

Saekano Volume 1 Prologue

“The stage will be set on a faraway island in the East which is around an hour’s flight from Tokyo...” (TL Note : *Kono Aozora ni Yakusoku wo*)¹

The reddish rays of the sun illuminating the classroom after dismissal emphasized my solitude.

“Then, due to the lack of students in the academy on the island, they had to merge with a notable local girl’s school...” (TL Note: *Mashiroiro Symphony*)¹

The energetic shouts of the fools carried through the window.

“Thereafter, the protagonist wore a female uniform and started studying in that school. And that’s how the story begins...” (TL Note: *Otome wa Boku ni Koishiteru*)¹

In this quiet space where even the drop of a pin could be heard, my voice reverberated.

“And then, a princess from the moon came to the protagonist’s side, and this marked the start of her homestay in the protagonist’s home...” (TL Note: *Yoake Mae Yori Ruriiro na*)¹

Accompanying my enthusiastic and strong feelings, my voice started to diffuse.

“Oh. I forgot to mention this, but <Heaven>, <Hell> and the <Mortal World> exist in this universe...” (TL Note: *SHUFFLE!*)¹

“Hey...”

“And also, due to the advancements in technology, there are three sets of robotic maids in the protagonist’s house...” (TL Note: *TOHEART2*)¹

“Um...”

“At this time, in order to protect his social circle, the protagonist decides to join the Student Council Elections...” (TL Note: *Koi to Senkyo to Chokorēto*)¹

“Hold it...”

“Ah, by the way, all of the heroines each specialize in different fighting styles...” (TL Note: *Maji de Watashi ni Koi Shinasai!!*)¹

¹ These refer to the overarching plotlines of certain major Japanese galge. The full name of these galges are noted in full even though some of them have known short-forms i.e. Koichoco or Majikoi.

“IT’S ABOUT TIME YOU SHUT UP!”

“Uwa, don’t shout so loudly. You could be a nuisance to others nearby.”

My calm and solemn voice was suddenly drowned out by an explosive and unreasonable one.

“Should a person who has been rambling incomprehensibly and incessantly for more than the past half hour in the classroom have a right to say that!?”

“Has it already been this long...”

Indeed, after looking at the clock, the minute hand seemed to have moved around 15 degrees.

Ah, it was because I was too focused on the characters in the ending that I had no interest whatsoever in the movement of the long hand.

“Anyway, I’m going home. In all honesty, there absolutely hasn’t been a more time-wasting and boring event.”

“No, wait, calm down. I haven’t...”

“And to think I was wondering why you called me out of the blue after school and passed me a proposal with only a cover, let me listen to a incomprehensible speech, and invited me into a inconceivable group. It’s only normal that want out.”

“Even after suddenly calling you after school had ended, you still didn’t care and showed up, so I thought there was something to us...”

“Guh...All sorts of words with regretful meanings have already coursed through my head, so I gave up on calmly insulting you.”

“Is that so?”

The girl in front of me who had been complaining since a while ago gently nodded her head.

At this time, her blonde hair, which could be said to be her most defining feature, gave off a ‘sarasara’ sound and fell down her shoulders.

Her beautiful golden hair, which was almost like a piece of craftsmanship, as well as her white, porcelain-like skin would undoubtedly capture the heart of any man at first glance.

Her father is an Englishman, while her mother is a native Japanese citizen. She was raised in Japan, and is currently my classmate.

Eri Spencer Sawamura.

“Anyway, the reason why I’ve been ignoring you all this time is because I figured you as some sort of lowlife hikikomori² without any particularly defining skills or traits; but now here you are, wanting to produce your own game. Are you looking down upon today’s society or something?”

She pulls the typical ojou-sama act in public, and she’s regarded in my class, and even in my entire school as an astounding beauty; but if you peel off that layer of her personality, you’ll find this cruel, sadistic, passionate yet animalistic nature hibernating within her.

“You yourself clearly aren’t able to do anything, but yet you try to drag some people along to produce a game and brag about it afterward, I guess people like you should be called doujin hooligans. It also happens to be the type of people you hate the most.”

“What are you saying!? I’m telling you, I’m really passionate about this! I work twice as hard as other people too! Which basically means that without me, this project definitely won’t be able to succeed, and we’ll never be able to make this game!”

“That’s because nobody else wants to do it with you.”

“Argh, don’t just jump to conclusions like that! And that proposal took me a whole night to write, too...”

“Let’s see here, you wrote your name, the date, ‘Doujin Galgame Project (Pending)’...how did this take you even remotely close to a whole night.”

“I need my daily eleven hours of sleep, so of course it took me that long.”

“I don’t even know where to begin...dammit!”

“Ah, hey there...that’s mean.”

She was the trump card of the arts department, a girl who had won a prize at an exhibition when she was only in first grade.

She was truly one of a kind, having insanely good artistic talents.

² A term used to describe recluses who withdraw from social life.

This “true side” of hers is only known to an extremely small amount of people in this school, including me.

Of course, I’m not at the stage where “she only reveals her true self to me and me alone”. This woman is just too much.

“To think that someone like you would actually want to attract the attention of others, you’re ten years too early for that.”

“Well, considering I’ve got this far, that’s not too early now, is it. Also, can doujin galge really attract that much attention?”

“Ugh...you should just go back to your previous lifestyle of watching bishoujo anime and preaching about them to others.”

“I-if you keep saying things like that, I won’t pass you the Blu-Ray Disk for the final volume of <The Autonomous Council's Arbitrary Decision>³, OK?”

“See, people who drive others into a corner like you then leave them out to dry are just terrible!”

“N-No, um, that threat I just issued was just me being, you know, a little too full of myself, also I’ve never done something like that before...”

So you wanted to watch that that badly, huh...

Also, is “leaving someone out to dry” even a popular metaphor?

“Anyway, carrying on this discussion is useless. I’m too busy to even handle my own stuff. I just don’t have the time to help out with an outsider’s boring old game.”

“All you need to do is help out with the character design of the main female lead...also, it would be great if you could do the design of the female deuteragonist⁴ as well as the concepts for all the other characters...and as an additional service you could also color the backgrounds and....”

“Don’t increase content requests exponentially!”

“Something tells me that this has happened to you before...?”

³ Appears to be a reference to *Seitokai no Ichizon*.

⁴ The second most important character in a story, after the protagonist.

And such, the unproductive debate broke out in the classroom...

“Both of you, calm down.”

“.....”

“S-Senpai...”

I wonder when I had mistakenly felt that there were only two of us in the classroom... At this moment, a slightly low voice reached our ears.

Right, for this project, Erii was not the only person I had invited.

To foresee the danger of a seceder and increase the number of people, it could be called my turnabout victory...

“Well... Unfortunately, I’m forced to agree with Sawamura-san this time.”

“S-senpai...”

Just as I was thinking about my victory, Senpai decided to side with the favourite. I wonder where the Japanese spirit of rooting for the underdog could have gone...?

“Hey... Rinri-kun.”

“It’s Tomoya...”

Since my name appears here, I’ll just introduce myself while on the subject.

Tomoya Aki.

Toyogasaki Academy, second-year student.

And, as an addition to my profile created yesterday, President of a doujin galge production circle (as yet unnamed).

“I’ve already browsed through your plan for you.”

“Stop the sarcasm. That’s why I said it was fine for you not to purposely unfold it.”

Senpai carefully unfolded the paper that Erii had crushed up.

She clearly knew that the font of the words on the proposal (cover page) were especially big, in contrast to the few words.

“In other words, I understand what has been going through your mind from the past 30 minutes of monologue.”

“That’s amazing, I barely understand it myself.”

“Yes, ‘I haven’t really considered anything but I would rather recklessly drive straight on~Oh, time to sleep~’ I can understand these thoughts you made at around 10 pm last night while lying in your futon.”

“As harsh as ever, aren’t you.”

“It’s just that I hate your stubborn refusal to improve.”

Senpai always conversed this calmly, but she belonged to those with sharp tongues who paid no mind to their choice of words.

Beautiful long black hair, and mainly because her expressionless face, it gave people the objective impression that she was most probably a beauty.

An upperclassman older than Eri and I by one year.

Utaha Kasumigaoka.

“Anyway, even if you count the parts that were added-on in your speech, for a proposal as a whole I still give it zero points.”

“O-oh.”

“It’s because it appears to be a random set of things, which had appeared out of nowhere, patched together.”

“Ugu...”

“The idea probably came from picking a few compatible plotlines here and there from the games you most recently played.”

“B-but it’s because of the different genres mixed together that it feels avant-garde...”

“I suppose, you can’t really call it a steamboat, more on the level of a bowl of darkness.”

“N-nefuu...”

“Also, by ‘mixing different genres together’, aren’t you just being exceptionally strong-willed?”
Having exceeded the level of acceptable, Utaha-senpai was more like an exceptionally sharp-tongued person.

Compared to the more ‘passionate’ Eriri, this type of rational (or so it appeared) analysis pierced my heart deeper.

“But this whole plan can only come from me...”

“Which editor did this come from... ‘No one else can do this’... Any plan coming from an empty vessel certainly can’t be anything serious.”

“Eh...?”

“While this appears to be the honest truth... One day, a certain game company brought in a proposal that was sent to them. According to the writer himself, this was ‘a topic completely novel’, ‘something that clients all look forward to’, and that ‘even if one combed the whole business world, only [he] could complete the proposal’. Basically, it was a list full of self-praise.”

“Eeeeeh....”

Not good, this hit all the right spots.

“And then, once it was flipped open, there was ‘the childhood friend who wakes you up in the morning’, ‘the refreshing sporty short-haired girl’, the ‘obedient but persistent imouto’, the ‘spiritually mysterious girl’, the ‘comic relief’, ‘sweet depictions of love at the peak of the relationship’ and ‘endings with various plot twists as well as miraculous redemptions’...”

“Ahh... Enough, that’s already enough!”

Amazing, she managed to think up more than five plot elements in an instant after hearing that explanation. Such innovation.

“Well, that’s that.”

Utaha-senpai placed a hand on my sagging shoulders after having completely taken apart my 30 minutes of work in no more than 30 seconds.

“To be honest, Rinri-kun, I haven’t seen you being so enthusiastic about organizing otaku-related activities in a while, so you could say that I’m not exactly against the idea of helping you out.”

“Which, after some thought, probably means that you won’t be helping me then. Also, my name is Tomoya.”

An honour-roll student who has never relinquished her position of being the top student in the whole school since last year.

She often helps the drama club with their scriptwriting as well, having extraordinary linguistic ability.

The so-called “true face” of the girl who is feared by just about everyone only is known by, once again, a very small number of people, including me.

Well, that’s... No, this person is just too mean.

“Wait up... don’t you two go running in to this little world of victory now!”

“Is the world around you always that harsh to me?”

At this moment, Erii’s sharp tongue stabbed once again, accompanied by a ponytail that wagged from side to side.

“Oh, you’re still here, Sawamura-san? And here I was thinking you’d already dumped the guy and left...”

“Wha...”

It was then, by some sort of instinct unbeknownst to me, that Utaha-senpai’s defensive spree began to take effect.

“Honestly, you’re a very gentle person. I don’t dislike that part of you.”

“Coincidentally, that happens the very part of you that I happen to dislike.”

“Coming to think of it, I wonder who was the one that had run to into her own world first.”

“Yeah, since I was clearly the one who had refused to participate first, could you please stop tailing behind me?”

“Sawamura-san, you really don’t have the ability to differentiate things.”

“What? That’s utterly preposterous!”

“Hey, don’t you two get too full of yourselves now.”

I had been suspecting for a long time that those two really get along too well.

Well, only in a certain case.

“Hey, why is that Utaha Kasumigaoka here anyway?”

“I’m a student of this school, just like you, so what’s so surprising about me showing up here?”

“You know very well that that was not what I had meant.”

“Do you really want to be alone with him that much? Are you having some sort of weird delusions?”

“Let me just clarify that I won’t fall for this sort of bait.”

“Saying things like that so energetically just makes you look silly, you know.”

“I just live my life energetically!”

“Which is why you shouldn’t break doors like that.”

“It’s not broken! It just made a really loud noise, that’s all!”

“Hey, hey, hold up! Both of you, stop!”

My agonizing cries were drowned out by their furious howls and sounds of destruction.

The two of them then left the classroom without me while talking about me.

Really, this whole affair is just plain convoluted...

“Ah....argh...sigh.”

I finally let out a long sigh after being ditched by those two.

That was because whatever I had intended to do at this point, the sample speech of the main heroine, followed by the plots of the sub-heroines, and the scenarios of all the characters... The wild dream of entrusting of the production script had all come to naught.

The only material things that were left behind were a crumpled sheet of A4-sized paper and a person, me.

My proposal, as well as my high spirits and hopes, that I had had just an hour ago had been easily destroyed, and all that I had left were failure, detachment and loss.

No matter how you looked at it, there was nothing much to say about this whole situation.

That's why I should just give up already. I just need to muster the courage to back down.

This whole project had been started on a whim anyway.

It's not like this was some life-or-death struggle.

Hence, I can just say "There's nothing else I can do." and call it a day.

But...

"My battle has only just begun..."

Humans are able to summon their will to fight on even more effectively when backed into a corner.

... Only mildly sadistic authors would find such cornered characters "moe", but that was beside the point.

My proposal for a new project had been shot down, and my plans of creating a doujin circle had run into a dead end as well after failing to get sufficient members.

In this current situation, new elements of inspiration are nowhere to be found.

In short, this is the beginning of a legacy.

It's an old-fashioned thing, rising up from the ashes and all that.

Yes, it's so old fashioned that I can name five classics off the top of my head that have a plot similar to this.

However, these five or more classics are renowned works of which I can recall every single detail, even up till now.

So no matter how many times this repeats itself, or how many times this is used by others, good material is good material.

“Right!”

I clenched my fists, once again regaining the drive that I had had last night before turning in.

And then, I immersed myself in my imaginations of how I would be beginning to fight alone starting tomorrow.

“That’s a shame, no one’s willing to help you.”

“...Ah. so you’re here.”

“Um, weren’t you planning to use me as a model for the main heroine in the first place?”

“I’m really sorry. I forgot all about that.”

“Mm... I understand. You really forgot, didn’t you, Aki-kun.”

Let me just apologize for a second here. I need to make a slight amendment.

I should say that “our” battle has just begun...

“No, it’s just that you, Kato-san, simply don’t have that much presence in front of the others.”

“I’m just too far apart from them in terms of aura. Don’t forget that those two are extremely famous around school.”

“Well, that’s true.”

“Speaking of those two, they didn’t even ask for my name.”

“Well, they did shoot a glance at you in the beginning, no? Even though that was just about it...”

“Aki-kun’s pretty impressive too, to think you’d be familiar with people like Sawamura-san and Kasumigaoka-senpai. You seem to know them pretty well too.”

“...”

She didn’t complain about us leaving her to dry in a corner all this time, even while talking to me in her usual tone and voice.

Visually speaking, well... What you see is what you'd expect.

Despite having studied in the same school as her for over a year now, she has never left a single impression on me until about a year ago.

Megumi Kato.

'Hmm, the reason why her presence is so faint might be because of her nerve, I guess...' I thought to myself.

"Anyway, I've said all I've needed to say, so shall we head back now? I intend to stop by somewhere else along the way."

"You really are an optimistic person... aren't you?"

"I myself think that this is pretty normal."

"Normality won't do us any good. You're going to become a main heroine, remember? One from a galge."

"Right, right, the names of characters in games should be a little stranger, huh? Kato Megumi's a pretty common one."

"Don't just go about admitting it yourself..."

I recalled another golden rule of all acclaimed productions.

Which is, all of them had lead heroines who had an overflowing of charisma and defining personalities who can instantly jump into people's heads at the very mention of their name. There's also a saying that goes, 'As long as you have a striking character in your story, 90% of the battle has already been won.'

This also means that if the image of your character has not been constructed properly...

"I'm going to close the door now, alright? Key."

"...Ahh...right."

No. That's why the battle has only just begun!

I steeled myself once more and clenched my fists.

For some reason, it felt weaker than just now, but that's probably just my imagination.

This is the written story of me, Tomoya Aki, and Kato Megumi's days of battle.

This battle of mine to produce a game with a main heroine so bland that her role can be likened to that of Female Classmate A...

"Mmm... this should be fine."

"Is something wrong, Kato?"

"Ah, um, the door seems to be a little faulty. It needs to be fixed."

"...We should probably develop your ways of breaking things. This will help your character stand out."