



Summer Pockets Short Story [Naruse Shiroha]

Illustrator: Fumuyun

Author: Nijima Yuu

Translator: Waffle



Summer Pockets

サマー ポケッツ

Amidst the Summer Brilliance

Chapter Shiroha
Travelling Words

School doesn't change much during summer break. I can't really say the same about my classmates, however. I always feel they're a bit different, even after a month of not seeing them. I wonder if I am the same.

A week has passed since the beginning of the second semester. During lunchtime I place my lunchbox on top of my desk and prepare to eat while everyone around me gathers in their own groups of friends.

"Time to eat."

I don't really have anyone else to talk to, so I speak to myself before starting my meal.

"Shiroha! Are you theeeere!?"

A sudden and bright voice makes its way from the hallway.

"Huh!?"

My female classmates cover their bright red faces as they see Mitani Ryouichi from the other class make his way into the room. I don't particularly care, but I also don't understand why he likes to unbutton his shirt and expose his suntan. For the time being, I pretend I don't know him.

"Shiroha, are you here? Shirohaaaa?"

"..."

He won't go away, so I just stand up.

"There you are! Shiroha, do you have a moment?"

"S-Sure..."

With all the eyes of the class on me, I head to the hallway with him.

"What... what is it...?"

"Don't get so worked up over this. Here, I thought I'd give this to you."

Ryouichi-kun takes something out of his pocket.

"Don't."

I pull away instinctively.

"Why so evasive!?"

"I thought you were going to show me something weird."

"You think I'm some sort of weirdo!?"

"I do."

"No... no but... it's not that, it's just a photo."

Ryouichi-kun takes a photo out of an envelope.

"A photo!? Th-Th-Th-This is..."

It was a picture we took last week at the end of summer break with everyone... I'm in the middle of the image near a certain person, and it almost looks as if I was hugging him... Looking at it is so, so awkward...

"Please take it away."

"Eh!?"

"Why are you showing me this?"

"What a cold way to talk about the commemorative photo of all of us, don't you think? Here."

"No."

"Why do you keep rejecting it!?"

"Well..."

I take a couple steps back.

"I'm telling you, you don't have to make a big deal out of it. I just wanted to ask you to send it to Hairi."

"Eh... why me?"

An unexpected name: Takahara Hairi. My heart started beating a little faster.

"Come on, you two confessed to each other already, why are you blushing now of all times?"

"It's... it's not like that..."

"You didn't?"

"We're just... friends..."

"That's fine by me too... Anyways, please take care of the photo."

"..."

Thinking about it, saying no out of nowhere is also a bit strange. All I have to do is send the photo.

"All I have to do is send it to him, right? Okay, I'll do it."

"Wait, don't tell me you plan on sending the photo in an envelope with nothing else inside?"

"Yeah?"

"Don't you think that's a bit cold? In that case..."

"Should I send him a souvenir as well?"

"No, no. What about a letter?"

"A letter!? Why..."

"Because no matter how you put it, just a photo sounds a bit heartless."

"I'll write him... the letter."

"Don't think too much about it."

Ryouichi-kun waves his hand as he leaves.

"A letter... a letter... hmmm..."

I stand in the hallway thinking about it.



This is bad, really bad. The talk went from sending Hairi a photo all the way to writing him a letter. I can't believe what I got myself into.

"Still... writing him something..."

I think about it while walking down the hallway, at which point I've already forgotten about lunch.

"Kanou, what's the meaning of this!? You didn't participate in the summer practice at all."

"Hmm?"

Ahead of me, I find Tenzen-kun being scolded by his club's counselor.

"I apologize. The truth is, I secluded myself in the mountains and did some intensive special training of my own."

Tenzen-kun was showing off, holding a racket at the ready and wearing a jersey.

"In the mountains? What were you doing secluded in that place?"

"Mastering the Lightspeed Smash!"

"Lightspeed Smash!? What's that technique supposed to be?"

"An incredibly fast smash."

"An incredibly fast smash... huh..."

"Indeed."

"How fast?"

"The speed of light."

"The speed of...!? Then that's..."

"The Lightspeed Smash."

"What!?"

The conversation between those two seemed really complicated, pretty much the same as when I talk directly with Tenzen-kun at times. I changed my route to avoid them.

"If it isn't Shiroha. What's with the gloomy face?"

But he noticed me.

"Umh..."

I ended up explaining to Tenzen-kun what was going on.

"I understand... So now you're wondering what to write?"

"Yeah..."

"Takahara looked worried about his club activities, I wonder what happened with that."

"You're right."

Now that I remember, he had a lot of troubles in his swimming club, so I wonder if he was able to go back to it after everything that happened. After all, he could swim again, so it should be fine. Surely if he was back at it again he'd be really busy. He was so fast when I saw him.

"... So you're interested too?"

"Eh!?"

I come back to my senses thanks to Tenzen-kun. I didn't realize I was thinking so deep about this.

"In that case, you could ask him about it in your letter."

"But I wonder if it's alright for me to ask him..."

Tenzen-kun thinks about it for a moment too.

"I see your point, it's a pretty delicate matter after all."

"Yeah..."

"You could ask him in a more indirect, gentle way?"

"That sounds too complicated..."

"I'm sure you can do it. After all, it's your dream to become a novelist, isn't it?"

"Yeah..."

I unconsciously agreed, but I got flustered right away when I noticed...

"When did I talk about that!?"

"I think I got it wrong... Maybe I was thinking of my cousin."

"How would you confuse me with your cousin!?"

"No, maybe it was because both my cousin and you were worried about their frizzy hair, I think..."

"I don't even have frizzy hair to begin with!"

"Oh really? It looked really frizzy to me, so..."

"Stop making me worry over nothing!"

Huff... huff... I got too riled up. Am I really worried about my frizzy hair? No no, I can't get distracted by that. For the meantime, I'll try asking Tenzen-kun about the letter.

"Say, Tenzen-kun, wouldn't you like to write something to Hairi instead?"

"Hmm? Why?"

He didn't look very convinced, so I tried to look for a reason that could resonate with him.

"You know, as part of your training!"

"Shiroha."

He looked back at me with a straight face.

"Yeah?"

"The letter and my training have nothing to do with each other. Pull yourself together."

"Alright..."

"Hmm..."

I part ways with Tenzen-kun, and then look at my reflection in the window. My hair is not that frizzy, right...?

"Shirohaaa~"

"Ah, Ao."

Ao comes running to me with a bright smile on her face.

"Is something wrong? You were talking with Tenzen, and it seemed kinda serious."

"You see... it's about my frizzy hair."

"Frizzy?"

"Is it not!?"

"Hmm? What REALLY happened?"

"I was looking for help writing a letter, but the topic changed out of nowhere."

"Clearly you chose the wrong person for that... So this letter, it's for Hairi, right?"

"Y-Yeah. Say, what would you write about if you were in my place?"

"What I'd write?"

Ao ponders for a moment.

"You guys are dating, yeah?"

"Eh... Eeeeh?"

"You don't have to get all flustered. You confessed to him in front of everyone, after all."

Ao forces a smile.

"Why don't you write about that?"

"About what?"

"I mean... you know... Like, you want to kiss him and stuff."

"Khh...!"

I choked over her commentary for a moment.

"No way, I can't just write something like that out of nowhere!"

"Yeah, I'm sorry, that's too direct after all... But it's not like you don't want to do it, right?"

"I haven't even thought about it."

"Really? I totally would..."

"W-With who?"

Ao gets shocked by my question.

"N-No! I'm not talking about Hairi! I'm just saying that it'd be nice if someone wrote that to me..."

"Would it be nice? Hmm..."

I think about what Ao's saying, but I don't really get it. It feels even sillier than Tenzen's idea.

"And if you touch the subject in an indirect way?"

"Indirect?"

Now she's sounding like Tenzen-kun.

"(I wonder if I can be really that indirect. Now I really don't understand anything...)"

I try thinking of someone who might be able to give me better advice, and one face comes to mind. I head to Class C.

"Nomiki."

Nomiki was fiddling around with her remodeled water gun as I called her name.

"Oh? If it isn't Shiroha, that's unusual. What happened?"

"You see, I was told to send this photo..."

"Ah, yeah. I'm sorry about the sudden request, but I'm counting on you."

"Sure, it's no big deal. I was also told to write a letter, but I don't really have to, right?"

"A letter? That's not a bad idea."

"S-Sure... But even so, I haven't really written a letter before..."

Then I realized: I don't really have to write about me.

"Isn't there something you'd like to tell him about, Nomiki?"

"To Takahara?"

"Yeah."

"I'd probably say thank you..."

"Thank you?"

"For being such good practice target. Ryouichi goes down immediately, and Tenzen blocks all my shots with his racket and gets too excited about it."

Nomiki started muttering.

"I... see..."

A good practice target. Nothing sounds good about that.

"No, wait."

As if having a sudden revelation, Nomiki shakes her head.

"There's no point in writing about me. Shiroha, you should write about yourself."

"But I should be writing something in representation of everyone, not just me, right?"

"Maybe, but I'm pretty sure he'd would like to know more about you than the rest of us."

"Even if you say so, I can't come up with anything..."

"Maybe you could try introducing yourself and talking about yourself again!"

Not again, I haven't even written a letter before to begin with. Is it fine to write about my everyday life? 'Today I went to school, today I had a nap, today I did my usual activities'... Is it alright to just tell him last night's dinner was good?

"Hmmm..."

I can't make up my mind!

"Hmm?"

That person... at the other side of the hallway, I think I see Mizuori-senpai. I don't really know her all that well, but she's older, there's a chance she'll be able to give me better advice. I head over to talk to her.

"Uhm, excuse me!"

"Eh?"

She looks back at me with a smile.

"My, Shiropa-san"

... Shiropa? Well, whatever.

"What is it?"

"There's something I wanted to ask you."

"Yes?"

Senpai looks at me with an inquiring look.

"Ah! I see. In all honestly, I think your size is fine as it is."

"My size?"

"But if you're aiming for a bigger size, you'll need someone to fondle them for you. And of course, I'm talking about Hairi-kun!"

"Wh-Wh-What are you talking about!?"

Although the conversation went in an unexpected direction, I managed to explain the situation to Senpai.

"A letter, huh?"

She puts her hand on her chin and thinks for a moment.

"Is not like I'd really understand the feelings of a boy, but I can at least tell you what I'd like to see in a letter sent to me."

"Really? Thank you very much."

"In short, Paitaku."

"Pai, taku."

Paitaku... paitaku... I've never heard that word before.

"What is that?"

"Hmmm, you're too innocent yet, I see. Paitaku is just that, Paitaku."

"???"

Senpai gets close to my ear while I'm still standing there confused.

"Paitaku is, you see..."

"Yeah?"

...

"Wh-Wh-Wh-Wh-Wha..."

I back away from Senpai, completely shocked.

"Don't make those eyes, you look as if you just saw something terrifying..."

"Senpai, are you crazy!? Or a pervert!?"

"A cluster of breasts."

"Crazy AND a pervert, then!"

"Hmhm, but I do think he'd be happy."

"Only you can think that."

"But isn't just writing words a bit lame? I'm sure he'll be more than happy if you put a mark of your own body that he can feel on the letter."

"A mark that he can feel..."

While I feel like I've been deceived to an extent, she still has a point on that last part. I'll keep the general idea as a reference.

I go back to my seat and decide to start the letter, taking into account everyone's advice. All of it was pretty inconsistent, but I'll do my best anyways. Maybe something decent will come out of it.

... And 10 minutes later I'm done.

拝啓 鷹原羽依里 様

写真を送ります。

あの時は後ろから誰かに押されてこのようにぶつかってしまい、
すいませんでした。

ぶつかると言えば、ぶつか……部活？ そういえば、部活的な
ものを休んでるとか。聞いたような気がします。

そんなに気にしてるわけじゃないですが、どんな感じでしょう。

話は変わりますが、外国の映画を見ていると、簡単にキスしたりして
いますね。文化の違いですね。でも国際化甚だしい世の中なので、
日本もああなっていくのでしょうか。

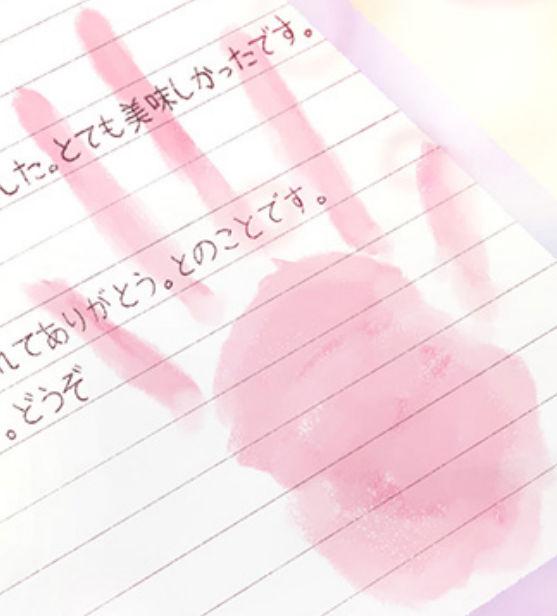
ちょっと恥ずかしいですね。(他意はありません)

私は元気にやっています。

昨夜は、カレーの煮付けに湯豆腐を食べました。とても美味しかったです。

それが私の近況です。

追伸 みきが実験体になってくれてありがとうございます。とのことです。
あと私の指紋を押しておきます。どうぞ



"Dear Takahara Hairi,

I'm sending you a photo. I'm sorry for bumping into you, I have no idea who pushed me from behind.

By the way, I was also curious about your club activities. It's not like I'm that interested, but I was wondering how you were feeling about it.

Changing the topic, I saw a foreigner movie the other day and the characters were kissing. That's how cultural differences go, don't you think? Maybe, since Japan is internationalizing so fast, that will be common here too, eventually. That's a bit embarrassing, to be honest. (I have no other intention as I write this.)

I am doing fine, myself. Last night, I had curry with vegetables and boiled tofu. It was really delicious. That's all I can think of about me, for now.

P.S. Nomiki says thanks for being a good practice target.

Lastly, I attach my fingerprint. Please help yourself."

I read the whole thing again...

"Awful!"

This is horrible. Why did I put my fingerprint to begin with? Now some blood seal-looking hand mark lies on the bottom of the letter, pulling all the attention towards it.

"I don't understand... letters... at all..."

At the limit of my frustration, I sink my head into my desk and a headache begins to attack me.

"Naruse-san."

"!? Wh-Wh-What is it?"

That caught me by surprise. I tense my whole body like a cat ready for battle.

"Steam was coming out of your head, so I was wondering if you were alright."

It was a girl from my class. She was having lunch with her friend, and it seems they caught sight of me thinking about the letter.

"What happened? Did Shiroha forget her homework?"

"She's not an airhead like you, y'know."

The girls took an interest in me and started surrounding me. Taken aback by the unexpected situation, I give them an answer to hopefully dissolve the attention.



"I was... I was writing a letter..."

"For who?"

"Someone I met... this past summer."

"Who is it?"

"Well..."

... I have no choice but to tell them the general story, while feeling extremely pressured on top of it.

"Eeeh!? A guy came to the island this summer!?"

"Y-Yeah..."

"So you're writing a letter to him after he went back to the mainland."

"How wonderful!"

"Is n-not a big deal."

"Isn't he your boyfriend?"

"No..."

"Oh, I see."

"The thing is, I'm bad at writing letters."

"Oh, I getcha, I getcha. Writing something for your family is easy, but going all formal is totally different."

"Yeah, exactly."

Finally, someone who gets me, I'm actually happy.

"At times like this, you gotta go for a slogan!"

"A slogan?"

"To put it simply, you just write whatever you want to tell him directly, in one phrase."

"Yeah yeah, if you change the topic too much, your letter will lose focus."

"In one phrase... Sure, I think I can do it."

"Way to go!"

"By the way, Naruse-san..."

"Hmm, what?"

...

I ended up having lunch with a group of girls I don't know. Well, they are my classmates, so it's not like they're complete strangers, but I have to pay attention to their conversation and it's sort of tiring. Although... It's also a bit fun. Yeah, it was fun... I think about the past month. Hairi came, a lot happened during summer break... If there's one phrase I'd use to tell him what I have in my mind... That would be... I miss you. I miss you a lot.

"... I really miss you."

Eh... What am I murmuring out of nowhere!?

"~~"

There's no way I can write that, but maybe something along those lines.

"Alright!"

A week has passed since the beginning of the second semester. I don't know whether to call it the end of summer break or the end of my admonition. Since my suspension from school happened during summer, none of my classmates found out about it. I was able to attend school again, as if nothing happened. We shared mundane conversations with each other like usual. It was something only I really knew about. Still, it felt like the season actually had a big change as summer approached its end and fall was drawing near. Now, I felt a refreshing and mysterious sensation with my everyday

life in this city, just as bright as those days I spent on the island. The bright sun of the island still remained in my eyes, and it was shining bright on my daily life in the city.

One morning, as I was leaving the house, I notice an envelope in the mailbox. The sender was:

"The Eagle Scouts of Torishirojima"

Or so it said.

"Dear Takahara Hairi"

What elegant handwriting. My heart was beating fast. I hurry and open the envelope. I smelled the faint fragrance of the sea for a moment, and the memories of those days came back to me. The nighttime walks, the cries of the insects being cut off by the sound of my bike, the clear starry sky. The envelope contains a photo full of many familiar faces, and a letter that read:

"Come back whenever."

And nothing else, what a bold letter. While I see the birds soar through the sky, I realize: That's right, I can go back whenever I please, to that island and to that summer.

"I'm off to school!"

And without even noticing it, I make my way out of the house at full force, aiming for the road that leads me to the next summer.