

Cheater!

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If I win, you be my slave until I graduate college. - K.O. And if I win, I get away. - o02o22o10o Let the game begin. - K.O. (Kyoya x OC)

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"Hey, Kyoya-kun?" Tamaki asks. It's a few minutes before the bell rang for the first class of the day. The other students are chatting or doing their homework at the last minute, while I see a few catching a few more winks of sleep, which is what I want since Tamaki kept me up most of the night with his wretched phone call. It was about some off-the-wall plan for the Host Club as usual.

"Yes, Tamaki-kun," I say nonchalantly, not even bothering to look at him. I'm on my laptop, looking for something. "What do you want now?"

"Let's ask Mii-chan if she'll paint the Host Club's portrait," he utters in his usual enthusiastic way.

"Go ask her yourself."

"Mmm...."

I look up at him giving me the begging face. His violet eyes are big and glazed. He looks at his hands whose forefingers are pressing together and twisting like how an eight year-old would. "Please? I have no effect over her."

"That was entirely your fault," I say, turning back to the screen on my laptop.

"It wasn't my fault. I didn't know she would react that way. How on earth could she have resisted my charms?" He asks me, waving his hands around overly dramatic and then posing.

I remember it all too well:

"Class, this is Akihiro Kasumi. She will be joining our class now," our homeroom teacher said.

Kasumi Akihiro: Home schooled until Freshman year of high school. Father: Akihiro Ichiro. A computer expert and an alarm system programmer. He makes the security system for my family and among other wealthy families and companies. Her mother, Akihiro Mika, sells her art to museums who'll buy. There may not be much, but it wouldn't be too bad if I was friends with her; there may even be some benefit to come from it from her father's side of business, I remember thinking.

It was our first year of high school when she came. I had met her a few times before at dinner parties, but I had no motivation to formally meet her.

Tamaki stood up before I could stop him... or give Kasumi some sort of warning. "Akihiro Kasumi!" He said excitedly. He bowed humbly and gracefully. "I am Tamaki Suou, a prince for a beautiful princess, such as you. Welcome to Ouran." He went to reach for her hand, but only found air.

Kasumi had shirked against the chalkboard with her blue-green eyes widened with tears collected in the corners behind her thin-framed glasses. There was a huge blush on her face. Her shoulders were stiff, her hands were pressed against the wall behind her and the poor girl was shaking. She definitely wasn't expecting someone like Suoh Tamaki.

"Suoh-san," the teacher said sternly. "Sit down in your seat." He looked at Kasumi and then said, "I am so sorry Akihiro-san. He's one of our more rambunctious students."

More like stupid.

"Please, have a seat."

She hesitantly came off of the wall and walked to an empty desk. She made sure to make a large berth around Tamaki and to sit in one of the available desks that were farthest away from him. She made a very wise choice.

Tamaki apologized to her at lunch and she shyly accepted it, but she still made sure to keep a safe distance if she could manage. We all know how pushy Tamaki can be. In fact, I'm absolutely sure he was the sole reason why she never stepped foot in our club room. She would have been perfect for Mori or Haruhi. Honey would be another good possibility if she was in the shota type. I wouldn't have minded hosting her either, but I was always kept busy.

"I'm sure if you come with me she will accept the great task of the Host Club," he says overdramatically.

I let out an annoyed grunt and closed my laptop. "Fine," I mutter. I'm about to stand, but the bell rings and the teacher wants everyone to sit down.

Kasumi and I had talked a few times before, but she was always so withdrawn. I could tell that she was smart; I didn't need to see her test scores to know that. In fact, she was in the top ten out of all of the second years. I guess that she just doesn't feel comfortable sharing her opinions and thoughts with other people, but that is what intrigues me about her. I can't blame her, because she was home schooled for all of her life, with very conservative and protective parents, and then the very first person she met was Tamaki who scared her nearly half to death. We did have decent conversations, but it just took a while for it to get started and there were usually a few gaps of silence that I had to break. Other than that, it felt easy to talk to her. We mostly talked about her dad's security systems and her older brother who wants to teach. She really admires her brother that was for sure. She always talks about him and how outgoing he is.

As soon as lunch starts, Tamaki makes sure to remind me of asking Kasumi. It doesn't take too long to find her at all since she's at the same place as always: the Art Room #2. She is just sitting alone in one of the desks near the window, sketching on her drawing pad in with her old, worn pastels with a small smile on her face. Her black hair is in a tight bun as it always was and had headphones similar to the ones Hikaru owns over her ears.

"Hello, Mii-chan!" Temaki yells.

Kasumi flips her sketchpad closed and looks at him with a cautious look. She pushes the pause button on her CD player and removes her headphones off of her head and let them hang around her neck. "Hello, Suou-san. Hello, Otori-san." She relaxes a bit when she saw me, but continues to keep a straight rigid face. "Is there anything you need?"

"We, the wonderful Host Club, would like you to paint our club portrait," Tamaki says in his prince-like pose.

"Um, why me? Why not ask the Art Club?" She reaches into her backpack and takes out a handkerchief to rub her hands, trying to clean them from the pastel residue.

"Because Kyo-!" I push Tamaki away before he could finish his sentence. He was about to make it sound like I had feelings for the girl which I most certainly do not. She is a nice girl, and I might like her slightly more than the other girls for not being stupidly gaga over every guy with than above average look, but we don't have much in common. She is the 'intro-artsy' type while I was the 'calculative' type, not to say that there is anything wrong with her, but if we don't have anything in common I wouldn't be able to benefit off of her as a 'couple'.

"Your father had brought some of your paintings over at our house one evening to show off your talent in case there would be some interest while he was updating our alarms in one of our summer homes. They are well done and we need a sort of an 'inside-job' done for us." I make sure that I'm smiling in a friendly way. It's the same smile I give to potential customers at the club.

"Because of all of your fangirls?" She looks at her hands and starts to rub them again.

"Yes," I agree. "In fact almost all of the members within the Art Club consist of girls who come to the Host Club so we can't really depend

on them, you see."

"Oh, because of the whole favoritism thing?"

"Yes, exactly. That would cause a bit of problems for our profit."

"Okay. Um, when do you need it?" She has a small smile.

Tamaki pops up right next to her, scaring Kasumi again, and making her drop her kerchief. I bend over to pick it up while Tamaki was talking. "Anytime before the year is over is just fine, but we would like it as soon as possible. You see, Mori and Honey will be graduating this year and we wanted the portrait of the very first and wonderful Host Club to be hung on the walls of the school so people will remember us in the future!"

"Ah, I understand completely," she said in a monotone voice with her smile twitching. She was hunching over the desk with a hand over her heart and shaking a little.

"Oh thank you, Mii-chan! Of course we'll pay for all of your hard work and eff-."

"It's alright. You don't have to pay me," she utters, holding up a stained hand.

"Eh? You don't want to be paid?" Tamaki bends over the front of her desk to try and catch her face.

She tactfully adjusts her sketchpad, acting as if some of the pages have gotten loose and need to be straightened. "No."

"We could at least buy you a new easel and a new canvas for the painting," I offer. "I had heard that your very rare and one of a kind easel had been damaged."

Her eyes widen in surprise in my direction. "How...? Never mind." She looks away. "Yes it is, but it's OK. I have five other easels and

ten canvases already prepared. All I really need is to take a photo of what you want me to paint."

"No need," I say, taking out a photo out of my jacket pocket. "We already had a professional photographer take the picture."

She takes the picture and looks at it, adjusting her glasses a bit to analyze it further. Her fingers were still slightly smudged with dark green and brown pastels so she held it lightly in her fingertips. "OK, I'll get started when I get home." She looks at us with a small smile. "Um, Otori-san, can I have my handkerchief back?"

I look down at my hand and gave her back her tissue. I had forgotten that I picked it up for her because Tamaki's antics distracted me. "Thank you for agreeing to paint the portrait, Akihiro-san."

"No problem," she said. She put the photo in an empty page in her sketchpad and put it in her messenger bag.

Tamaki was about to hug her with the possibly of swinging her around, but I yank his ear and drag him out before he inflicted even more damage to her sensitive psychological and emotional state. I drag him all the way to the cafeteria where the rest of the members of the Host Club are seated. Hikaru and Kaoru are amused at how I was treating their 'lord.' "Akihiro-san agreed to paint the portrait," I say as I sit down.

Honey cheers and jabbars to Mori on how excited he is to see the painting. Haruhi just stares at them and mumbles, "I can't believe she agreed even though Tamaki was there." The twins don't care about Kasumi since they think that she is too boring, because, despite being terrified of Tamaki, their surprise attacks never seem to work on her (I think it's because they don't aim to hug her to death), so they just hold a conversation to themselves and with Haruhi. Tamaki is being Tamaki, flirting with the nearby girls, luring them to promise that they would come to the club after school, which they do, and tries to get Haruhi into joining the conducts. I, on the other hand, am still looking for something on my laptop.

I have been looking up rare and hand-carved easels especially for Kasumi since her birthday is coming up. I still stand by that I don't have any feelings for her, but hard work is hard work. She is far too nice for her own good which is why I am going to disguise it as her birthday gift. I heard from her father that she was devastated when her favorite easel was broken because one the maids accidentally bumped into it. It was an old wooden easel, and was very delicate, so it just fell apart when it collided with the ground. 'Damaged' was a major understatement.

I found several well-carved easels, but I am trying to find a specific one. Something similar to the easel that was broken, but not as delicate. Kasumi seems to prefer wooden tripods than metal ones and she doesn't like using the H-frames because they aren't very portable. It's a little more difficult than I had anticipated, but I finally find one that is ideal the next morning well before class started.

It's a tripod made out of mahogany wood with a deep cherry finish, carved in an ivy and floral design that's highlighted by the wood grains. It was even made by the same person that made Kasumi's old easel. I hurry and put down a price since it's being auctioned off, and luckily for me, there is only a few minutes left until the auction is declared finished. After a while, since no one is challenging the price I had placed, I thought that I was going to get it, but someone places a price that was only a dollar higher than mine. I try to put down a higher price, but it won't let me and the other person wins the auction.

I scan my laptop, for a second thinking that my laptop had simply froze, and find out that someone sent a temporary virus to stop me from doing anything. Specifically, to ensure that I wouldn't succeed in winning the auction. I'm deeply annoyed, not because I lost the auction, but because I let my guard down and I didn't anticipate a cheater. I quickly chase down the source of the virus but it turns out that he got rid of the trail as soon as he won the auction. Fortunately, whoever did it was within school grounds due to tracing the type of virus used. I looked for the winner's name, but he was smart enough

to not use his real name or even initials (the bastard). Instead, I found a username: o02o22o10o.

What the hell? What kind of handle is that? I submit a few programs to have access to send whoever it is a message.

K.O.: I know who you are, I lied. I know that you are within the walls of Ouran High School. If you hand over the easel that you succeeded to get by the means of cheating, then I won't send any means of authority to get you and arrest you for sending that virus.

I try to follow the message, hoping to find the specific computer that was used to send the virus, but I hit a wall, or rather a reroute to a few countries, along with IP addresses, and disappeared in the center of Russia. After a few minutes I get a reply, still untraceable.

o02o22o10o: *Am I correct in assuming thAt you are Otori Kyoya?*

I'm surprised, that he figured out who I am so quickly, but with all the rerouting and seemingly expertise in computers, it's to be expected. I look around at everyone I can see, but no one within my class is using a laptop at the time. I continue on with the message.

If you are, then you would have already Sent the authorities after me if you knew my identity. The Otori Kyoya I know wouldn't stand for these Kinds of things. I apologize for the virus, but I had no choice. Don't worry, the virus is easy to expel and it isn't in effect any longer. The security that you have installed on your laptop will take care of it. I will again apologize for the mishap. Please do not try and pursue or contact me again.

I stare at my laptop screen in near-amazement. He figures out who I am and even calls my bluff. I have to give the guy some credit for boldness and finesse, but being asked not to be 'pursued' is something I wouldn't do. How could I be outmaneuvered by some third-rate hacker and let him get away with it? It's simple: I wouldn't.

K.O.: *You are correct in your assumptions. I am Kyoya Otori and I applaud you in your little performance so I'll give you a deal. If you give me your name, and the easel, I won't send the proper authorities after you. You won't be in any serious trouble if you agree.*

I wait a full five minutes before I receive a response. He must have actually thought about my offer. Of course if he does accept, I wouldn't just let this incident go. During the wait, I am trying to decide whether to force him to clean the club room every day, or to be the Host Club's secretary (my personal slave) so I can get a more work done instead of listening to Tamaki whenever he asks for me.

o02o22o10o: *I apologize, but I caNnot take that deal. I do trust your words, you are always honorable with them, but I don't want to willingly give up my idEntity. I'm sure that you enjoy challenges, and you seem Kind of bored at times, so here's my proposal: let's continue this game a little lOnger. I apologiZe if I'm making you frustrAted now. I'll give you hints from time to time and I'll let you know if you are correct or incorrect. However, there are rules. No viruses from either one of us, I give you my word. You can hack into the school network if you want because I can guarantee that you will need it at least once. You cannot ask me anything personal about myself (name, parents, hobbies, etc). The last rule is that this game is only played at school when both of us are present. If I don't respond Within two to five minutes, then I haven't received your message because it's out of rAnge, which means I'm absent from school. It will give you another hint from the rosters. Now, are you willing to continue?*

This is getting very interesting. He wouldn't take the bait that I set out for him even though he would have been able to get away (almost) scott-free. His identity seems to be more important. He's even trying to tempt me to play the game just to probably intrigue me enough to have a chance to get away without me knowing anything. It's all a matter of pride now.

K.O.: *Okay, I'll continue with this game. If I win, I get the easel, and you'll be my slave until I graduate college.*

o02o22o10o: *And if you give up, my identity, for as far as you got, remains unknown. Deal?*

K. O.: *Let the game begin.*

o02o22o10o: *YoUr first hint is something you've probably already noticed about ME that is unusual. It's my username. The numbers stand for my initials and my nickname. If you can figure out all of the possible combinations, tHen I'll give you a freebee and tell you which 10 possibilities are my Initials. Don'T worry, the numbers are in order. I would normally give you twenty-four hours for an answer, but you're smart, so I'll give you until lunch. NO random guessing; I'll know. Have fun.*

As soon as I read the cocky bastard's message to the end, the bell rings, jolting my thoughts away from my laptop. I close my laptop and write the numbers on a piece of paper. Two, twenty-two and ten, I thought as I got out my math homework. If it was simple, then the combination would be B, V and J, but he said that there was more than one combination and that the numbers were in order. What else could it be? How many combinations are there?

As soon as we are allowed to get started on our homework in class, I took out my laptop (I had finished my homework for the entire chapter anyway). To my surprise he sent another message:

o02o22o10o: *Just wondering, why do you help with that host club if you aren't that interested in the girls? Are you only there for profit?*

He had been paying special attention to me. I feel like I'm being stalked.

K. O.: *I thought you said not to ask questions about ourselves; plus I'm busy trying to figure out your lame hint.*

I waited less than a minute for a response. He had been waiting for my message.

o02o22o10o: *Reread all of the messages. I only said not to ask me questions. I never said that I couldn't ask you any questions. Loosen up a bit, will you? I can feel your tension all the way from here. You better hurry, time's running out.*

Is he making fun of me? I felt myself getting annoyed. Apparently, "Reread all of the messages," was a hint in itself, so I reread all of the messages and notice that some of the letters are capitalized where they shouldn't be. I had noticed them the first time I read them, but I didn't think that they were important, and just thought they were careless mistakes. I wrote the letters on a piece of paper and-thank god-they were in order. The bell rang for next class, which I was ahead in anyway.

K.O.: The message, it says, "Ask Nekozaawa Umehito," correct?

o02o22o10o: Correct. Sorry, no more messages. I'm busy in this class. Good luck.

Umehito Nekozaawa? How can he help? I ponder, contemplating it all period. I'm anxious for the bell to ring so I can ask the Black Magic Club President. Once the bell for break rings I hurry to Nekozaawa's class.

"Kyoya-kun? Where are you going?" Tamaki enquires.

"To see the Nekozaawa-sempai," I reply, trying to walk around him.

Tamaki turns as white as a sheet and then grabs my shoulders and begins shaking me. "No, Kyoya-kun! You can't go there! You'll be cursed forever!" He has tears spilling over his cheeks.

I get out of his grasp and say, "Don't be ridiculous. Even if there were such things as curses, I highly doubt that Nekozaawa-sempai would

go on and waste his time trying to put a curse on me. Quit your worrying. I just need to ask him of something and then I'll come right back."

I hurry to Nekozaawa's class, leaving Tamaki standing in the middle of the hall with his hand up to his mouth, and quickly found him coming out. He's quietly talking to Kasumi with his cat puppet making weird gestures. They're both smiling and chuckling as they are talking. She seems completely comfortable around him. Well, he certainly isn't Tamaki, that's for sure, and that is certainly a good thing. They're both a little timid so of course they would get along somehow.

Maybe if Tamaki had come with me he would actually stay away from her. On second thought he would probably sweep her away from him and, in turn, give her a heart attack. I sigh and shake my head at the thought. I call to Nekozaawa, successfully gaining his attention.

They both look at me. Nekozaawa looks at me with mild confusion, but stops to see what I want anyway. Kasumi blushes and showed a small smile. "Hello, Otori-san. What can I do you for? Another favor for the Host Club?" Nekozaawa asks.

I hesitate a little bit since I would have preferred to solve the hint myself, but like he said in his message, 'time's running out.' "I would like to talk to you in private. I need a bit of help with something."

"Ah, OK." He turns to Kasumi and quietly utters, "I'll see you later at the club room?"

Her smile grows and she nods her head before waving me bye and heads to her next class. I produce a small smile for her before she left.

"So, you need my help with something?"

I show him the three numbers I had written down and explain what I need help with, ending my explanation with a question, "How could

there be combinations for letters with just three numbers?" I know my explanations could be confusing for those who couldn't keep up.

The hooded figure looked at the paper with the numbers scribbled on it while his puppet held a gesture with one hand to its chin and the other to scratch the side of his head. "Hmm, and this person told you to ask me?"

"Yes."

I can see that something clicks in his head, and he has a wide grin to show. "Well you could try a bit of numerology. I remember in a Tarot book of mine that letters in your name could have a deeper meaning, but the person could have just used it for the initials."

"May I see that book?"

"Of course." He reaches into his bag and hands me the small worn out paperback book. Why he kept it with him, I don't want to know. "It's in chapter 15." There's a pause of silence before he asks his next question. "So is the easel for Mii-chan?"

"Yes, for her birthday and as a payment for the club portrait," I answer. I can see he has other ideas, thinking that I have other feelings for the girl. Most of the people relatively closer to me seem to think that. I still don't see why people thought that there was something between us. She's intelligent, as in never falling for Tamaki's antics and declining in joining the Host Club after school, but she's just too reserved, and I don't think she would be interested in computers or business.

"Ah, yes. She very much suits her birthday-Pisces. A connected duality. Well, I'll see you around Kyoya-kun. I hope the book helps." I can here him emit a wicked chuckle.

"Thank you, Nekozawa-sempai." I immediately look into the pages and found what he was talking about. There's the numbers one through nine and then numbers were lined up under them, but there

isn't ten or twenty-two. I can't figure out the connection between the username and the little numerology chart immediately, so I read the chapter during English class to figure it out and wrote down all the combinations. I had to add the two digit numbers before finding out which numbers are the right numbers to look under: 2, 4, and 1. I got the message in just before the lunch bell rang

K. O.: *The initial combinations are: B D A, B D J, B D S, B D X, B M A, B M J, B M S, B M X, B V A, B V J, B V S, B V X, K D A, K D J, K D S, K D X, K M A, K M J, K M S, K M X, K V A, K V J, K V S, K V X, T D A, T D J, T D S, T D X, T M A, T M J, T M S, T M X, T V A, T V J, T V S, T V X, Y D A, Y D J, Y D S, Y D X, Y M A, Y M J, Y M S, Y M X, Y V A, Y V J, Y V S, and Y V X. Correct?*

He answers back in less than a minute, as if he was expecting me to figure it out so soon.

o02o22o10o: *You are correct. Well done and just in the nick of time. Are you going to answer my question from before? I realize you purposely skipped it, but it's still a safe question, right?*

K. O.: *Are you going to give me the 10 initials?*

I hurry to the lunch table to continue this little chat. No one really notices except Tamaki, but I provide an excuse that I'm checking our profits and recording our expenses in case we were going overboard with the decorations. He buys it without a second thought and the girls distracting him helps too. I open up the box with his message and quickly read it.

o02o22o10o: *Yikes. A little touchy. I guess when you're determined you just want to get right to the point. Well, I guess I don't need that question answered right away anyway. B D A, B D S, B M A, B M S, K D A, K D S, K M A, K M S, T D A, Y D A. Any questions?*

He is starting to show his real attitude, and his cockiness is starting to get annoying.

K. O.: You're getting overconfident of yourself, you know that, right? So what other plans, do you have for this little charade?

o02o22o10o: Sorry, do I seem overconfident? I'm just having a bit of fun. And as for the plan, I'm just making it up as I go along really. At least you're not bored, right? I can just imagine you sitting in class looking over your profit margins that you've already looked at thousands of times while the teacher drones on and on about something that you've already gotten ahead in. Even when girls surround your table at lunch, you seem very distant from them. I can bet you put on that same face in the club too, with that same fake smile, but they're too infatuated with your good looks and family background to really notice that that's what that is. A fake. So, let's just take our time with this game, or are you planning to give that easel to someone in a hurry?

He's just making this all up as he goes along? I think, having a feeling like I'm the one being conned, but he did have a point. I am definitely not bored anymore, I have to smile to myself for that. I guess I can make this game last a little longer and I bet it'll take Kasumi a while with our painting so there really isn't a rush on it. However, he doesn't need to know so much.

K. O.: You must be quite bored too, to actually want to continue this, even though your identity's on the line. So why don't you want me to know your name?

o02o22o10o: Well, all I can really say is that if a certain someone knew that I was having some form of personal contact with the Kyoya Otori, son of the great Otori family, she'd get mad. Not that I think you would rat me out or anything, I just want to be on the safe side of things.

K. O.: 'She?' A fan-girl of mine?

o02o22o10o: I wish, but no. My mother. She's a little iffy about your family. It's nothing personal, it's just that if she doesn't get to know

someone first, she automatically doesn't trust them. There are other reasons, of course, but I don't feel like divulging in them.

K. O.: *After you told me not to ask about your family, you go and tell me about your mother?*

There was a three minute hesitation period, before I feel myself smirk. I had him.

o02o22o10o: *That was a mistake on my part. Oh well, it can't be taken back now. It's not as if you've ever personally met my mother anyway. I'm going to have to end this for today. I'm a little behind on homework next period so I'm going to try and get that finished this lunch period. Talk to you tomorrow.*

K. O.: *Running? Fine. It'll just give me time to cross-reference the initials and the student list.*

o02o22o10o: *That's great, after you're finished with the cross-referencing, it'll get really interesting, but no, I really do have homework to do. It's distracting at home so I wake up very early and end up doing homework here at school between periods and during class. But you can believe what you want if you feel that self-ego needs that much petting.*

I gape at the computer screen as soon as he broke the connection. I will find out who you are! A new incentive runs through my veins. The cross-reference would probably take days because there were over three thousand students in the high school division alone, and I will not lose just because I assumed he is a high school student, but it would be worth it. I want to win this game of his and laugh in his face and declare my triumph. He will learn that no one mocks me! Who ever it is will suffer.

The teachers don't care as long as I aced their tests and did all my homework. The Host Club is just a side project compared to what my drive was running toward, but I pretend to work on the finances. It's a good thing that I don't have any clients today or I would have either

ignored them or sat them at Tamaki's table which would have caused a fuss after the club closed. No one notices me, and because of that I actually finished right at the end of club hours.

I figure out that there are only eight usable initials with over a hundred students with those initials. All I need to do is figure out what class he was in or wait until he was absent or tardy. I'm getting closer to him! I accidentally let out a dark chuckle which scares the other members of the club to hide behind the couch.

"Kyoya-kun?" Tamaki ventures to speak to me. He's clutching to Haruhi's shoulders as if she would protect him. "Is something the matter? You've been acting strange all day today."

I pull myself together in put on a straight face. "No. Nothing's wrong Tamaki. I've just been busy with something lately."

Tamaki brightens up and jumps from behind the couch. "OK, so can we see Mii-chan?"

"Why? We saw her yesterday. She couldn't have gotten very far with the painting in only a day."

"Yes, but I didn't see her at her table today. I was going to invite her to sit with us as an honorary guest until she finished." So much for secrecy and no favoritism.

The twins come up behind Tamaki. "Hey, don't you notice that she always sits alone?"

"What do you mean?" Haruhi asks out of pure curiosity. She only met Kasumi once, but the meeting was cut short due to Tamaki popping up out of nowhere and trying to hug them both. It was a good thing that Haruhi had quick enough reflexes to pull on his ear to stop him.

"Every time that we see her, she's almost always alone," Hikaru says.

"She doesn't talk to people and no one except us really talks to her," Kaoru finishes off the explanation.

"And she's always drawing. Art freak," they mutter in unison.

"Actually, she seems to have made friends with Nekozaawa-sempai," I say when I remembered her and him chuckling about something. "I think she's with him in his clubroom right now."

Needless to say, Tamaki turns white, and then he turns blue and faints. After only a second of unconsciousness he pops right back up and yells, "We must save her from the vile wicked being! Hikaru! Kaoru!"

The twins stand erect and salute. "Milord!"

"We must come up with the perfect plan to rescue our fair and delicate baroness!" The three plus Mori and Honey gather into a huddle to form this "perfect plan."

Haruhi and I sweat-drop. We can already tell that this is going to end very horribly so we walk away, not even bothering to sneak out, and head towards the Black Magic Club ourselves. "Kyoya-sempai? Why is Tamaki-sempai...?"

"Protective over Akihiro-san?" I finished her question in a droll tone.

Haruhi nodded.

"Simply because he scared her nearly half to death when they first met... and nearly every time they met after that. He sees her as sort of a glass figurine. So he's been trying to talk to her and invite her to places so she doesn't continue to be so fragile because, as he puts it, 'she has been closed off from the world around her due to her home-schooling' (similarly to how Kaoru and Hikaru just kept to themselves except less hostile) and possibly something to do with her parents since they don't venture out in the media and flaunt their wealth, like our families do."

"Even though he's the one not being careful around her?" She asks sardonically.

"Exactly. Fortunately, I or someone of the club is usually around to get him under control before he scares her away. Permanently." I adjust my glasses just before we arrived at the door. I knock at the door and we wait for someone to answer.

"Welcome to the-oh, Kyoya-san. How was the book?" Nekozaawa asks, with Beelzenef bowing.

I return the book to him and state, "It was very helpful. Thank you for letting me borrow it." I see Haruhi give me a questioning look when she saw the title, *The Complete Guide of Tarot*, but she dismisses it. "Is Akihiro-san here, by any chance?"

"Why yes, she is. Please, come in. She's actually almost done with her masterpiece." He's smiling from beneath his black hood, so whatever Kasumi is working on is making him happy. It makes me wonder how close the two are, and had become behind my back. I usually have tabs on every student with families that were significant to my own.

Haruhi and I glance at each other before entering the dark club room. Nekozaawa leads us by candlelight to where Kasumi is. She was sitting down on a stool and painting something with many suspiciously dark red candles to light the canvas for her. Kasumi is so focused on what she was doing she doesn't notice the two extra people sit down on a macabre style couch right behind where she sat. Haruhi and I can see that she's painting a portrait of Nekozaawa as the Black Magic Club Leader, hood and all. It was very exquisite and well done as far as what we could see. A reward of practicing all of her life. She pauses in her efforts and surveys her work before finally painting in her signature and the date, finishing her piece.

"I'm done Ume-kun," she murmured, as if speaking any louder would cause a huge earthquake upon the club room. She looks around for him and jumps off the stool when she saw us. "Ah!-Hello Fujioka-

san, Otori-san. You startled me. Is there anything that you needed?" She asks quickly, and her face blooming into a bright blush in the candle-light. She was obviously caught off guard.

"Tamaki wants to see you today, so Haruhi and I thought that we should come and get you before he-" I state before I'm interrupted by a loud bang from the door. Damn, I think. Too late.

"Mii-chan! I shall rescue you from-!" Tamaki yells, running in and tripping on the rug before he finishes his sentence.

"Suoh-san? What are you doi-?" Nekozaawa asks, before he was illuminated by the twins' flashlights. In which case, Nekozaawa starts running to a safe, dark, corner, screaming out, "Murderer!"

I simply grasp her hand, along with her backpack, and calmly lead her out of the club room, with Haruhi following, where Honey and Mori greet us from outside.

"Yay!" Honey cheers, waving his arms and little flowers framing his face. "We rescued Kasu-chan! Tama-chan said that we should welcome you while they fight the demon!" Haruhi, Mori, Kasumi have sweat drops behind their heads to adorn their blank stares. "Hey, hey, Kasu-chan! Now that you're rescued, do you wanna eat some cake with me and Usa-chan and Takashi?"

Her blush darkens, but she has a strong resistance. "I'm sorry, Haninosuke-sempai. I only stayed to help Ume-kun."

'Ume-kun'? She would normally just stick with last name basis, but not with Nekozaawa?

"I was planning on working on the Host Club's portrait as soon as I got home. I'm sorry."

Honey has a disappointed look and that's when Kasumi gave in for once. She has a strong resistance, stronger than most girls, but it isn't unbreakable.

"Umm, well, maybe I could join you for lunch tomorrow?" She looks between Honey and me, making sure that Honey was happy, but asking for my permission. I nod to her to let her know that it was OK.

"Yay! Kasu-chan's joining us tomorrow!" Honey whirled in a circle with his bunny plush. "OK, Takashi and I will see you tomorrow!" He waves as Mori and he walk off to their car to head home.

"I suggest we head home too before Tamaki comes out from his 'rescue mission,'" I say.

"Agreed," Haruhi says, while Kasumi nods, taking a peak at the Black Magic Club's room to make sure that the other three weren't coming out, or to make sure that Nekozaawa was alright. Haruhi briskly walks off to catch the bus home, leaving Kasumi and I to calmly walk to the front.

"Would you like a ride, Akihiro-san?" I ask, handing her bag back. Kasumi's home is farther than mine, but I figure that it is the nice thing to do, so she wouldn't have to wait at the front alone (and if either of her parents saw me, I could probably receive a kind statement from them for future purposes). On a business errand, I once saw her standing outside of her gates, and then hours later saw her still standing in front of the gates. Out of curiosity, I stopped and asked her, and she said that the gate's password suddenly changed, so had to wait for a maid to let her in, but to make her stand out there for hours? Before I could question her farther, the gates rolled open and she ran in.

"Yes, please," she says politely with a smile, wider than when Tamaki's around or when she's with Nekozaawa. "Thank you for offering." I knew she would say that. She's pretty predictable when it comes to etiquette, and like I said before, too nice. "Let me just call the driver to cancel, and Ume-kun to make sure he's really OK."

I nod to let her know that I wouldn't mind. Usually calling, or texting another person while you were with someone is considered rude, but they were important calls, so I didn't mind. It's not like she's big on

conversation anyway. When we arrive at my car I let her go in first and sit next to her, opening up my laptop to actually check the Host Club's profit. It's important to prepare for whatever obstacle that guy had planned for tomorrow, but I would do that when I got home and not with a guest. I can't let anyone else see or know about the game I am playing.

During her second call (Nekozawa), she seems relieved that he's fine. She produced a, "You're welcome," probably for her portrait. At one point, from the corner of my eye, I could see that her face had turned scarlet. Her head sunk between her shoulders, and she grumbled her good-bye. It's obvious she's embarrassed of something, and with her hasty hang-up, she's hiding something.

"Everything alright?" I ask nonchalantly.

"Yes." Her smile returned. She hesitated, but eventually asked, "He started to ramble on about cursing Suou-san; it was about to get graphic. What are you doing?"

I close the laptop, and say, "Host Club margins, but it can wait." Even though I don't expect her to converse, it would still be considered rude to focus on something while you were with a guest.

"Ah."

"Tamaki and I didn't see you at your usual table. He wanted to know how the portrait was coming along."

"It's only been a day. I'm not even close to finishing it."

"That's what I told Tamaki. By the way, he wanted to invite you to sit at our table as an 'honorary guest' until the portrait is done."

She chuckles behind her hand. "Yeah, it is like him, but I'm sorry to say that I'll be busy for a few days at lunch. Tomorrow is my only spare lunch time."

"What are you going to be busy with?" I am a little disappointed, but mainly because Tamaki would be asking for her over and over.

"Studying mostly. I've been getting a little behind on some subjects." There's a pause of hesitation, and she puts a curled finger against her lower lip, a nervous habit of hers. "By the way, if I may ask, what did you want with Ume-kun earlier?"

"Nothing much. I just needed to ask him something."

"Ah."

"If you want, I could help you after school." It's just an act of kindness that I don't mind offering. She never attended the club, probably wouldn't, and she doesn't normally socialize with the frequent Host Club guests. Unlike the other girls, if I help one of them, I would have to help all of them. That would have taken way too much of my time. With her, it most likely would have been kept private, provided that it wouldn't get out to Tamaki.

"No thank you, I can manage on my own. You're probably already busy with the Host Club anyway."

Not really. I'm just busy trying to catch the bastard who hacked into my laptop and stole the easel that I hadn't bought yet. I can feel my eyebrow twitch from the thought. "Actually, yeah, you're right. I'm probably going to be pretty busy."

After that, silence hung between us. She just looked in her lap, and smiled to herself.

It isn't awkward. It's actually quite comfortable. I realize it's the pressure of our families, or just being in public with high expectations in their minds, that makes the silence awkward for us—pressuring for us to converse, when we really don't have to. We just enjoy our own space.

She seems content to let the silence continue, her smile never dropping. When she isn't fidgeting or trying to hide her face, calm in her situation, Kasumi seems kind of refined. It almost seems like I can finally see her grace.

I guess it isn't so bad to just sit with someone like her. It is quite relaxing, actually, to not expect to converse. We don't talk for the remainder of the ride until we arrive in front of her home. It isn't huge like other homes, with only four floors at most, but it looks secure and comfortable enough.

"See you tomorrow, Otori-kun," she said, waving to me by her front gate, entering the code.

I nod to her back through my window. "You too, Akihiro-san." It isn't two minutes after I told my chauffeur to head home before I realize something. Did she just call me Otori- *kun* ? However, I didn't think about it much after I got home. It was probably just a slip-up anyway. Preparing for the match is my top priority since I have already finished my homework for the next few days (the teachers like posting up future assignments if the students wish to get ahead or not).

o02o22o10o: *Are you ever going to answer my question from yesterday?*

As soon as we got each other's signals in the morning before class started, we continue where we left off in our game. Unfortunately, he came back to the question I had avoided.

K. O.: *What question?*

o02o22o10o: *Why are you in the Host Club if you don't seem to be interested in the girls? Are you there only for profit?*

To be honest, I'm only in the Host Club because of the blundering blond idiot, Tamaki, because he was my best friend; however the

profit from the club was equally appealing. If I tell him that though, it would make me seem like a heartless guy only looking for contacts; thus my customers would dwindle and we would lose profit.

K. O.: I'm in the Host Club, yes, for profit. Maybe to you I seem to be uninterested in the girls, but I am interested, just in my own way. This is a business, after all. Why I am in the Host Club as a host, however, is none of your concern.

o02o22o10o: *Business I understand, but there's another reason?*

I keep dodging his questions as we continue our back and forth all morning until lunch when he refused to answer back. Claiming he was severely behind in his next class. With the way he complains, he sounds like he's on the verge of failing.

Was he really running or just avoiding me?

"Hey, Kyo-chan?" Honey calls, tugging at my sleeve.

For the first time that day, I take my eyes off of my laptop screen.
"Yes, Honey-sempai?"

"Kasu-chan's getting scared of Tama-chan, so can you scoot over so we can sit on this end of the table?"

I look over and see that Kasumi's holding her sketchpad in front of her as a shield while also hiding behind Haruhi. The twins are waiting in anticipation to see what would happen, and Mori has a steady hand on Kasumi's shoulder just in case.

"Yes, of course," I mutter switching to the next seat over. Honey sits at the very end of the table with Kasumi between him and myself. Mori sits across from Honey, making sure to stay close in case Tamaki doesn't get the hint. She instantly relaxes, knowing that she's well-guarded, and eats a slice of cake with Honey. Kasumi talks some, but not much. That's not so surprising. It's also not surprising

that she mentions that she hasn't even come close to finishing the painting.

I get another message box from him and immediately open it.

o02o22o10o: *Are you really not interested in girls, or is it that you have a specific girl in mind?*

K. O.: *I don't like any girl specifically. I thought you were too busy.*

o02o22o10o: *There's going to be a sub for a few days, and you sitting with some girl is far more interesting at the moment. That never happens. Does she mean anything to you?*

He's in the cafeteria! I stand up from my seat and look around, but it's impossible to discern who it could possibly be.

"Otori-kun, are you alright?" Kasumi asks, looking up to me.

"I'm fine," I state rigidly as I sit back down when I hear another beep of a message box.

o02o22o10o: *Ooh, touchy aren't we? Make sure not to worry your darling girlfriend there or else she'll find out what we're up to and the game will be over. You'll lose.*

K. O.: *She is just a girl, that's all. She's not my girlfriend. Where are you?*

o02o22o10o: *Close enough to see what's going on. So if she's not your girlfriend, what is she to you? You even gave her a ride home yesterday. That's not something you would do for just any girl either.*

K. O.: *How long have you been stalking me?*

o02o22o10o: *"Stalking"? Believe it or not, I'm not a stalker, you're just quite noticeable, and apparently easy to wind up. I find it intriguing on how many personas you carry around. You're not that hard to figure out. I can feel your frustration from over here. How*

about another hint to ease your torment? Of course, if you take the hint now, I won't give you another freebie. Three hints are my maximum, but here I thought that you would be able to figure me out with only one hint. I guess two is alright, but I expected a lot more from you.

K. O.: *No hints. No freebies. I can figure you out.*

o02o22o10o: *I know you can, and that's why I've decided to add a deadline to this game of ours. You only have one more week.*

WHAT?!

K. O.: *You can't keep adding rules.*

o02o22o10o: *It's my game, and this just makes it more challenging and fun, don't you think? Besides, it's daunting to think that this game could last well after graduation. I think this time limit will be a good motivator. I'm not messaging you like this for a romantic date after all.*

K. O.: *I'll find out who you are, but I don't need a week. Three days will be plenty of time.*

o02o22o10o: *Three days it is then. Good luck! And by the way, tell Kasumi I said hi, will you?*

I decide to close my laptop, forcibly ending our battle for now. How did he know Kasumi's name?

"Kyo-chan?" Honey cautiously asks from Mori's lap, shivering in fright.

I look around and notice that people are giving me looks of concern, with a side of fear. Even Kasumi had moved to the other side of the table next to Mori, hiding her face behind her sketch pad.

After that, I never responded to any of his messages when I was in front of the club, and I had volunteered to give Kasumi a ride home

again. The messages seemed to have a threatening tone, so I didn't want her to get hurt if this person is crazy and possessive, but I figured that the best way to protect her was to keep her close if at all possible. It was the first time he had asked about someone other than me, and it was Kasumi, a girl, who didn't even come to the Host Club. The only connection she has with the club is the portrait. It's not like I ruled out the possibility of this person being a female, it just seemed unlikely until now. Perhaps he is a she whose focus is on me and Kasumi might be an obstacle, or perhaps he just has a crush on Kasumi and is possessive of her rather than me. This did start from an auction on an easel I was going to give to her. I need to make sure to watch out for her, but of course this means that Tamaki will be teasing me about it.

I asked him, 002022o10o, if he was a man or woman, but he responded haughtily, "It doesn't matter which gender, I have different personas just like you. I just hide it better. But I will tell you that I can be anyone at Ouran." He's starting to really piss me off.

The next morning, I hit a break.

K. O.: *Are you late? Do not lie.*

A few minutes later, I get a reply.

002o22o10o: *Yes, I'm late. Can't talk now. I'm preparing for the lecture.*

I thought he or she was preparing for the teacher scolding him or her, but just then, our substitute teacher, Akihiro-sensei, Kasumi's older brother, stumbles into class. "Hello, I'm Akihiro-sensei, substituting for your homeroom teacher who is ill today. I apologize for my tardiness. I don't have a good excuse, so just take out your books and turn to page 324."

Tadai Akihiro. His nickname could be "Dai." I look at the list of ten initials. T D A was there. I hadn't counted on a teacher being a possibility, but now this is starting to make more sense. He knows

Kasumi, and I know him well enough from her to know that he can be quite protective, although he works a lot. Not to mention that he definitely knows his way around computers thanks to his father and his company, and he knew precisely what kind of easels Kasumi likes. This might work to my advantage. Perhaps hanging out with Kasumi more will anger him enough to make a mistake. It's a good lead, but I want to be thorough, and make sure it's him before I do anything bold. I'll definitely still keep an eye on him.

All throughout the day, in between classes, dodging the club to sit with Kasumi at lunch in the art room, and then hosting at the club, I narrowed the initials down to three initials (T D A, B M S, and Y D S), and twelve people based on their family, hobbies, and potential careers. Tadaï is still on the list, along with two other teachers, seven male classmates, and two female classmates. I crossed out the other two teachers because Kasumi never had a single class with them, not to mention they were women in their late fifties. In addition, I crossed out the two female classmates because neither of them are into any art classes, therefore they would have had no need for an easel, which means I was left with eight suspects.

"You're giving me a ride home, again, Otori-kun?" Kasumi asks. I caught her outside of her art class after school and told her to follow me out to the parking lot.

I give her my best smile and say, "Yes, I would like to give you a ride home, if that's OK with you." I can't let her know that someone may be stalking her, or is planning to harm her; she might panic and get scared, and I would like to prevent her stressing out as much as possible.

"Oh, thank you. I thought I would have to wait for my brother for a ride. Let me just send him a quick text to let him know that I have a ride, OK?"

I nod to her to let her know that I don't mind. A few minutes after her text, she receives a reply and she tucks her phone into her bag. "My brother says it's OK."

"Really? I'm a little surprised. He's usually very protective of you, isn't he?"

"Well, I merely told him that a friend is giving me a ride. I didn't mention your name, or your gender, and he didn't ask. Is that OK? That I said that we're friends?" Her cheeks brighten with a blush.

"Yes, that's OK. I don't mind." Her face darkens some more. It must have been because I gave her another smile. "Shall we?"

She nods. For a few minutes the ride is quiet, but eventually Kasumi broke the silence. "Are you OK, Otori-kun? You haven't been looking too well."

"I just haven't been sleeping well, that's all. It's nothing for you to concern yourself over."

Her frown grew, and her eyes settled into her lap. Unlike most days in the car, she didn't look content about the lack of conversation this time.

"Has anything been going on with you, Akihiro-san? Anything strange lately?"

She looks back up to me. "'Strange'? What do you mean by strange?"

"Just anything out of the ordinary, I guess."

"Um, does you giving me rides so often count as strange?" She smiles at me, letting me know that she meant it in a more humorous way.

"No." She thinks it's strange? Well, sure, I've never often given her rides, and if I do anyone any favors, it's usually for my own benefit, so maybe it would seem strange to her, but it's still rather insulting. I couldn't tell her anything, or adequately warn her in any way. Maybe I could still protect her this way?

"Master Otori, there is a package for you. I've placed it into your room by your table."

"Thank you." I wasn't expecting anything to come in the mail, but when I see the large box, I have a suspicion that I know what it is. There's no return address. I tear open the box, and it indeed is the easel I had been cheated out of receiving, along with the card that merely reads:

o02o22o10o: *Game over.*

That bastard was cutting his losses and running!

The next day at school, as soon as I got into my seat I type:

K. O.: *Just because you returned the easel does not make this game over, you damn coward! Tell me why.*

When I hit the send button, an error message comes up telling me that the connection had been terminated. I try to send the message again, but the error message persists. Damn it! If he could have closed the door at any time, he really had been toying with me, but why?

I had gotten too close to finding his true identity.

Well, just because he wouldn't let me exchange messages with him, doesn't mean that I couldn't find out who he is. I still have the initials and a short list of suspects that I could shorten with a bit more research.

After just a single day, I have narrowed it down. There's no other person but Kasumi's brother that could be the culprit. He had motives for buying the easel, for involving Kasumi and threatening me, and he no doubt knew his way around computers, but I just have to be absolutely sure.

I go back to the auction website and find that he had terminated his account. Smart. If he had kept his account up I could have tried finding his email address, or crack into his account to get a phone number, but he had closed that option. Next I search the handle o02o22o10o and any other changes I could think of (x02x22x10x, -02-22-10-, etc.) and find a five year old report from the Akihiro Security Enterprise.

Basically, Akihiro Ichiro had put in the report that an anonymous person by the user or o02o22o10o had bought a few select branches of his network when they weren't for sale, and then made unwanted modifications that ultimately improved his security devices. Despite the improvements, Ichiro wanted the person found for illegal cyber tampering, and let other companies know of the person and the methods used to get what he wanted, even though the anonymous user gave the company back to him.

Stealing the company, and then giving it back without a warning. o02o22o10o had played this game before, and I was a fool for thinking that it was his first time doing this.

Searching the site further, it turns out that Akihiro had never found the culprit.

It gives me a plan.

I sign up for a 24-hour email and sent Akihiro an email saying that I had a suspicion of who o02o22o10o could be.

We exchange messages, and stories. Indeed, the anonymous person had even played the keep-away game with Akihiro, and gave the company back suddenly without a word, but Akihiro never got close to the person's identity. He was given three hints, but couldn't figure any of them out. After his promise of keeping my anonymity, I type Kasumi's name (in hopes that her brother would jump in to save her) and that I would be willing to email him screenshots of the proof I had, but when I try sending the email, an error message pops up. I immediately put a tag on it, and try sending the email again, only for

the error message (a fake error message) to pop up again. Each time the message pops up, I trace it closer and closer to the person's location. I must look crazy walking around with my laptop all over the school, but finding the source of the trail is much more important.

Eventually, I reach the far corner of the school where not many people wander. The perfect place for solitude and for a place with no distractions or interruptions. Similar to the auction site, my laptop freezes, but it's too late. I had narrowed down to a single classroom- the first science classroom. I slam open the door, intending to intimidate him and reach into every inch of my blackmail folder to get what I want: payback, but it isn't Akihiro Tadai whom I had assumed the culprit is.

"Akihiro-san? Kasumi? You're two-twenty-two-ten?"

She bolts out of her chair, but has no where to escape to. Caught. And she knows it.

I retrieve the clues from my memory, and understand.

Ask Umehito Nekozaawa.

Kasumi had been friends with him

The list of initials. Hers were probably within the mix. Kasumi "Mii" Akihiro. KMA.

The day Akihiro-sensei was late, she could have been late too if he gave her a ride.

The playful feminine touches within the messages, and asking of other females. I had only assumed o02o22o10o to be male when he had threatened Kasumi, but she threatened herself?

I spy a phone next to her laptop, and realized she could have used her phone as well as the laptop to send the messages. She had sat

right next to me that day, so she sent those messages to get me off of her trail.

"How did you know it was me?" She asks after a few minutes of silence.

"I didn't."

"But the email... you put my name in the email."

"I was trying to draw your brother out."

Her eyes glint with surprise. She takes a few moments to think, and then starts giggling. It starts to get into violent fits and she can't seem to control it. Her teeth even shows between her lips as her laughter gets louder, filling the room.

Even I start to chuckle.

Between her bouts she tries to speak, "If I hadn't have panicked... you would have never found out. I could have won!"

"If you hadn't have cheated by returning the easel, and ending the game early, I wouldn't have felt the need to hurry. I would have happily assumed it was your brother, searched his equipment and found him innocent of all charges, leaving you in the wind."

"I thought you had suspected me, even after I tried throwing you off my trail."

"I never suspected you from the beginning. You had been completely off my radar."

Her eyes widen in surprise, and then lets out a few more fits of giggling. "I can't believe this." After a while, she calms down and chews on her lips. "So, what was my punishment? Your slave until college graduation, was it?"

"First I want to know why?"

"I really wanted that easel."

"No, why did you hack me?"

"I honestly didn't know it was you until you replied to my message. After that, I panicked. I didn't want you to know it was me who froze your computer, and you wouldn't let it go, so I proposed a game."

"Why did you end the game early?"

"You had been giving me a ride home every day for over a week. I thought it was because you suspected me and wanted to observe my behavior, to see if I would panic."

"And the easel. Why did you send it to me?"

She shrugs her shoulders and snorts. It's unladylike, yet amusing coming from her. "I was going to get it back, anyway. It was for me in the first place, wasn't it?"

I snort back. She has me there. "Was all of this really just so I wouldn't find out who you were?"

She looks off to the side, and I notice her cheeks lightly flush. Oh.

"You have feelings for me, don't you? And you had no intention of telling me."

She hums an affirmative. "I know you don't think I'm all that impressive, and it's not like I'm the best person for your benefit. Plus, I'm an 'art freak,' as some of your friends have seemed to enjoy calling me. I love art, that will always be my passion, but I do enjoy coding, and figuring out puzzles. In addition, you're in the Host Club. Isn't it some kind of rule that you can't have a girlfriend, or something? I figured it would just waste both of our time if I had declared my feelings for you, and so decided to pretend it was nothing."

"You seemed to enjoy sending me messages, and asking questions about me." I sit in the stool next to her so our conversation wouldn't be overheard.

"It was just moments of weakness. I was just supposed to enjoy the moment while I had the chance, and close the door when it ended."

"If I hadn't found you."

"If I hadn't have panicked, you wouldn't have found me. You still didn't think it was me even as you slammed open that door."

I rest my head in my hand. What am I to do? This is entirely not what I had expected.

"So, what now? Are you going to tell my father?"

"What do you think he would do?"

"Well, I won't go to jail due to the statute of limitations, although you can still press charges on me."

"If you fix my laptop and promise not to do this again, I won't."

She reaches for my laptop, opens her own, and fiddles with both of them. "Done. And I have a disc at home that could improve your personal security if you want it."

I nod. It's strange. Kasumi is more than I had thought her to be. She has changed somehow. "I won't tell your father, and I won't press charges."

"So... what? Slavery until college graduation?"

I smile. "Yes."

She slumps her shoulders, showing that she had hoped for no punishment.

"You are to attend the Host Club every day and help me with my duties, organize the club website, and help with cleaning up after."

Her expression turns disheartened. "Is that all?" she retorts sarcastically.

"Just one more thing."

"What?" comes her dejected reply.

"Let's go out on a date."