

A sea of children stood around the notice board, trying to peek over each other's shoulders to look at the piece of paper that had recently been placed there.

Shoichi, on the other hand, didn't really have a hard time reading it. He had good eyesight, so he didn't need to be as close, and he was taller than everyone else, so he could still read it from the back without having to get right in the middle of the small crowd.

"Ugh..." as soon as his eyes landed on his own name, he couldn't help but let out a groan. Not this...

The notice posted on the wall was a bed assignment for those staying the night at the camp. Over one hundred children, all of them practitioners of different kinds of sports, had come to this place and, as such, they all had to have places to sleep. Since they were all staying at a school during break, they'd be using emptied classrooms to sleep in.

That by itself wasn't a problem. Shoichi was already used to sleeping in a futon since his childhood home wasn't all that spacious and his bedroom couldn't fit a bed.

No, the problem was the person that had been assigned to sleep right next to him...

"Sensei, about the sleeping arrangements..." Shoichi immediately went up to the supervising teacher, already trying to find a way to have it changed.

"Yes?" the man glanced down at the husky, looking either very bored or very uninterested. In fact, Shoichi could have sworn he saw the adult deer rolling his eyes.

"Is there any way they can be changed? I don't-" before he could finish his sentence, the deer made a gesture for him to be silent, sighing deeply in annoyance.

"I'm sorry you couldn't sleep next to your friends, Urata, but the beds were all decided at random. It wouldn't be fair if everyone would be allowed to choose because then some kids would be isolated. Not everyone came to this trip with their friends, you know?" the deer immediately began to lecture him about how you can't always get what you want and how you need to get used to things not going your way and yadda yadda yadda.

Shoichi tuned out of the conversation about halfway through.

"I hope you'll understand, Urata-kun." the man finished his speech by giving the young husky a pat on the shoulder, quickly walking away from the group.

"Great..." the boy mumbled to himself, now fuming. It was only matter of time before he had to deal with-

"Ah, 'Just Urata'-kun!" a voice came up from behind the husky and immediately put him in a foul mood. The boy turned around to look at the small shiba, looking up at him with excitement in his eyes. "I just saw the list. Looks like we're bunking together, what a coincidence, huh?!"

*This kid... Shoichi thought. I swear to God that I'm going to smother him with a pillow tonight.*

Still, he tried to remain composed. It wouldn't do for him to suddenly snap at the kid again. The instructors were already keeping a closer eye on him after how he behaved in the bus this morning.

"Yeah, sure. Huge coincidence. Also, stop calling me 'Just Urata' would you?" he tried to keep his voice as icy cold as he could. Maybe the boy would take the hint and leave him alone.

But then again, if this morning was any indication, there was no way this would ever happen...

"Okay!" the boy nodded, filled with excitement. "Then I'll just call you Shoichi-kun!"

Shoichi could feel the vein in his forehead throbbing. It took every ounce of self-control he had to not strangle this kid right then and there.

"No. You *won't* call me that. We hardly know each other and, frankly, I don't really care to. Call me 'Urata-san'." the boy looked up and to the side, as if he were considering it.

"Nope. I'll stick with Shoichi-kun!" he fired back, making the husky choke.

"Wha- Why?!" he had a hard time imagining someone being this annoying by accident. This *had* to be done on purpose, right?!

"Because friends call each other by their first name!" the shiba responded as if it were the most natural conclusion in the world. As if Shoichi were an idiot for not having thought of that first.

"Okay, kid. Look at me, look me right in the eyes and see if you understand what I'm about to say." he leaned towards the boy, his face leaning only a few inches from the kid's face, almost feeling the shiba's breath on his face. "We. Are. Not. Friends!"

Yuuichi stared up at him for a few seconds, pursing his lips.

"Why not?" he fired back.

Shoichi was taken aback by his question.

"Wha- Because I don't even know you. Not to mention how annoying you are!" honestly, this kid was so weird, dealing with him this morning and now at night was starting to make Shoichi's head spin.

"What about me is annoying? I've only ever tried to talk to you and be nice to you." the shiba said dryly.

"Th-that's because..." Shoichi kept stammering, attempting to come up with a response.

To be truthful, he didn't quite know why. Something about how chipper this kid was just rubbed him the wrong way. The kid hadn't done anything *wrong* per se.

In fact, now that Shoichi thought about it, the boy's only mistake was talking to the husky when he was in a bad mood.

Even then, his pride forbade him from admitting to that fact.

"I don't have to explain myself to you. I just don't like you and that's that!"

Yuuichi pouts, staring up at the taller canine with a look of boredom.

"You're really petty, you know that?"

Shoichi groans, rolling his eyes and glaring at the boy.

"Whatever, just don't bother me anymore." he says, turning around and attempting to walk away from the conversation.

The shiba, however, quickly walks around the husky and stands in front of him again, surprising Shoichi.

"W-woah, how did you-"

"You know, it wouldn't hurt to get to know other people and have friends." Yuuichi spoke softly, smiling widely at Shoichi.

That constant cheeriness... it was beginning to make Shoichi feel uncomfortable for some reason.

"Who says I don't have friends?" he retorts, pretending to be offended at boy's remark. "I'll have you know that I have tons of friends!"

Yuuichi cocks his head to the side, suddenly looking puzzled.

"Really? Because Saya-san told me you're always alone at school. Oh, and that no one in your team likes you." his words, albeit innocent, are like a knife through the husky's heart.

"T-that's because..." Shoichi fidgets uncomfortably in his spot, trying to come up with a decent excuse. "Why do you even care? Why don't you try to make friends with the other kids? Why are you constantly coming after me?"

"Oh, that's easy!" Yuuichi smiles another wide, toothy grin, his tail wagging behind him. "After I talked to you at the bus, you just looked like you really needed a friend!"

"Wha-" taken aback by his words, Shoichi stares down at the shiba, gaping. "I-I need a friend?"

"Well, duh. Everyone needs a friend." Yuuichi's voice was so full of cheer that it just annoyed Shoichi a tiny bit.

Truth be told, he just wasn't used to dealing with other people. He'd never had any real friends other than his little sister and he didn't know how to interact with other kids his age. And someone he didn't even know suddenly being so forward... it took him out of his comfort zone.

"That so?" he muttered to himself, looking down at the floor.

Shoichi felt tempted to just go along with the shiba's whims in the hopes that the boy would get tired of it and move onto the next person.

"So so so, Shoichi-" the boy was almost bouncing around where he stood, leaning forward to continue looking at the husky in the eye, even after Shoichi had looked down at the floor. That nearly made the husky jump back in surprise. "What sorts of things do you like? Other than volleyball, of course."

"I... M-man, you're really insistent..." being suddenly put on the spot, he had a hard time to come up with an answer. Even worse, Shoichi got the feeling that the shiba was starting to wear

him down. He was now having difficulty mustering the annoyance to shoot him down. "I like... games and stuff."

"Oh, did you see the new CirclePhoenix game that came out for the JoyStation?! Eternal Fantasy 18?!" Yuuichi suddenly shouted out, his tail now wagged so fast that it was a blur and the boy leaned so far forward that Shoichi had to take a step back to maintain his own personal space.

"E-Eternal Fantasy? That's an RPG, right? I don't really play those sorts of games."

The shiba immediately settled down, his tail hanging low as he began to pout.

"Booo, but RPGs are fun!"

"I-I don't doubt that they are but-" Shoichi already began to dread hearing a lecture on why those sorts of games are good and why he should play them. Instead...

"Oh well, if you don't like them then there 's nothing to be done about it. What sorts of games do you play?" Yuuichi completely changed the subject. Shoichi's head was already spinning trying to keep up with the conversation.

"U-uhm... f-fighting games. Maybe racing games. I also like shooters, but I can't play them for too long because they make me feel nauseous, and I like... Huh?..." Shoichi froze. He hadn't even noticed it at first but... wasn't he having a completely normal conversation with this kid now? Even though he had vehemently denied any contact to the boy, now he stood here talking to him about videogames. "Ah, you know what, it doesn't matter. I have better thing to do."

Shoichi turned around and began walking away. It might have been petty but he wanted to stick to his decision of ignoring this kid. Even if the boy could turn out to be nice... no, he was annoying. Incredibly annoying. Just talking to him for a little bit was already giving Shoichi a headache.

"Ah..." the boy's voice echoed in surprise from behind the husky. Then, there were the sounds of hurried footsteps. "H-hey! Are you going to start ignoring me again?! And here I thought we were getting somewhere."

"Don't talk to me. I already told you you're annoying." Shoichi felt bad about it somewhat but... no, even if he didn't walk away, what then? He would talk to the boy, maybe the kid would want to approach him more times. Eventually they might be talking all the time. Then they might become friends... the idea of having to deal with a stranger every single day was so stressful that it made Shoichi feel sick just feeling about it.

*It's better if I just keep my distance... he thought. Less trouble this way.*

"Booo. You're really stuck-up, you know that?" the boy's voice echoed from behind, sounding incredibly frustrated. Shoichi could imagine the boy blepping behind him. He decided to pay it no mind.

"Well, there you go. I'm stuck-up. You wouldn't like dealing with me anyway so now you know you can just leave me alone."

"I wouldn't go *that* far... Hey, I promise you you're going to end up being my friend!" the boy stopped walking and half-shouted his last words, making a few other nearby kids turn their heads to look at the two. Shoichi merely sighed and continued walking.

*No. No I won't...*