Ayumi was currently in charge of her class’ public art installation. It was a Christmas tree with a bunch of unique decorations as well as pictures that were gathered by the Journalism club.

Although it was managed by her class, the project wasn’t really theirs anyway. Since their class failed to submit their application form in time (foul play was suspected), they decided to help out in one of the Journalism clubs end of the year showcase project.

On a side note, Shino was wearing a Santa hat along with a fake beard and started getting into character. Didn’t she just say she hated Santa? The expression that Kotoharu gave behind her tells that she was scammed or rather persuaded into this.

“Hohoho, I’m here to check up on who are being good and bad children. Mind if I take a look?”

“Sure, just make sure you don’t mess around with the display.”

“Hohoho, that’s a good girl Ayumi-chan. Here, you deserve this present.”

What Shino handed over was a box of takoyaki that was wrapped with a ribbon. With the design patterned like a gift wrapper, it was hard to distinguish from an actual present except that the savory scent of the takoyaki was seeping out of it.

Since this was a gift given to her by a friend, despite being freshly cooked food from the neighboring stall, Ayumi reluctantly accepted the offer.

“Uh… Thanks.”

Seeing Ayumi smile brightly after accepting her gift, Shino had a triumphant look and went towards the display. She then looked at each pictures and saw a lot of explosions, fires, and some inventions going wild in them.

“Hohoho, I see that there have been a lot of naughty kids in this school. They all deserve coal!”

“I prefer it if you would not. Knowing them, they would probably just stock it all up and burn it as fuel for some project. It would have the opposite effect of what you want.”

“Eh? But didn’t that nice girl earlier say that Santa gives coal to bad kids?”

“That is for normal children, not teenagers. Especially not this school’s students.”

Thinking about the fact that the eccentric students here would probably accept any gift they receive whether be it a time machine, a plastic model, toy car, poison, coal, yesterday’s newspaper or a death threat. The students here would find a way to enjoy whatever they got in any situation. Not everyone, but something bad will happen either way.

“Then what should I do now? I am the new Santa after all?”

“Listen here…”

Just as Kotoharu was about to start another lecture, a group of boys suddenly appeared in front of them.

“Look! There she is! The Santa girl!”

““Oooh!”” ““Really?!”” “She doesn’t look erotic as the rumors say. In fact, she looks just like a girl wearing a hat and a beard?” “You’re right. She’s just a normal girl. Move on to the next target!” “”Oooh!””

Seeing the trouble end by itself before it even started amazed Kotoharu that it didn’t have to turn out like those scenes in a manga. Kotoharu silently thanked the gods that nothing crazy happened and also for those poor boys after remembering the Santa girl’s true identity.

Later that day, there was news about several boys experiencing a near death experience but that news faded in the background of the festivities.

The first phase of the festival would be the various stalls and plays that would last until sunset. Then the next part would be the time when they close up shop and head to their respective classrooms and clubrooms where they will have a small party and exchange their gifts. Following that would be the grand banquet that will be held at the gym where announcements and rewards would be held.

It was already half past 4 o’clock when the sky started to become orange when Kiryu found himself walking. To be more precise, he just woke up after passing out in the booth and realized that someone was dragging him by his arm.

That someone was none other than Kuromi who was holding his arm tightly. The fragrant scent from her hair made Kiryu flinch a bit to which Kuromi noticed.

“Tch. You woke up already.”

“Too bad. Can you let go now?”

Kuromi’s reply was a simple judo throw over her shoulder. Kiryu noticed this and quickly got away from her hold and adjusted his landing. She wasn’t a pro so he was able to do this much when he was aware.

“Tch.”

“Can you please stop clicking your tongue? Also, what happened to the booth? And since when did I dry myself?”

After recollecting his thoughts, he realized these things. Just after he passed out in the dunk booth during his 6th? 8th drop? Kiryu can confirm that he was still the dummy even after he passed out since was able to regain consciousness when they ran out of customers. Then the facilitators started playing themselves without replacing him until he passed out again.

How long was he out? And when did they dry him up? Questions started piling up in Kiryu’s head but more importantly: Where was Kuromi dragging him into?

“That’s a lot of questions from you. Anyway, the exchange gifts will start soon.”

Kuromi then started to walk ahead without looking back at him.

“Oh yeah.” Kiryu just remembered and started to head the other way.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

Then someone grabbed the nape of his neck.

“Ow ow. Kuromi?”

“You’re coming with me.”

“Huh?”

“You were a great help to our class earlier so you are obligated to join our party.”

“Eh? But I have my own class-“

Before he can complete his sentence, another person came in the hallway.

“It’s fine. You can join their party.”

“Hitomi-sensei?!”

“They already got permission earlier so it’s fine.”

The modest teacher with glasses replied with a charming smile. But being under her class, Kiryu can tell that that smile meant no good.

“Since when?!”

“When you were passed out.”

“What?! Don’t I have a say in this?!”

Hitomi continued to smile as she insisted.

“You were the star on their booth so it’s just right for you to celebrate with them. It’s not gonna take long anyway. There’s still the buffet later so you can join your classmates then.”

“That’s not the problem here! I was forced to-“

“Oookay. That’s enough.”

Kuromi who still had his neck started dragging him again. While having a scheming grin.

“Nooo!!!”

“Take care Okayama-kun.”

“Whaaa!!!!”

Some cries were heard but he still joined Kuromi’s class party anyway. During that time, Kiryu had no other choice but to give his gift to Kuromi directly.

It was already time for the banquet.

“And Shino is chowing down on the food as expected.”

“Haha. At least she’s enjoying herself.”

“You sound like you’re her guardian.”

Kotoharu can’t help but accept Kiryu’s statement. During the banquet, it was nothing more than eating food and conversing with others just like in a fancy social gathering. Except that etiquette is unnecessary here.

“So how did it go? I heard you were dragged around by Kuromi again.”

“Haha…”

Kiryu tried to laugh it off but remembering all the horrible things that happened to him today, despair clearly showed in his face.

“If it was a stranger, they would definitely think that you’re a masochist for sticking up with her.”

“Shut up!”

Kotoharu let out his honest thoughts on the matter but he knew better that the relationship between his two friends is nothing like that. At least not the S&M relationship.

“You know, that last comment really hurts.”

“What comment?”

“The one in the narration.”

“What are you talking about?”

As Kiryu tries to defend himself, he only failed and made himself look dumb.

“Hey!”

“Who are you talking to?”

Trying to find a good time to cut in, a person with messy hair came in the scene.

“Are you perhaps referring to me, Okayama-kun?”

“Ha? Oh its President Makuro. What’s up with the formal speech?”

“Haha. Just messing around. So, what’s up?”

The president had a playful vibe to him and was laughing along the merriment in the room.

But Kiryu wasn’t buying it. Then he started to interrogate his intentions.

“What do you want from us?”

“Ara. I’m found out?”

Realizing that playing dumb will not work with Kiryu who already grasped Toshiro’s nature. Meanwhile, Kotoharu was still dumbfounded about the sudden deadly atmosphere he felt between them.

“As expected of Sasaki’s younger brother.”

“Well, she did warn me about you lots of times. Sorry for having this freshmen spoiling your expectations.”

Not being able to follow things, Kotoharu decided to ask: “What’s going on?”

“If you remember the times the disciplinary committee found us out despite throwing all the evidence out, it was because of this guy.”

“Eeh?! You were the mastermind?! You’re the one that’s planning to end all the problem clubs!”

Hearing Kotoharu describe him like that, Toshiro can’t help but sigh.

“That’s a bit crude of you to phrase it like that. I only did my task as the Student Council president of organizing and maintaining order in the academy, I’m not really a mastermind of some plot to end clubs.”

“That’s what all masterminds say.”

“Listen, all I do is point out the problems that needs to be fixed while the Disciplinary Committee takes care of it and applies proper punishment. If I really wanted to end clubs, I have the power to submit a form to the administration to do so.”

“Eh? But that’s what Mamiya-san old us?”

Something inside Toshiro just broke.

“Anzu… was it? No wonder I’ve been getting more threats recently.”

Toshiro was already drifting away from reality as a deadlier aura came out from him. Although it might have been better to avoid the first topic, Kiryu just wanted anything to divert the president’s thoughts from growing more dangerous.

“So what is it that you want from us? We haven’t done anything to get your attention have we?”

As he was able to pull himself together, Toshiro got back on what he needed to ask.

“Exactly my concern. The Information and Technology club has yet to do something that warrants our attention. Although it would’ve been better but very abnormal if you did nothing, but we already have leads that you are making something in the background. The new members seem a bit too calm while we haven’t seen the other members lately. What’s going on?”

Placing all his cards in the table, although there was nothing to gamble, Toshiro said in a serious tone.

“Ah. There’s nothing to be worried about.”

“What?”

Hearing the suspecting Kiryu lower his guard, Toshiro wasn’t able to anticipate, or rather thought this would be very unlikely to happen that there was nothing to worry. But since he didn’t have any details about it, he decided to ask further.

“It’s something very stupid. I bet the other seniors are also thinking the same but we have to follow our president’s whims.”

Kotoharu and Kiryu felt a slight relief that it was about this. They were too worried about the other party’s identity that they forgot about the circumstances. There is a large scale event in school, the President’s whims, and the club’s infamy. Of course it was about *that*.

“What are you guys doing?”

“It’s not much of a secret to worry about.”

“?”

“Well, the others are gonna…”

While the expected cliffhanger happens, on the other side of the gym, the girls were also having their conversation.

“Yo Shino-chan!”

“Mugu. Mo! Ahume! Mugomi! (\*chew\* Yo! Ayumi! Kuromi!)”

Seeing Shino stuffing her mouth with food as they came, Ayumi and Kuromi felt envious of how Shino was able to keep her slender figure. But the two of them had different reactions.

“Haha. Shino-chan is a heavy eater as usual. Can’t help it since this is a buffet after all!”

Kuromi kept an energetic attitude and joined in the food as well. Just a single plate though unlike Shino’s double mountain platter.

“Shino, if you keep that up, you won’t have enough room for dessert.”

“What are you talking about Ayumi? Girls will always have room for dessert. Right Shino?”

Ayumi tried to discourage Shino from eating too much before she lost control of her appetite. Or rather, she just really prefers sweet things and Kuromi just added fuel to the fire. It was then when another person enters the scene.

“Talking about more room for food to that food black hole, of course she would have.”

“Ara, Megumi-chan. Haven’t seen you for a while.”

A girl with braided hair and glasses named Megumi greeted back.

The girls had a bit of sharing of stories from today and sharing of food from Shino’s triple mountain deluxe platter, which Shino didn’t really enjoy much when people get from her plate. It was all fun chatter between the girls until Megumi stepped into a certain topic.

“Oh yeah. Kuromi-chan, I heard your class dragged along Kiryu on your antics. Is he still alive?”

A bit of a grim way to put it but after seeing the recent things Kiryu went through, it won’t be surprising if he dropped out sometime soon. The other two girls nodded in unison while Kuromi replied laughing.

“Hahaha. He was able to survive somehow. You might not believe it but that guy is pretty durable. And if he were to get serious, he might just not have to go through all that.”

“Ara, aren’t you complimenting him well?”

Megumi had a mischievous smile of a mother that had found her child’s secret. In response, Kuromi said…

“I’m not complimenting him. Just earlier he almost managed to fend off one of my attacks if the teacher hadn’t come in.”

“You sure know him well. You can say all that with confidence.”

“Well, I met him longer than the others here so it’s just natural.”

The group of Shino, Kuromi, Ayumi, Kotoharu, and Kiryu were childhood friends that went way back. But before they all got together, Kiryu and Kuromi already met each other.

“Speaking of which, you guys said that you already met each other’s parents. Even if you aren’t neighbors.”

“Eh?! Isn’t that a bit too close for childhood friends?!”

Megumi sounding surprised while Kuromi tilted her head in wonder.

“Is it?”

“Hmm… I don’t know. Anyway, how did you two met?”

“Why are making it sound like we’re a couple?”

“Well…”

Seeing that Kuromi won’t answer directly, Ayumi teasingly interrupted…

“They met in the station when their older sisters were dragging them along. Then they got along pretty well with each other.”

“Hey!”

“Heh…”

Kuromi got annoyed with Ayumi’s unnecessary help. She wasn’t flustered or got embarrassed if you expected that. She was plainly annoyed but not too much.

“Sisters huh?”

“Long story. She’s on some development company abroad now.”

“Oh, is that why we never met her?”

Responding to Ayumi’s question, Kuromi turned her gaze away from them and nodded “Yeah.”

It seemed quite suspicious for a proper answer but the atmosphere around Kuromi suddenly got heavier.

Shino, who was busy eating her quadruple deluxe food summits, just finished eating them all and joined in the conversation with a new topic.

“Ugu. Ah. Oh yeah, guys. What did you get in the gift exchange?”

“Did you open yours yet?”

“Tada, it’s a ticket for a buffet near town!”

Shino cheerfully showed the contents of a decorated envelope that that showed a number tickets. It’s not only one?

“You just had your fill and you’re talking about another buffet. Sigh.”

“Hehe.”

“Have you opened yours yet, Kuromi?”

Ayumi turned towards Kuromi, where she saw for the first time today fidget like a small puppy. “Cute!” She thought but kept it in her mind.

“No. I’m planning to open it at home.”

“? It’s fine but I’m planning on opening mine now.”

Ayumi took out a novel sized gift box from her bag and ripped the wrapping off… smoothly.

“Woah! It’s a limited edition mini figurine of Mi\*\*ka Mi\*\*to! YAHOO!!!”

Unable to contain her excitement, Ayumi screamed out as she held the box high.

“I didn’t know you were into anime goods Ayumi?”

“Not really. I don’t even watch anime. The closest I got were reading light novels and I am a big fan of Ka\*\*chi-sensei’s works!”

Whenever someone’s favorite hobby is in topic, anyone would get excited and talk away. Anyway, we can’t really use unauthorized names so let’s skip this a bit so we don’t have to censor much.

“I got a necklace from my friend.”

“Ooh. Nice one Megumi.”

Amongst the four girls, only Ayumi was the one that seemed like a normal high school girl that gets excited in sharing what gifts they got. Shino was airheaded as usual, Megumi was being shy now that the topic isn’t under her control, while Kuromi was being unusually quiet.

“Your turn. What did you get Kuromi?”

“Huh? Didn’t I say that I’ll open it later?”

“Come on. We shared ours here. It’s a bit unfair if only you got away and opened it at home.”

“Not my fault…”

“I’ll find out later and post it on the internet.”

“Blackmailing me?”

“Just joking. Why won’t you share it anyway? Who did you get it from?”

Not wanting to answer Ayumi, Kuromi looked away with her face all red.

“Let me guess… Kiryu?”

\*fidget\* Seeing that reaction, Ayumi grinned. Megumi noticed too and added…

“If I should know, your class dragged him into your gift exchange to right?”

“So it is Kiryu?”

Kuromi widened her eyes as she forgot about that trivial information. Why would she want to hide it now?

“It’s okay. I’ll just force the answers out of him. Where is he by the way?”

Kuromi probably realized that Ayumi might not hold back her punches. Normally, Kiryu would be fine but for some reason Kuromi failed to realized that and gave in.

“Wait.”

‘Bingo!’ Was what occurred in both the minds of Ayumi and Megumi.

“…I’ll open it now. Sheesh. It’s too bothersome.”

Ayumi smiled at the events.

Kuromi took out a small palm-sized wrapped box from her bag and showed it to the others.

As she untied the ribbon, the wrapping smoothly unwrapped itself as if the ribbon was the only thing keeping it together.

What could it be that came from Kiryu that made Kuromi like this? An engagement ring? A necklace? The anticipation from the other girls except Shino that thought it was a cupcake, was reaching its limit.

After the wrapper fell off, what was inside was a glass box containing a snow globe.

Everyone’s expectations were broken. It would have been fine if it was some special romantic snow globe but this one was clearly bought from a gift shop from New York. The gift shop trademark was even there.

“There. Happy now?”

For some reason, Kuromi was still embarrassed but no one knows why at this point. Does she have a secret obsession with snow globes? Or was this some sort of insult to her? No one here knows.

On the side though, Shino gave an understanding look and didn’t say anything else as she chowed down in another food mountain.

It was just a bit after the banquet ended. The sky was already dyed in the colors of the night and only a few lights remain. It was a quiet and serene night. Most of the students have already left and the only ones left are the ones in charge of cleaning up… and some members of the Information and Technology club.

“Put your backs into it! We’re almost done here! Just the net is left!”

The Information and Technology club president, Yukino Akayuri, yelled out commands in her track suit in the middle of the night.

“Ugh… This is pointless. This is completely useless.”

“Oi Kouta! If you don’t put in a lot of effort, we will not finish this by bedtime!”

Hearing Kouta protest to himself, Yukino reprimanded him. But Kouta can’t help but sigh at what he was looking at.

“So this is where you guys have been.”

Entering the scene from the shadows, Anzu Mamiya of the Disciplinary Committee crossed her arms as she observes the scene before her. She didn’t understand a single thing going on with all the equipment in here. Since the day is over, she is now wearing her regular uniform instead of the Santa girl costume from earlier.

“I’ll just ask you people one thing, what are you doing?”

“Hohoho, isn’t obvious?”

“No, I understand nothing.”

Anzu was glaring at Yukino who then gave a grin in reply.

“Hehe, if you are that oblivious Miss Disciplinary Committee then I shall enlighten you to our grand plan.”

Anzu put up her guard on what Yukino was going to reveal as if she were a stereotypical villain. As for Kouta and Sasaki on the side clearly had expressions saying it’s nothing that great and rather something very stupid.

“This is…”

Giving a little pause for dramatic effect, Yukino finally said it.

“The InfoTech’s Santa Claus Capturing System!”

Yukino declared with great and honest enthusiasm. Anzu and the others in the scene gave obvious disappointed gazes at her, even her own friends. It was a very big anti-climactic plan, record-wise and plot wise. It was really a poorly designed reason.

If you take into account the other members recent reaction, it was obvious.

Yukino herself was innocently convinced that this was a great plan though.

Seeing the contraption that was like a tall cubical iron tower with fuel on a cavity below, it could only resemble a chimney. What else could it be right? ‘Santa’ would enter that chimney and probably some sort of trap would trigger inside. Only an airhead would fall for this. Who would enter a suspicious chimney like that? Not to mention that this was inside a school.

Anzu felt really disappointed of her expectations and turned away. She left with a final warning.

“Just make sure to clean up afterwards.”

“He-Hey! This is not a stupid plan if you’re thinking about it like that! Hey! Don’t ignore me!”

Probably Yukino felt that Anzu’s departure was some form of insult to her, she got mad.

“Hmph, just watch. We will be the first people to catch Santa and get him to tell where his workshop is!”

“Hahaha! Is that so? You guys never fail to impress me in various ways.”

Back in time a bit, during the time when Toshiro was having a conversation between the other two boys from the Information and Technology club.

“Somehow, we feel relieved this time.”

“You can’t help that. Yukino just has a childish imagination and has scary power to implement it.”

Toshiro laughed at the situation as he waved goodbye.

“Is it really alright that we aren’t there to make sure that nothing goes wrong?”

“How can a big chimney with a net go wrong?”

“I don’t know. But if something does go wrong, it might end up destroying the school. Just like with the prototype.”

“You’re worrying too much. We already fixed the bugs in the blueprint, that’s why we got free time today.”

After that short exchange, Kiryu and Kotoharu resumed eating the food on their plate after noticing it went cold. They’ve been talking too much lately.

“In the end, we missed the whole fun because we were working on something that wouldn’t produce results. Why did we decide to build it today anyway?”

“Funny story actually. The first years were building a trial the past week and it ended up blowing up.”

Kouta and Sasaki were heading home in the dim lit streets in the middle of the night. They left ahead of Yukino, who decided to stay until she caught Santa, after building the whole thing by themselves.

“Eh? Good thing ours didn’t. It won’t will it?”

“It’s all right. The kids already got rid of the problem. The fuel tank was just unstable in the blueprints.”

Sasaki answered Kouta’s worries with a smile. She was rather confident of what her brother and friends did, or rather, she was already away from school so she wouldn’t mind if it blew up now.

“Sigh, and here I was wondering why Yukino let them go.”

“You just weren’t there on the first trial because you were too busy in the committee.”

“Shino was also in the committee you know?!”

“Hehe.”

Sasaki continued teasing Kouta until they parted ways by the station. Although it was already late, Sasaki still had to prepare dinner since Kiryu would also come home late.

“Yosh. I’m gonna be making meat stew tonight.”

Then she went towards the nearby supermarket that stays up late. There, by the produce section, she met a certain girl she knew.

“Ara, Kuromi-chan. Fancy meeting you here.”

“Eh? Sasaki-nee? What a coincidence.”

Kuromi, who also had a shopping basket, met with Sasaki with a surprised look.

“Are you cooking dinner late too?”

“No. My parents are coming home tomorrow so I might as well prepare.”

“Oh. The old man and Asuhiko-san is coming home tomorrow? I should greet them as well.”

“Hehe. That would be great.”

Kuromi had a gleeful expression upon hearing Sasaki’s words. Tomorrow is Christmas eve and Sasaki was planning on inviting Kuromi over to celebrate. But due to this news, the plans had change.

“If you could, you can come over and join us for dinner tomorrow.”

“Eh? That would be great. I should tell Kiryu about it tomorrow.”

“Sure.”

It was a scene that you would rarely see from Kuromi in school whenever Kiryu is involved. She didn’t change her reaction and remained happy. Of course, this isn’t a facade since Sasaki knows about her treatment with Kiryu. It’s a complicated relationship but there was no reason that the atmosphere right now was being staged.

“Oh. Do you guys have plans tomorrow?”

“No. Just dinner with my parents.”

“It’s been a long time since the last time we ate with them.”

“Come one Sasaki-nee. They came to visit us last month too. Did you forget already?”

“A month is a long time!”

And so the pleasant small talk between the childhood friends went on until they went home.

When Kiryu heard about the news, he was panicking for some reason and locked himself in his room.

It was at the same time when Sasaki and Kuromi met, in the school rooftop, Shino and Kotoharu were viewing a bright glowing scene before them. Then the fire alarms rang.

“Geez. Prez manage to blow it up again somehow.”

Kotoharu rub his head as he can’t believe everything went according to his worries. It might not be known to everyone yet, but Kiryu now owes him money.

“That’s our Prez.”

Shino who was accompanying him was staring at the same scen was clearly thinking about something else distant.

“You know, if you are really disappointed about Santa or Jack Frost not being real, don’t mind it. There will still be people that will give you different gifts in life.”

“Haha. I’m not a child anymore, Kotoharu, so you don’t have to be all philosophical around me.”

“Heh. Just trying to lighten the mood.”

“Thanks.”

Shino had a sad expression on her face. Although she felt very happy throughout the day, now it just feels like a fleeting bliss.

“Kotoharu…”

“I know.”

“Thank you very much.”

“It’s the least I can do for you.”

The conversation between them seems vague to a stranger but even their other friends wouldn’t understand what’s going on. It was something only the two of them know.

Kotoharu turned back and leaned on the railing as he stared at the night sky. The clouds started to clear up so some stars can already be seen. It was a beautiful sight at the same time sad.

“Merry Christmas…”

Kotoharu muttered in a very low volume but Shino still heard it.

“And a… happy new year.”

Shino continued.

“Take care of the new me on the new year too okay?”

“What are you talking about? Nothings gonna change, you will still be the clumsy and gluttonous Shino to us.”

“Hehe. Can’t help it. It just tastes so good.”

With that, the world had shifted into a new day, and Christmas eve finally started.