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Alright. No messing around. I think we know why we're here. I know why *I'm* here.

First off, I'm an *open* "Sayaker". A fan of her character. So I'm going to be talking about Sayaka Maizono from the visual novel/game/whatever-you-will Danganronpa as if I'm biased. I won't pretend not to be, but I actually *will* be as objective as possible here and let you know when I'm ever not.

Second off, that's because I want people to take this seriously. Because, I've put in the work to get to know this "Sayaka Maizono". So I'm going to know what I'm talking about here. As a Sayaker, as someone who loves this "Sayaka Maizono," I'd be doing her character a disservice if I screwed around.

Just getting those points out at the forefront.

Third off, if this counts for anything, like some sort of "ethos" or what have you—I initially thought Sayaka Maizono was a "meh" sort of character without anything special going for her and quite a few things going against her. She was very average, and that was because I first saw the DR anime, *Danganronpa: The Animation*, when I was introduced to Sayaka. DR: The Animation is a vastly shorter, vastly inferior version of the Danganronpa visual novel. A vastly shorter and inferior version that I won't be bringing up here.

I didn't hate Sayaka or particularly like her either following The Animation, and even watching a playthrough of the game initially didn't do much to change my opinion of her. She definitely wasn't "Hifumi Yamada" level (a terrible character), but she wasn't as badass as Byakuya Togami or Kyouko Kirigiri, or as layered as Celestia Ludenberg (Celes) or even Sakura Oogami.

But then, I went through the game a second time. About half a year later.

And then...I started noticing some things, two years into my exposure. Sayaka was *much* deeper, *much* more interesting, *much* more complex than she seemed.

Of course...spoilers:

...it only lasted one chapter.

The "first," actually. Because she died before that chapter's completion. But it was..."intriguing" to see what I was finding out nonetheless. So, I finished the game, while enjoying the rest of the cast, of course—then went through it again, making sure to cover Sayaka's free-time events and story dialogue extra-perceptively. I could tell there was something more to them than what it appeared on the surface...people really wanted to make the most of the short time she was here. As if her impact was supposed to go *far* beyond that one chapter.

...

...well, after three times through the game, my stance on Sayaka has virtually 180'd.

In my varyingly humble opinion, Sayaka Maizono has the *best* character development of any character in fiction. *Period.*

And considering it all happened in **one chapter?**

She's perfectly written.

Perfectly. Written.

Again, this isn't supposed to make you change your mind about how much you like her. But since few people really understand her character at all, it's a clarification that'll prove to any doubters that she's the most elaborate character we've had in Danganronpa so far.

Probably the most elaborate character we'll ever have as well. And one of the most well-written characters in fiction, period.

—lastly, I didn't proofread this. So, if you're the type of person whose never made a mistake in their life typing and hates to see other's making mistakes...it should go without saying that this isn't for you.

Her brief profile (minus her backstory since I'll explain all that in the file) is below.

Profile

Name: *Sayaka Maizono*

Age: *17-20*

Date of Birth: *July 7th*

Weight: *108 lb.*

Height: *5'5''*

BMI (useless): *18.0*

Chest Size: *83 cm.*

Sign: *Cancer*

Favorite Color: *Pink (well, her custom fuku ribbon and underwear are)*

Junior/Senior High Schools: *Nekuroroku (3 years)/Nekuroku (0-3 years)/Hope's Peak Academy (2 years)*

Title: *Ultimate Idol*

Just a note/A few mentions: I normally go with the in-game text for quoting (shout-out to *UnderMybrella* for transcribing all that like an ace), but when I'm lazy or wanting a better-sounding tone I'll copy *orenronen's* LP dialogue. It's pretty much the same thing, only he apparently translated the Japanese version himself. Quite well, I'd say: a true DR vet. And last, I just want to give a shout-out to *bamboo-woods*, whose Naezono Tumblr page showed me more inspirational content than I can even think of right now, lol. I *know* I wouldn't have been able to do this if not for these guys.

Also...if you don't like evidence or facts, quotes, or clarifications, this (again) won't be for you.

So leave.

Now then, here is the official synopsis for Danganronpa, the game featuring Sayaka Maizono. If you're already aware of the general plot, you're fine to skip ahead. Obvious spoilers after this quote, as I'll try my best to explain everything in greater detail within this document:

"Hope's Peak Academy is home to Japan's best and brightest high school students [termed 'Ultimate students'] — the beacons of hope for the future. But that hope suddenly dies when Makoto Naegi and his classmates find themselves imprisoned in the school, cut off from the outside world and subject to the whims of a strange, murderous little bear named Monokuma. He pits the students against each other, promising freedom to anyone who can murder a fellow classmate and get away with it. It's up to you to find out who Monokuma really is, and why you've been taken from the world you once knew. But be careful what you wish for — sometimes there's nothing more deadly than the truth..."

And so, the main character, Makoto Naegi and 15 (revealed to be 16) other, equally amnesiac students wake up from random desks at their high school, Hope's Peak Academy. They are given rules by this "Monokuma" bear, stating they'll have to kill another student to escape the locked facility.

Only two students can be killed by a single person. And when two or more people discover a dead student, he'll organize a class trial where students must try to convict the murderer: the "Blackened". If the right person is convicted, the Blackened is executed. Or, as Monokuma states, "punished". If the wrong person is convicted, the Blackened goes free while everyone else is executed.

These are the terms in which the story of "Danganronpa" begins. Where Makoto, first, encounters his old classmates in this strangely empty school—and none of them remember each other.

Only...he and another student, *Sayaka Maizono* seem to have not forgotten *completely* everything.

They do remember knowing each other from their middle school days...

"For the anti-Naezono crowd (Who Is Sayaka?)"

Now, in looking at Sayaka Maizono's character, I'll be starting off pretty brazenly with the concept of "Naezono". No need to drag the super-awesome intro out any further. But I do need to give a *clarification* for Naezono: that is, "Maizono and Makoto Naegi's *canon* relationship".

Many don't get this fact at all; and before I go talking about Maizono's downfall and betrayal, etcetcetcetc, I need to get into the main relationship her character revolved around. The relationship with the main character of Danganronpa that shaped a good 50% or so of her character development. And so, you'll find out most of what you need to know about her general personality in this section alone.

Sound good? Alright.

Below is the first interaction Danganronpa's main character, Makoto Naegi, has with Sayaka Maizono upon seeing her.

Or, rather, upon her noticing that Makoto *looks* like he wants to speak to her. Something that'll help explain her psychic tendencies and critical nervousness around him as we go on and I throw mentions throughout this.

But this is the first piece of their interaction, so I won't go any further with that aspect of it. Please keep it in mind, the immediate, bold backdrop to a great deal of Sayaka's personality.

"(Sayaka, speaking) I'm Sayaka Maizono. Pleased to meet you!"

([Makoto, thinking] Her self-introduction was bright, and seemed to come so naturally... She had a nice odor, like I've never smelled before...

Sayaka Maizono...

When I saw her name in the Hope's High Academy thread I was honestly surprised. She's the leader of a nationally-famous female idol group. As a Super High-school Level Idol, she's a popular performer who appears frequently on TV and in magazines. But, that wasn't the only reason I was surprised she was a student in this school. It's something from a while back. She probably doesn't even remember it.

But, putting that aside, the more I look at her the prettier she becomes. Her skin is like a doll's...)

"(Sayaka) I'm not a doll. I'm very much alive!"

"(Makoto) Huh? Did you hear me!?"

"I can read minds."

"What?"

"Kidding! I just have a really good intuition."

So, to begin properly, let's start with the obvious: what the game explicitly provides (and don't worry; I won't just be making up nonsense in this thesis). She and Makoto recognize each other from middle school (junior high), and she had an eye on Makoto every day after he helped a crane that got lost and wandered into the school pond (as she says in her first free-time event). She wanted the chance to get to know him in private but never got it due to fans and groupies crowding her:

"(Sayaka) But it's kind of strange, you know? I never thought I'd get a chance to really talk to you like this. All through middle school, you never talked to me. In fact, you never even looked at me."

"(Makoto) It's because you were like a celebrity. I couldn't just go staring at you... ..Wait, how did you know I never looked at you?"

"Because I looked at you all the time..."

"...Huh?"

"I always searched for an opportunity to start a conversation."

"A chance to... start a conversation with me?"

"But since I always had so many people around me, we ended up graduating without saying a word. That was one of my biggest regrets."

"But... why me of all people?"

"Do you remember our first year of junior high, that huge bird wandered into our school pond."

(Now that she says it, I think I remember that incident...)

"It was that bird that always shows up in Japanese fairy tales. You know what I mean, the turtle once every million years, the bird once every thousand..."

"(Makoto) A huge bird that got wandered into the school pond during our first year... I think it might've been..."

"(Makoto) It was a crane. It just walked right into the pond."

"(Sayaka, retroactively surprised) That's right! That's what it was. It was so big, the teacher had no idea what to do. But you led it into the forest behind the school. You helped it find its way out..."

(Well, only cuz I was already in charge of taking care of the animals at school. They made me do it...)

"I should have said thank you then, but...is it okay if I do it now?"

"Thank me...?"

"I'm that crane, you see. I've come to return the favor. Here, let me make you a cloak..."

"Ehehe. Just kidding!"

"Y-Yeah, I kinda figured..."

"Honestly, though, I was so impressed..."

That's why I always wanted to talk to you, even just once. I never imagined this would be how I got my chance..."

(Yeah. If we'd met again at a train station somewhere downtown, that'd make for a nice dramatic reunion... But instead, it's this weird school.)

"**Maybe (lol), but still...** I'm sure you'll help me find my way out, just like that crane. You'll save me.

It's just intuition, I know, but I still believe it."

(I'm going to save her...?)

"(Makoto) I'll do my best, I promise that. I'll make sure it's more than just intuition. If there's anything I can do, I'm going to do it...!" (Notice him discretely encouraging himself.)

"I believe in you. Besides, my intuition always turns out to be right.

Cuz I'm psychic.

Ehehe. Kidding, kidding!"

[With the underlined, the context of orenronen's translation differs slightly from the official and Japanese. It's still good, but some context is missed—the underlined is the official translation. I'll be doing those distinctions this way from here on out.]

That comparison to the adage of the crane weaving fabric can be taken in a few ways, but it really was a joke. To lighten the mood for her a bit before she got serious again right after.

And by "dramatic reunion," Makoto simply means getting to talk as they should've then (after all, he never knew her outside of a distant fan's perspective). Notice how Sayaka slyly reads his mind—this is

actually the *second* time in the story—and he doesn't even notice. The instance is bolded.

Anyway, here we see Maizono admitting when they're alone that she'd *always* been thinking about him and how they could find time to talk to each other in private. Makoto, on the other hand, was a close fan of hers like virtually everyone else—but he never paid her any close mind in person because he defeatistly assumed she was too high register for him and would never notice him anyway.

Since Sayaka was never given any time to herself, she graduated without getting to speak to him. Though she regretted that until they finally, genuinely met in high school, the point is she thought of him and tried to speak to him for so consistently long (three years) because she had a strong interest in him.

Was that captivation back then? Probably not, but it was definitely admiration. In this case, there's only a thin line between the two.

There's one real reason why Maizono was so struck by Naegi from that point on after his action, and another flash of her past reveals why:

"(Makoto) Well... what about you, Sayaka? What's your dream? I'd love to hear..."

"(Sayaka, reflectively smiling) My... dreams... Ever since I was a little girl, I always admired the idols. There were just the two of us. Me and my father, you see. Dad used to work until late every single day. I was always alone at home.

I was just a child... It was a little lonely... But the thing that eased my loneliness was the lives of the idols I could see reflected on the TV screen. They were like big sisters to me. They could sing and dance really well...

And best of all... their smiles... When I looked at their smiles, my loneliness was forgotten in the blink of an eye. That's why I always wanted to become an idol like them. Someone who can give other people strength.

...And I managed to make my dream come true."

"(Makoto) That's really amazing. Having your childhood dream come true! It's really... great... (notices she now looks more serious)"

"I did whatever it took to reach that dream. I mean it. Even some things that... weren't so pleasant."

"Eh?"

"I honestly believed that as long as you kept chasing your dreams, someday they had to come true. But to do that, you can't take your eyes off of your dream, not even for a second.

Even if sometimes it's a bad dream... Whether you're awake, whether you're asleep... To make your

dream a reality, you have to keep your gaze fixed on it no matter what. In that world, if you lose focus for even a split second, you get left behind. You have to keep on swimming against the current, without even taking the time to breathe... That's the kind of world my dream lives in."

"I... didn't realize it was that difficult."

A lot to get into here. In short, what Makoto did with the crane was the only thing that moved her, but it meant everything to her and literally hit her on multiple levels. Yet first, let's keep in mind that everything she just described was from before she ever noticed him.

So, from the start, Sayaka had no mother. She could only remember her father who was barely around for more than a handful of hours a week because of work (I know that life; so, no, I'm not exaggerating). Meaning they were almost certainly poor. I figured that by the one TV screen they had despite how hard her father worked, but her father could've definitely found a workaround if he weren't poor and completely dependent on whatever job(s) he had. Whatever the case, he wasn't Superman: whenever he *was* home, more than half the time was probably spent asleep.

Of course, she might've had friends at school, or she might've not. Without much parental influence, it could've gone either way. But she was definitely sad, and she felt a constant fear of loneliness throughout her childhood. Even with some friends for the school days, what was there to go home to every night? What about holidays and vacations? The weekends?

The reason she was able to keep going and not wilt with despair as a severe latchkey kid is because the idols she watched on that TV at home felt close to her. As she said, they were like the older sisters she never had, and she felt warmer inside just by seeing them smiling and happy.

Which, in a way, is sad in itself. But I digress.

Now, of course they wouldn't be on forever, so that feeling couldn't last. But she was determined to become an idol to feel that happiness genuinely and be a good influence to someone else in her position. That's why she did everything she could short of murder (slight exaggeration) to get to where she was by middle school.

But then what does that mean exactly? "Bad things"? "Bad dreams"?

Well, we should already know that sexual favors towards those who'd sponsor or her staff is what's on most people's minds here. Is it that likely, though? It could very well be.

...but perhaps not: if she were found out, she'd be ruined. And the possibility for blackmail was high. She's a desperate character to an extent, but she's not one to put herself in dangerous positions if she doesn't feel she absolutely has to. Otherwise, she tries to avoid them. So, *maybe*. But she *probably* was sexually harassed and she probably did put up with it. Obediently, I guess you could say.

More than that, though, is what else she's implying. In short, she probably hurt a lot of people to get to where she was. I don't mean physically, probably not physically, but did she screw over her fellow competitors to gain an edge over them? Likely. She undoubtedly did whatever she could to get an edge over whoever she had to compete against to get sponsored or make a cut in the first place—because she said she did absolutely *everything* she could, including those things she didn't find pleasant. If someone got in her way, that'd be unacceptable to her with that mindset. As for what that'd entail, it's up to your imagination, though the result would've likely been that she crushed the dreams of many other aspiring idols if they threatened her success, no matter how close she might've been to them. That's how she got to the VERY top, after all, before even starting high school. The Asian idol industry, for anyone not in the know, is very cutthroat.

Granted, we don't know exactly what she meant. She could've blackmailed her sponsors for all we know. But I think the above's realistic (not the "blackmailing her sponsors" part). So long as she wasn't caught, that and her actual looks and talent would explain how she managed to skyrocket in exposure.

Whatever the case, the point is she did bad things. *She* did bad things. And by being in the center of that industry for so long, she probably saw a lot of bad things done to other people and attempted on herself.

This forms the basis for her character, believe it or not. Early in life, she was, in short terms, neglected and alone—and then was exposed to the commonly-known-yet-uncommonly-known "dark side" of the idol industry she'd revered and desperately tried to get into. All of this after and while giving it her absolute all, and all before finishing middle school. And after being born into despair and moving up into deceit, backstabbing, condescension, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, extortion, peer pressure, public pressure, etc.—she just shut herself off from everyone. Understandably so, because of how jaded she must've been with the terrible people around her day in and day out. And with herself: who she viewed as equally sad.

Sure, there was a glimmer of hope to inspire her from start to end, but it really *was* overshadowed by darkness. That's her backstory—

—and note that when I say she "shut herself off," I don't mean she wore some damn mask. I mean she actively had skeptical suspicions of everyone around her and only behaved as was necessary to keep them from having overt reasons to harm her. I'll fully explain, then X that mask nonsense on Page 130.

No...Maizono was...

...cautious.

In a way, similar to Kyoko. There're a few differences—but, again: not a "mask." Admittedly, I do know the "mask" theory comes from Makoto himself, but it honestly doesn't make any sense—and Makoto, as we know from the room switch, is moreover really bad at reading Sayaka unlike vice-versa.

So anyway, does this sound like a really likeable character? Obviously, she didn't know what she was getting into, but she didn't want to stop herself either once she started down the dark path. She didn't want to go back to her old life—where she had nothing, hardly knew anyone, and couldn't help anyone. This is just a part of what makes Sayaka interesting to me. Most of Danganronpa's other characters all have spotless and generally boring backstories. Maybe some sadness here and there, but nothing that stains their psyche on a *moral* level. But Sayaka's is not only interesting from this circumstantial standpoint: her backstory alone gives her character several degrees of depth that we scarcely see much of at all for her in Danganronpa. Not overtly: it must be *searched* for.

Beyond the years of darkness, though, the turning point is that day she's referring to. The first day she got a chance to see the type of person Makoto was. But it wasn't just that he saved the crane. Indeed, she remembered *him* but forgot the type of bird it was after her memory-wipe...but more on that memory-wipe later. It wasn't just about saving crane for the sake of saving the crane being a nice act on its own. For Sayaka, Makoto showed her a part of humanity she'd forgotten existed. A part of humanity and a part of *herself*.

This isn't speculation, either. First, just think about it: after all of that time in the idol business, she'd made it—but she still knew she had to watch out for everyone. In the business *and* out, she couldn't slip at all. In her stressed, solemn words, one mistake was *it*; and this was what she'd worked her whole life for, and what she'd tragically hurt so many others for.

Then to all of a sudden see someone being so selfless and jump in to save a crane trapped in deep water? Not caring how they looked to others or whether it was safe for them? Needless to say, it melted that numbness she'd grown used to feeling. It got her wondering...maybe there really *was* someone who could show her some outright kindness and trustworthiness. Genuine compassion she hadn't seen in Lord knows how long. Someone she didn't have to have her guard around, and someone she could be at ease with. Even her idol friends were fierce, internal rivals as she said (and we'll talk about one, Ayaka Haneyama, much later)—but Makoto didn't have to be one.

That event explains *a lot* of her behavior in the game. It's part of why she quickly grows fond of him when they get to know each other. Which is why she tells him everything about her past. Specifically things that, from her POV of not knowing about the Tragedy (memory-wipe that I'll explain further), could destroy her image, personal and public, if he outed her. She's still clinging to the hope of her band continuing, so she knows she's putting all of that in danger by merely claiming she wasn't as pure as she was supposed to make herself seem in public: the coveted nature of a top idol...and of course what Makoto saw in her when he first met her in Danganronpa (refer to the intro on Page 6). The only reason she would've done this was if she felt she could confide in him almost *100%*.

It's why she's comparing herself to the crane after thanking him. Though the adage was a joke, she *awkwardly* put that joke out there before getting serious again because, as we see her say, there was a degree of truth to it. By freeing the *crane*, he freed *her*—in a way.

Not *entirely*, but it gave her an element of self-hope through the person she felt (almost) 100% emotionally secure around. She couldn't connect to anyone else but him, least of all during the events of Danganropa, and she literally confesses this:

"Makoto... You're the only one I can trust. So please... No matter what happens, please always be there for me. I need you on my side..."

To jump ahead, it's why when Makoto rings her door bell in a certain scene, she starts out with a tentative and reserved "Yes?" because she doesn't know which student it is or what they could possibly want with her—then perks up and opens up the door (and her willingness to talk) immediately when he says it's him, openly telling him and no one else about how scared she's feeling and about her desire to get a self-defense weapon just in case she's attacked. Of course, in the midst of fearing for her life, she's going to be reserved about opening her door.

This isn't to say no one else feels reserved when you buzz them, but you as Makoto are the only one she'd have ever opened up to, especially in that instance of fearing for her life, before even saying anything to her but his name. This happens with no one else. All of that kindness and trust was based solely on her several-years-old memory of him.

It's why she's the one who goes out of her way to carry Makoto back to his room after Mondo knocks him out and across the floor, as the official guidebook states. Despite the entire class being there as well, and some students being physically closer to him than she was.

It's why:

([*Makoto*] I guess I revealed my lack of cool right from the beginning...)

"(*Sayaka*) Makoto...?"

"(*Makoto*) Oh, uh, I'm fine! Nothing wrong here!"

"Oh, that's good. I was kinda worried..."

"Th-thanks..."

Consider that, with her having stated she relies on him, she was reading his mind yet again in that scene.

It's why she *only* gets close at all towards *Makoto* during the game. And by "close," I mean "actually speaking to someone outside of official business". But it's also why whenever the "Monobusiness" involves Makoto, she'd generally rather follow him or get his cosign/company than decide for herself, according to the others, or follow the others at all:

- 1) *([Makoto, hasn't yet spoken] Nobody was there waiting for us. We don't really have much choice. I guess we should just wait here for now.)*

"(Sayaka) Hmm... Okay, let's just wait here."

- 2) "And to thank you for helping me out, I'm going to become your Ultimate Assistant!"

"Huh? My assistant?"

"Yup! I'm your assistant now! I'm going to help you out as much as I can, so let's get out of here together!"

- 3) *"(Mondo) So we have to just give up..."*

"(Toko) That's all f-fine and good for t-today, but what do we d-do tomorrow?"

"(Sakura) Our only option is to split up and look around again, and let everyone know if we find anything."

"(Aoi) Yeah, okay. Let's do that...!"

"(Junko, leaving) Then we're done for today? Good, I'm exhausted..."

([Makoto] With heavy movements, everyone headed off to their private rooms.)

"(Maizono) Makoto... Are you ready to call it a day?"

"Yeah, let's go."

- 4) "Oh, Makoto! Perfect timing!"

"Huh...?"

"Listen, I have a favor to ask..."

"A favor...?"

"I was just getting ready to head out. If it's okay, would you like to come with me? Maybe we could talk..."

- 5) "Okay, we can stop looking for a weapon, then. But as long as we're here, let's hang out a bit more." (And if you try to leave: "As long as we have this opportunity, why don't we talk a bit more?")

- 6) "...If Makoto's going, I'm going with him. It's not safe to walk around this place alone."

...until the motivational video anyway. But that's later.

Though, on that brief note, it's also why she ends up choosing to betray him *specifically*, but **without** physically harming him. She knows how selfless and trustworthy he is, so she doesn't fear any suspicion or retaliation in trying to pull it off. It *is* manipulative of her (**I never said she was perfect, and her human flaws make her more interesting to me**), but in an ironic (say, "flattering") sort of way in that she purposely plays the one person she knows she can trust inside. Without actually trying to kill him.

Basically, that one scene is the reason why she says over and over that she feels safer and more assured around him, and it's because of his kindness and honesty. He's not full of deceit like everyone else she knew; and though his first act with the crane gave her that spark of recognition, she begins to feel that way even stronger the more time they spend together.

This is a mouthful, right? But you want one particular scene that sums all of this up in a nutshell? Take for instance the scene where Makoto got between Byakuya and Mondo—Makoto getting punched actually made Sayaka even more fond of him:

We know that when he stands between Mondo and Togami and says, "S-Stop it! We shouldn't fight!" he's knocked out by Mondo.

But just before, Sayaka tried to protest the idea of Byakuya ignoring the group's efforts and going off on his own, with his reason being the concern that another student was planning to discretely murder one of them—and possibly him—in order to escape. His reply soon led to Mondo's confronting smartass (badass) Byakuya then Makoto stepping in, but Sayaka *didn't know what to make of Togami's reply to her before Makoto intervened*:

"(Sayaka) W-Wait, hold on a second. That would never-!" (Essentially the only time she yells out at someone like this who isn't Makoto—also important to note for later.)

"(Byakuya) Don't bother saying it couldn't happen. You can't deny the possibility. That's why you all seized up with fear when that graduation rule was made clear to you. Am I wrong?"

"B-But..... "

"So, I'm simply acting in accordance with what I think is best for me."

Okay.

The reason he "wins" that exchange is because this situation is pretty much Maizono's life story, and the only reason she got to the top of her industry. That is, by distrusting others, being skeptical, and generally keeping her interests as Priority #1, doing everything possible to push them.

It's no wonder then why she worriedly points out Rule #6 (a rule she's clearly perceived before anyone else), which explicitly involves betrayal...

"(Sayaka) - Hey, um... I have a question.

For regulation number six... what do you think it means exactly?"

[Rule #6] Anyone who kills a fellow student and becomes "blackened" will graduate, unless they are discovered.

...leading to Byakuya expressing his distrust and desire to be alone. Since Togami's essentially speaking Sayaka's language with that same reasoning she'd have once used back in the day (albeit much less obviously), she realizes this and reluctantly starts to seriously doubt her own fearful protest—that she raised to try and hold back the suspicions she had before anyone else, immediately after reading that rule.

The suspicions he just made worse. Now she's thinking he might have a point. After all, he *himself* stated that she noticed that specific rule.

After Makoto's knocked out, everyone splits up to investigate a hidden passage out of the school—since what can they do for him? He's not gonna die—but they compromise and plan on reporting to each other what they've found. Naturally, Maizono went on her own, like Togami and Kirigiri (and Taka: explicitly, however, no one else wanted Taka with them).

This is reported to Makoto by Sayaka herself (excluding the "Taka" part; she'd have been more comfortable completely alone regardless) when he wakes up and she brings him to the cafeteria. Considering the nature of her rise to the top and how that culminated in her not getting close to anyone but Makoto here, she would've felt safer doing that from the start: going off on her own just like Togami wanted to. Though Sayaka obviously *wouldn't* have wanted anyone to think of her in the same way they were thinking of Togami at this point, so she probably would've helped in a group eventually. Right: As she ended up doing when she led the group discussion in the cafeteria shortly afterwards—and I'll get to that shortly.

Anyhow, Togami's words made her much more cautious of the others because of the gravity of the situation. It's just that when she saw Makoto try to stop the fight so everyone could cooperate, then get knocked cold across the room, that reminded her again of how strongly she felt about him in particular. He was the only one (again, even more than her idol friends who likely clawed their ways up as well, and with whom she had strong rivalries) she knew she could trust completely. This is because he was absolutely selfless. To a *dangerous* fault. And when he sees her after waking up from the bed she put

him in:

"(Sayaka) Anyway, I'm really glad... that I know somebody here. Talking to you has made me feel a lot better about all this... You're amazing, Makoto!"

"N-No, I'm really not... I'm nothing at all compared to you 'ultimates'."

"But **you're** the one that helped me find my courage again. Not any of those 'ultimate' students."

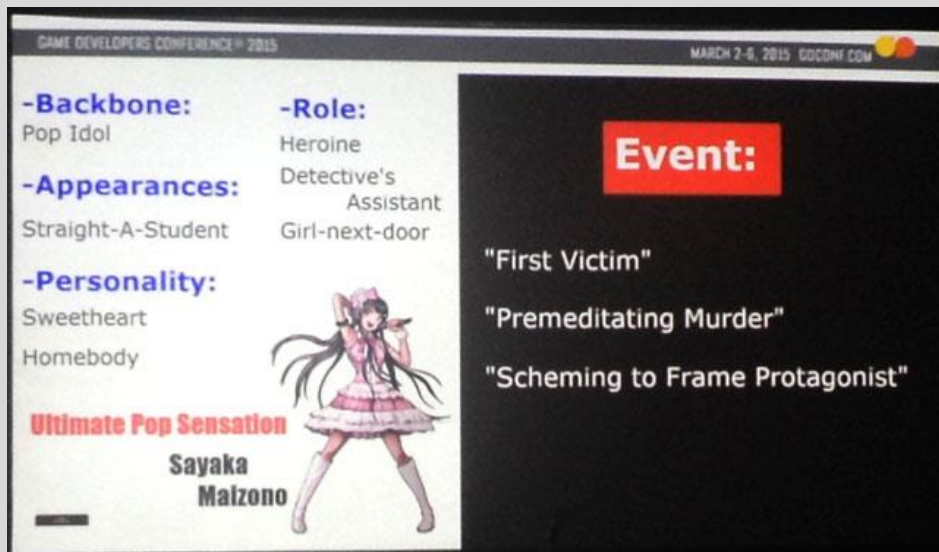
"Thank you for saying that..."

"And to thank you for helping me out, I'm going to become your Ultimate Assistant!"

"Huh? My assistant?"

"Yup! I'm your assistant now! I'm going to help you out as much as I can, so let's get out of here together!"

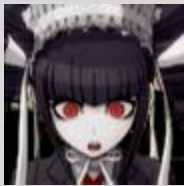
That's the basis of the detective/assistant duo, in the concepts of her character:



She's working with Makoto because Makoto's the only person she feels comfortable working closely with: because she actually remembers him from before and got to know something good about him. And because she feels he's trustworthy and completely honest in general. Essentially, "Mr. Perfect" as far as morals, integrity, and humility are concerned...something she was desperately looking for. And he's the *only* one like this. Naturally, this is why, in such a serious setting, she only ever works alone with *him*.

As for her courage, thanks to Makoto's display of selflessness, she's still reserved just in case and never gets past superficial acquaintanceship with the others; but she doesn't continue to let her doubts dictate her rapport with them as with Togami. Meaning she's more sincerely involved in the group (I'll mention the cafeteria meeting) than she otherwise would've been if things ended with Togami shooting her down then walking away. She *wants* everyone to do well and get out, and that's because she genuinely *doesn't* want anything bad to happen to anyone.

When she says "she found her courage again" she means the courage to cooperate despite the distrust she has, the courage to potentially put herself in harm's way so they can all get out. The courage from before Byakuya's cold-cynical remarks took hold of her, making her think that cooperating *even slightly* wasn't a good idea unless she absolutely had to. There's no other situation at this point in time that's occurred between her and Makoto this way. So, in the end, we see things like:

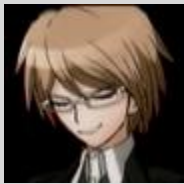


(*Celes*) It is perfectly obvious that we have been imprisoned in some secret location, with no way out.

(*[Makoto]* None of us had any response to that. We didn't want to accept that reality--but it was staring us right in the face.)



(*Toko Fukawa*) You didn't h-have to go and s-say that. I w-was trying not to th-think about it... N-No way out... We're t-trapped in here. What are w-we supposed to d-do...?



(*Byakuya*) It's very simple. If you want to leave, you just have to kill--



(*Mukuro*) Don't even joke about that!



(Sayaka) Everyone just calm down, please! We need to stop and think about what to do from here.

Despite not being calm herself—at all—deep down inside, despite not being used to a leadership position of this sort, and despite still being wary of everyone there besides Makoto, Sayaka still tries to force herself to say something encouraging. Despite not really knowing what to do. But the point is that she's now sincerely *trying* to cooperate with everyone else in spite of these weights she's feeling.

She still clearly states that Makoto's the only one she can trust, and she doesn't go hanging out with everyone as if there's no possible danger. It goes without saying that she would've confided in him either way. But whenever she feels the situation needs to *stay on track*, she'll now be right with the group:



(Toko) W-Well it's not like any of you i-invited me along! Nobody said hey, c-come with us!



(Toko) I blame y-you for leaving me out! I-It's your fault!



(Mukuro) What—if you wanted to come along, you should've just said something!!



(Toko) Hmph. F-Forget it. Like I'd w-want to go anywhere with a dirty s-slut like you...



(Mukuro) Dirty slut...?



(Toko) Your mind is as th-thin as your body. You m-make me sick to my s-stomach...



(Mukuro) I...I don't even know how to react. How can you say awful things like that to someone you just barely met?



(Yasuhiro) Alright guys, everybody just calm down, okay? All this stress is bad for your skin, y'know?



(Sayaka) That's right! Are you already in such good terms that you feel it's okay to fight? How does that work?

([Makoto] Maizono-san... I don't think that's what it's all about...)

He doesn't get her rhetorical sarcasm in trying to calm them down, but that just shows—for the most part—her awkward way of phrasing things due to her heavy career taking up her social life.

More directly, there's now also—her wanting to be with group whenever it concerns progressing forward right then:



([Makoto, thinking] Huh? There's something inside this cardboard box. It's...!)



"(Sayaka) ...a bunch of DVDs. And each one has a label on it with someone's name. This must be the 'video for each of us' he (Monokuma) mentioned..."



*"I'm going to call everyone here!!" *leaves**

What this means is Makoto had already begun to influence her personality for the better.

I can seriously go on and on, but you get the idea here. The general point in terms of "Naezono" is that, after everything Maizono had been through, she expected the worst from people. Partly because of her upbringing, partly because of the awfulness she'd seen them do for years, and partly because of what she had to do for herself. Those general feelings continued within her until her death.

When she saw Makoto's altruism, though, he revealed himself to her as someone she wasn't even aware existed around her. Maybe there had to be someone like that somewhere; maybe they were a Sayaker even (well, he *was* a fan of hers, but she actually never knew this). But to be in the same school as her *and* in the same grade?

In the end, however, she'd been too concerned with waiting for the perfect moment (not necessarily lovey-dovey, but just to where she's not being crowded) to just go ahead and tell Makoto her feelings, which at that point *can* be inferred as romantic but not necessarily—either way, she'd been *extremely* interested in him. However, literally thanks to Makoto's ironic Ultimate (Bad) Luck factor (that gets him in the prestigious Hope's Peak Academy and gets him involved in the Danganronpa killings), they happen to go to the same high school *and class* this time.

They just take a different route to get there. He gets accepted there from the start, immediately leaving his Yuuyami High; and she transfers in later from her previous Nekuro High, at Hope's Peak's request, *for reasons we'll get into later* (I really do mean it with these).

There (which means in Hope's Peak high school and after their junior high years together), she originally confesses how she feels and they become close. And there, her high-school memories are wiped, and

she forgets this confession.

Oh, wait...they don't become close, you say? Some seriously think that's just speculation for whatever reason.

But they really, seriously do.

In canon.

Well, let's not screw around. Here's how we know:

First, we'll get *Monochrome Answer* out of the way. *Monochrome Answer* is, bluntly put, a song on a Danganronpa music CD, based on Sayaka's reflection on her feelings about Makoto in high school before the memory wipe. And it can be extended to Danganronpa (the game) because the situation in Danganronpa (the game) is the same as before the memory wipe, minus all the obvious death and despair. All that changes is Sayaka and Makoto want to focus on getting out and surviving so they can even *have* a life together and not a permanent, Danganronpa Bad Ending.

"(Sayaka, blushing) There is someone who... interests me..."

([Makoto] Maizono-san looked straight into my eyes. It seemed to me her cheeks turned just a little red... ..Eh? She's looking straight at me?)

"(Sayaka) But I should put those feelings aside for the time being. Our priorities should be on finding a way out of here."

"Y...yeah. You're right..."

"But I should put those feelings aside for the time being."

—oh, come on. She literally *just* admitted it. Why am I still doing this?

'Cause I'm a sap, I guess.

Explicitly, her voice actress (Makiko Oomoto) says the song implies Sayaka's relationship with Makoto. In a Twitter post, she says she thought of that when singing and ran it by Kodaka, the Danganronpa creator, as well. In the official guidebook, she states that the song's possibly a reference to their life before the mind-wipe, but the vagueness doesn't even matter because there's explicitly a line from *Monochrome Answer* that mirrors their School Mode ending exactly:

"(Sayaka) I have been waiting for the day when I could finally take steps towards the [*Monochrome*] future with [*him*] you, Naegi-kun." [If you don't understand the brackets, see the lyrics to *Monochrome Answer*, and you'll understand it's the same verse. I have too much time to waste on other things (in this document, of course).]

And in another tweet, Oomoto says the song "could" refer to an alternate universe with the two (School Mode). That wouldn't matter either, for reasons I'll get into with you shortly. But she could, of course, be singing about any old guy or a made-up guy unless Kodaka says otherwise. Oomoto saying she spoke with Kodaka about it isn't proof enough.

As for School Mode itself, that's a whole 'nother story that would best be explained in another section. (Yes; sorry about all the loose ends. But it can be found on Page 49.)

So, in line with that CD, the opening events of Danganronpa/Danganronpa School Mode are essentially a repeat of Sayaka/Makoto's original transition into high school, since everyone's lost their memories of having been in high school together—but we know Sayaka and Makoto still remembered each other from middle school.

To clarify, the beginning of Danganronpa takes place 2-5 years after their graduation from middle school, with the prior two years of their time at Hope's Peak forgotten; but Sayaka/Makoto, through their past three years of middle school memories (as a budding crusher/a distant fan; and as classmates) are the only ones who know and remember each other from before the memory wipe:

This means the beginning of Danganronpa is a continuation of Sayaka's desire to speak to Makoto from middle school. When Sayaka sees Makoto again after all that time, she soon remembers his face—and his name, having heard his earlier introduction with someone else—then puts the two together, at which point she immediately trying to start up a conversation with him until Ishimaru stops it:

"(Sayaka) I'm Sayaka Maizono. Pleased to meet you!"

([Makoto] Her self-introduction was bright, and seemed to come so naturally... She had a nice odor, like I've never smelled before...

Sayaka Maizono...

When I saw her name in the Hope's High Academy thread I was honestly surprised. She's the leader of a nationally-famous female idol group. As a Super High-school Level Idol, she's a popular performer who appears frequently on TV and in magazines. But, that wasn't the only reason I was surprised she was a student in this school. It's something from a while back. She probably doesn't even remember it.

But, putting that aside, the more I look at her the prettier she becomes. Her skin is like a doll's...)

"I'm not a doll. I'm very much alive!"

"(Makoto) Huh? Did you hear me!?"

"I can read minds."

"What?"

"Kidding! I just have a really good intuition."

([Makoto] She's too sharp...)

"(Sayaka, surprised) Hey, aren't you..."

(Now what?)

".....Yeah, it must be. I'm sure of it. Hey, Makoto. Did—"

"(Ishimaru) Hey, you two! Your conversation is too long! Are you planning to spend all day introducing yourselves!?"

"I'm sorry... I was just..."

"Introductions should be short and to the point! Conversations have their time and place, and now isn't it!"

"(Sayaka, frowning) I... understand. I'm sorry, Naegi-kun. I will... talk to you later."

([Makoto] Maizono-san... she tried to say something to me... But it's not like this is the last time we'll have a chance to talk. As she said, we'll try again later.)

Let's forget for a moment that this Ishimaru had no part in deciding that everyone should be introducing themselves. The people who *did* decide on this for the group were Aoi Asahina, Celes, Chihiro Fujisaki (three of Makoto's classmates), and Sayaka herself—only slightly worried so far, as Monokuma hasn't yet appeared.

[But here is her line if it matters: "Okay, so let's get introductions out of the way, then we can move on to whatever else. Sound good?"]

It'll be *more* important to take into, for later, her reaction to Ishimaru: her reluctantly accepting what this random man, rudely shouting in her face, is ordering her to do. That is, suddenly drop the serious, personal conversation she'd wanted to have with Makoto for years. Her reluctantly *accepting* that, and apologizing to Makoto as Ishimaru continues to watch them.

She really does understand here—that, from speaking with his unreasonable ass, these people probably *are* like all the others she knew from before...

...something we can see her sadly coming to terms with as she slowly accepts Ishimaru's command. And so, she understands that, unfortunately for her *own* sake, she really *should* be trying to speak to Makoto alone.

But keep in mind her being nice to Ishimaru *nonetheless*. Not telling him what she *really* wants to say. This *isn't* a mask.

Anyhow—not taking into account her extra two years of lost memories, I feel it's important to understand that if Sayaka finished senior high entirely before enrolling in Hope's Peak (which most fans believe is required—no certainty yet, only active enrollment in a high school is stated), it would've been her first time seeing Makoto in three years.

If she only did one year of senior high, it would've been her first time in a year.

If she hadn't even finished her first year of senior high before enrolling, which is entirely possible considering how talented she was (along with certain others in her class) and how much Hope's Peak only cares about talent in general, it still would've been a couple weeks since the last time they'd seen each other. But let's not forget that, with what Maizono does, a single day is extremely chaotic and demanding, feeling more like a week anyway. That's why it takes even her a *moment* before she recognizes that *he's* the one she had her eyes on for so long—as you read. Her obsession with him meant the recognition should've been near-instant. Yet she engaged in a pretty fair conversation with him, staring at him as well, before it hit her.

But at the same time, the fact that she's still so quickly able to remember Makoto and what he did for her after all this time and, more importantly, *after losing her most recent memories*: it's a testament to how endearing he was to her back in junior high. It only took a minute or so. Even though they also weren't even in the same middle school classroom, something we see in another conversation a few hours after the above:



By the way, Naegi-kun...



Eh? What is it?



W-Well, it's just...



I know this is kind of "continuing the self-introduction thing," but I want to confirm something with you.



Continuing our self-introductions?



We kinda got cut off before, but I have a question I wanted to ask you. [Notice her nervousness in just bringing this fact up—because she's still entirely not sure whether she's right about recognizing Makoto: she's starting to second-guess herself. And, more so, because she's not sure if she has the right to ask something like where Makoto went to middle school.]

([Makoto] Something Maizono-san wants to ask me... Now I'm really curious...)



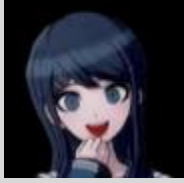
So... what do you want to ask?



Naegi-kun ...did you happen to go to Blackroot Junior High? Were you maybe...in class 2?



Y-Yeah, actually...I was.



I knew it!



I went there, too! I was in class 4, though. Do you remember me?



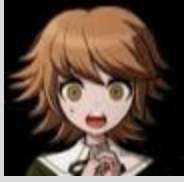
How could I not remember...

([Makoto] Even back in middle school, she was a celebrity with all kinds of "ultimates" surrounding her. How could I forget? Almost as surprising as her question was...that she remembered me! We'd never even talked to each other, but somehow she still knew who I was.

Of course, referring back at their very first introduction, Makoto recognized her much sooner since he didn't have as much going for him in that intermediary period. On another note, that "Now what?" he thinks is out of actual curiosity since he never expected her to want to converse with him. It should be obvious—but, just to be safe, he isn't getting annoyed. Especially since *he* approached *her*. His last thought makes it clear.

[Also, it's just my opinion, but I strongly believe Sayaka didn't even finish her first year before getting and accepting the offer to transfer into Hope's Peak. I'll explain why, later. As usual.]

Now anyhow, Chihiro Fujisaki thinks he recognizes Makoto too at first, though Makoto doesn't recognize him back. And when Makoto says this, Chihiro second-guesses himself right away, so his memories of Makoto aren't nearly as strong as Sayaka's and Makoto's. Goes without saying for Makoto's towards him as well:



"(Chihiro)...Huh? Maybe it's just my imagination, but... have we met before?"



"(Makoto) Um, I don't think so. We just met for the first time. Which is why I said 'nice to meet you'."



"Oh, yeah. Good point. Sorry..."



"Y-You don't have to apologize for that."



"Oh, yeah..."

Unlike Chihiro's, Sayaka's thoughts of Makoto are much stronger because of the circumstances surrounding them. After that profound effect his saving the crane had on her, she thought about him and tried to talk to him *every single day* after that. By her own admission. That was sometime in the first of their *three* years of junior high, so her connection was definitely on an entirely different level.

And let's not forget that Makoto's feelings weren't as strong as Sayaka's either (i.e., she wasn't on his mind 25/8), yet he still had a strong enough memory of Sayaka from their middle school years that, unlike with Chihiro, he could respond positively to her when she brought up an alleged past involving the two of them (the crane). And not be lying for whatever reason.

[Here's a brief and condensed plot reveal to help the next paragraphs make more sense for some. Skip it if you know the general backstory:

Two years ago, students are peacefully attending Hope's Peak.

A year ago, this current high school class (#78) is locked in this high school because of a tragic event many name the "Tragedy" where hundreds of millions throughout world were manipulated into rioting and warring in the name of causing despair. The school served as a lockout/bomb shelter from the events outside. Most other students/faculty were killed.

*The class had volunteered for this, knowing all exists would be sealed. But the instigators of these riots, the 16th student of the class—**Mukuro Ikusaba**—and the Despairs' ringleader, **Junko Enoshima**, purposefully hid among the 78th class of Hope's Peak: the class Makoto and Sayaka are among. They incapacitated the class a year into their new, sheltered lives. Then wiped their memories. All remaining faculty were killed.*

*The 78th class wakes up **two** years after entering Hope's Peak and **one** year after the Tragedy. They incorrectly believe they fell asleep/were knocked out for weeks at the most after first arriving. Then, with Mukuro impersonating Junko and pretending to suddenly awaken with amnesia as well, the real Junko activates Monokuma....]*

When Makoto and Sayaka actually meet in high school for the first time prior to Danganronpa (pre-Tragedy), ending up in the same class, we can't see them talking, of course. But nearly every picture of the pre-Tragedy high school shows the two close together or smiling at each other.

However, most of the evidence of Danganronpa Maizono's state of mind continuing from her pre-Tragedy days comes from the simple fact that the Maizono in Danganronpa is the exact same Maizono during the two years at Hope's Peak, except with the Ultimate Despair (Mukuro and Junko) hounding her. The only difference between the two regarding her relationship with Makoto is that it's marred by fear, and so she puts her hope for *surviving* in his hands.

[Until Monokuma introduces them murder-Motivational Videos that show them their deepest fears.]

The pre-mindwipe Sayaka has all the time in the world to get to know Makoto, so their relationship would've arguably been even stronger then. This, of course, all applies to Makoto the same way.

Even so, they manage to get very close to each other in Danganronpa and were probably going to be in a pre-Tragedy level relationship if they'd both survived, since that's kind of closeness was what they both wished for, after all. In Danganronpa, they're friends with mutual attractions for each other—but dire circumstances convince them not to let those attractions out. It's a bit like Romeo and Juliette, only very much less blatant.

It really does get close, though:

"(Sayaka) By the way, may I ask you a question, Naegi-kun?"

"(Makoto) You're suddenly so formal again... What's up?"

"I know it's a little rude to ask, but... Do you have a girlfriend, Naegi-kun?"

"Eh... Eh!? Why do you ask all of a sudden...!?"

"(Sayaka, worried he does) Why are you panicking? Does that mean you have one...?"

"N...no... I don't! I don't have a girlfriend yet!"

"...is there anyone you like?"

"W...wait a second! What's with you all of a sudden? Why are you asking me this?"

"(Sayaka, smiling) I was just curious, so I thought I'd ask. Was that wrong?"

"I don't think 'wrong' is the right word..."

"But it's just natural I'd be curious. I mean, you and I..."

(M...me and her...!?)

"...we're classmates stuck in the same situations, aren't we?"

(Classmates...)

"(Sayaka, more confidently) But... you're really more than that, Naegi-kun... We've surpassed being just classmates..."

(...surpassed being classmates!?)

"We're friends. Ever since junior high."

(Is that... so... Yeah, we're friends. Of course, that's how it is...)

"(Sayaka, with a nervous expression) ...aren't you going to ask me, Naegi-kun?"

"Eh? Ask you what?"

"Isn't it clear? Aren't you going to ask me whether I have a boyfriend or not?"

(Honestly, I do want to ask. But there's a part of me that doesn't...)

"(Makoto) I'm sure you're very popular with all sorts of men. It wouldn't be strange if you had one..."

"Bzzt! Wrong answer! I don't have a boyfriend! ...I mean, I'm too busy to have one. It's not just an excuse, it's true."

"So... Is there... someone you like...?"

"(Sayaka, blushing) ...tee hee, I wonder...? There is someone who... interests me..."

(Maizono-san looked straight into my eyes. It seemed to me her cheeks turned just a little red... ...Eh? She's looking straight at me?)

"But I should put those feelings aside for the time being. Our priorities should be on finding a way out of here."

"Y...yeah. You're right..."

"...Naegi-kun, let's leave this place together. You won't betray me, right?"

"O...of course I won't...! There's no way I'm going to betray you!"

"(Sayaka, nervous) Naegi-kun, I'm going to say something from the heart. I'm not faking it, it's what I truly feel..."

(smiling) I'm... really glad you're here with me, Naegi-kun..."

Whew...

...that was a novel. Let's read it again.



"(Sayaka) By the way, may I ask you a question, Naegi-kun?" / "By the way, may I ask you just one question?"

You can tell her tone changes more in the original dialogue. Obviously, she's trying to be extremely polite so as to not offend him in any way. With this subject being broached, her formal tone is out of nervousness.



"(Makoto) You're suddenly so formal again... What's up?"

Makoto, meanwhile, asks what she needs but had almost trailed off just before, wondering what her sudden change in tone could mean. And slightly embarrassed by it.



"I know it's a little rude to ask, but... Do you have a girlfriend, Naegi-kun?" / "And still so suddenly formal, I have to ask... Do you have a girlfriend?"

And she's still nervously trying to be polite. Like before, she's even politer in the original (underlined) than in the fanmade English translation. But the hesitant trailing is enough leftover context. What's only conveyed in the original, though, is her gathering her composure and—contrary to in the "crane" scene earlier (along with another scene)—accepting that she naturally slips into formality exclusive to him.



"Eh... Eh!? Why do you ask all of a sudden...!?"

As we can see, Makoto's actually still musing over her first line until the second question finally hits him. Then he's utterly shocked that she'd even ask that. Because of their *status difference* (and not some stupid, contrived reason like most stories give, e.g., "you're so pretty") he doesn't and never expected her to have *any* interest in him on *that* level. Recall that in their middle school days and in their first Danganronpa exchange, for the same reason, he didn't expect her to ever want to converse with him at all.



"(Sayaka, worried he does) Huh? Are you embarrassed? Does that mean you do...?"

And she misreads him, since she's earnestly not trying to *read* him (psychically). She mistakes his embarrassment at "someone like her" bothering to ask him "something like that" for a sign that he has a girlfriend and didn't want to talk about it. It's not sensible to think that way; but she suddenly, *visibly* looks nervous here because she's now, clearly and unintentionally, assuming the worst.



"N-no, I don't! A girlfriend...? Not at all!"

This response is interesting because three things have occurred: one is that he's seeing Sayaka worried and trying to deescalate the situation. She's not reading his mind, of course, and they haven't really had that much time to take off as a more experienced couple would have. So, there's some confusion here. He's also suspecting that she *might* be trying to railroad him into admitting he doesn't for her sake, if only because of her nervous face and tone. But because of how forcefully he denies her

assumption, he makes it sound like he's not interested in such a thing at all.



"...is there anyone you like?" / Then... do you at least have a crush on someone?

After a short pause, she decides to nervously ask the above. Her expression actually becomes even more nervous here (not exaggerating: the images show this) because of how vehemently he denied it. She really doesn't want to put him off spending time with her in general, so she's asking in a softer, less certain [that continuing's a good idea] tone now: from "girlfriend" to "anyone you like". It's a second attempt; a clever, less direct approach.



"W...wait a second! What's with you all of a sudden? Why are you asking me this?"

But now, look at his steady expression, the same as before. Makoto's obviously embarrassed. Partly because he doesn't have anyone and considers himself a loser (even though the way he said that actually worries her), and partly because of what he thinks she's getting at. And how strange it seems to think it's the truth.

But even though he thinks she *might* be interested in him, obvious considering the time they spent together, he can never imagine it as a fact. He's not mad or flustered, but he's having a hard time processing how she's conversing with him—and he ends up accidentally sounding rude, hardly even noticing.



"(Sayaka, smiling) I was just curious, so I thought I'd ask. Was that wrong/bad?"

But Sayaka notices. Seeing that he's embarrassed now, she smiles to make things less awkward, giving him a simple, innocuous half-honest answer for the same reason. Notice, "half-honest," as in, "she doesn't state, 'I like you,' as her reason".

She's prepared to stop the curiosity, though, if she sees it's too soon to bother asking him. And she's asking that innocent, disarming rhetorical question at the end *because* she's prepared to stop. Obviously, it's not to mock him, going by what we've just seen. But because she doesn't want to outright admit that she fears she's irritating him...

...but if he replies affirmatively, whether he's actually irritated or not: "Yeah, that's usually not something you'd just ask all of a sudden." / "Yeah; I'm not that comfortable answering that...."?

Then that's definitely a sign enough (to her) for her to drop the topic. She doesn't want to invade. And because she believes she's not skilled at making small talk (which is what this is, at least right now—and she's right) due to never having had free-time outside of work, this would reinforce the impression that she's screwing something up in trying to speak with him. All the inner-complexities of this line are concealed by her smile, which she's earnestly putting on to calm him down, despite hoping he'll keep talking to her.



"I don't think 'wrong' is the right word..." / "I-It's not that it's bad..."

And now Makoto's trying to avoid offending Sayaka just as she was trying not to offend him right before. He tells her that he didn't think it was "wrong" of her to be asking him this...but he trails off, unable to think of a good excuse (or the best way to say his excuse). Those excuses are two quotes up: that he really didn't think he was "worth" having that conversation with someone like her.



"But it's just natural I'd be curious. I mean, you and I..."

Though Sayaka senses from his tone that he's not getting irritated and continues for him. She doesn't even let him finish finding the words to justify himself—she wants to cut off his doubt about her and himself before it can surface. So she's thinking of saying *it*...



(M...me and her...!?)

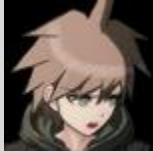
...and it seems to have worked. He's thinking too...and moreover, getting excited...



"...we're classmates stuck in the same situations, aren't we?" / "Because we're classmates, going through the same thing together."

...but she can't. With another pause, she manages to avoid confessing. Naturally, the "...we're classmates" line makes no sense as a follow-up to, "Do you have a girlfriend?" Their "same situations" aren't those of two hopeless romantics—she asked Makoto, after all, whether he had a girlfriend. She didn't know. So, this line was simply a hasty justification she thought up on the spot to avoid saying the more natural, "I like you" that she almost managed to confess.

And as clumsy as it was, she actually meant "classmates" as in "middle school classmates" since Hope's Peak is proving to be some nonsense at the moment and there's nothing special about their relationship here. However, her unintended blunder was in failing to remember here that they *were* in the same middle school *graduating class*, but they *weren't* in the same exact *classroom*. So, it stings *that* much more for Makoto to hear. The worst part is she doesn't even notice.



(Classmates...)

And again, just look at his expression. Right in front of her. She doesn't need mindreading: he's obviously extremely disappointed by her reply...though deep down, he might not have *truly* expected her to just confess her feelings like that.



"(Sayaka, more confidently) But... you're really more than that, Naegi-kun... We've surpassed being just classmates..." / "Although...that's not really all there is to it... We've surpassed being just classmates..."

This time, she's a bit more in control and goes with into the next sentence with more confidence. She's visibly trying to push herself on. After all, she can tell from his silence he's discouraged. He's only thinking; not speaking. Even though she avoids the topic again here, she's not trying to tease him: she's actually trying to be more *genuine* now. Almost painfully so, to be honest. So, her expression changes again.





(...surpassed being classmates!?)

But he, for some reason, expects her to confess again. Very lame to rely on a woman to get your hopes up. Oh well—I admittedly don't know why he doesn't confess for himself, his lack of self-confidence aside. Probably because he's still not completely sure as to how she actually feels right now. We see that many, many times.



"We're friends. Ever since junior high." / "We're friends. We've been friends since middle school, in a way."

She still can't bring herself to confess, though. Obviously, she's repressing what she really wants to say: she and he *both* know they damned well *weren't* friends in junior high. As much as she wishes that was the case.



(Is that... so... Yeah, we're friends. Of course, that's how it is...)

That's why I said "deep down, he didn't really expect her to confess" earlier. As we can see, he's still discouraged. But he expected her not to have "those" kind of feelings for him, so to him it was a little pointless to get excited over something so obviously impossible. You could say he's viewing Sayaka in this romanticized way that doesn't apply to how she really is as a person. Whereas most Sayakers themselves (in fiction and real life) erroneously view her on a black-and-white moral spectrum.



"(Sayaka, with a nervous expression) ...aren't you going to ask me, Naegi-kun?"

Well, she realizes attempt to cheer him up failed (since she's bad at talking personally this way, which she says later). After a short, silent moment, she starts to get worried again. And the only thing she feels she can do, since Makoto won't simply ask her (damned brick), is outright ask him to ask her. There's a better way to go about all of this—but, as she said and we see, she's not good with casual conversations. Regardless, with how silent he is, it's a wonder she isn't insulted *herself*, but she likely knows how Makoto's feeling from his easily-readable face. Making her feel even worse.



"Eh? Ask you what?"

Makoto's clueless and nervous. Not surprising since he was just led to believe she wasn't interested in him on that level. They're both not used to this. Like, at all. (And after that rollercoaster, there's no way he could be predicting the following question....)

On the other hand...



"No...not "what"... Aren't you going to ask me whether I have a boyfriend or not?"

There it goes.

By the way, she still looks nervous here, fearing that he isn't interested in that subject or her. Or that she just now ruined it if he *were*. She's growing anxious to the point where her formality is starting to slip. But, even though I can't say for sure, I wouldn't be surprised if she were both nervous and frustrated at the same time by now.



(Honestly, I do want to ask. But there's a part of me that doesn't...)

"On the other hand..." he *did* anticipate her asking him what she just did. He still doesn't know *why* she's posing that question; he's nervous for a different reason he must now confront head-on.

He *wants* to ask because he wants her to say, "No; I don't have one," so they *might* have a chance. He *doesn't* want to ask because he doesn't want to feel embarrassed and played with if she happens to say, "Yes; I do have one." After Sayaka's past remarks, the latter might be understandable. But she *isn't* playing around with him.



"(Makoto) I'm sure you're very popular with all sorts of men. It wouldn't be strange if you had one..."

And so, tentatively, he answers. Just to confirm his worries.

And this sums up how he's been thinking of her all this time. From middle school, or even earlier, up

till now. While superficially admiring and lusting after her, he never considered it possible that Sayaka wasn't anywhere but in her own top-level world of success and fame. He's not even explicitly talking about just romance here: apparently, the fact that she's so popular means she's around more guys *in general* who are more interesting than he thinks he could ever be. Ironically, she definitely *was* for all we know, but she most definitely didn't find it as privately "enjoyable" as he believes. "Romance" certainly wasn't a factor. And compared to *him*, "interest" wasn't either.



"Bzzt! Wrong answer! I don't have a boyfriend! ...I mean, I'm too busy to have one. It's not just an excuse, it's true."

Now Sayaka's smiling again: since he never said he didn't care about her status. Neither of them have someone they're with, so everything seems perfect and she can happily tell him the above. She's not embarrassed at all because "it's true" and because she's really into him *anyway*. Not some other guy. Moreover, she can clearly tell now that he's still of the "two different worlds" mentality. But she's naturally hoping she can straighten that out.



"So... Is there... someone *you* like...?"

Makoto sees an opening. He's genuinely curious about who Sayaka likes, now that she replied that way, and so happily too. "Maybe," he thinks, "there's a chance...?" But notice how their emotional states and lines of thinking are pretty much moving parallel here while still being completely contrast to one another. *That's* great writing to me. They aren't just on two completely different subjects, but they aren't just outright expressing their feelings for each other. All we have are these little, awkward signs. Indications that they'll only recognize once they recognize they both have feelings for each other.



"(blushing) ...tee hee, I wonder...? There is someone who... interests me..."

...she's hoping to help ease his feelings of inferiority. Which is why, after all this time, she's not surprised to hear what she just heard. *Now*, Makoto finally pushed the question on his own. She's not nervous at all anymore, now that he's expressed a genuine interest (notice the stressed "you" above). And so, she lets go of her nerves and starts blushing at him uncontrollably—but she still can't bring herself to say it. Sayaka already knows that she can't *not* clue Makoto in on her feelings because she's blushing right in front of him, so her not wanting him to know just yet apparently isn't the issue. Plus, she brought the topic up and tried to get it this far in the first place.

In fact, at this point, she *expects* him to read *her*.



(Maizono-san looked straight into my eyes. It seemed to me her cheeks turned just a little red...)



(...Eh? She's looking straight at me?)

And he does. Until a *moment* ago, he was thinking it just couldn't be possible for her to want to try things out with him. Like it was some kind of pathetic fantasy, not even worth entertaining. In middle school he thought she didn't even notice him. Honestly, he still can't quite believe what he's seeing.

Now it turns out she has *feelings* for him. *Honest feelings*.



"But I should put those feelings aside for the time being. Our priorities should be on finding a way out of here."

That's practical, of course. But now they both know she's "interested" in him anyway. Obviously, she doesn't care if he knows for sure now. And just for the record, he was awkwardly rubbing his cheek just then—not awkwardly pointing at himself.

And for the record, she's now imagining escaping this place with him...and her future with him. You may have noticed it (or you will), that Sayaka always gazes off when she's intently reflecting on something positive. Like her dreams.



"Y...yeah. You're right..."

Well, he's still a little disappointed, but he understands at this point how she feels. Even without mindreading, she knows from his earlier disappointment, and from even before this scene, how he feels about her.

This reaction is a little different from those prior in that it instead conveys—that he realizes she has a point. He has to put his feelings aside too. And moreover, her words recalled him from the fantasy he was just beginning to indulge in. He's reminded of how serious and dire the situation they're

in...*actually is*. So the only thing left to do is get the heck out so they can actually *have* a future.



"...Naegi-kun, let's leave this place together. You won't betray me, right?"

...a future "together". And if you want a summary of everything I've been saying about Sayaka's *trust* in Makoto (versus everyone else) so far...



"O...of course I won't...! There's no way I'm going to betray you!"

But Makoto, not familiar with just how brutal her background is, gets taken aback by that statement. She also hasn't told him yet that he's the only one she can trust, so he doesn't realize just how serious she is with using the word "betray" even then. Either way, he has no reason to think she's insinuating anything, even with the entire "Murder Game" thing looming over them; but that plea really came out of nowhere to him.



(nervous) Naegi-kun, I'm going to say something from the heart. I'm not faking it, it's what I truly feel...



(smiling) I'm... really glad you're here with me, Naegi-kun..."

First, I should say that this "nervousness" indicated doesn't apply to anything romantic. As in, she's still not concerned about whether she can express her crush on him, and how. After all...it's like before. He already knows what the deal is. And she knows that he knows. That was more or less what she'd wanted to let him know from the start here.

But here's what the nervousness stems from:

Notice how this is the second time this very scene that Sayaka's wanted to assure Makoto she wasn't being dishonest with him. Or, more emphatically, "fucking" with him. And I don't mean physically. Unlike many women, Sayaka's come from a background as to where she's now wary of anyone being dishonest with *her*. So, since she views Makoto as the one person who's different, she wants to assure to him—even when he doesn't ask or understand it—that she's not like those other people either. Though, that unfortunately ends up being more or less untrue.

As we see, this subject of being completely honest with him from the bottom of her heart—makes her rather nervous just by the nature of the past negative emotions and "*distrust*" she's evoking within herself. And she's surprisingly good at suppressing that spirit, considering how long she's had it. What we see as well is...at times, she's still not totally sure she can trust even him. But for her sake as much as his, she wants to give him that chance anyway.

In any case, she's not lying to him *yet*. She *never* overtly lies to him until the *room switch* I'll go over later. Yet right as she's nervously about to tell him what she always wanted to, she decides to tell him—how glad she is to be with him. This seems like a physical deal at first; but for Sayaka, his being with her is just as well an emotional one. Emotionally-speaking and in the context of...what's *going on* in the school right now, it's easier for them both if she's not outright like we'd want her to be. They both already know how the other feels. At least for the moment, it's more appropriate to hold off distractions and focus on surviving until they can finally, genuinely enjoy each other.

Let me know if I read a little too deeply anywhere. (Although I didn't.)

So, first off (yes, "first off"), in this scene, she's referring to Makoto when she blushes. Seriously, she's staring right into his eyes. And *on purpose*, at that. The only reason she doesn't confess is that it's not the right setting, but it's evident to Makoto by the end that she's more than just "...interested" in him. It's also evident that she wants him to know this since, I've got to repeat, she bothered to set the entire scenario up. (Also, this is the only isolated scene where I'd accept the concept of "the mask," even though that's just her awkwardly smiling after failed confessions in a desperate attempt to not destroy the mood she'd been trying to establish.)

In high school before the memory wipe, we see that Makoto and Sayaka appear so close because this element of despair doesn't exist, meaning she could admit her feelings without worrying about the killing game and being trapped in a high school. Note as well that Makoto's disappointed when she even *hints* at not having feelings for him, so we sure enough know he cares through that as well. If *nothing* else. But we already knew from general in-game context, Sayaka's introductory scene, and the *Makoto Naegi Secret File* short story (below) that he initially loves her on at least an aforementioned superficial level:

"(Think about something pleasant,) he told himself in an attempt to take his mind off the task at hand. The first thing that came to mind was that night's TV schedule. Someone he used to go to school with—someone he knew very well, but who did not know him—was supposedly making an appearance on a music program airing that evening. He had been looking forward to watching it for several days.

(*Man, I can't wait,*) he thought—and in that very same moment, he heard the sound of something snapping and almost lost his balance." [Very distracted.]

...the question is then, where does she find the time to confess to Makoto back then in the two years before the memory wipe? Did she *even* confess? We don't know for sure, but we can assume that she did based on that last huge scene alone occurring in spite of Monokuma's actions.

So right; this is just an assumption. I'd rather operate on the assumption that they did confess, but it doesn't really matter. Sometimes confessions can be cliché; if Sayaka survived with Makoto at the end of Danganronpa without saying another thing about "boyfriends" or "girlfriends", I'd still fully expect them to end up with each other, and it would've still been realistic if they had. Maybe even more than if she brought up those rather light terms again, considering the circumstances of the world ending around them (The Tragedy).

But since Sayaka *did* want to confess that she was at least interested in Makoto before because of the event with the crane, that and another, deeper confession would've probably been told to him early on regardless of whoever was around—because we know she viewed this as her miraculous second chance (compared to her trying and failing in middle school) that she didn't want to give up. Because she *did* say, "But since I always had so many people around me, we ended up graduating without saying a word. ***That was one of my biggest regrets.***"

Sayaka's no airhead. No one in the first Danganronpa is, really. But more than that, Sayaka's a very *thoughtful* person. What she'd just said takes into account never knowing her mother, rarely ever seeing her father, being lonely at home almost every evening and night for years and years, whether she had friends at school or not, growing up poor, having to see her father even less to become a successful idol, giving up the relaxed home and school life she had to compete in the industry, regretfully not wanting to or not being able to return to her former life, doing a number of things she found distasteful and immoral to get to the top and stay on top, almost never having any time to herself, realizing she's bad at conversations, encountering who knows how many instances of deceit and betrayal and greed and ill-will there, having to leave her acquaintances in Nekuro High behind to attend Hope's Peak, having to leave her idol friends behind for the same reason—suddenly being trapped in Hope's Peak with a bunch of strangers, desperately wondering whether her life's work has vanished, being urged to kill these people she doesn't have any problem with, and still not knowing where her father and idol friends are.

And so, it's really telling that among the *worst* of those to her is *not getting the chance to speak with Makoto*.

It's **really** telling. In fact, I would bet money that the event with the crane was the first thing she brought up when she saw him in high school.

...wait, it was! And we see it in *Danganronpa*, which literally resets their high school days after the memory wipe! Funny thing that; and then, she almost confesses to him in the very midst of suffering in

that school.

Well, regarding that "crane" conversation, the only explanations for how it went down the first time would be she either made time to see him regardless of the crowd or she got "lucky" and managed to catch him alone. Genuinely speaking, it was likely the first honest conversation she had with *anyone* at Hope's Peak the first time, and that would've been with her memories intact and with hundreds of other students and faculty attending.

The fact that they were actually in the same class this time probably helped her to have an easier time seeing him, whatever the means. As Makoto said about her after waking up from Mondo's hit, "Even back in middle school, she was a celebrity with all kinds of "ultimates" surrounding her." Meaning even in middle school, the top *high school* figures were crowding around her too (it had to be high schoolers from Hope's Peak seeing her, as he wasn't in Hope Peak yet and he didn't remember his first years there). Though that's not at all surprising considering she was world famous, it helps to give us a picture of just how hard it would've been for her to ever find some time alone, let alone some time for her and Makoto together.

Also, because the above conversation is before her watching the "motivational video," because they were close in the past at Hope's Peak (the "déjà vu effect," if you will), and because she was so severely obsessed with him long before he ever even suspected she so much as *noticed* him, there's absolutely no reason for her to be faking those lines. None whatsoever.

You also can't fake blushing, as stated. Not in this context. She's doing it uncontrollably. And she's doing it throughout most of the conversation, shown in in-game images, only she makes it even more prominent towards the end. Sayaka's attitude does change after watching the video, that's very true. But that's another story entirely, and many people wrongly claim that Sayaka never felt anything towards him before Danganronpa against all reason and common sense. It's simply not true.

If it's any surprise, though, I'm still not finished.

See, Mukuro has feelings of jealousy towards Sayaka because of their shared interest in Makoto, before and after the memory wipe. Mukuro could never admit it and get close to Makoto, and the pictures of her outside of Sayaka and Makoto's A and B group support the unfortunate scenario (along with Mukuro's general shyness). Aside from that, she makes a few subliminal jabs at Makoto over her while she's able to in her disguise as Junko:

"(To Makoto about her "photoshopped" magazine images) Hey, don't be so surprised—everyone is doing it. It's not like they had to do heavy modification in my case... These days, editing the photos in a magazine is just the way things are done!

I mean, shouldn't you be even more surprised about a certain singing princess? They're always making her eyes so big and her skin so ceramic, after all!"

"Is... that so?"

([Makoto—he'll get over it] I feel like all my dreams are shattered.)



"(Mukuro; replace the "~" with "... " and it's apparent she's cracking...) Na~e~gi~!



Ohh, is it just the two of you right now? Are you on a da~te?"



"(Makoto) Wh-Whaaaat?!"



"Damn, Makoto! I never woulda guessed, but you're a total player, huh?"



"(Maizono, blushing) No, no, it's nothing like that. I'm his assistant!"

([Makoto] Sh-She denied it so nonchalantly... I kind of... oof...)



"[Mukuro] Huh? His assistant? What is that, like some new kinda roleplay thing?"



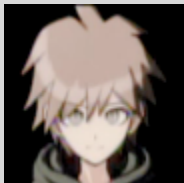
Whatever. It's not in my nature to ridicule what other people do in their spare time.



Bye! Enjoy yourselves! *leaves*



"(Makoto) ..."



"(Makoto) L-Let's just head to the gym already!"



"(Sayaka, blushing even more) Whatever you say."

First off, it's highly implied that Sayaka's seeing through Mukuro's act here, which is why she tries to play the "assistant" card. She's not seeing through *everything*, of course: she doesn't know who "Junko" really is here. But she knows that Mukuro's holding back feelings she has for Makoto. She does have good "mindreading" intuitions after all; but there's more to it than just calling it that, which will come in another section.

More to the point, that "assistant" remark Sayaka makes is *intended* to assuage those feelings Mukuro has, but Mukuro's too frustrated and has to go before she blows her cover or otherwise says something to reveal her jealousy—something she's not supposed to be saying.

Also, the "roleplay" remark Mukuro throws out was supposed to be a fetishistic insult aimed at her in particular—but after she leaves (presumably to cry in her room), the two just start thinking dirty about each other. Sayaka most of all. From what we see, she *presumably* cares about how Mukuro's feelings for Makoto...

...but not that much. Because, why should she? She knows Mukuro intended an insult, but it aroused her anyway. Sayaka, by her very nature, wouldn't deprive herself of someone/something she cares about for the sake of someone *else's* jealousy. With her bitterness, Mukuro brought those reactions on herself, regardless. Luckily, she'd already left.

And I'm still going. Let's not forget the abundance of times Sayaka states she depends on Makoto to stay gathered while they're all trapped. Let's also not forget how close she wants to be to him because of how much safer he makes her feel. Can we do a quick compilation? I won't list everything, I promise:

"(Sayaka) Umm, Naegi-kun...? If you have time, there's something I'd like to tell you."

"(Makoto) W...what is it? You sound so formal all of a sudden..." [Along with the crane scene, here's the second instance.]

"W-well it's just... I guess that was kind of formal, but..."

"I have really come to depend on you, Naegi-kun."

"Eh?"

"I think I can become really strong, just because you're here for me. If you were not here, I would probably be overwhelmed with anxiety... Whatever it is we got involved with is scary, but because you are here I feel somehow... safe."

"(Sayaka) Anyway, I'm really glad... that I know somebody here. Talking to you has made me feel a lot better about all this... You're amazing, Makoto!"

"N-No, I'm really not... I'm nothing at all compared to you 'ultimates'."

"But *you're* the one that helped me find my courage again. Not any of those "ultimate" students."

"Thank you for saying that..."

"And to thank you for helping me out, I'm going to become your Ultimate Assistant!"

"Huh? My assistant?"

"Yup! I'm your assistant now! I'm going to help you out as much as I can, so let's get out of here together!"

[Sound familiar?]

"(Sayaka) Hmhm. You know..."

"(Makoto) Huh? What's up?"

"I feel like I really have become your personal assistant, don't you agree? I may not be the best assistant in the world, but I'll give it everything I've got."

"(Makoto) When the time comes... I'll protect you."

"(Sayaka) You... will? Thank... you... If you'll be my ally, I guess I don't need a weapon after all, huh?"

"(Makoto) Sayaka...?"

"(Sayaka) Please... help me..."

(Her voice was small and shaky.)

"Why...? Why is this happening to me? To kill, or be killed... I just can't take this anymore...!"

"Sayaka..."

...

(Finally, she raised her face up from my chest. She looked at me with those big, wet eyes of hers.)

"(Sayaka) Can I... can I believe what you said?"

"Huh?"

"That you'll help me get out? No matter what it takes...?"

"A-Absolutely!"

"Makoto... You're the only one I can trust. So please... No matter what happens, please always be there for me. I need you on my side..."

"Huh? O-Of course I'll be there for you! No matter what, I'm always on your side. I mean... ...you *are* my assistant, after all."

"... Thank you, Makoto. Hearing you say that, I feel like I can keep going. I can get through this... as long as you're here with me. Like you said, I'm your assistant."

Hey, hey—let's not forget Makoto's side:

[(Makoto) Being told something like that directly from Maizono-san...

I'm happy, but also a little embarrassed.)

"[(Makoto) I feel the same thing. You're really saving me by being here, Maizono-san."

"(Sayaka) Really!? Heh heh. You flatter me."

(Maizono-san's smile... That wonderful, calming smile... I am not flattering her at all. That smile is really my savior.)

(Maizono-san laughed again. The closer we get, that smile makes me stronger. ...that's how I felt.)

"(Sayaka) I don't see anything else suitable for self-defense in here..."

"(Makoto) I... I think even if you're worried, we probably won't need anything for a while. And also, if the time comes when we do.... I... I will protect you..."

"You... will? Thank... you... If you'll be my ally, I guess I don't need a weapon after all, huh?"

(Maizono-san said that and laughed. She flashed that wonderful smile of hers... Her calming smile. Whenever I see that smile, I really feel like I can do anything.)

"(Sayaka) But here's what I think. I'm just like that crane right now. I'm being saved by you, Naegi-kun. It may just be my intuition, but I really feel that way."

[(Makoto) I'm... saving Maizono-san?]

"(Makoto) I'll do my best, then. I don't want it to be just an intuition. If there's anything I can do, I'll do it."

"I really believe it. I mean, my intuitions are very strong. It's because I can read minds.

Heh heh. Just kidding."

(Maizono-san laughed again. The closer we get, that smile makes me stronger. ...that's how I felt.)

[(Makoto) Her laugh was like the sound of bells tinkling. She had a wonderful smile. The kind that calms your heart when you see it.)

"(Sayaka) But you're the only one here who managed to calm me down. All the other "Super High-school Level"s couldn't do that."

"(Makoto) I'll do my best to help you so we can get out of here together!"

[(Makoto) Hearing Maizono-san say that... Suddenly, I felt like I could do anything!]

"(Sayaka) It really feels like I'm your assistant, don't you think? I may be unreliable, but I'll try doing my best!"

[(Makoto) You're not unreliable, Maizono-san. You're truly the most comforting assistant I can think of.)

([Makoto] She started giggling even louder. That somehow mysterious smile of hers made my heart grow calmer. Her smile was the nicest smile I'd ever seen...)

So, I guess we should probably stop with the quotes here. For now.

One thing worth mentioning is that Makoto also (gameplay-wise and in lore) won't go out and spend time with anyone else in the school until he spends time with Sayaka at least twice. The second time being a free-time event that's not directly related to the main plot.

I've met a lot of people who think that ruins her character because the game's "forcing" you to like her, despite her and Makoto's relationship having already begun long before the game began. If you don't like Naezono, that's fine...but it's only one stupid free-time event. If you hate that one event enough to judge her entire character, you don't *deserve* to talk about either her *or* Makoto in the first place. (I'm also going to bring this up again to poke more fun at the people who judge her based on something this petty.)

And now, on to School Mode. This part of Naezono will be a little difficult to explain, since I only want facts and don't deal with non-canon material here. If I do use uncertain points, I'll explain why I'm using them and how they can be canon, but I won't lean heavily on them compared to other information.

Most everything in School Mode isn't even close to canon since it's an alternate universe from Danganronpa. Where the students are kidnapped as before, but where Monokuma orders them to cooperate and make him backup robots instead of kill each other. Therefore, the Killing Game does not happen. Whatever similarities occur between the two games, for the most part, involve breaking the fourth wall.

No matter the case, though—the mode really is non-canon....

...however, some things stated *in* School Mode are general statements that can hold up *outside* of School Mode. Things such as a young Sayaka and her dad sometimes playing Othello together. Whenever they have time.

And so, on the next page, I'll measure the importance and validity of Naezono—Sayaka Maizono and Makoto Naegi's relationship—using this side branch of the Danganronpa canon.

"For the anti-Naezono crowd, and general character depth (School Mode)"

Since only canon events will be used, that means no School Mode ending. That ending between them literally involves them recalling the main story, which I don't even want to get into. And fortunately don't, because it's a non-canon scene.

But other than that, there are still things inside School Mode to support Naezono and expand her character yet some more. Before we get into specific aspects of their School Mode interactions, let's just talk about the general reactions Sayaka gives at the end of her dates with Makoto. I don't consider these canon because I don't consider the School Mode dates canon, but they still might help some people gain a little more insight about her general personality.

—If you **"had a really good time"**: *"I had so much fun today! Thank you! But...it's more than just 'fun.'* When I'm with you, I feel like...I can relax. What about you, Makoto? I really hope you feel the same way. Well, please invite me out again sometime. It's a promise, okay? Anyway, we should probably get back."



So, right: I'm not going to take these reactions too literally, as they aren't canon. But I'll explain the intention behind them regardless. Here, we see an in-character Maizono thanking Makoto as she probably would've in any other scenario. The interesting part here is when she says she feels she can relax. That statement can be taken in a few ways:

- 1) She's expressing her attraction to Makoto and how she's more than just amused by him when she goes out with him. Her blushing a second later (and many other events) support this. Also, the fact that she's not good at coming out and can't even come out in her School Mode ending. Again, not saying every relationship needs a clean confession, but the pausing as she thinks of a euphemism is a good giveaway that she's either too nervous to admit her feelings outright or doesn't think it's the right setting. Lastly, the "What about you, Makoto? I really hope you feel the same way. Well, please invite me out again sometime. It's a promise, okay?" should sum up how she feels pretty nicely: otherwise, she wouldn't care and she certainly wouldn't be blushing. She trusts him to respond in kind and come see her again. The whole, "It's a promise, okay," aspect reinforces the inherent *cynicism* in her personality as well. The very slight seeds of *distrust* that just barely show through even *after* they spend time together.
- 2) She's stating that Makoto's presence allows her to experience the peace of mind she never really got to experience when she was busy idolizing. This can go with #1, but it alone isn't implying attraction. Here, she's stating that she feels comfortable around Makoto because she doesn't have to constantly have her guard up around him; and that's not something she can say about anyone else except maybe her no-show father who didn't seem to be much of a factor in her life by the point where she's in her career and has started cynically worrying about others.
- 3) She's stating that Makoto's presence allows her to experience the peace of mind she otherwise wouldn't be having because of the situation they're in. Sayaka's character is a tragic one partly because she got hit much harder than anyone else when Monokuma began his Mutual Killing Game. Though he *wasn't* singling her out to mentally break her, it's almost as though that were his intention.

I'll explain why later, of course. But for now, it's just important to realize that when Sayaka's spending time with Makoto, she usually isn't wallowing in her own fear, dread, and regret. And that allows her to...well, "*relax*" a little. Though that word would be severely downplaying her emotional state in the main story, where she admitted she couldn't sleep. "Relax" applies more so in this case specifically because it's stated in the much less severe School Mode, but that's part of the reason why I don't consider this true canon. Nonetheless, they're still in danger in School Mode, so her statement's not irrational.

But I think you can see how, for this general reaction, they considered every aspect of Sayaka's personality when dealing with her dialogue. She acts exactly how I would've expected her to act in the main game. She even has her nervous/worried expression when essentially pleading for him to ask her out again, appealing to his trust. And notice how she still has that expression when she abruptly says they "should probably get back". She obviously doesn't want to go back but knows she has to (because she's worried of Monokuma/the others), and she's worried whether he's alright with her suggesting it.

-If you "had a pretty good time": "Thanks for showing me around today! Just spending time with someone helps me recharge, you know? If you want, feel free to invite me out again. And if I have some free time, I'll do the same thing. So, do you want to head back?"



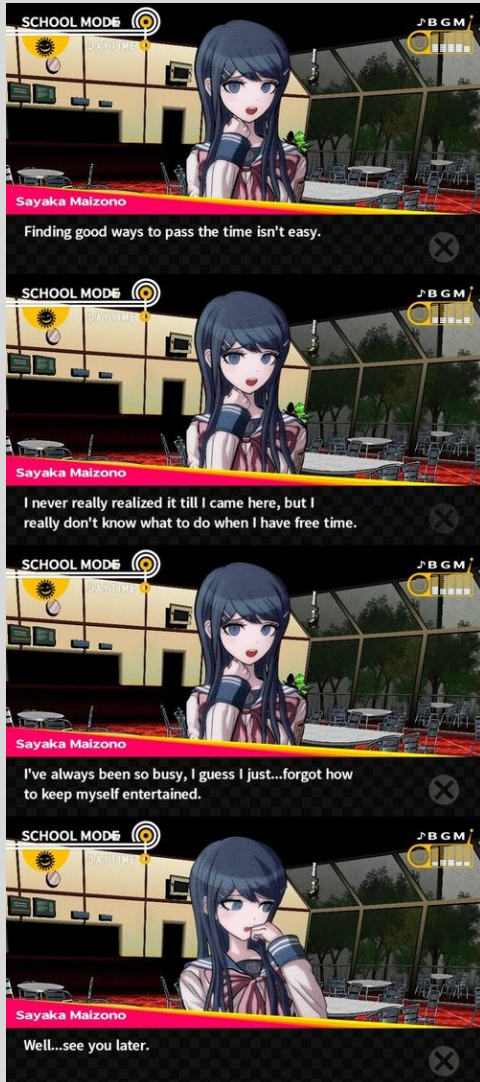
Even though this is still considered a good reaction—well, a "pretty good" reaction—I don't consider this to reflect Naezono. This *isn't* how Sayaka would normally act around Makoto: if you read it carefully, it's more how she'd reply to someone like Aoi Asahina if Aoi spent time with her. She's certainly being polite and grateful—her sentiments are probably not *made up*. But since School Mode is so contradictory, it *might* be a practiced line she doesn't mean; and even if it isn't, her feelings are still *neutral* and *reserved* either way.

In this case, with Makoto, she's giving him a general, lukewarm answer and doesn't even hint at anything other than simply enjoying the couple hours they spent together. She even says "spending time with someone" instead of "spending time with you," so she's definitely not taking it as more than two friends hanging out, if that. And she has no problem "asking" Makoto to ask her out again, unlike earlier (moreover, notice how bluntly she goes ahead and says she'll do the same "if she has time," when she normally has trouble talking to Makoto on that level—so she's likely less sincere about how much she enjoyed his company here and looks forward to it later).

Thing is, this actually makes sense in hindsight: since Makoto didn't stand out with her or to her, you can't really consider this reaction "Naezono" *anyhow*. Let alone the fact that School Mode is already non-canon. Then, of course, "Do you want to head back?"

No...that's not her. Not with him.

-If you **"didn't have much fun"**: *"Finding good ways to pass the time isn't easy. I never really realized it till I came here, but I don't really know what to do when I have free time. I've always been busy, I guess I just...forgot how to keep myself entertained. Well...see you later."*



I'm not sure why I'm even going to do the negative reactions, but I am. Probably because I'm a...well, I already said it somewhere up there. I won't skimp out on them, though, and this one is an interesting take on how I feel Sayaka would react to Makoto if Makoto screwed up with her in the main game.

By that, I mean, I feel this is how she would react, but their canon relationship never resulted in reactions like these from either of them, even when things were going iffy with the "boyfriend/girlfriend" talk. Sayaka, in canon, has never shown that she could bring herself to not treasure Makoto's company. The only time that even slightly changes is when she unintentionally wears herself out over the stress of the Killing Game, ruining their moments.

Anyway, this reaction is interesting because Sayaka's making the same excuse she made in the main game about not being good at making time for herself because she's always busy. In the main game, however, she makes that excuse regarding starting and holding casual conversations without a solid purpose, as she isn't good at small talking—and there, Makoto helps her find something to talk about with him.

Here, Makoto completely messed up. Somehow. And she knows it but doesn't want to come out and say it, because she doesn't want to hurt his feelings. So, what she does is blame herself for not being interesting, while also not bringing up the fact that the date was a failure. You can see her try to make up an explanation to better justify this when she pauses before saying she "forgot how to keep herself entertained".

The interesting thing about this "lie" is that although she really feels Makoto's at least partially responsible for the date, she really *is* in fact blaming herself for being a bad date, meaning she's actually telling a half-truth. We know this because she not only gave this excuse earlier in the canon, and not only because she knows she wasn't able to save the date with her less-than-stellar social skills around Makoto—but because she messes up after pausing to explain: she states "myself".

"Myself": A mistake that implies she was only thinking about *herself* when she was around Makoto on their date, which is never the case in School Mode or the main game. And then, when she realizes that she messed up trying to talk to him again, and realizes she doesn't know how to continue without making things worse, she nervously looks away before excusing herself.

Actually, I find it kind of funny that after an awkward silence of who knows how long, Sayaka suddenly opens up by trying to blame herself before things get worse, unintentionally insulting Makoto in the process, *then* tries to fix that but, not knowing what to say, excuses herself after yet another awkward pause before things get really worse. I don't think she'd intentionally try to hurt *anyone* in the class over a bad outing; but considering she's nervous around and only specifically cares about *Makoto* on a personal level, it makes sense that she'd react this way. Ironically, Makoto probably could've salvaged this outcome if he said *something* while she was speaking here.

But that's...not his style. As we've seen.

Rather ironic how hopeless the "Ultimate Hope" is with her.

-If you "don't think things went very well at all": *"I just feel so drained... Are you not feeling well? I'm not feeling well. I'm gonna go lay down for a while. Goodbye..."*

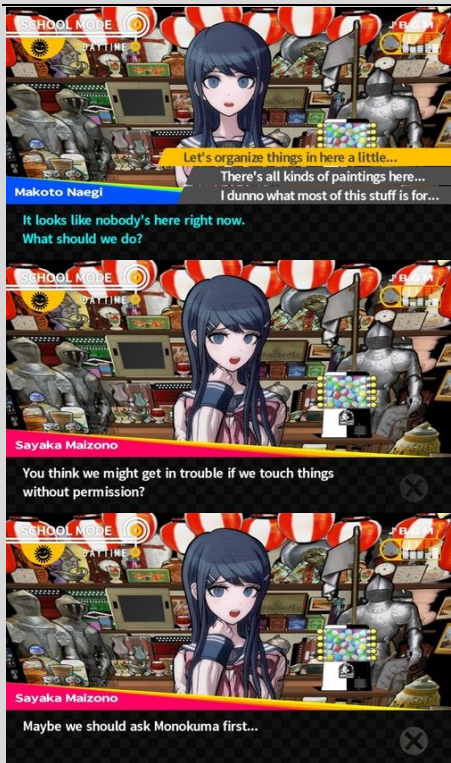


First off, if you ever got this reaction, you're an insensitive bastard.

—or maybe not since the non-canon School Mode's non-canon date responses are contradictive as hell.

The next [few] page[s] for instance....













(Okay, but to be honest, the obvious embarrassment and painful attempt at deflection is hilarious here.

"Keep that a secret." Lol.

...adolescent physiology sucks.)







Etc.

I can't even make a "women" joke. Though, to be honest, I *could*, however, probably wiggle a bunch of reasons justifying these contradictions...

...but really, they just didn't give a damn. It's a what-if fun mode.

Now back on topic:



There's not too much difference to mention here from the last reaction other than Makoto somehow completely turned Sayaka off, which I didn't think was possible for them before I first saw this.

In this reaction, Sayaka can't even stare at Makoto as she's trying to think up a sudden excuse to get out of being on this awful date. The difference here is she's completely lying: she feels fine and just doesn't want to be with you. Her excuse isn't even good here because Makoto's awfulness somehow managed to throw her off her game to the point where she can't even think her acting through.

Out of nowhere, she says she feels drained and pauses to think of another lie: "*Are you feeling well? I'm not feeling well.*" Not only is that lie rushed and generic, it's potentially another unintentional insult; but she either doesn't notice or doesn't care as she goes right into saying she's going to go lay down—which may or may not be true. The point is she wouldn't let him in her room if it were. Then she tells him bye and leaves without saying she'd see him again.

Even so, she probably doesn't dislike him in this ending (I think it'd take some 3rd-tier disaster to make Sayaka *dislike* Makoto); but she definitely feels uncomfortable and wants to get out fast before things get worse, this being why she can't even face him straight as she tries to think up a haphazard excuse to get out of being with him.

That being said, if their relationship were to have ever hit a low point like this, I'd probably agree with that reaction. It seems very "Sayaka": indirect and trying not to hurt Makoto's feelings, even if she absolutely couldn't take being around him for the moment. Indeed, this is more or less what happened

when Sayaka lost her cool with Makoto (twice, but I'll get to the second time soon). Although, in both cases, they agreed that she needed to rest.

Now that (most of) the romantic stuff is out of the way—

—oh, wait: I forgot what Sayaka says to Makoto when he walks up to her!

"(Sayaka) Oh, Makoto! You wanted me?

Ehehe... just kidding!"

With this expression:



I shouldn't have to explain. Only with *him*.

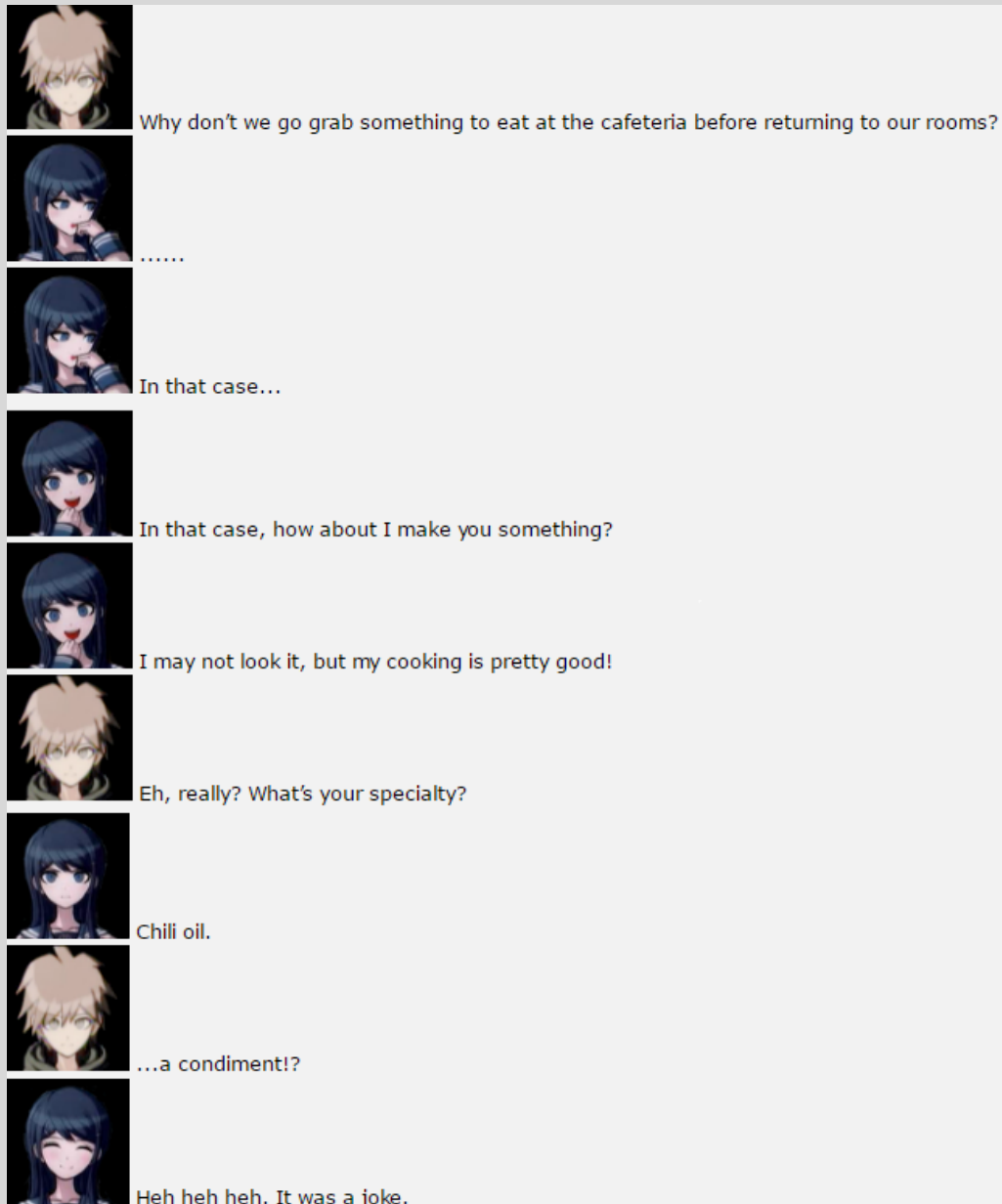
The only thing I'll add is that this occurs in the *main story*. Right before the "do you have a boyfriend" scene.

...*now* that (most of) the romantic stuff is out of the way, here is some extra general information that School Mode gives us about Sayaka:

- 1) Sayaka can't cook: There's actually a reference to this in the main game where she offers to cook for Makoto. When he asks what her best dish is and she says "chili oil," a condiment, she's jokingly alluding to the fact that she's not good at cooking because she's obviously never had time to learn—but as for why she didn't start by primary school (she was still essentially living alone, after all), I don't know.

If you remember Sayaka's scenes rather well, this is almost immediately after she screamed at Makoto that she didn't have time to waste with Monokuma's Killing Game: you can see how when, after she worriedly apologizes and Makoto tries to change the subject, she tries to think of way herself to re-brighten the mood. Of course, Makoto takes this change in tone for a

"mask," the source of way too many wrong analyses of her character. Moreover, the "chili oil" is only half of the joke she's making: being a "pretty good cook, period" is the other.



Now if there's one thing Sayaka really can't do well at all, it's tell good jokes. But she's nervous, stressed out, and talking to her crush, so please give her some leeway.

Anyway, that scene's a contrast to both when Makoto asks her the same thing in School Mode (her specialty) and when he asks her whether she can cook *at all* in School Mode: she replies by respectively asking him what he likes most and by asking him to "ask her later":



But that's alright because the same meaning's conveyed: that she doesn't know how cook so she can't give a straight answer for risk of (in her mind) disappointing him. In the first case, she asks what his favorite dish is, intending to study how to cook it for him later (call it dishonest, but that's love to me). Of course, Makoto's oblivious. In the second case, she explicitly says been studying up on techniques because she's been invited to cooking shows, and that's why she playfully asks him for more time. It's a more "positive" way of saying: "No...not yet..." in spite of admitting: "No, not yet."

She also blatantly admits to not knowing how to cook when Makoto invites her on a picnic:



Or rather, that she's bad at it. Either way.

Also, notice how in the last sentence, she puts her full trust in Makoto even when she doesn't know whether he can cook or not. She could be just being nice, or she could be really adamant of his supposed abilities even though she has no idea what they're going to make yet. She could just be trying to get on his good side too. Since she's blushing, all are possible but the first is most likely. She just has that much of a liking towards him.

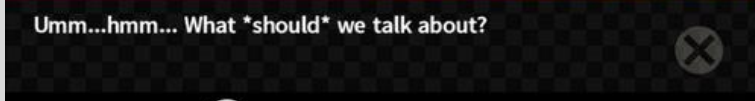
Now before I go on, I'll mention just one more time that I don't necessarily believe in the explicit canonicity of the School Mode scenes I'm linking. I'm using them because they help to support an already existing aspect of her character or because they introduce a straight piece of information about her character that's nothing more than a bit of trivia to consider. In the case of the former, I'm not saying that Sayaka's a fan of picnics, for example; but regarding the latter, she likely was invited to cooking shows in the main game as well (unless she made that up completely, which would be unlikely—she seemed comfortable enough and already admitted to not knowing how to cook).

- 2) Sayaka's bad at making small talk: This, as with most everything else I'm listing, is referenced in the main story. Sayaka explicitly states that she's bad at making small talk in the main game because she's not used to having downtime or speaking about anything but her profession when she does. The first time it happens is here.

```
SM - Umm...
SM - ...
SM - I know I said I wanted to talk to you, but now that we're here... I don't really know what to talk about.
SM - And I was the one who invited you to come with me, too. Sorry...
MN - It's okay.
MN - I mean, if there's nothing to talk about, then we can just not talk, right?
SM - Huh?
MN - You don't have to force yourself to talk. We can just, I dunno... stare off into space or whatever.
SM - Stare off into space...?
MN - Oh, but you're probably super bored! Just standing around doing nothing...
SM - No, it's not that it's boring. It's just...
SM - I've never really done it before. I don't have a lot of time to just... do nothing.
```

Sorry for the laziness as opposed to typing everything out, but you get the point. Thanks again, *UnderMybrella*, for the 100% accurate, literal game transcription there.

Back on track, this inability to make small talk is further supported in School Mode with an abundance of scenes I'll bring up. Even if the scenes' canonicity themselves are questionable, her reactions aren't; so check the following page.



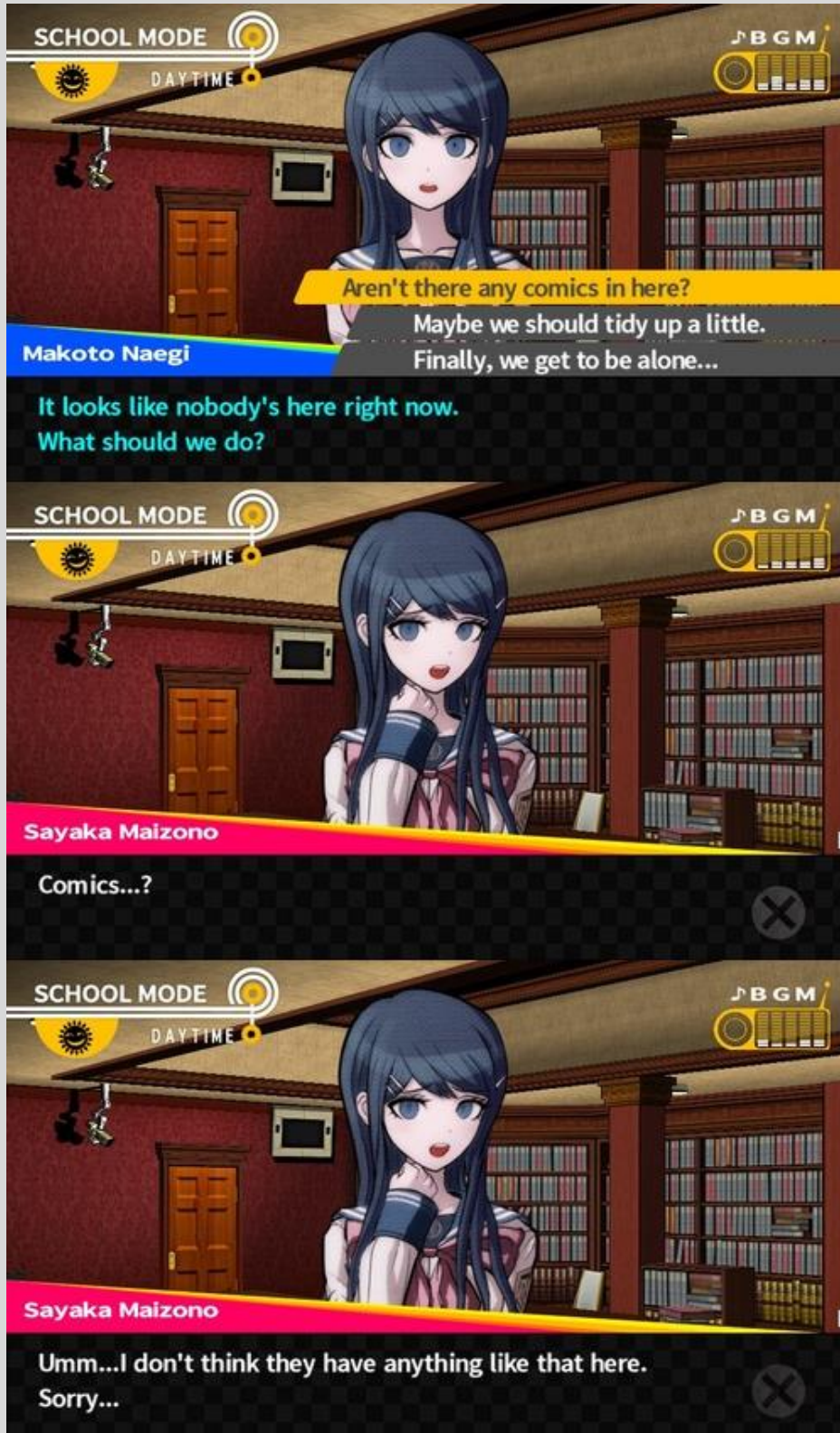
And here's another:



"Another two," I mean:



Okay, I last one I promise:



Just kidding:



Although, we could go on. A lot of these reactions are the result of her being nervous around Makoto, of course, worrying too much about what to say around him, yet without a doubt wanting nothing more than to spend time with him anyway. Though we can also see that she's just not that good at most impromptu conversations.

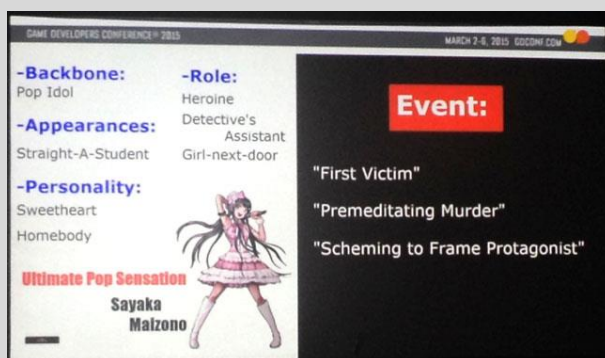
Let me clarify again that this doesn't mean she can't hold conversations well in general; she can, but she's only good at it when it involves something she's interested in or knows about. A lot of people nowadays—thanks to the internet—have this problem; not just her. When she's faced with a topic she's not familiar with or invested in, she doesn't know how to sustain the discussion. Instead, she usually freezes up, trying to think of something relevant to say and usually sounding awkward—or she can't form a real reply at all. (That is, a reply that extends the conversation at hand.)

To sum, this isn't to say she's socially awkward or even introverted—she couldn't have lasted so long as an idol if she were: it's mostly to do with not being used to having one-on-one conversations that aren't about things she'd know or be particularly interested in discussing. This also *isn't* to say the School Mode options are an accurate guide to what she'd be interested in: only the nature of her replies matter to me; and even then, they get pretty screwy. But it *does* mean she'll sometimes say awkward things without meaning to, particularly (but not excluded to) when trying to follow a conversation that's uncomfortable to her.

So maybe you were wondering something like, "Then what about Monokuma and the Killing Game? Or her feelings towards Makoto or about her dreams?" Which is what I wondered at first before looking into it—and the narrative reasoning/psychology behind it is those don't count as "small talk". Especially not to her.

- 3) Sayaka often studied in the school library: this is just a small fact that you may or may not have known. It's not meant to insinuate anything about her intelligence compared to anyone else, though I should reiterate that she really is a shrewd and intelligent character.

You may have noticed that "straight-A student" note from earlier:



But this is a fact that exists mainly to show she's diligent and very future-minded (as we see throughout the game, sometimes in a not-so-good-way) as opposed to caught up in academia.

To that end, she frequently goes to the library, alone, to study in the midst of everything that's going on. With the hope that she'll have not fallen too far behind once she's gotten out of Hope's Peak—and this is *after* Monokuma's trapped everyone. *No one* else does this. *At all.*



It's not just about studying in the library: no one else in Danganronpa studies their schoolwork in general, anywhere, during this period. Whether that says something about her intelligent with respect to the other students doesn't matter—so much as the fact that Sayaka's the only one who's actually mindful of the fact that, if she escapes, she'll have a normal life to get back to.

Most ultimates and Hope's Peak itself were stated to not take grades as seriously as the process of the students' improving their ultimate talents—but since Sayaka can idol regardless, that dedication just shows how much she actually gives a damn about her life compared to everyone else. In other words, much *more*. And this isn't to downplay everyone else's (mostly selfish) desires to live at all.

But is it really that big a deal to state this other than for..."bragging rights"? Why would it matter to any of them they were all locked up in that school in the meantime? Well, mindfulness aside, that's a good point. So, let's look at this on an even more personal level.

Notice the second-to-last statement. Sayaka implied her room was too noisy to study in, but the rooms are soundproof. That's either a lie or a stupid oversight and one of the many reasons I

don't take School Mode too seriously. Assuming it is a lie, though, and she didn't have a logic lapse within two consecutive sentences, she's actually going to the library to study, then, because she doesn't have peace of mind in her room.

And as a matter of fact, she never explicitly *states* her room is noisy. Only that she gets "distracted". So if the rooms aren't different in School Mode (they aren't), and if she's not slipping up or lying, Sayaka's literally referring to a sense of *mental* peace and quiet.

I won't go into this too long since it's somewhat uncertain as far as it relates to her studying in the library. Heck, she could even just be making up whatever to try and hold a conversation, meanwhile contradicting herself.

But Sayaka's a person who's full of regrets....

...ah, screw it. Let's go in as usual. She obviously dwelled on her situation of being trapped and forced to kill to escape while alone in her room (remember, this sentiment of not being able to focus on studying in her room would carry over regardless of School Mode).

But we can't forget that her past before Hope's Peak wasn't anything pleasant either. That's not to say she'd have wanted to do everything differently to end up not attending Hope's Peak; yet she must've at least *thought* about what questionable things she did to get where she was, and how it seemed that, without her parents being there, she never really have a chance.

Sayaka's in her room for most of the game and even with the Killing Game can't shake the feelings of suspicion she has for others. She only goes out to study or relax—alone—or to spend time with Makoto when he asks or help the group try to escape the school. Once again, it all makes sense, however: her life had previously been too fast-paced to really reflect and let her past sink in; but with how slow her days are after being locked up in school, and with the prospect of dying constantly looming around her, she has ample time to wallow in private self-pity and sorrow.

As for why she smiles and blushes?

Quite simply because of the context.

Makoto's spending time with her and suggests they study together in the library—as though it's a normal school setting. As though they aren't currently imprisoned and haven't been threatened to kill each other (this happens in School Mode as well).



Makoto's company and her attraction to him (nearly) always cheers Sayaka up, quite simply because, in his genuine kindness—or at least, that's how she sees it—he's able to distract her from the regrets of her life, her cynicism, her worries for the present and future—and he's usually able to dull her constant anxiety as she's trapped inside that school. Without him, as she feared and stated, the longer she were trapped in that school, the worse her anxiety would get until she lost her reason and thought or did something completely unlike her.

This is because Sayaka, as far as being broken down, actually has it worse than anyone in her class. For her, the longer time passes with nothing happening, the longer she can reflect on all of the above. I'll explain this more in time, but it essentially means Makoto serves as her emotional diversion.

- 4) Sayaka didn't know Makoto was a fan of hers: which you might notice I said way back—and as you can see all throughout the game, Sayaka never knew that Makoto noticed her, let alone that he was a fan. I feel like I said this before, but the former is actually the same way both her and Makoto felt about *each other* up until they met in Hope's Peak (both times). Sayaka only finds out that Makoto was aware of her presence when he says so in their first free-time event, just as Makoto only finds out when she says so in the same scene. She didn't even consider him a casual fan because whenever she tried to see if he noticed her, he wasn't paying attention (as he likely turned away whenever he thought she would look at him).



(That's only the 1st part, actually.)



The whole conversation wouldn't fit on one page.

For Sayaka's case, she doesn't expect him to notice her because she's "famous". But she hopes he will merely because they go to the same school and she's always waiting near him, trying to get his attention and find a moment where they can be alone.

Actually, she's not expecting it after a while. She's just hoping he notices her *at all*. By—pure *happenstance*. How earnest she was at trying (versus how earnest she thought she was) to get his attention, I don't know; but since she wouldn't have wanted to alienate her constant crowd of groupies, it probably wouldn't have made a difference no matter how hard she tried. Notice she isn't upset at Makoto either even though he guiltily feels the need to defend himself. She's just stating a fact from her perspective, and she's rather more upset with herself for not trying even harder to get his attention.

Makoto, meanwhile, is noticing her but either pretending he doesn't or literally ignoring her whenever they do happen to meet eyes. He feels she's too high-register and doesn't notice him, so he's not trying to be "in over his head" by believing he's worth a celebrity's time and space, let alone one as successful as her. That is, he feels he's a waste of time compared to most Ultimates, but Sayaka to him is on an entirely different level from all of them. It really is a bad cycle that actually makes Makoto out to be a bit of a jerk, especially considering how stressed out Sayaka was about having *one* private conversation with him, and then to *just* having him look her way.

And to continue to pursue the guy after it seemed like he never cared about her—or, worse, was going out of his way to ignore her....

However, even after this scene, she still doesn't realize he's been a big fan of hers forever. Not in canon. And she dies without knowing that he listened to her at all. Besides his introduction and general awe for her and what she does, you've already seen a few lines in this write-up that proves he's a real fan.

Unfortunately, he never got to tell Sayaka that he was a fan of her music, and she crushed on him without knowing this at all. The only "solace" to this is that, either way, it probably wouldn't have affected her fatal decisions much later on. No, "I'll be the only fan you need! I'll appreciate you enough for 10 million people!" was likely going to work with her. One, she was already in love with him and already had near-immeasurable admiration and respect for him. Two, that wasn't what her later desperation was about. But more on that eventually.

And to add a last subpoint, she might've known he was a fan if she read his mind, but she gave no hint of knowing how Makoto felt about her as a performer. Meaning she didn't read him at the right times for that, if nothing else. School Mode only seems to support her obliviousness.



Makoto Naegi

It looks like nobody's here right now.
What should we do?



Sayaka Maizono

Huh? Mine!?



Sayaka Maizono

I-I can't imagine a school store would carry that kind of thing...



Sayaka Maizono

But I'd be so embarrassed if they did and you found it...!

Here as well (sorry; you may have to zoom in some, as I'm hoping to keep this on one page):



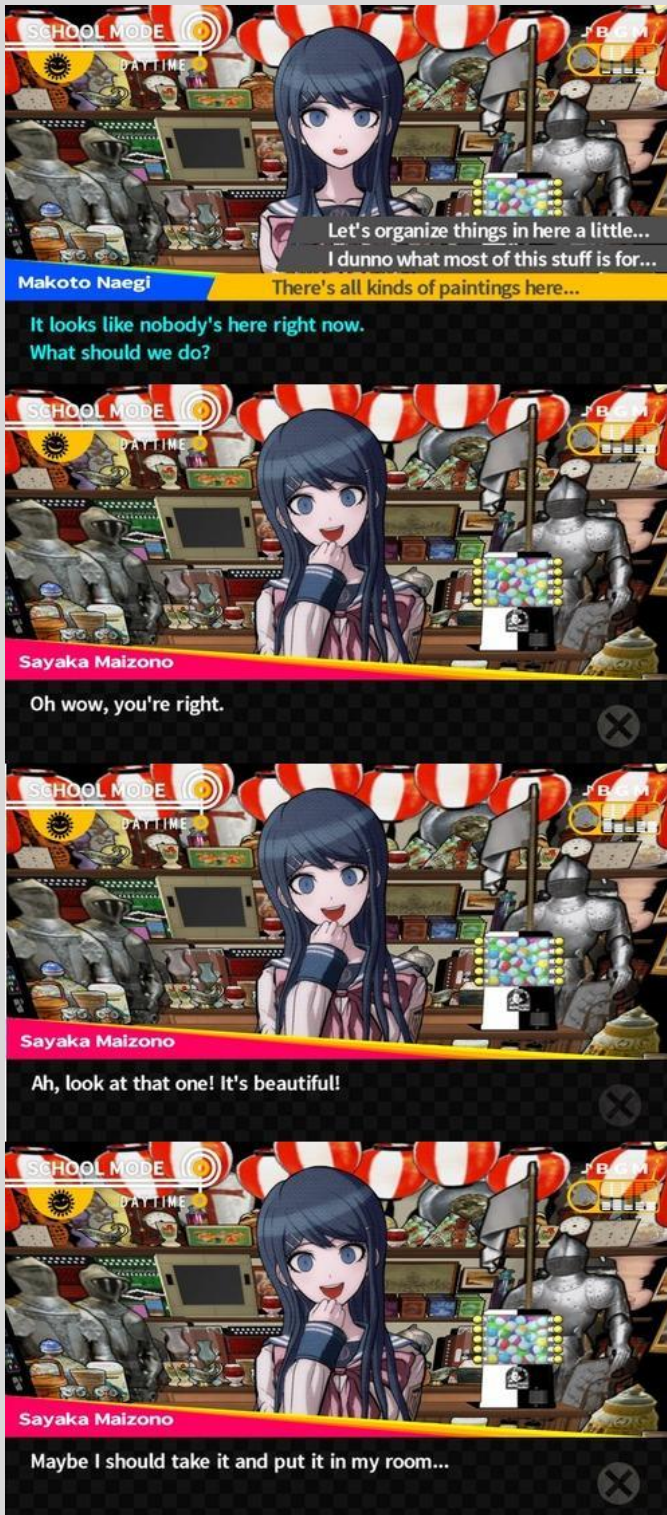
5) Sayaka loves pretty/nice-looking things. But this shouldn't need an explanation.

Anyway, School Mode stresses it:



For the above, they're in the school's store. But it makes sense as to why Sayaka wouldn't want to waste that doll's novelty on healing her mood by "stealing" or even "buying" it.

Now then, another:



We can see that she feels a little less strong about these paintings than that doll. The irony of the beautiful doll being there in that terrible situation temporarily helped numb her to the anxiety she recalled, being trapped in that school. But the paintings weren't so emotionally captivating as to evoke a sense of awe in her, *in spite of* the terrible situation she was in. She didn't recall that situation at all.

But it all makes sense. Thing is, you might've noticed Sayaka never put *anything* in her room the entire time she was alive. And if you didn't notice that...she didn't do it.

Other than Naegi, for gameplay-related reasons, the only other person who never furnished their room in any way was Kirigiri. The snooping detective who, in all likelihood, was rarely in her room. If I recall, the game even made that a plot point.

So then, why wasn't Sayaka, who apparently liked fashion and beauty, into personalizing her living space even a little? If you haven't guessed why, it might become more apparent later on. But for now, speaking of fashion and beauty...



Notice the pause before she blushes with embarrassment, realizing pretty late that she was shouting out right next to him.

I'll say this upfront:

...well, not really "upfront," but anyhow: Sayaka *never* fakes blushing in this game. School Mode or otherwise.





Sayaka Maizono

I can't believe they got all these plants to grow in a room like this.



Sayaka Maizono

Hope's Peak really is amazing!



Sayaka Maizono

Oh, and if you look close, you can see all kinds of strange flowers mixed in, too!



Sayaka Maizono

And not just flowers. I've never seen a lot of these fruits before...!



Sayaka Maizono

I feel like you could spend the whole day just walking around in here!

- 6) Sayaka was interested in trying darts: because it seemed like an "adults-only game". Sayaka—whether you want to believe it or not—was a *very* mature person who had to grow up *way* too fast. Partly due to her being alone and partly due to the idol industry...just look at how she speaks in the more-casual *translation*. So, it makes sense that she'd be intrigued by an adult-ish game like that, simply because it's adult-ish. She doesn't know how to play, though.



- 7) Sayaka's pretty good at Othello: so she says, but she starts to wonder how good she still is in the end. She might be rusty after years of not playing with her father, thanks to her idol career.



- 8) Sayaka doesn't know how to play pool: and she likely didn't care much about it either way. She only bothered to try and learn in School Mode because Makoto suggested they play. Suppose you could call that the "tipping point".



- 9) Sayaka believes in (mostly good) magazine horoscopes: ...or more like she just accepts the good predictions for optimistic emotional support—naturally—disregarding everything else.

Not trying to say that's a bad thing either. Horoscope consultancy completely human, and I don't care who takes those predictions literally anyway. She obviously doesn't.

It's worth noting, too, that this horoscope interest relates more so to her general, hectic and awful idol life than anything to do with Monokuma. Though she could've definitely sought a horoscope for that if it were possible, I personally don't think she'd go to such things when she's locked up and her life is actually in danger. And, my views aside, she speaks of this in a context of generality, not as of being locked up in Hope's Peak.

I also, once more, don't consider this exact scene itself to be canon—although I consider her statements below to be true....

...but as an aside, I've met some people who consider School Mode canon *and* subscribe to "the mask" nonsense at the same time—and what a mask she's putting on *here*, being completely honest with Makoto in one of her more intimate moments with him, despite how overly self-aware she is around him. Then fearing she said something wrong while frowning and worryingly admitting it aloud. What a complicated, enigmatic mask this torn character is putting on.





The point is Sayaka knows it's cheating but realizes what she said—and is, nonetheless, suddenly worried that Makoto takes this stuff seriously enough to think any less of her for it. Even though she's merely trying to be optimistic regarding her own messed up life.

- 10) Sayaka prefers sandwiches to hamburgers. But I wouldn't go so far as to say she prefers eating healthier in general, however, as the scene where she says this and stomps your relationship status to red is directly contradicted by the similar scene that has her fetching cake for her and Makoto...for breakfast.

You saw the scene before, but here it is again:





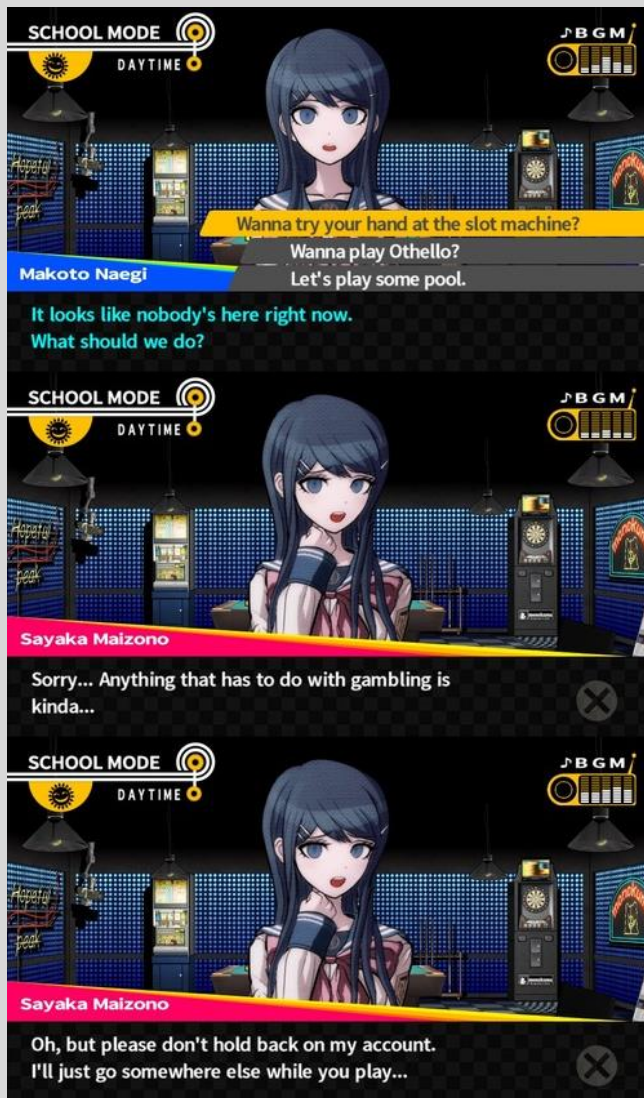
How that ruined her and Makoto's time together, even out of canon, I can only imagine the myriad of ways. Dead serious too.

- 11) Sayaka doesn't usually eat a big breakfast: she also says she's fine with eating anything for breakfast. But her apparent, dubious aversion to junk food while not minding cake and juice/soda contradicts this.

Although, she could just be saying this below for Makoto's sake and exaggerating:

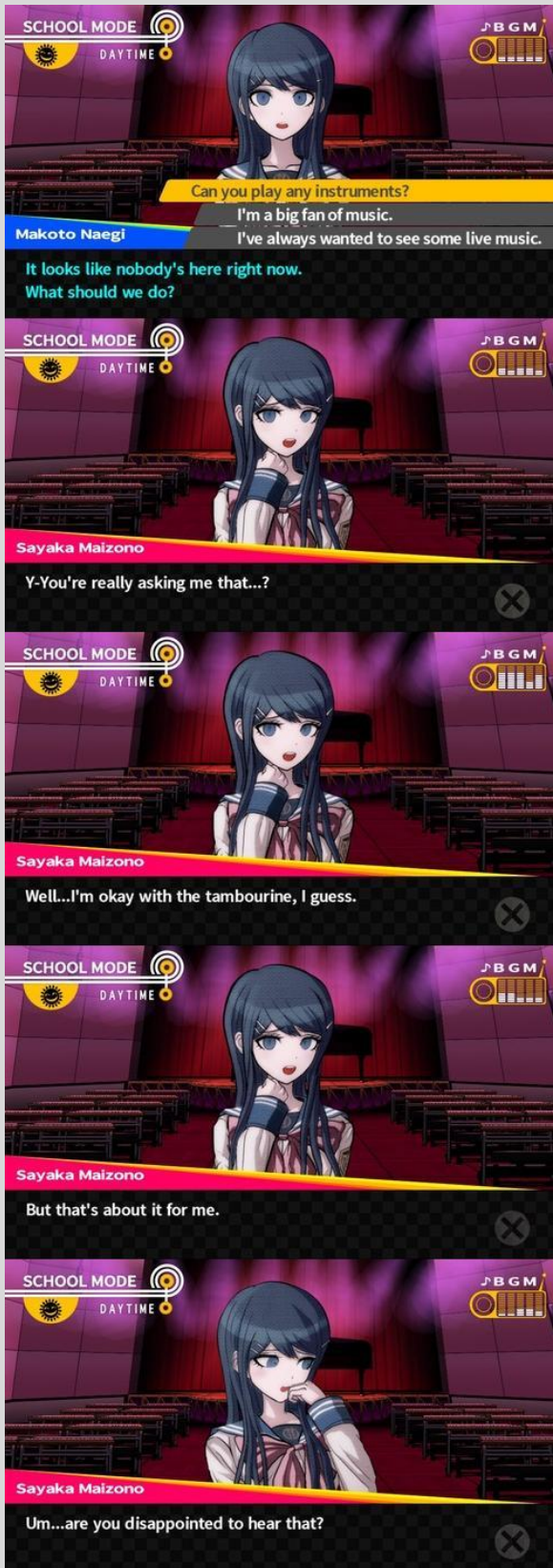


- 12) Sayaka hates gambling: Probably because even though Pachinko's legal, a gambling idol's sketchy and gambling would possibly ruin her financially and status-wise. But that's just a guess; it could just as well be for financial/moral reasons, or whatever else.



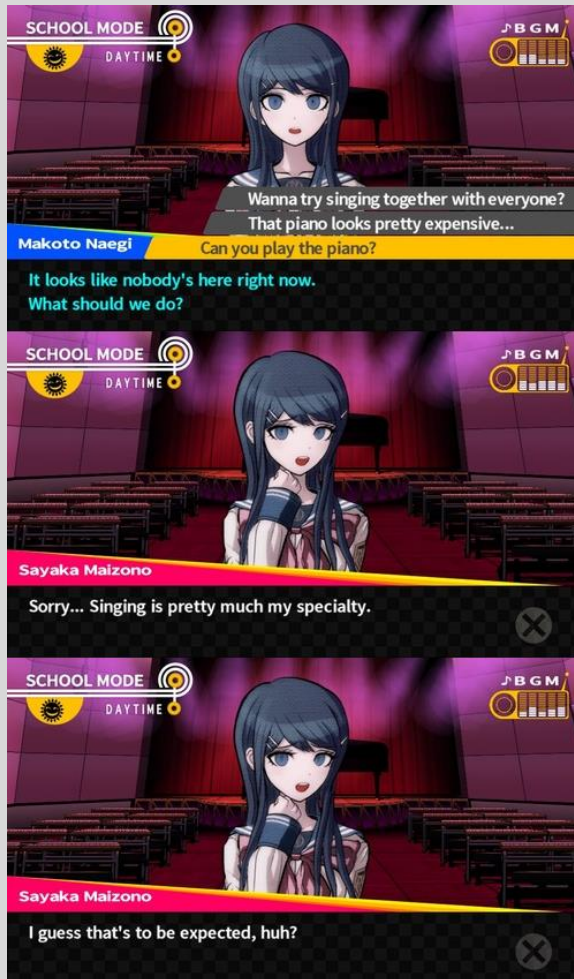
And I'm not sure if she'd hate it in the main game to the point where she wouldn't be able to stand near Makoto while he's doing it, but that seems to be the case in School Mode. And if that's the case in canon (I'm actually ambivalent about it), those guesses are the only immediate reason that makes sense. Who knows, though. For all we're told, her mother could've been involved in some kind of gambling accident or something.

- 13) Sayaka's okay with the tambourine: In which "okay" probably means very little. It's probably not a filler reply in the conversation below, but a nervous, earnest one—considering that she gave it after she was shocked to hear that question and worried about Makoto's response. Why would she be? Because she knows she's just a vocalist and doesn't want to disappoint Makoto. She paused to think about something she could say, but only one thing came to mind as an instrument she was familiar with. She didn't even consider lying, however.



(It's kind of telling that she's truly worried he doesn't consider her singing talents to be interesting enough. Very irrational.)

She also can't play the piano (big surprise).



(Same deal as before.)

In School Mode, she seems to be embarrassingly self-aware about the fact that she can't play any instruments and only sing, at least when Makoto personally brings up that subject with her.

Yes, it's a sense of *shame*. And it's unique to him. Not really considering that for much, though, since those are just School Mode-specific responses that can't be extrapolated to the main game. I can imagine it happening in the main story, but it doesn't matter.

- 14) Sayaka would've liked to watch someone else perform live: she hadn't had time to go see someone else in a while because she was always busy, but she says she enjoys it for the learning experience in School Mode. Since that's the only reason she states for having gone to these venues and wanting to go in the future, it should be considered canon.

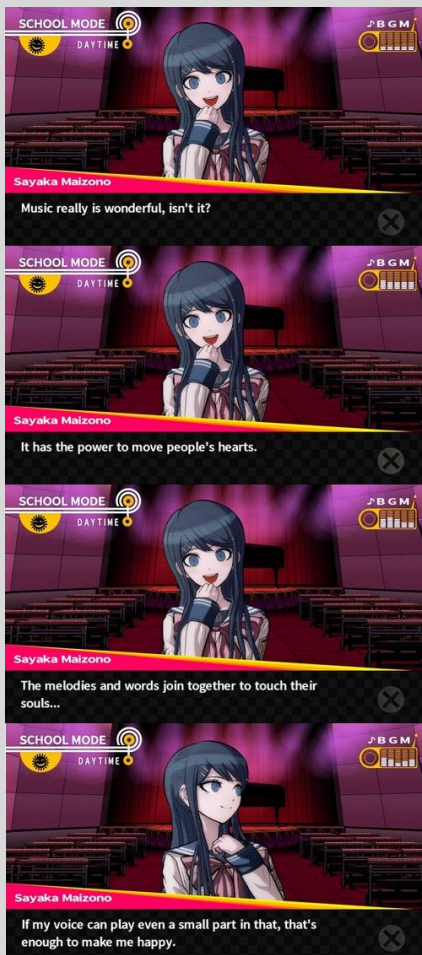


And that was more mind reading.

On a relevant side note, I guess that if you're at the absolute very top and you're still trying to learn things from others, it says a lot about your maturity and work-ethic. Even the best in their profession can learn from others who might be worse than them. And if she's going to other performances to learn as much as have fun, it's a testament to just how seriously she takes her own career at such a young age (remember, she's operating while believing she's two years younger than she actually is, and she probably didn't just start watching other people's concerts *during* that 1st year at Hope's Peak).

On an irrelevant side note, notice how she starts blushing when she imagines him watching her perform—which he's done many times before. The irony's stifling. Moreover, that blushing might be embarrassment *and* arousal...but I'm not saying it's the latter without good evidence. Just noting that it wouldn't be unbelievable (since it's happened before). But regardless of the immediate irrelevance, this is a point that backs up what was stated earlier about her not knowing of Makoto's interest in her.

- 15) Sayaka's not just singing for herself: I already covered why she even decided to become an idol above, and I'll probably do it again later, *and* many of you probably know anyhow. Still, this moment in School Mode's another piece of evidence to support the moral values she said she held:



Though that scene itself is non-canon, I can definitely imagine her saying something like this in the main story.

- 16) Sayaka worries when she doesn't feel she's doing well with Makoto: This is also a theme in the main game, up until she decides "screw it" after a certain scene involving DVD's, but we can see the same theme in a couple of School Mode scenes as well:

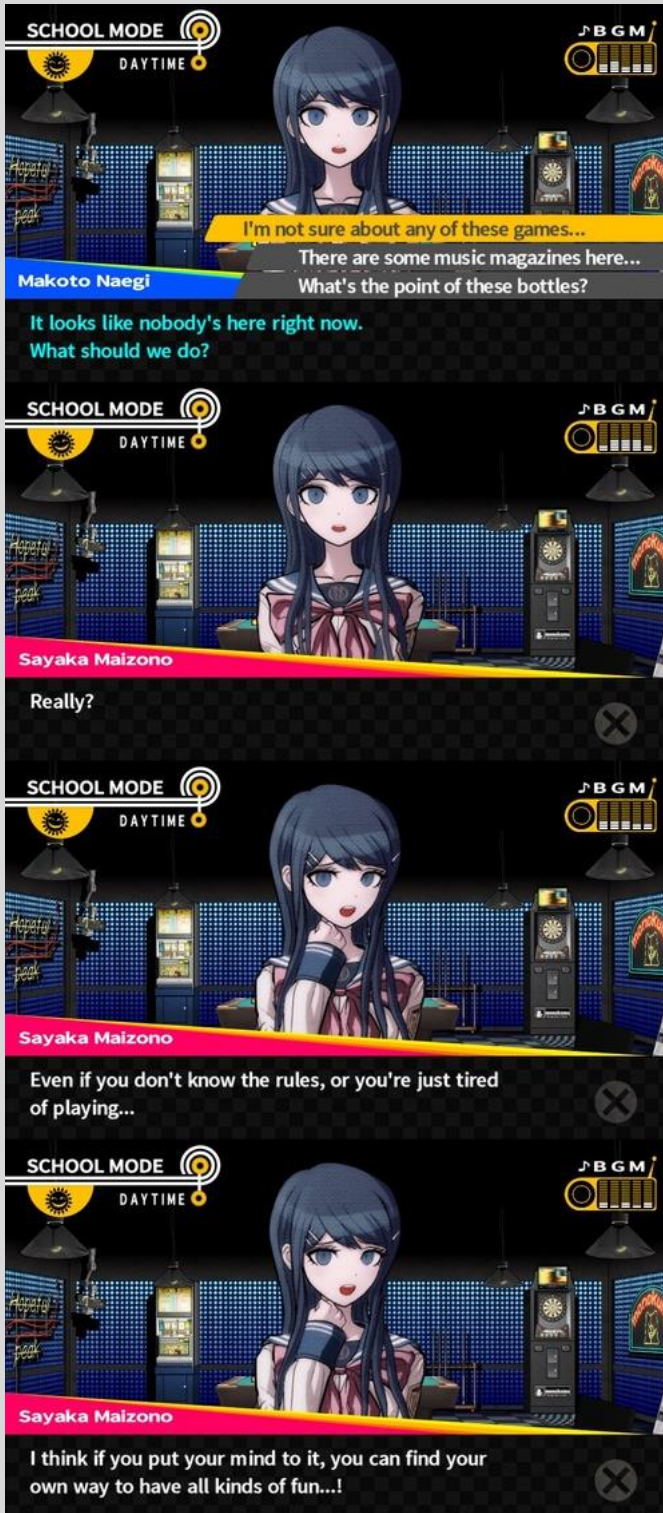
A)



This scene appeals to me for being particularly more than meets the eye. What's going on here is that after Makoto says he wants that random suit of armor, it perplexes Maizono and she doesn't know how to react to the abruptness. Because, in character, it's not something Makoto would say anyway. So, after she tries to figure out where he's coming from (possibly imagining him the armor too), she fails to understand him and admits that half to him and half to herself, worrying for her sake that she won't be able to understand his interests. When she says his taste is odd, she doesn't mean it as an insult but says it in a simple matter-of-fact tone that comes across as an insult.

But as appealing as this scene is, non-canon Makoto is non-canon. And non-canon School Mode isn't what I'm looking for. Despite that, I do think Sayaka's behavior was matched near perfectly here, with her reaction.

B)



In this case, Maizono's trying to get Makoto to stay after he decides he's not interested in what the rec room has to offer. What makes this interesting is that Maizono's essentially begging him to stay with her and enjoy himself through positive reinforcement. The "don't think things went very well at all" ending doesn't match up at all with this scene, another reason I consider School Mode non-canon: Makoto's bailing out on *her*, not vice-versa. Why?

Well, Makoto basically brought her to that room to play, and then he suddenly changed his mind. Without saying he wants to go somewhere else with her, Sayaka immediately assumes he's suddenly changed his mind about spending time with her altogether, so she desperately tries to get him to stay by appealing to their being able to have fun *somehow* together, even if it doesn't seem that way from the look of the place (and even if she doesn't know what else to do).

As always, everything about this, from start to end, is non-canon; but Sayaka's reaction, if Makoto suddenly decided to act this way while they were hanging out, would almost certainly be this reaction, if not similar.

I'd put many more scenes up that are just general Naezono support, but those aren't canon, so they wouldn't count for much. They're not really as powerful as the "do you have a girlfriend" scene either.

Instead, I'll do the Kokoronpa (Heart-Shot), scene that sums up what I've been saying so far about Naezono well enough.

First, to explain it if you don't know what that is: This is a scene that's exclusive to School Mode (and so, non-canon), in which Makoto is suddenly able to read the thoughts of a person in his class that he's grown close to as a result of their spending time together. The process of him reading minds is, of course, non-canon as well.

I'd wondered at first whether it'd be a good idea to go into Sayaka's Kokoronpa. It's in School Mode—so it can't be canon, right? But then I realized that it's literally Sayaka's inner thoughts about Makoto surfacing after they've reached a certain level in their relationship.

This could've happened in the main game or before the memory wipe, and it would've just gone unmentioned. And these feelings aren't anything that were affected by the main storyline of School Mode anyway, so it's no problem for me to consider this abstraction (only her thoughts) canon and treat it that way. And it's no problem to disregard every other possible Kokoronpa scene at the same time.

Here's the event in full, before the responses are chosen (you'll probably have to zoom in):





I hate the idea of it.

Affirmation

Sayaka Maizono



I hate the idea of giving someone a reason to dislike me.

Affirmation

Sayaka Maizono



But I want to know more about him.

Affirmation

Sayaka Maizono



I wonder if he thinks I'm strange...

Affirmation

Sayaka Maizono



I don't think today is the day...

Affirmation

Sayaka Maizono

Make sure to scroll down slow so you don't miss anything, just in case. What I'm going to do is go ahead and explain each line she's saying in detail, so we can better understand where she's coming from. Don't believe I can do so accurately? Well then...my last time doing it didn't convince you?

It's important to remember that these are subconscious thoughts she had about Makoto that she may or may not have dwelled on at certain points in the past. This moment here, this "Kokoronpa," is just another moment where someone's dwelling on those thoughts, only they're doing it in front of Makoto here, and he can somehow sense their feelings (which makes no sense, but I'm willing to buy her feelings for the scenario if only because the nature of the Kokoronpa makes sense, even if Makoto's part in it doesn't).

Alright, let's jump in—oh, but before I go ahead, I'll just mention I'm going to be describing her visual reactions as well when it's necessary. Same as before, only now you can see for sure I'm not lying.

Now let's jump in:

"What should I do...?"

Not much to say about this, but she's obviously felt this way many times before. As in, since middle school. Kokoronpa, though a non-canon event, plays out Sayaka's feelings perfectly. And it's not surprising that she was distracted by those feelings here, when, as we'll see (or as you've seen), she's wavering on the verge of confessing to him and trying to work up the courage to go through with it, but beating herself back with self-doubt. She also tried to confess to him in the main game—which I described the same way as now—and couldn't for likely the same reason, in addition to it being a much dire situation there.

"Makoto... He's someone I know I can trust completely."

He's someone that everyone can trust completely, since he's a gullible, kind-hearted sap. But only Sayaka's aware of this the entire time...

...well, not for that last reason, though.

"But sometimes he can be a little too nice..."

"He's a gullible, kind-hearted sap." This doesn't have anything to do with him saving that crane, by the way. And there's more to this statement than it would appear....

"If we get too close, I'll just end up being a nuisance."

And away we go...

People say she's not a deep character. There used to be a relatively high chance I'd genuinely laugh at whoever said this in person.

No, really: This speaks *volumes* about her character—before the DVD night. What Sayaka's saying here is a direct continuation from the previous line, even though they look scarcely related. The reason Sayaka's worried about being a nuisance, as we can see all throughout her dialogue from here to Monochrome Answer, is because of her past. I'm glad I already said pretty much everything I have to say about her past—it sucked and made her into a distrusting, cautious, self-seeking opportunist.

Now, she obviously wouldn't act this way around Makoto. In fact, she tries her hardest not to give him any ill feelings and still goes out her way to overtly ask him if she's ever offending him. The thing is, because Sayaka and Makoto grew up in two different circumstances, she's worried that she will clash with him. It's not just about their personalities being fundamentally different:

-She has her career to think about.

-She has different interests and goals than him—in fact, he doesn't even have much of a preference for anything.

-She's able to read his mind and he can't do the same (School Mode notwithstanding).

-She's much more obsessed with getting to know him than vice-versa.

-She's much more obsessed with being on his good side so she doesn't turn him off or run him away, etc. Yet she knows she's too obsessed about this, and it troubles her.

-She can't do much besides sing.

-She's not good at holding conversations outside of her interests.

-She's not good at discussing her feelings for him.

-She has a lot of baggage from her past that she wouldn't be good at discussing or admitting in-depth either. Or just dealing with it and him if it somehow came out.

-She doesn't have a stable life. She took the nation by storm, by junior high, and almost 80% of the country is a serious fan, yes. But she almost certainly isn't living with her father, and her father almost certainly isn't managing her. She speaks as if she hasn't seen him in a long time (I'll get to her family in another section, though).

Even if he is around, however, I'm sure we all remember when she told Makoto how fleeting her job was and how busy she was. The life as a top Japanese idol in the nation's most popular idol group is not a relaxing one. Especially when that group consists of just 5 members. I still can't imagine all the utter hell she went through to establish herself that well before she was 13, while dealing with all that other mess in her past that would've ruined many other kids. This is all disregarding that she believes her career, livelihood, and way of life, *and* identity are in danger with their being trapped for who knows how long, completely out of touch with the outside world.

-Her cynicism applies—even if it's very faint—to Makoto as well, and she can't be sure when it's ever turning him off.

...all this makes for a very strained relationship. And every time she gets near him, she's worrying about any few random bullets from the list. Not only that, but she's worrying about the most crucial of all: the fact that she puts all of, literally *all* of her faith in him, to the point where she even forgoes getting a self-defense weapon in exchange for his word that he'll protect her...when she'd been

completely restless moments earlier from actively fearing one of the students or Monokuma himself would attempt to attack her for any or *no* reason. Because she's putting all her faith in him and wanting to spend so much time with him, she fears she'll essentially be "that shounen girl" who gets on his nerves with her constant closeness that he might perceive as clingy or even needy. And if not that, she fears that her personal flaws would destroy their relationship on any level, even as friends.

"I...hate the idea of it."

She hates the idea of it. See: All the above.

But even more, she's trying to think of a way to describe how much she hates the idea of her pushing Makoto away while trying to get closer to him, and she can't think of anything more than "hate". Sayaka's not the vulgar type, but "hate" in this case is pretty close to the strongest word she—or anyone—could've used. And it's the strongest negative word she uses in the story.

It might sound basic; but for what she's feeling, it's perfect. "Hate" in the most extreme case is a very raw word that usually can't be eloquently intensified. That's why "pure hatred" is stronger than "pure [any other adjective]".

Notice how her expression changes here. She's not clasping her hands because she fears being a nuisance. She's clasping her hands because she *hates that much* the thought of Makoto disliking her. She's actively thinking about how much she *hates* the thought of Makoto disliking her *at all*.

"I hate the idea of giving someone a reason to dislike me."

Sayaka...isn't one to use the word "hate" too much. Again: When she does, you know it's serious. What makes it serious, well...aside from her expression, it's how she changed the topic from being about Makoto to in general. This might not seem like much, but it's a really major change. Obviously, she cares about Makoto more than anyone else. Not to say she cares about other people "less"—but she never even realizes Makoto is a fan of hers and has a reason to like her aside from the stigma of her being a famous pop idol, her looks (and smell), and how she speaks to him.

Yet, the other millions of people? She absolutely *needs* them. They are her reason for *being*. They're her *raison d'être*. Without them, she wouldn't have a career—or, yep, a purpose in life or reason to live. This is how she feels. I'll go into the latter more later; but for now, hear me out: this is why she's pictured in panic-mode. Of course, this is a representation of her mental state, and she soon calms down. She's not literally having a meltdown in front of him, but she does look very worried on the outside:



But it's an accurate representation, both that and the panicking. Because if anyone dislikes her for who she is—in other words, for what she's devoted herself to being—they're disliking not just her, and not just her music, but disliking her and her music in spite of the fact that she spent hours upon days upon months upon *years* toiling *endlessly*, working her soul off *simply* for the *chance* to make others happy. Despite all of the terrible experiences she went through to have that chance. Because *that's* what's given her the strength to go on. *That's* what's given her life *any* meaning.

I could go on a prosaic ramble, but let that sink in if you will. It's true.

"But I want to know more about him."

...and despite how afraid she is to go on, fearing the one person she's closest to will stop liking her...she still wants to try and tell him how she really feels....

Let's let *that* sink in.

"I wonder if he thinks I'm strange."

Admittedly, Maizono *is* rather strange. When around Makoto, if nothing else....

That's not a bad thing, of course. Not like how she assumes it to be. But again, she's *extremely* self-conscious when it comes to Makoto. We don't know whether she's referring to her constant apologizing, her past, her unusual politeness—especially around him—her psychic tendencies, her preferences, or anything. It could be all of the above. It could be she's thinking of the costumes she wears when she's on stage or the type of music she does. She only doesn't know he's her fan, but they both know he's aware of her career.

Maybe he's more of a rap fan. That hoodie screams "backpacker". It could be that, hell, she doesn't seem to know any instruments and can only sing.

But by now it's clear: Sayaka's attempt at confessing is failing as she shoots herself down with hopeless insecurities and feelings of inadequacy, quite possibly tormenting herself with every potential reason he *possibly* could have for not liking her (as a person) until...

"I don't think today is the day..."

Well...I'm sure she's reluctantly told herself that many times before.

I hope it's starting to get clear now. I'm sure some of you guys/girls already knew or just had a couple of things confused. But as far as Naezono is concerned, it's not only canon but Maizono has much, *much* stronger feelings for Makoto than he does for her. He loves her, definitely...but it's not even in the same category. Her love goes far beyond infatuation.

And while his does as well, relying on her emotionally and liking her personality and charm, she's just *helplessly* enamored by Makoto: *The Ultimate Hope*, for who he is at his core. If he wasn't him, I'd be jealous. His noble nature hit her dejected, cynical character like a rock before she even knew what had happened to her. And from then on, she quite simply couldn't let go.

Man...what a wild ride....

And we're going right on ahead. We're not even halfway done yet.

So...the reactions.

As with all Kokoronpa events, there are four possible choices that net four possible reactions: "had a really good time," "had a pretty good time," "didn't have much fun," and "don't think things went very well at all," just like the general reactions I outlined at the start of the School Mode section.

For Sayaka's Kokoronpa, here are the responses that give you a reaction of each type—and as before, I'm going to explain each line, starting on the next page.

Affirming "being a nuisance" -> "Didn't have much fun"





"[Makoto] I can't say for sure it wouldn't be a nuisance."

Here, Makoto's basically admitting that he knows she's worried about putting him off *despite* sincerely wanting to get to know him better. He's also saying she might end up getting on his nerves, implying she's already started to. While that's honesty and not necessarily an insult, we all know from "I hate the idea of giving someone a reason to dislike me" that Sayaka would assume the worst—especially with him.

"Ah..."

She's too shocked by what he said to even realize he read her thoughts. But she was so deep in her worrying that her surprised is subdued.

But even if it is...that's fine.

At this point, Makoto's either saying that he doesn't have feelings for her and is trying to be nice about it, or he's saying that he loves her back and isn't going to mind her bothering him.

Because I want to help you, however I can.

And it's the former. Though, not only does he confirm he's starting to get annoyed by her or imagining that her being close to him would get annoying (he wouldn't want to "help" her being annoying if she didn't feel she wasn't or wouldn't be), he's patronizing her with kindness as well.

That's how it comes across, anyway. What else could he "help" with after shooting her down, admitting he doesn't have any feelings for her and strongly implying he's getting annoyed with her? The only thing he hasn't at least implied so far is that he dislikes her as a person, which would seriously be the last straw for her. But at the very least, it sounds like he's patronizingly friend-zoning her.

Makoto...

She's starting to process exactly what he's said...and it's not good....

So you're a psychic, too?

I'll explain the significance of this line later in the "Is Sayaka Really a Psychic?" section. All the same, I think you know my stance based on every indication so far—this sentence, anyhow, is just an aside. She's almost made up her mind about how to respond as of the last line, and she just now realized Makoto read her mind in the meantime.

N-No, it's just... Well, I'm not sure. Maybe I'm just starting to understand things better?

What's the best way to summarize this....

...it's literally...reaffirming that he understands the reason for her thinking, "If we get too close, I'll just end up being a nuisance. I hate the idea of it." And reaffirming that he, again, is starting to get annoyed by her or imagining that her being close to him would get annoying, that he doesn't have feelings for her (at least to the same degree), and that she could use his emotional support to help her get over her hopeless feelings for him.

I see...

And she unfortunately realizes this.

...

At this point, she's either still struggling to think of a response or still in shock over what he said. Likely the latter.

Well, you don't have to worry about me. Whatever you're thinking, please forget about it.

Likely the latter, because her reaction here is reluctant but firm. After a moment of speechlessness, Sayaka decides the only thing she can do is end the conversation right there before Makoto does the one last thing she just wouldn't be able to take: dislike *her*.

Affirming "thinks I'm strange" -> "Don't think things went very well at all"



Continued below



Now, this one was a bit confusing at first to me.

You're not strange. I just...don't know what to do.

This here is the classic "it's not you; it's me". It's so seemingly out of place in the context of her private thoughts that Sayaka immediately questions what he means by it, since she can't even begin to comprehend him.

You don't know...? What do you mean?

Well, that was sort of a lie, what I said. She doesn't know exactly what he's trying to say; but she's still a shrewd character, and she knows that he's going the "It's not you; it's me" route—which means it's her. As you can see, she's starting to look worried. And when she's so deep into her feelings like this and fearfully dwelling on Makoto's words, that along with her being familiar with the concept of "intuitions"—his reading her mind doesn't really faze her, in the midst of this more important topic.

I mean, to you I'm just another person in a room full of people. How could either of us know each other?

So, this was the part I never understood because I wasn't sure how this really related to him affirming she's strange.

But I'll explain it—it *really* tells how good Sayaka is at reading people and context clues, for her to have perfectly understood this. Honestly, she's better at it than Kirigiri. And unsurprisingly, everyone else in the class.

Makoto's giving an excuse here. He's affirming that she's strange to him but [technically lying and] blaming it on himself because of their different social statuses. Saying that *of course* she'd seem strange to him: he can't possibly comprehend someone on *her* level.

However, not only does Sayaka know this is patronizing fluff and a poor attempt at sparing her the straight up "You're strange," Sayaka's now starting to doubt that they could ever have a chance because of what he said. If he really feels that way, he doesn't think a relationship between them would work out. And somewhere between...

...

...this...

I see...

...and this, Sayaka realized that Makoto read her thoughts. Maybe not as explicitly as with the last case, but she's too dejected to care either way. She's also realized that they can't go any further. If Makoto's picked up on how she feels while thinking she's strange and/or that they could never be together regardless...well, there's just nothing more she can do about it but leave it be.

I don't want to cause you any more problems. Maybe it's best if I don't say any more...

And so, she leaves it be. All of her feelings. Canonically, that would be the end of "them" (luckily, she took it very politely, for how sick she had to feel), but you could keep playing as normal between them since it's School Mode.

Also, look at how, in her reply here, she still considers that she may have been vexing Makoto with her crush on him. This is the important part. She cares about his feelings even if it's not mutually Naezono related. And so, she doesn't want to worsen things between them after he's called her strange, by going on about her feelings. She doesn't want him to be burdened with her self-doubt.

Whether that means she voluntarily shuts up as the generally nice and mindful Sayaka or as the Sayaka who's still fascinated with his kindness and not wishing to anger him for his sake isn't detailed, however...but I'd say that though both probably play a role, it's a bit more of the former because he'd just done something that wasn't kind at all. The scene makes it fairly obvious that there's no "mask" here either.

Sorry, I just feel the need to say one more time that I'm not doing this because I think there's anything special or canon about these particular scenes. I do feel the reactions match up to how Sayaka would react to this out-of-character Makoto, though, so that's why I'm explaining them like this.

But now for something more positive.

Negating "thinks I'm strange" -> "Had a pretty good time"





Sayaka Maizono

Makoto...!



Sayaka Maizono

Th-Thank you...



Sayaka Maizono

Hmhm. I kind of figured you'd say that.



Sayaka Maizono

But right now...I haven't figured out exactly what's going on with me.



Absolutely not.

Makoto not only denies that Sayaka's strange; he does it with conviction too. I'd consider this the canon response for him, if there were one.

Huh!? Absolutely not what...?

Makoto's reply is so forceful that it startles Sayaka who's been deep in thought up until now. She then wonders at the very end whether or not she looked obvious to him.

You just feel the way you feel. There's no way I'd ever think that was strange.

Now...even though I'd probably say the same thing, really...we all know this is the default "safe" response. It's part of the reason this isn't the best option, along with him not going 3X as strong as he does in the next choice. But it's still very Makoto. Very, very, very Makoto. In both a good and a bad

way (but that's just me). Unlike the next answer, he also doesn't go, "you can talk to me about anything, anytime".

Makoto...!

She's surprised by his tolerance, even though he hasn't confessed. But the "..." indicate that she's just as surprised by his mind-reading.

Th-Thank you...

Still surprised all around, she barely manages to get a thank you out, as she gets embarrassed over the fact that Makoto read her so easily and comforted her while she was worrying again over seemingly nothing.

Hmhm. I kind of figured you'd say that.

She then blushes for the same reason, being worried over nothing while coming across as transparent. So, she tries to play it off in an obvious lie that—well, it's obvious to us, anyway. It'd better be. And in case it's not apparent, she's referring to if she actually asked him whether he was strange. The earlier surprise and the "So you're a psychic too?" mean they didn't expect him to have heard her thoughts this time (or any other).

But right now...I haven't figured out exactly what's wrong with me.

It's not about, "You're in love, Maizono." No, she's actually referring to why she can't get it out (the confession, that is), and why she gets so self-conscious and fretful whenever it involves Makoto. She knows she's in love, but even she doesn't think it should be *that* severe.

Will you wait, and listen to everything I have to say someday?

That is, will he wait to hear her confession when she's gotten herself together well enough to give it? Who knows when that "someday" will be: she doesn't look too sure of herself. Actually, why's the girl the one trying to confess like this? Not to be sexist, but our man hasn't even thought of making a move, has he?

Eh, if she were that in love with me and I felt sort of similar, I'd have still personally told her to just say whatever she has to say at this point, but Makoto obviously doesn't mind even though...

Of course. I'm ready whenever you are.

...he knows exactly how she feels already. Maybe he's just that polite about things.

Thank you. When that time comes...

I'm not even sure how this scene carries on. I know Sayaka almost certainly wouldn't have known how to finish that sentence, so Makoto probably generically agreed (ala "right") with her or she didn't finish it at all. Well, maybe she just says what she normally says after "having a pretty good time".

Negating "thinks I'm strange" -> "Had a really good time"





Makoto Naegi

I want you to talk to me anytime, about anything.
Don't even hesitate.



Sayaka Maizono

...Okay!



Sayaka Maizono

You really are a wonderful person, aren't you?



Sayaka Maizono

Thank you, Makoto...



Sayaka Maizono

I'm not ready right now, but...when the time comes,
please listen to what I have to say.



Sorry for the out-of-place last few images. I realized I hadn't gotten everything captured and don't feel like going through the game again, so I took these from DanganronpaSchoolMode off Tumblr, a great resource for both the Free-Time events and the School Mode events for the first two Danganronpa games.

Now, more to the conversation, this is essentially a much more positive version of the last one we just saw. A couple of other details separate this reaction from the one just before as well, but the principle is pretty much the same.

Of course you're not a nuisance!

The first half of the first main difference is that Makoto's, of course, arguing that Sayaka's not a nuisance instead of not strange. Choosing one over the other shouldn't mean much if anything at all

to Sayaka (well, strange might be more general than a personal nuisance), but School Mode has Makoto answer entirely differently depending on the decision. This really sucks, since this option here is the best one; but I'll show why Sayaka responds better soon.

Huh...?

But not here: this is just Sayaka being surprised by Makoto's sudden apparent mind-reading abilities again.

Sure, maybe hearing the truth or learning something about someone might change things...

Here we go again.....

But I would never, ever consider that a nuisance!

...mhm. Logically speaking, calling anything resulting from a fact learned about someone a "nuisance" is 90% of the time going to be the incorrect usage of the word anyway. But Makoto's fired up and doesn't care; and Sayaka's seeing him become Ishimakoto, the Deity of Love. All her worries are literally melting away, and...

Makoto...

...while there's still some self-doubting in her that he's gotta clean up, she doesn't know how to react, seeing him like this. I wouldn't call his behavior completely non-canon or out of character, since he acts like this at times in the main game, but it's definitely rare and worth her being speechless. Moreover, there isn't any presence of *doubt* compared to the latent doubt and uncertainty that's always present as he encourages her in the main game.

I want you to talk to me anytime, about anything. Don't even hesitate.

And that's it right there. Why the hell is he so forceful and surefire here? Why is Sayaka being a nuisance so much worse than her being strange? He could dislike her for either reason unless he'd enjoy her strangeness, something that's really for him. But it doesn't warrant such an unequal response between the two. I know there had to be a best choice; there's just no logic behind it. Makoto (almost) literally goes all in here. *This* is the Ultimate Hope speaking to her. *This* is the canon, endgame Makoto speaking to her (figuratively speaking). He's not just bolder, he's more assertive. It's like he's a different person from before.

This Makoto is essentially the romanticized Makoto that Sayaka dreams and daydreams about. The pure and total kindhearted, awe-inspiringly inspirational Makoto the others don't notice until different points far later into the main game.

...Okay!

Almost immediately, she agrees with him. She was still doubting herself some, but not for long after that.

You really are a wonderful person, aren't you?

Yeah, she's totally in love.

Thank you, Makoto...

She's fantasizing and blushing again. Not going to even consider what she's imagining. Partly because somewhere in her last pause...

I'm not ready, but...when the time comes, please listen to what I have to say.

...she begins to doubt herself *again* for whatever reason. To be honest, actually, it's probably wanting to confess at a less embarrassing time after Makoto's pseudo-rant and her near-total feelings being exposed (she didn't *explicitly* confess in the Kokoronpa).

This is the third thing that separates this answer from the last, though: Sayaka goes ahead and *urges* Makoto to listen to her when the time's right. It actually means quite a lot that she isn't *asking* him like the last time. It means that, apparently, she herself is getting a bit bolder and surer about how she feels, thanks to him. Likewise, she never said anything was "wrong" with her. Cheers.

Definitely. I'm looking forward to it.

Super Makoto's still in action. And he genuinely sounds much more into it than he did in the last answer.

So am I...

Once again, she's fantasizing about, presumably, confessing—and what would happen next. If this reaction is anything to go by, Sayaka seems to respond better to this forceful Makoto than the regular, meeker Makoto. And with good reason: this one's cooler, more charismatic, and doesn't have a backdrop personality.

There are events in the canon that support this, by the way. Like when he comforted her after that scene I haven't yet mentioned. The one dealing with the DVD's. Like when he calmed her down when she first broke down by offering her lunch. Like when he went on his spiel that convinced her not to get a self-defense weapon.

For this reason (since it's the most positive), I'd have to consider this choice closer to the canon than the others, though they're all ultimately non-canon. But School Mode in the end does give us a fairly accurate and definitely interesting insight into Sayaka's disposition and other random/important things about her.

So, finally, we're done with School Mode. I'd just like to say, before I move on, that I personally couldn't give the slightest damn how *anyone* feels about this pairing. I don't even care how *I* feel about it—and *I* don't like this pairing *at all*. I used to not like Makoto at all either. But there's only *one* pairing in this entire series that's canon (as of DR2).

This one.

The "DR3 anime" does confirm Makoto and Kirigiri as a canon couple, but the DR3 anime is terrible and most no one likes it. This relationship revolves around Makoto finally moving on due to Sayaka's having been dead for months and months, along with Kirigiri's softening up and even sacrificing herself to save Makoto's life. Even though she was revived shortly afterwards because she's a "fan-favorite yet not-so-complex" character. Though the "not-so-complex" characters usually are more of the fans' favorites.

I mean, she is relatively complex—but not relative to Sayaka.

Anyway, if she sacrificed herself for real, good on her. I have nothing against other shippings. I don't care about shippings in general. But people confound their "shippings" with what these characters are stated to actually like, and that's denying reality. Whatever happens in the future with Makoto and Kirigiri now that Sayaka's dead still won't change the fact that Sayaka was Makoto's first true love and that Makoto was Sayaka's *only* true love. The pairing is forever valid, forever canon.

And now, about being "done" with School Mode...or, not really.

There's, in fact, one more thing I've got to cover before I'm finished with it. It's regarding "the mask" and not canon in the slightest (neither is "the mask" itself), but it should let you know what I'm looking for if I'm ever to consider that concept as truth. I'll bring the concept as a whole up later below. But just for support, this should be a sufficient example:





What we've got in School Mode here is Makoto being out-of-character again. He's not trying to be a jerk, but...he's inviting Sayaka to hang out on a date, then telling her he's feeling bored moments after she's standing awkwardly silent and nervous, once they got to where he suggested they go. She's obviously going to be wondering if she's responsible for his boredom.

You can also say that in a matter-of-fact tone, he's simply pointing out that the place looks rather boring. It's a dumb remark to make without following it up with something else, but only Sayaka would have the reaction she has to him saying that.

So, he's still being obtuse here even though the last line lets us know he was potentially just trying to start some kind of conversation by saying that.

Her response would be a good example of "the mask" in action if the scene were at all canon. The reaction should honestly be rather clear, and it's actually hard for me to explain it because of how apparent it is. I'll try, though:

That apology is a tense apology. When Sayaka hears that Makoto's possibly feeling bored after inviting her out, she immediately starts to worry and question whether she did something wrong. Yet when she tries to ask him if he's bothered, she realizes she's too afraid at how he'll react/if she'll say something wrong and stops—*then* she puts on a smile to frantically try and persuade him to stay, apologizing for good measure. She doesn't show any signs of nervousness to the point that she could be acting snarky and sarcastic in response to him, but even Makoto knows Sayaka better than to assume that. And we know that's not Sayaka's nature, let alone around the person she's most seeking validation from. Although she's not showing any signs of nervousness of the outside, however, she's practically *begging* him to stay on the inside.

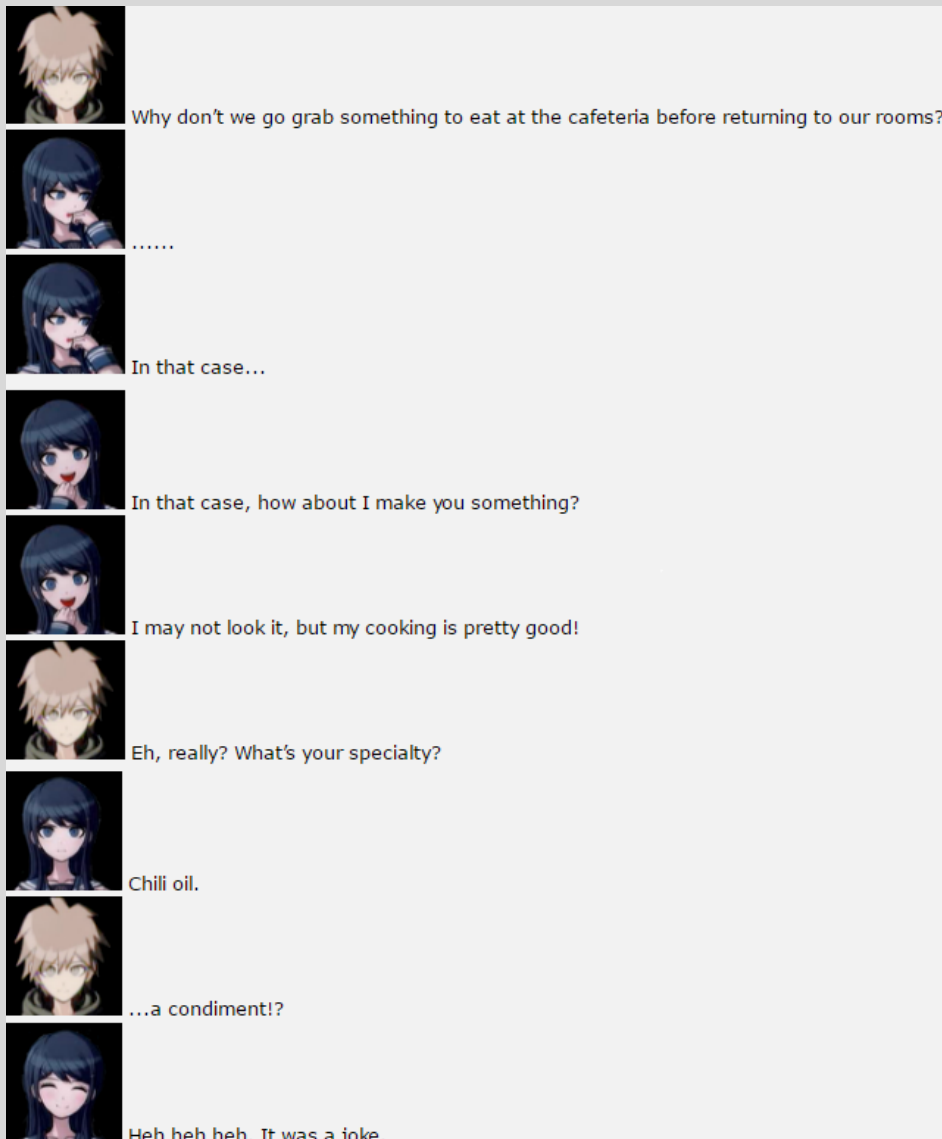
This is what the mask should be. It's definitely not some perpetual façade she's putting on, like people assume it to be. She's extremely nervous and trying well not to show it. That's perfectly evident here, and there's nothing to dispute. Ultimately it doesn't count as official, but remember this scene when I point out that common fallacy.

"The Mask"

As a matter of fact, let me just go ahead and deal with "the mask" now that we're *finally* out of School Mode. I don't have a better transition on hand anyway, and debunking this falsity will make it easier when getting to the darker scenes with Sayaka.

First, then, I'll just explain where it came from—actually, there's only two possibilities as to how this theory originated:

- 1) Someone gathered Sayaka was smiling a lot but broke down at a few key moments when she feared losing her old life (paraphrasing that right there), and they figured she was one of those smiling characters who was a perfect actor, only smiling to hide the crushing pain of her existence falling apart and somehow managing to fool everyone at the same time.
- 2) Someone read Makoto's brilliant analysis below and took it literally despite him being dead wrong.



Then #1'ers and #2'ers might've mixed a little #2 and #1 in with their theories, but both theories are equally wrong. After which they spread those theories where Sayaka was generally putting on a mask that somehow only we (and Makoto) noticed for the entire time she was alive—some might say she dropped it at certain points, but the concept is wrong no matter what the case. Now we've got more people than necessary believing that Sayaka never came at any situation honestly. That she was always trying to fool everyone around her.

Don't get me wrong: It's all well and good that people are realizing there's more to Sayaka than the cheerful idol exterior she shows. Nonetheless, these people have come to the wrong conclusion: the mask theory only implies there's two levels of depth, or dimensions, to Sayaka's character—there are, in fact, five.

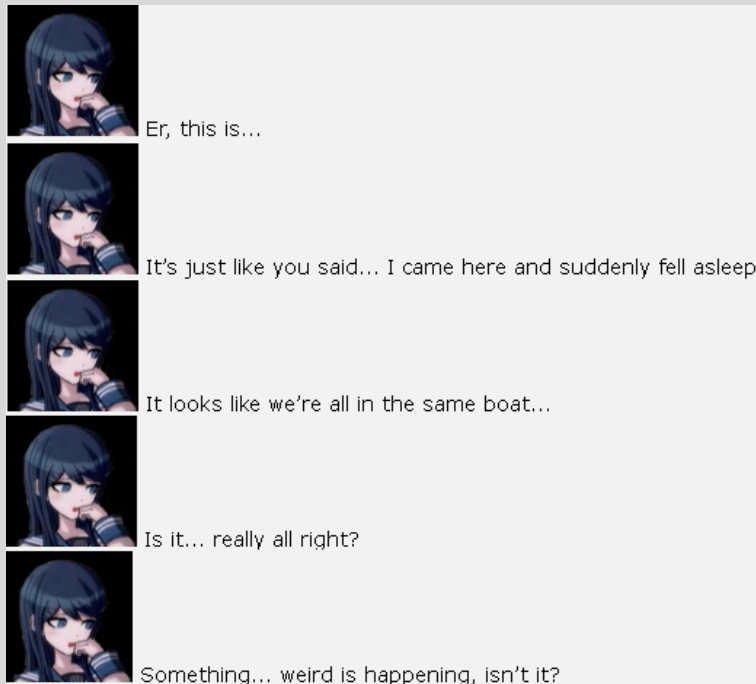
See, The Mask theory, which I'll call "Masked Maizono" from here on, suggests that beneath Sayaka's openly kind and cheerful personality, there's a lot of turmoil.

That's it.

That's not only inaccurate: it's selling her short. Instead of summing it up in one sentence, though, I'll explain why Masked Maizono's out and then summarize her character up until she watches the motivational DVD.

Here's the **first of all** for why Masked Maizono's out...

...all of the lines she says in public that show her not putting on an act:



...

...okay, forget it. I'm going to directly copy out some in-game text and show you some of her honest emotional expressions in the document. If we're going all out, we might as well go *all out*:



And why isn't there anyone here? Walking through the halls, I didn't see a single person...



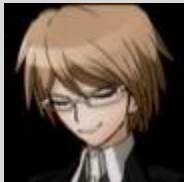
Where did all the other students disappear to? Why is our class the only one here?



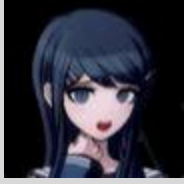
T...that's not why we're worried...!



Hey, wait a minute! You can't say that!



...am I wrong?



T...that is...



.....



...but this is not the time to be happy. We're locked in here, after all.



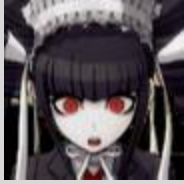
Talking to you has made me feel a lot better about all this....



But *you're* the one that helped me find my courage again. Not any of those "ultimate" students.



If we keep to the school rules, it will be easy to become terrified once night arrived.



We will keep imagining someone coming to kill us. [Now we get what Sayaka meant.]



Eh...!?

No: There's more.



Yes?



Good morning, Maizono-san.



Ah, Naegi-kun. You came just at the right time!



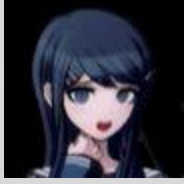
The right time?



You see, I have a small request...



A small request?



I was just about to go out myself now. I thought maybe you could join me...?



I don't mind, but where did you plan to go?



Well...



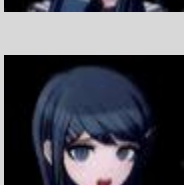
I thought maybe I could find some kind of weapon for self-defense somewhere...



S... self-defense...!?



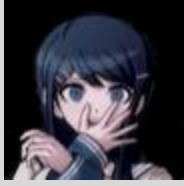
I mean, we can never know when the people who locked us all here decides to come attacking one of us...



So I thought I should at least be prepared to protect my own body if something happened...



I... I will protect you...



You... will?



Thank... you...



If I can count on you as a friend... I don't need a self-defense weapon anymore.



Um,



.....



I know I said I wanted to talk, but when push comes to shove, I don't know what to say...



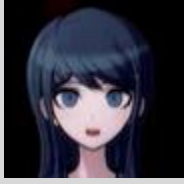
I'm sorry...



It's okay, don't worry.



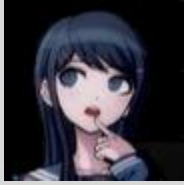
If you don't have anything to say, it's fine to just be quiet.



Eh?



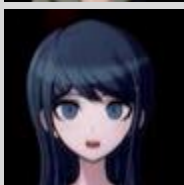
Instead of trying to have an unnatural conversation, isn't it fine for two people to just enjoy some time together quietly?



Quietly, huh?



Ah, but... you will probably get bored! Sitting here without doing anything...



Nope. I won't get bored or anything. It's just...



I'm not... used to it. Not speaking.



I...is that so?

([Makoto] Maizono-san isn't a regular high school student like me. She's probably constantly busy and surrounded with people.)



.....



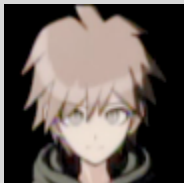
Um, I know it's sudden...



But do you have a... dream, Naegi-kun?



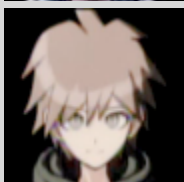
Eh? A dream?



I don't think so... I'm still searching for one...



Oh, I see. It would be nice if you found one, Naegi-kun.



Y... yeah...

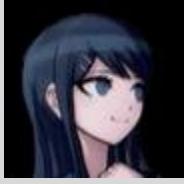
*([Makoto] She seems troubled. I wonder what's wrong?
Does it have anything to do with dreams?)*



So how about your dreams?



Can you tell me about them?



My... dreams...



Ever since I was a little girl, I always admired the idols.



There were just the two of us. Me and my father, you see.



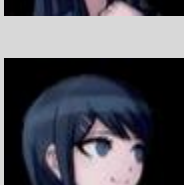
Dad used to work until late every single day. I was always alone at home.



I was just a child... It was a little lonely...



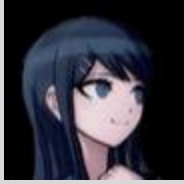
But the thing that eased my loneliness was the lives of the idols I could see reflected on the TV screen.



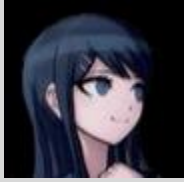
They were like big sisters to me. They could sing and dance really well...



And best of all... their smiles...



When I looked at their smiles, my loneliness was forgotten in the blink of an eye.



That's why I always wanted to become an idol like them. Someone who can give other people strength.



...And I managed to make my dream come true.



That's really amazing. Having your childhood dream come true!



It's really... great...



.....



In order to make that dream come true, I was prepared to do anything.



Even bad things... Really... anything...



Eh?



If you chase after your dreams, you can make them come true. I honestly believe that.



But if you want that to happen, you must never lose sight of your goal...



Even when you feel like you're living in a nightmare... Whether you're awake or asleep...



To make your dreams come true, you must always have them in sight.



In my business, if you let yourself relax for even a second, you can be put away and forgotten. Did you know that?



So you must always swim with the current without stopping to catch your breath.



It really is that kind of world.



I... didn't realize it was that difficult.



So... you aren't having fun...?



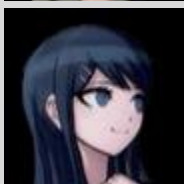
No, that's not how it is at all. Everything is really fun. Honestly!



But... that's why I'm so scared...



Eh...?



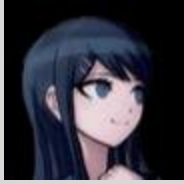
Right now... every day is really fun.



In my current group we're all great friends... We may be rivals sometimes, but we all like each other...



Those girls were my precious best friends ever since we all had our start in the business.



If they weren't there... I would probably have given up my dream a long time ago.



Making our dreams come true together, working together. I'm really happy right now.



But... that's exactly... why I sometimes get scared.

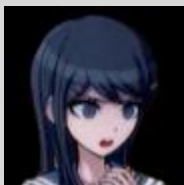


What if the world suddenly gets tired of us... When that happens... what will we all do?

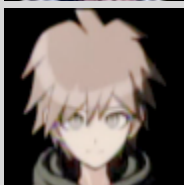


Our dreams will be gone, our fun days will come to an end. Everyone will go their separate ways...

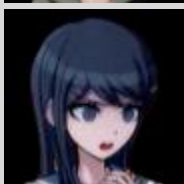
(Ma...maizono-san... She's shaking...? She looks... really afraid... It's her treasured dream she earned through unimaginable hard work. Maizono-san is really afraid of losing that.)



That's the reason I decided to join Hope's Peak Academy.



Eh...? What do you mean?



They say everyone who graduates from here is successful in everything they do, right?



If that's the case... I thought I could make everyone in my group stay together forever...



That's... what I thought...



But... instead...



We're locked in this place and can't get out...



I'm sure... my friends are waiting for me...



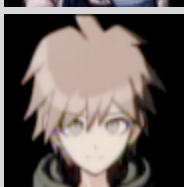
Even though the more time passes... the more we're going to be forgotten...



It takes no time at all... to be erased...



That's why...



Maizono...san?



I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR ANY OF THIS!!

(That was the first time I heard her scream straight from inside her soul. It was real anger. But she had every right to be angry. I mean, because she's locked here, all the hard work she and her friends put into making their dreams come true might be for nothing. No, I can't simply call it "hard work". For someone like me, there is no way to measure the burden on her shoulders.)



I'm sorry.



I made you listen to my silly complaints...



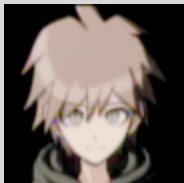
Are you... mad with me?



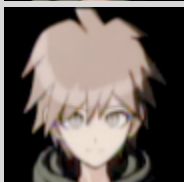
N...no. How can I possibly be?



I'm sorry...



...



Hey, Maizono-san,



Are you hungry, by any chance?



Why don't we go grab something to eat at the cafeteria before returning to our rooms?



.....



In that case...



In that case, how about I make you something?



I may not look it, but my cooking is pretty good!



Eh, really? What's your specialty?



Chili oil.



...a condiment!?



Heh heh heh. It was a joke.

And this is all by *just* the first major interaction Makoto has with her. Nowhere in any of this text is she putting on a mask. Even in that last scene, when she has her first meltdown, she's being completely honest with him. As far as she's concerned, that's the *problem*.

In the beginning, Sayaka doesn't know what to say because she's not used to having free-time. But when Makoto and her both mention how much time she had to be busy as the reason she's not good at random conversation, **that's when she thinks of her old life**.

She then tries to railroad Makoto into letting her talk about her old life and how she really felt about what was happening to her. All for her comfort: by asking him *his* goals. Once he predictably says nothing of importance, and then asks her what the deal is with her dream (she probably only expected the latter though), she begins smiling and reflecting on her past in detail.

Her expression when she says "I... My dream is..." and that response itself confused me for a while. Why would she reply this way to his question when she expected and wanted him to ask about her dream?

The answer is because Sayaka's trying to reassure herself. Partly because she had accomplished so much and she dwelled on it to help cheer her up some; partly because she was with Makoto and she knew he would listen to her "silly complaints" later on and hopefully make her feel better.

But as she goes on, she gets caught up in her own words and negative thoughts and starts spiraling down in a haze of worry and fear. Then, her anxiety grows more and more until she begins thinking entirely about everything she's going to lose. At that point, she gets enraged that all of this is happening to her and ends up screaming at Makoto.

It's important to understand that she didn't even realize beforehand that she'd get so angry while talking to Makoto. Why would she want to yell at him? And want to feel terrible? And that's why she apologized later.

The entire chain makes sense if you think about it: Makoto is the perfect medium through which she can express her true feelings. After all, she loves him in part because he's perfectly understanding. She'd done that with him and him alone up until now. When she confessed how safe he made her feel and how she put all of her trust into him; when she basically said she loved him; when she told him how scared she was; when she told him *everything* in this scene...it was all exclusive to him.

To kill the mask theory, though, that *does* mean she was hiding those feelings from everyone else; but that *doesn't* mean she was hiding under a false persona to fool everyone else into thinking she wasn't being bothered at all, or even bothered in those personal areas—since she never *brought those areas up*.

She was still openly expressing her nervousness and concern in front of the others; the only difference was that the deeper, more personal subjects, she only felt comfortable sharing with Makoto. Isn't that how most people are? I mean, if I tell you I'm scared of amusement parks but don't tell you I nearly fell out of a rollercoaster because it's extremely harrowing to recall in detail, am I hiding behind a mask? Masked Maizono doesn't make much sense, does it?

Yet although she *didn't* realize beforehand that she'd get angry, that didn't *not* make him the perfect medium for her to want to confess/vent everything she'd been holding in up until then. Ironically, because she was talking to Makoto and he was the one person with whom she could "cry out from deep within herself"—but on purpose—that's what she did. Unfortunately, she just never thought she'd lose control.

But it wasn't just that last scream this applies to:

"(Sayaka) But that's the thing that scares me the most.

If the world gets tired of us, then what happens? What happens to us?

Then the dream dies, those wonderful days come to an end, and everyone goes their separate ways..."

([Makoto] S-Sayaka...

She's trembling...

She must be terrified.

She worked so hard, sacrificed so much, to get where she is. She must be terrified of losing it.)

"(Sayaka) So that's the reason I decided to come to Hope's Peak."

"(Makoto) Huh? What do you mean?"

"(Sayaka) Well... they say that if you graduate from here, success is basically guaranteed.

Which means I could keep on performing with my best friends, for ever and ever.

At least, that's what I thought.

I really did believe that, but...

...now we're trapped here, with no way out.

They're probably waiting for me...

While I'm in here, the world out there is forgetting about me.

Minute by minute, we're all disappearing.

But still..."

"(Makoto) Sayaka...?"

"(Sayaka) I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE STUCK IN HERE!!"

It was *all* of this. That entire time.

And sure: Sayaka was "half-terrified". She was "half-livid" too. I want to stress that although she was obviously speaking to Makoto for the entire scene, she was speaking to Makoto for the *entire* scene. As she got angrier and angrier, she was actually, unwittingly, *ranting* at Makoto.

Once her expression changed...



...she was still speaking to Makoto, but she was starting to think of how much she was losing, why she was being trapped there, what her situation was now—and most importantly, towards the end, what her limited, awful options were to get out (which, understandably, looked grim and undesirable to her). Then she screamed at him, again on purpose, because she couldn't contain how angry she was and wanted someone to hear—and at that moment, only *he* could've been that someone.

That's my personal view of how things had to be at that moment. Once more, though, from her point of view, there's no way she truly meant to shout at him: she just *couldn't* control her anger.

So it adds up.

She might've screamed at herself several times the same way while she was alone in her room (no one would've heard), but Makoto was the only person there she felt she could be completely open with.

And then, she looks at Makoto and sees he's just awkwardly staring back at her, feeling somewhat guilty as well. He *was* sympathetic, but whether or not she noticed that wouldn't have changed the fact that she believes she killed the mood. Sayaka immediately picks up on his expression and realizes she screwed everything up, apologizing for ruining the mood and embarrassing him. Then she tries to trivialize her issues so Makoto doesn't feel too guilty, hoping he wasn't put off by her anger. Then she apologizes again. Note that she isn't apologizing to save the scene—when she finally comes to, she's well aware that she already ruined it. She's genuinely sorry for losing control of herself here.

However, it's also important to understand why she screamed what she did. "I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR ANY OF THIS!!" is a pretty good translation, and not any different from "I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE STUCK IN HERE!!" and I'm sure you understand the context of her frustration there. But allow me to go into it a little

more, because it just so happens to be the perfect time to help any skeptics understand *why* she betrayed Makoto and plotted to kill someone.

Now, you already know that Sayaka's not as innocent as many thought she was. We can throw that notion out the window and look at her in an unbiased light. She's definitely being broken in the above scene, but it's not as though she were hiding behind a *smile* and plotting then: because of the nature of her pragmatic, serious and cynical character, she was *already* susceptible to being lured in by the ultimatum of "kill someone without getting caught" that Monokuma offered.

But her past made her even more susceptible.

Recall that in this scene, she accidentally slips into talking about not wanting to disappear. The fact that she subconsciously did this alone should tell you that it's her biggest fear alongside, perhaps, Makoto, her idol friends (i.e., "only friends"), or her father dying.

So, "Yeah, yeah, she doesn't want to lose her job."

No. It's more than that.

With each passing *hour*, the chance of her friends abandoning her and breaking off after all the work they put into building each other up, all the work *she* put into building *them* up grows greater. The chance of her never being able to inspire anyone again like she had by the *millions* grows greater. The chance of her losing her very identity and becoming *nothing* grows greater. The chance of forever losing the one thing that ever made her truly happy grows greater. The one thing she spent years of her life trying to reach no matter *what* the cost or *what* the toll.

It's one thing to lose everything you know after a hard fight, but to just have your life whittle away completely because you're powerless to do anything? While everyone else knows they can continue dreaming after they just get out of this place, Sayaka doesn't have that luxury. If it's too late for her, the field wouldn't want her back: idols are usually short-lived anyway, and they're in abundance. She's going through each day in that school with the anxiety of not knowing whether it's all over for her or not. No one else there is in this kind of pressure.

I guess an okay comparison would be if your math teacher's passing back those final exams you took a week ago. You don't know how well you did, but you're fearing the worst. Those short moments before s/he reaches your table is going to have your heart and stomach feeling much heavier than once you actually get the paper, regardless of what your grade is.

The uncertainty of everything is wearing on her because she just can't know *what's* actually happening to her—that's why she screams at Makoto that she doesn't have time to be screwing around, wasting time in that school. For *any* reason. Ironically, had she actually *known* what happened in the outside world (as in, before the memory wipe), she wouldn't have broken down from anxiety attacks like this one. Because she would've eventually come to terms with the fact that there was no one for her to reach: society had collapsed.

And if you say she could just "get another job," i.e., "missing the point entirely," that's not only missing the point of that idolizing being her truest dream and everything she poured her life and soul into, it's missing the point of...well, the paragraph above. She feels as though she has a *purpose* in life, and that purpose is to be influential enough to help others. She feels as though she has a real *family* now, and that family only exists so long as she and her girls are together.

That's on top of her generally worrying what's happening to her friends and father while she's locked up too. As in, their *safety*. Not that she probably saw her father more than once in a blue moon after she became a serious idol, but she still *loved* him.

Sorry, I just felt that was important to get out of the way—but please don't forget it.

So, we were at, "Then she tries to trivialize her issues so Makoto doesn't feel too guilty, hoping he wasn't put off by her anger. Then she apologizes again."

This deal:



I'm sorry.



I made you listen to my silly complaints...



Are you... mad with me?



N...no. How can I possibly be?



I'm sorry...

Makoto's not really sure how to follow up her apologizing, though, and he tries to change the subject to going to the cafeteria. Sayaka realizes what he's doing, and she fears that her outburst ruined their moment for good.

So, she tries to change the subject as well: offering to cook. I touched up on this earlier, but now's the second analysis. That entire offer is planned and not at all genuine, as we can see. For one, she and we all know she can't cook. She doesn't have any business suggesting she cook for him, especially not after he's already suggested they eat something from the cafeteria. Second, we see in the dialogue that she hesitates before making the offer because she's trying to think of something she feels he'd want to hear or find interesting.

In the end, to sum it again, Sayaka's embarrassed and worried after losing her composure and apologizes. Makoto then tries to change the subject by suggesting they get something to eat (not really sure why he assumes that would help matters—unless he's stereotyping), but Sayaka still feels as though she's made Makoto feel a little uncomfortable. So, she looks for a way to lighten the mood. What she comes up with is suggesting she cook for him instead, and when he makes a surprised remark about her claiming she can cook, she lies by saying she's better than she looks. Then when he asks what her best dish is, she replies with a condiment, fully aware that's not a dish. Of course, the whole thing was *the* joke she planned to lighten the mood: "she can't cook for anything". However, Makoto quickly forgets about the joke itself and focuses on how quickly her mood changed as she laughed at her joke.

Though strikingly unfunny, whether or not she intended to make Makoto laugh with it doesn't matter much. Her main point was to take Makoto's mind off the grave atmosphere from earlier and make him not want to worry about her.

It didn't work. Partially because it was unfunny. (On a side note, you might wonder how she could say that condiment with such a straight face after her meltdown earlier—well, that's because she was still in a heavy, serious mood, of course. Which is part of why the laughter afterwards was forced.)

But as far as Masked Maizono goes here, her smiling and laughter is forced and fake; but she's doing it to try and cheer Makoto up—not somehow hide how she feels. It'd be illogical to try to hide that anyway, as she'd just showed him in person how worried and frustrated she was after admitting and explaining it to him when he clearly didn't understand.

Masked Maizono, like all psychological "masks" in characterization, implies that she's putting on an emotional front so people believe she's more composed than she actually is. That is the concept of "the mask" in general. At least in this sort of narrative sense.

But we not only see her openly worrying in the scenes before Makoto's major interaction with her, we see her intentionally telling him her worst fears, then trying to take his mind off being worried for her when her fears accidentally get the best of her. She even blatantly apologizes to him—twice—after she loses her composure around him. So, again, what mask exactly is she trying to fool Makoto, herself, or anyone else with?

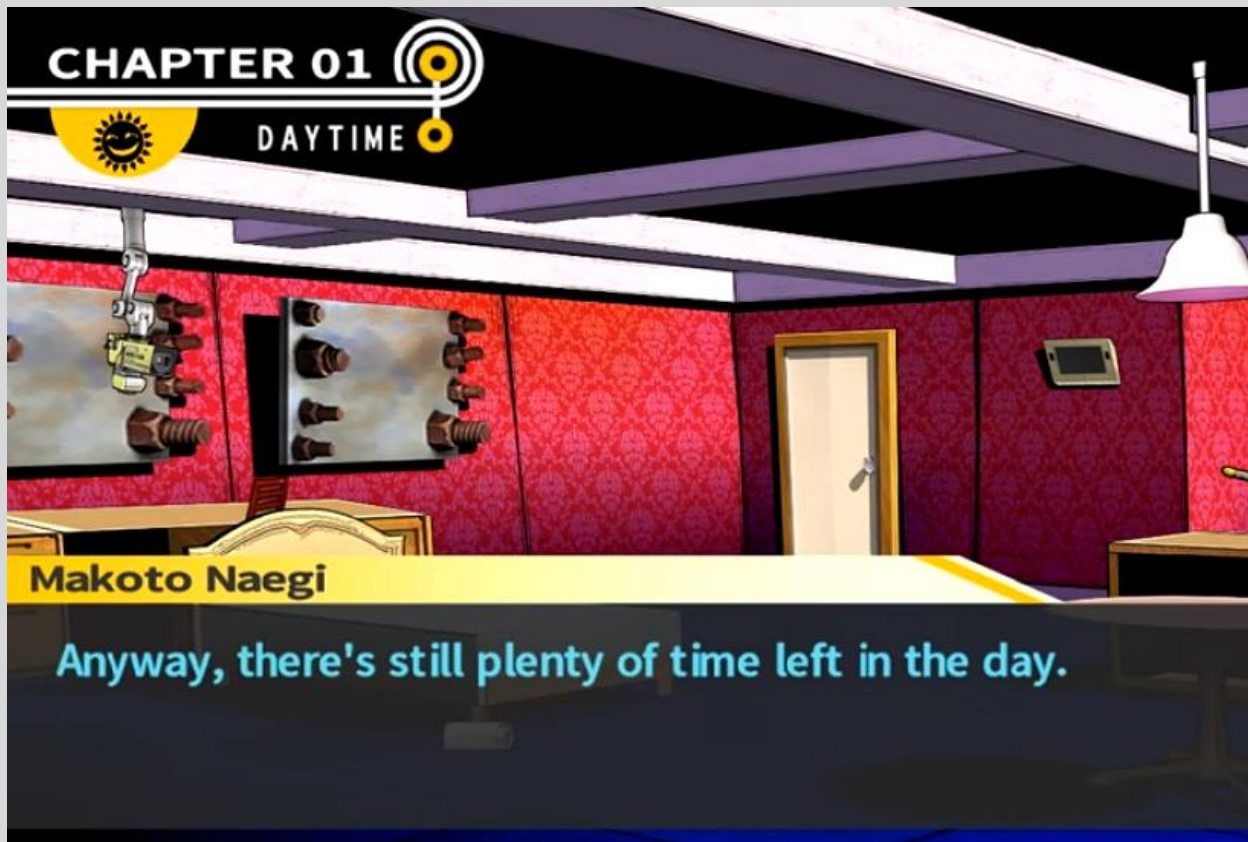
It's the exact *opposite* principle of wearing a figurative mask: if Sayaka were wearing a mask in even that last scene, she would've wanted Makoto to think she was worried like everyone else—when she'd have *actually*, in reality, not been worried much at all. Goes against basic logic completely, right?

This is what that theory implies, though: that Sayaka's hiding her true feelings from everyone. Meaning her *confession* to Makoto would've been a part of the mask.

But not only do we *not* get a mask here, the point's hammered in when, chronologically, Makoto shows up at Sayaka's door hours later to talk to her, deciding to cheer her up once he finds out her fear and frustration has stopped her from sleeping (which she reads him to find out, expectedly).

After reading his mind (since she asks whether he'll try to cheer her up, meaning he didn't state he would) Sayaka apologizes for the scene before, and for the fact that Makoto's feeling the need to take time out of his day to personally comfort her. This is right before he spends time cheering her up, whereupon she's then reminded of that life-changing "crane" incident with him she meant to bring up—before her meltdown the scene before stopped her.

How do I know these two scenes happened within hours of each other? Because right after they eat following her meltdown, events proceed this way:



Continued below



CHAPTER 01
DAYTIME

Makoto Naegi

I really don't feel like just sitting here. Maybe I'll take a look around...



CHAPTER 01
DAYTIME

Makoto Naegi

I really don't feel like just sitting here. Maybe I'll take a look around...



CHAPTER 01
DAYTIME

If you'd prefer **not to engage in free time**, you can always choose to simply **go to sleep to skip it**.



CHAPTER 01
DAYTIME

Anyway, why don't you try it out by spending some time with Miss **Sayaka Maizono**?



CHAPTER 01
DAYTIME

She's the ideal partner to begin with, don't you think?

Makoto can always skip Free-Time event exploration/interactions with other students by choosing to go to sleep instead of staying up. But this very moment after Sayaka's outburst, heading to her room is the only option that progresses the story.

For those who hate the fact that Sayaka's first Free-Time event is forced (seriously, it's just a single FTE; come on now), the meta explanation makes sense in lore. Because Sayaka had just nearly broken down moments ago, and it makes sense that Makoto wouldn't want to just go to sleep a couple hours after that. He'd want to check on her.



N...naegi-kun...



I'm... restless. I think I'm scared after all...

([Makoto] What should I do? Should I try inviting Maizono-san to spend time with me?)



Are you going to...try and cheer me up?



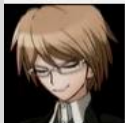
I'm sorry for... taking up so much of your time...

Rather genuine, if you ask me.

Needless to say, where there's a first of all, there's a **second of all**. Now what I've shown are all just a bunch of little details that let us know the theory's wrong. But they're separate enough to section like this. For instance, look at Kyoko's perception of Sayaka:



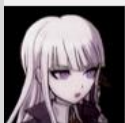
...Ah, Togami! Did you see Maizono by any chance?



Should I have? I just came here from my room right now.



Maybe she... forgot about our breakfast plan?



Someone as... reliable as her?

The original text has Kirigiri say: "I got the sense she always has her stuff together..."

This is the only direct line from Kirigiri about Sayaka besides her "hypothesis" after the Case 1 verdict and her quote in her analysis of Sayaka's character in the official guidebook. The line is from before the trial commences, and it's before the missing Sayaka's discovered; so we have Kirigiri's purest possible interpretation of Sayaka's character without any bias. Though, it's backed up: don't forget Sayaka wanted *out* of that prison more than anyone there, from the very beginning. So, even if it meant she had to work with others, she was going to do what she needed to do to give herself the best chance. This

was why Kirigiri had this impression of such an always-on-time individual...in addition to Sayaka's not being able to sleep, as she said.

And that quote means exactly what you think it means. She didn't expect Maizono to have gotten into any trouble (even so much as being late once) because she always looked like she had everything under control and was in good standing with everyone. Kirigiri hadn't yet searched Makoto's room, so she couldn't form any opinion of her other than from how she portrayed herself in public. How did Maizono portray herself in public? As happy; as sad; as nervous; and confident; as disappointed—everything but angry, because she never felt a reason to be angry if she wasn't thinking about angry thoughts.

Now, considering that Sayaka shows both negative and positive emotions and that Kirigiri is great at empathizing with others and understanding their motivations (Case 4's ending, "You're the Ultimate Hope," calling out the mastermind, defending Sakura, Chihiro's gender [though that was fairly "hands-on"], etc.), why couldn't Kirigiri realize that Sayaka's positive emotions were a perpetual "front"?

Maybe because Sayaka was just reacting *naturally* to situations and *not* forcing artificial emotions? Like a...human?

And there's gonna be a **third of all** too. We've already seen that Sayaka openly shows her nervousness in front of everyone, especially Celes and Byakuya, when they intimidate her (Celes in particular trying to scare Sayaka for fun.....in order to ease her own insecurities.)

This time, we'll look more at Makoto's side specifically, since he started the whole Masked Maizono theory.

Makoto himself shoots many holes in what he probably didn't *mean* to be a legitimate analysis of Sayaka's personality. Not only does he never treat or think of Sayaka any differently after he makes that statement, he never mentions her supposed "mask" ever again. Indeed, he says the same thing about Kirigiri, someone who acts *completely different* from Sayaka, just because she didn't want to tell him her Ultimate title. Which she didn't know. So maybe that counts:

"(Makoto) Well... I guess you don't have to tell me."

"(Kirigiri) No, I *don't* have to tell you. So I'm not going to."

[(Makoto) Nothing about her turned up online, so I was thinking maybe she got picked by chance like me, but...]

"(Kirigiri) ..."

[(Makoto) Her face is like an iron mask. If she doesn't want to tell me anything, no point in asking.]

In truth, although this was a seriously wrong assumption to make of Sayaka, Makoto was never serious about it...as opposed to quite a few unfortunate, misinformed individuals online. The entire statement was nothing more than an analogy where Makoto tried to find a way to personally describe Sayaka's sudden happiness that he couldn't comprehend. But what he *knew* was that she *wasn't* happy.

And she wasn't trying to make him think she was suddenly fine so he could *forget* everything he saw—she was forcing herself to act happy for him to *make up* for what he'd seen. He just didn't understand

how she could do it so well. That's not a mask: that's plain old good acting skills. And as for her acting, I'll go into that later, as she only does it in one other scene. I can explain the difference between good acting and wearing a figurative mask, though:

Good acting is being able to convey a certain disposition that isn't one's natural disposition. Sayaka was able to convey that she was immediately cheered up, even though she'd just screamed in anger. Makoto knew she couldn't have been completely fine when her problems were constant; but he was still surprised by how quickly she appeared to cheer up, and he could only rationalize it by assuming she were wearing a mask of sorts—a "neutral" expression because her forced feelings and actual feelings would've been canceling each other out.

With this ability to act, Sayaka wasn't trying to fool Makoto into believing her earlier outburst was fake by disguising her feelings: she was using her acting skills to try and convince Makoto that she'd calmed down and he had nothing to be concerned about over her stress—it was just a one-time moment that wasn't usually anywhere near that serious; it was just a "silly complaint".

But putting on a mask is different. Putting on a mask is trying to hide one's actual feelings and expressions with fabricated feelings and expressions, in order to make others (or oneself) believe the actual feelings don't exist. Because the one putting on the mask, for whatever reason, doesn't want them to be acknowledged or, for some reason, isn't able to reveal them.

Sayaka obviously didn't have a problem letting others know how she felt. She showed how she felt to literally everyone, so that would mean the feelings she showed had to be a part of the mask. Those feelings were exclusively feelings of nervousness, seriousness, and caution. She wasn't completely cheery around anyone *but* Makoto, and that was because she only trusted Makoto to "relax" around.

Then, does that mean *her solemn disposition* was the mask she showed? That's the only way Masked Maizono could justify itself. Because even though Sayaka wasn't letting her guard down and getting too comfortable around everyone besides Makoto, she was still being honest with everyone. Whatever feelings she showed them were completely genuine, only subdued because that was itself part of her personality: being prudent with how she interacted with others just in case they had ill intentions. She simply didn't let herself get carried away.

But not willing to open up completely isn't the same as disguising your true emotions and statements. Maizono herself admitted, while smiling and reflecting with an off-gaze, that she enjoyed her time with her closest friends, and she considered them literal rivals (as they considered her so). That is, rivals to her very way of living. It just came with the territory was all. So...is this a lie as well?

Now the **fourth of all**—but I'm almost done: remember this line?

"(Sayaka) Anyway, I'm really glad... that I know somebody here. Talking to you has made me feel a lot better about all this... You're amazing, Makoto!"

"(Makoto) N-No, I'm really not... I'm nothing at all compared to you 'ultimates'."

"But you're the one that helped me find my courage again. Not any of those "ultimate" students."

"Thank you for saying that..."

"And to thank you for helping me out, I'm going to become your Ultimate Assistant!"

We know what this means, or we should after the explanation I gave. This entire conversation flies in the face of Masked Maizono because of what Sayaka's admitting.

Even if Makoto doesn't realize she was planning to act on cynical judgments, he should easily know that she was feeling doubtful about any optimism in her situation. One, because it happened right after she conceded to Togami when he shot down her protest for everyone to cooperate. Two, because Monokuma had just appeared to give his dreadful introduction, worrying everyone including her. And again, she'd voiced her uneasiness about this situation many times by then.

Masked Maizono in this case wouldn't even *want* Makoto to know she'd lost her courage, right?

Okay, so that should all be logical. And lastly, there's two more parts to this point:

"(Sayaka) That's why I wanted to try and talk to you just once. I just never thought it would be in [these] kind of circumstances..."

([Makoto] Yeah. If we'd met again at a train station somewhere downtown, that'd make for a nice dramatic reunion... But instead, it's this weird school.)

"(Sayaka) Maybe, but still... I'm sure you'll help me find my way out, just like that crane. You'll save me. It's just intuition, I know, but I still believe it."

You can probably see it already, but I'll really keep it short this time: Sayaka is supposedly wearing a mask, yet she goes out of her way to let Makoto know she's hoping he can help her escape the school and save her life. Why isn't she trying to hide how much she's depending on him—from him?

"(Sayaka) ...And I managed to make my dream come true."

"(Makoto) That's really amazing. Having your childhood dream come true! It's really... great... (*notices she now looks more serious*)"

"I did whatever it took to reach that dream. I mean it. Even some things that... weren't so pleasant."

"Eh?"

Unlike the other parts, this doesn't even have anything to do with the Killing Game, but I didn't want to make a fifth point. It's just as important, however...

...because...*why* would she tell Makoto this incredibly dangerous and risky information in the first place...? If she's wearing an "idol mask," it makes no sense that she'd imply, on purpose, that she didn't become an idol cleanly. That actually goes against the concept of the general mask of purity that idols wear. The image they're all required to convey to their fanbase, whether in public or in private.

And you could say, "Well, it's Makoto, so it's different." But that would be wrong because, whether she could be sure he'd snitch or not (she couldn't), we see that Sayaka values her dream just as much as Makoto, if not more. She put *unimaginable* effort into building it, and she knew it longer. I'll get to that argument later, though.

And also...I didn't think I was going to do a **fifth of all** for space purposes, but...I am. You probably don't care since you've ideally stuck around this long already, so thanks. Really, though, this reason is more than important: in truth, it's a crucial part of understanding Sayaka's character. Maybe after posting the image, you'll understand what I mean:



If not, I'll go into right now. More is said in these three lines than a lot of people seem to realize, apparently, or otherwise both "Masked Maizono" wouldn't exist and more people would acknowledge the obvious legitimacy of Naezono.

To get through this, however, I'll just explain each line as I've done before. Yes, it's boring. But that should allow me to say everything I have to say. *(And at the start of this scene, she's very formally asking if she can pose Makoto a question. Makoto asks why it's so formal, and she says it's because she knows she can count on him. In other words, because she respects him like no one else. Probably not a lie.)*

So:

"Having you by side really makes me feel a lot better"

Why wouldn't she be feeling well? Or...why does she need to feel better? She doesn't have everything together without him? There goes Masked Maizono, immediately right out the window.

"If you weren't here with me, I just don't know what I'd do. I'd be lost..."

And now Masked Maizono is getting beaten on the ground while someone's digging the grave. Sayaka literally tells him that she doesn't know what she'd do without his being there to comfort her. We see some of this come out when she snaps and says she has to get out after they look for a defense weapon. We see it later after the motivational video I'll discuss soon—but I'm sure many of us know *that* classroom scene; Makoto momentarily saved her there. And we see it from her general aversion to the thought of being trapped, along with several negative School Mode reactions you get when you remind her she's trapped (non-canon but consistent).

So, by "lost," she means she'd be losing her mind over feelings of helplessness as her dream shattered and friends (family) and father faded away. Similar to how she already was, only without Makoto to—comfort her. His presence was literally the only thing keeping Sayaka's total misery from overwhelming her and making her go crazy. And that was because she felt for him/related with him (in terms of having *known* him) *and* because she felt he was honest and selfless enough to watch over her whenever she needed it.

"I hate that we had to meet again under such awful conditions, but...I'm relieved you're with me."

While the first part of this sentence doesn't directly contradict Masked Maizono as she could be speaking in a matter-of-fact tone, it does show how regrettable she feels her circumstance is, as if you couldn't have told already. Her hate is as genuine as ever, of course, but the positivity of Makoto being there for her regardless of *what* conditions they're in tones that down.

The second part is where things get interesting. It contradicts Masked Maizono for the same reason as my last point, but there's also a little Naezono in here. Notice that pause towards the end: though she was definitely relieved to have Makoto with her—anyone she really knew (essentially family) would've been pleasant to have there, in fact—she was also definitely thinking of something tame to say. And though she and I said she was relieved to know someone while they were trapped, she didn't really *know* Makoto from those days: she was just obsessed to *get* to know him. But before she even gets to know him well, she's considered him one of, if not her closest friend.

Now, I can't make any predictions for how much she was downplaying her feelings. Still, she definitely was downplaying her feelings, as she did two more times in her second Free-Time Event ("do you have a girlfriend"). She probably wasn't going to say anything lovey-dovey, but "relief" doesn't do the joy she must've felt as much justice as another word could've.

Finally, this panel shows that although Sayaka hated what was happening to her (not just *where* they'd reencountered, but the situation), she valued Makoto's presence more (for now), and *that's* why she was able to keep a smile around him nevertheless.

Just by considering these key facts, you can tell that Sayaka wasn't wearing any sort of mask. At least not during the events of Danganronpa: we don't see her in depth to any degree before that, chronologically-speaking or otherwise. But she says to Makoto that she honestly enjoyed her time around her fans and group, so she couldn't have been putting on a mask of *enjoyment* around him/them even *if* she had reservations about being totally open and careless around them.

"Sayaka and Her Family"

Well, we're at last getting closer to going into the second half of Sayaka's character. But before that, let's go into something that's right before the change. It'll kind of "bridge the gap," so to speak.

This is obviously going to be about Sayaka's family. And the reason I'm saying it'll bridge the gap is because I'm going to be talking about Sayaka's past soon. Probably one more time, about as in depth as earlier, since her earlier years no doubt had a lot to do with her personality going into Danganronpa.

What I'll do is start by speaking on Sayaka's relationship with her mother, next her father, and then how she viewed and fit into her family, herself.

Sayaka and her mother: Sayaka never knew her mother. The general fandom seems to think her mother died, but I'm not going to claim that for sure—it was never stated what happened to her mother, let alone how she died if she did. Whatever happened to her, she wasn't in Sayaka's life, for reasons that may or may not have been in her control.

And either way, Sayaka only ever mentions her mother once:

"I grew up without a mother, you know..."

Here, she does trail off, implying she's thinking about her mother. But this is how she's looking when she says that one line:



It's kind of hard to make sense of it, isn't it? But there are possible reasons for it. Recall that in this scene, she's thinking of her dream—so with that mind, why would she be reflectively smiling after she mentioned her mother?

We don't know for sure, again; but I do have three proposals, two of which are equally plausible—one not so plausible, but whatever:

- 1) She came to terms with what happened to her mother: This is a rather broad reason, and the second one's an elaboration on that. In this case, Sayaka's smiling because she's already been without a mother years. She literally never saw her mother her entire life. While sad, that

probably meant she'd grown to accept the fact that she didn't have a mother. In fact, she probably wasn't that bothered with it, other than the fact that her father was always working, leaving her without anyone around. If she never knew her mother, she could've only missed her in a conceptual sense—unless she saw pictures of her mother or heard stories from her father. But either way, she smiled as she said she grew up without a mother: somewhere along the line, she learned to live with that fact. To accept that's how her childhood was. The proof is in the smile.

However, correlation isn't causation. Does her coming to terms with what happened to her mother mean she feels okay when thinking about it? Especially if she might've known why her mother disappeared? I doubt it—and I doubt she's just indifferent either. She dwells on it (the pause, "..."), and she's also simply not a cold-hearted person. Besides just never being mean to anyone from what we've seen, she did want to help people who were depressed like she was and just make others smile in general by performing. That was her only reason for becoming what she became. But she's also not even cold-hearted in the sense of being unconcerned either.

- 2) Her mother would be proud of her: This is an expansion of the first, as I've said. It's also my personal reason for why she looks the way she does. The difference between this and the first possible reason is there's no definitive proof to solidify it. But there's still certainly more than enough evidence to make it a plausible notion.

Part of what makes it plausible is the pause after she says she grew up without a mother. In this case, she came to terms with what happened to her mother, but she's more so proud of what she accomplished and hoped—or would've hoped—that her mother was impressed at how her daughter grew up. If she felt her mother would be proud of her, wherever she was, and gazed into space as she said she grew up without one, she not only came to terms with not having one, but appreciated the dream she'd built (which is half of why she smiles even as she knew she'd tell Makoto about her growing agitation) and appreciated what her mother did for her by just having her (the other half).

The second reason this theory's plausible is because her father had to have let her become an idol. If her father let her become an idol, she was definitely thinking of *something* as she continued to smile while explaining she was a lonely child whose father was rarely there for her:



Dad used to work until late every single day. I was always alone at home.



I was just a child... It was a little lonely...



But the thing that eased my loneliness was the lives of the idols I could see reflected on the TV screen.



They were like big sisters to me. They could sing and dance really well...

What was the subject she was leaning to the entire time? Her dream. And despite her father being absent for so long, what did he allow her to have? Her dream. What did her mother allow her to have?

- 3) She was thinking about the idols she saw: This...isn't anything like the other two specifically, but it's still marginally related to the first. But it could also be true. Sayaka was thinking about idols most of, if not the entire time she began speaking: that was the turning point for why she decided to become an idol.

"I... My dream is... I've always wanted to be a star, as long as I can remember.

I grew up without a mother, you know...

And my dad worked really late every night. I was always home alone...

I was just a kid, ya know? So I was really lonely.

But that all changed when I saw a pop star on TV for the first time. She was so pretty, like a princess. And she could sing, and dance... But more than anything else, there was her smile. Looking at her smile, I could feel my loneliness melting away. I decided that's what I wanted to be someday. I wanted to give that kind of encouragement to others. Eventually, that became my dream.

It's not at all far-fetched to assume she was thinking of those idols the entire time. By extension, thinking of how she became an idol herself. The only problem with this is why she wouldn't show any sort of different expression for her mother, but that's where the first theory comes in: Sayaka's come to terms with her mother's absence, and now she's merely using it as a point.

I subscribe to the second reason, for the...reasons given. While she was probably thinking about the idols as well, she definitely had to have been thinking about her mother. It's almost equally likely that all

three cases can be true, but the second is a little more likely as a standout because of how she lingered at the end of her statement. She had to be thinking of something specific and not just...

Sayaka and her father: Sayaka's relationship with her father wasn't much clearer than the one she had with her mother, despite them actually knowing each other. There are a few things we can still reason from it, though. I won't have to do lists here, either.

The first thing we can say is that...we *don't* know whether she spoke in a matter-of-fact tone when she mentioned her father not being around often:



Dad used to work until late every single day. I was always alone at home.



I was just a child... It was a little lonely...



But the thing that eased my loneliness was the lives of the idols I could see reflected on the TV screen.



They were like big sisters to me. They could sing and dance really well...

That translation conveys the message well, but the actual in-game text is:

"I... My dream is... I've always wanted to be a star, as long as I can remember.

I grew up without a mother, you know...

And my dad worked really late every night. I was always home alone...

I was just a kid, ya know? So I was really lonely."

...and we can see that she trails off when mentioning her father as well. At first, I thought she was speaking in a matter-of-fact tone because of her expression being the same wondrous one throughout, but now I know that isn't the case—and if you're thinking to yourself, "Why does this guy care so much about the expression choices, they're just expressions they chose..." that's *because* they're expressions they chose for her to match what she was saying/thinking. For a reason. It all adds up.

Anyway, she wasn't speaking in a matter-of-fact tone: in fact, as said before, she was likely remembering that her father allowed her to do what she was doing in the first place. No matter how much of a star she'd become, he had the power to say "enough" and take her out of that life (when she was still a kid,

which meant...essentially the entire time). He had the power to say no when she told him what she wanted to do. And if she protested, that was pretty much all she could've done, being his child. And don't think she could've become a star secretly—without him knowing, because he could've easily found her and put her on lockdown. Especially when she became more famous.

But sometime when she came to him and told him what her dream was and how hard she planned to work at making it come true, he agreed. Reluctantly or otherwise, he agreed to let her pursue her dream. We don't know whether he *supported* her or not, but Sayaka would have had to leave him behind at a certain point, when she went nationwide—and possibly worldwide. I doubt he could manage her five-person band or do anything else for them. All we know is he let her do what she wanted.

But maybe I'm off-base: maybe, even, he let her go because he knew she was making life better for herself than he'd made it (and could've made it) for her.

...it's not important, anyhow. The only thing that matters is that he allowed her to reach her dream. You probably remember this as the second point in what Sayaka was smiling about, concerning her mother...

...well, that's the idea: Sayaka was thinking of how appreciated she was that her father gave her this chance and how proud he had to have been to see her rise to where she was. It's exactly the same reason as earlier, and that's another reason I believe she was admiring her mother just earlier. It follows the same line of thinking, literally as well.

Another reason I think she admired her father was because she was a mature child. Even though she admitted she was lonely, she even downplayed *that* by saying "a little," when she had to have been extremely lonely; definitely so, considering the drastic actions she took after those idols on TV moved her. In spite of this loneliness, she was able to put things in perspective. She never complained about how hard it was growing up (not at the one person to whom she easily could've). And she practically glossed over the fact that she grew up with hardly any parental care. This is because she knew two things:

The first was that she (and Makoto) couldn't help what happened to her mother—so, she came to terms with whatever it was. That's a fact.

The second was that her father was, presumably, only gone as much as he was because he had to support her. If he wasn't there working, she wouldn't have been able to live in whatever (likely shoddy) room she lived in, and she'd be starving. For some reason, he had her in bad circumstances, or maybe things just fell apart right before or sometime after her mother had her. But regardless, he broke his back afterwards to make sure she could enjoy at least a basic life. At the very least, he worked his ass off as best he could...

...he couldn't always be there for her, of course—and that indirectly helped her in other ways. Sayaka was resourceful, though: he probably understood that as well. And she knew they were alike, all the same, in terms of their work ethics anyway. A very hard-working guy raising a very hard-working girl.

Sayaka and her family in general: Really, I sort of went over this already. But to make it short, Sayaka didn't show any reason to feel anything negative for her mother. She didn't show any reason to feel anything negative for her father either, even when she mentioned him in School Mode. This is because

she'd come to terms with and appreciated their roles in her life, however limited, and appreciated how they shaped her to become what—she became.

However, it goes without saying that she felt it was regrettable that both of her parents were absent or almost always absent. Her dream aside, she would've probably wanted to do many things over if she had the choice.

Did the Motivational Video Really Mean that Much?

With all that in mind, then, it's at last time for the actual motivational video Sayaka received and how it completely changed her character.

...or did it?

You could actually make a good case for Sayaka's character technically not changing at all after watching her motivational video.

And that just so happens to be how I feel.

I'll explain in an overview of her past, which is why I spoke about her family first:

So we know the general situation, I'm sure. Before that crucial scene, Sayaka wasn't open towards anyone but Makoto. She wasn't dishonest towards anyone specifically, but she didn't trust anyone but him enough to be completely comfortable around them. Consequently, she was always cautious and beware of any negative feelings or intentions others might have possibly had or would/could possibly have. And, if you remember how she **"hates"** the thought of giving people a reason to dislike her, that means she was always extra cautious and stressed, trying to behave in the nicest (remember: "neutral") way she could to be amiable with everything, no matter the situation.

This is because her past had her seeing nothing but, well, neglect and loneliness from her early childhood (and so help her if the other kids found out her life), and deceit, selfish motivations, betrayal, and insincerity from her performing years. Even as she grew more and more famous, every six of these problems still weighed on her. And eventually, she learned to distance herself from others just in case someone had it out for her; she could always have fun with her closest friends and her fans, but she was always wary at the same time.

When she saw—or rather, noticed—Makoto for the first time, that wasn't an extraordinary moment for her. It wasn't her breakout moment either. His completely selfless, honestly-kind-of-jeopardous actions of leading the lost crane to safety...really weren't that impressive. But that's precisely why she was so *overtaken*.

I mean, it was definitely a nice thing to do, but cranes can swim very well. It definitely wasn't in danger of drowning, and it probably could've found itself out of the woods. So this wasn't a case where a crane was about to die and a crowd of people were watching the scene, wanting to help. It was just a simple, impromptu task given to a member of the animal-rearing club who happened to be on duty that moment: leading a crane from out of a pond, a crane which probably wanted to be in that area in the first place. Meanwhile, the Sayaka also happened to be out by the school's pond for whatever reason (hopefully able to get some cherished time to herself there), and she caught him as he helped lead the crane off school grounds.

If this doesn't sound at all like something worth obsessing over—that's because it isn't. All he did was lead a swimming-capable bird out of a pond and into the woods, a minor task that was just another part of his club duties.

Case in point? He forgot about the event, including the bird, and didn't even think it was worth acknowledging when Sayaka brought it up years later. Sayaka doesn't even imply that Makoto does anything *else* of note the entire time she's watching him from then on.

Yet Sayaka was so struck by what Makoto did that back then...

...that she thought about him for *literally* every day afterwards, all because of that moment.

In a way, it's very telling. What Makoto did was incredibly minor, but Sayaka's life was essentially so...in her mind, deprived of basic sympathy, honesty, and decency...that she viewed him as a kind-hearted saint from just that simple act. Again, she *knew* it was simple, too, and that's why it resonated with her so much. She was so used to seeing the absolute worst from others that the smallest act of selflessness, the first she'd seen in years, even one that everyone took for granted, completely moved her. Specifically, she was moved in the same way those TV idols moved her when she was young. She found a new life. She was encouraged. Inspired.

Here everyone was, being the utter opposite of all she'd aspired to be, and he was going out of his way to be kind to a creature no one cared about—and a creature that probably wouldn't have wanted his help anyway. It was amazing.

Nonetheless...all of this is an aside. We got some more insight into her character, but let's continue. After everything I said, I need to reiterate that this wasn't her breakout moment. Even after the hope that Makoto gave her, the hope of there being some simple benevolence and sincerity in society, she still had the same skeptical feelings towards everyone else besides him. Only he proved himself to her, proved that he was different from the others. And she didn't get the chance to open up more by him—and he didn't even seem to notice she existed.

The main takeaway from this event is that Sayaka became obsessed with Makoto's character. From that moment on, she was trying to get to know Makoto however she could. Every day, she was looking for a chance to speak to him in private. But she was so popular (and surrounded by fake people) that she could never find a moment alone from that scene forward, and they ended up graduating without speaking. As she'd tell him later, that was one of the biggest regrets she *ever* had, a telling statement because of how utterly messed up her life was by the time she said that.

Sometime during or just before this, though, Sayaka met her closest friends and rivals in four fellow idols, most of whose names we never learn. One of them was Satomi Aoba, who's an unlikable, shallow, backup singer in their five-woman group—and really not worth mentioning simply because she only appears in a terrible spinoff novel.

The other is Ayaka Haneyame, who's also somewhat unlikable and shallow but sort of appeared in *Danganronpa: Another Episode*, a bigger title than that novel (*Danganronpa: Togami*). Ayaka is another backup singer for Sayaka who was jealous of Sayaka's spotlight. She was extremely jealous, in fact, to the point of literally acting out and ranting whenever Sayaka got attention over her—such as with their super-fan's referring to themselves as "Sayakers" to indicate liking the whole group. Part of a way to separate herself from Sayaka involved terming herself as a "demon" and her fans as "demon worshippers," giving her that weird, cultish edge that implied she had the effect of a succubus on her male admirers.

Satomi was also stated to be jealous of Sayaka and the rest of the group, in fact, for being the least popular...of the most famous group in Japan. Her entire public personality, at all times, was thus a cutesy mask. And Ayaka, despite being the second-most popular of the group, hated the fact that she

had to perform on the corner at all times because of her apparently unattractive face (something the personality she invented seemed to offset).

None of this was Sayaka's doing from what we know, but we know she desired to be the best as well and had a natural charisma that the other girls lacked. Yet, though Sayaka in Danganronpa, to Makoto, had no reason to speak badly about her friends or, let alone, tell him any bad things *she'd* done to them, we see regardless that she views them in a positive light—but that the sense of rivalry was heated among them.

But Ayaka was not jealous to the point that it ruined her friendship with Sayaka. In fact, most people apparently found her attitude cute, and she was definitely loyal to her group, meaning she probably enjoyed being a part of it. For anyone still wondering what Sayaka's motivational DVD is all about: it showed all of her bandmates apparently dead, implying Sayaka's family and career are gone. Ayaka and Satomi were both revealed to be alive, so they either complied with Junko and pretended to be dead or...were knocked unconscious. They were then locked up, presumably as potential motivators for Sayaka, in case Junko ever needed to give her this extra push.

What's important is that Ayaka was on the "Kill List" in Another Episode. Those on the Kill List in that game were supposedly the individuals closest to those of the 78th class of Hope's Peak, the class of Danganronpa. Therefore, as someone related to Maizono, this would mean Ayaka was *the* closest person to Maizono. So they were probably the closest of friends—even to the extent that her "jealousy" of Sayaka may have been part of her generally wild, public persona and not something either of them took personally.

That being said, Sayaka still didn't feel as though she could fully confide in Ayaka like she could with Makoto, because Makoto wasn't an immediate rival to her career status, and because he wasn't as abrasive as Ayaka. Even if Ayaka wasn't entirely serious with how she acted, her personality along with her being a rival would've been enough to give Maizono doubts about loosening up entirely around her. Remember that Sayaka didn't really show these...competitive quirks. Sayaka wanted to be 100% certain of how someone would react if she were ever completely honest about anything and everything.

For however long she was in high school, Sayaka kept this cynical attitude, even as her fame exploded. Even as she enjoyed performing for crowds everywhere, by herself and with her friends, and even as she deeply loved all the support her fans, there was always that asterisk on her personality.

And then, things kind of vary depending on whether we're going into the original Hope's Peak years and stopping, continuing into the events of Danganronpa, or continuing on to School Mode. I'm going straight into Danganronpa, because it technically continues from the beginning of the original Hope's Peak Academy years, as said earlier, while allowing me to talk about the darker part of Sayaka's personality.

It's also canon, unlike School Mode.

Now then, when Sayaka enters Hope's Peak—

—oh, but we didn't even go over her transferring in the first place.

We don't know how many years of senior high school Sayaka did. She could've done 0-3, and then she would have transferred to Hope's Peak, which accepts current high school students with an immensely recognizable level of talent. Many people assume that only high school graduates are chosen by Hope's Peak, but this is never specified. Personally, I believe that Sayaka transferred before even—or immediately after—finishing her first year. All this, I already said way back; but just to keep it current...

Why'd she transfer that early, to me? Well, due to the fact that she was at least a nationwide superstar who got to where she was completely on her own merits and self-exertion. Sayaka was so popular by the time she got to high school that most of Japan was at least a casual fan of hers, and nearly all of Japan knew her name.

A quick Google search, going by 2010: Japan's population was 127.5 million. By then, she was two years into Hope's peak. In *Danganronpa: Another Episode*, which takes place after 2010 (but we won't count the Tragedy's resulting deaths) Komaru Naegi, who is Makoto's little sister (and a genuine Sayaker), remarks that Sayaka has over 100 million fans. How many over 100 million? 110 million, 130, 145? Doesn't really matter: 100's large as *hell*.

Now, if we do the math, 100 million out of 127.5 million = 0.78, or 78% of Japan who's not just a casual listener or fan of Sayaka...but a rabid, *hardcore* fan supporting her however they can. That's how I distinguish the two, as not every fan of Sayaka's performances/music is willing to support her physically, and consistently so. But the number of general fans is thus even higher. Even tame Makoto considered himself a fan and looked forward to her performances. And he was *not* a Sayaker.



Yes. She was *extremely* successful and *extremely* revered. And since Komaru (the most important person to Makoto) was also on the Kill List and thus kidnapped, the above quote verifies that she didn't know Sayaka's fate.

As an organization that mainly existed to search for talent, why would Hope's Peak have waited to give Sayaka an opportunity to join them? Not only would they have profited from having her talent available to them, who knows how many *other* talented students would have sought to join them in order to be with her? Her attendance would have given them much more recognition, undoubtedly on an international level.

The only reason she might not have been invited that early on is because she ended up being in the same class as Makoto and the others. We know that Makoto got in on luck—but the others? Some of them were tremendously renowned (Byakuya, Aoi, Toko), some were notably renowned (Chihiro, Celes, Leon, Sakura, Junko), some less notably renowned (Kirigiri [yes], Hifumi, Mondo, Taka, Hiro), and some weren't known at all (Mukuro, Makoto).

I'm almost certain that if Hope's Peak weren't particularly interested in some of those students' abilities from the beginning, they could have still taken them in if there were a drought in talent. But I don't think that's the case. I think they were genuinely interested in those students because they did display a lot of talent, and there were many other students chosen that same year, who were in the same year despite being in different classes. For example, many of the other ultimate students who died before the events Danganronpa were in the same grade as the 78th class (the main characters' class).

With this in mind, there's no real reason that Sayaka could've *not* been chosen in or right after her first year without being younger than the rest of her class. In other words, Sayaka is definitely younger than some of the 78th class (like Hagakure who's over 20)—but *not* because she joined early and they happened to have already been enrolled in order to match up with her.

This leaves why she decided to leave her group behind for the chance to enroll in Hope's Peak:

"(Sayaka) But that's the thing that scares me the most.

If the world gets tired of us, then what happens? What happens to us?

Then the dream dies, those wonderful days come to an end, and everyone goes their separate ways..."

[(Makoto) S-Sayaka...

She's trembling...

She must be terrified.

She worked so hard, sacrificed so much, to get where she is. She must be terrified of losing it.)

"(Sayaka) So that's the reason I decided to come to Hope's Peak."

"(Makoto) Huh? What do you mean?"

"(Sayaka) Well... they say that if you graduate from here, success is basically guaranteed.

Which means I could keep on performing with my best friends, for ever and ever.

At least, that's what I thought.

I really did believe that, but..."

The first thing to remember is that Sayaka's extremely worried as she says this. I've already described that as best as I could, so I won't ramble on again; but that's a key factor here. In fact, when Sayaka says, "So that's the reason I decided to come to Hope's Peak," she's trying to keep calm even as she's growing more angry and more fearful.

The *last* thing she wants is to leave her friends behind, on purpose or otherwise, unless they themselves get in the way of her dream—something she wouldn't even like thinking about. And so, her purpose for leaving her friends behind wasn't for it to be permanent: it was so they could "hold the fort," so to speak, as she cultivated her talent and networking at Hope's Peak to a level where she—and therefore her group—would *never* be able to fall off. She wanted to do more than just sing better: she wanted to be *as perfect as possible*.

Without a doubt, she told her friends about this once she got her invitation, if they hadn't already discussed the possibility; and they understood where she was coming from even if they were reluctant to perform on their own from a "loss in popularity" standpoint. She was going to be back with them before they knew it, a completely different person. And then when they reunited, under their fans, they were going to absolutely *soar*.

Or that was the plan.

To be short, what happened instead was...The Tragedy.

We don't know which members of her group survived other than Ayaka and Satomi who went into hiding. All we know is those two, or whoever was alive once The Tragedy was in swing, officially disbanded their group for good.

What we do know *for sure* is what happened to Sayaka: she willingly locked herself in Hope's Peak with the rest of the school in order to avoid being exposed to the mindless murder and destruction happening outside. As for why she decided to go through with this when her friends were still outside, she was probably convinced by Jin Kirigiri that they'd already died (along with her father). Sure, she probably grieved like hell. Who wouldn't have? But she had to be realistic in the end. We can see in her interview video with Jin that this Sayaka is much more resolute because she's come to terms with her fate—a drastic difference from the Sayaka we see in Danganronpa who isn't aware of The Tragedy, thus much more tense, restless, sad, and anxiety-stricken. Like I said, her cluelessness ended up hurting her much more than everyone else, and more than she would've been hurt if she'd just known the cold, hard truth outright.

But back to Danganronpa, Sayaka never found out anything. She was knocked out probably unexpectedly by probably Mukuro, a *classmate*, at some point when the Despair Twins who'd infiltrated the school began their Killing Game plan. Then she woke up two weeks later—after they used the school's advanced technology to erase her freshman and sophomore memories: everything after her first moment of walking in the school on her first day. So, she had no idea of what happened other than walking in and collapsing (not even knowing this was an attack), then being woken up in some random classroom in the school and being left to her own devices.

So, without any idea of what happened or what was happening, she only knows that it's apparently her first day at Hope's Peak and she collapsed at some point when she walked in the school. She goes looking for other students—or anyone—and stumbles across them after some time. The main thing here, though, is that she immediately becomes cautious of them as that's her personality. While trying to find out just what's going on is, of course, priority number one for her, not getting hurt in any way is *also* priority number one. Therefore, when she and the others begin talking about "whatever-I'm-not-speculating-pointless-things," she's at the same time trying to be as amiably neutral to everyone as possible so that they don't have a reason to try anything that might hurt her. Meanwhile, she's forming

her own personal opinions of everyone at the same time, but she always keeps these opinions to herself for obvious reasons.

"I can't decide if Mondo is totally dependable or completely terrible..."

Unless it involves Makoto. She can tell him.

Though that example scene did admittedly involve Makoto in the first place. This is what she says to Makoto about Mondo after Mondo pretty much forces him to check the movie room for the "secret" [motivational videos] Monokuma left in it. But she's putting her "perfect" image at risk by even making that statement.

Once Makoto comes to and meets her, however, she quickly remembers him and immediately tries talking to him. Ishimaru isn't having any of that and scolds her, and she apologizes to him instead of lashing back because of what you just read. But it's clear that her feelings for Makoto are strong. She's never spoken to him before and is only going off memories of a romanticized scene involving him at this point, yet *that fact* and the fact that she somewhat knows him unlike everyone else is enough to get her to not only want to speak to him outside of formalities but to want to speak to him and try to relate to *and* confide in him while she's in this stressful situation. And although figuring out what exactly is going on is more important at the moment, that's only because she knows she has to be oriented, informed, and safe in this uncertain situation before she even thinks about continuing on with him on *any* level.

Between that moment and her crucial, game-changing scene (literally, it jumpstarts the Killing Game after a four-day stall), she goes through four important moments. In order, these are "the detective/assistant," "the self-defense weapon," "the crane," and the "the do you have a girlfriend"?

Now, I'm going to sum these up just for a recap. Real quickly, though, seriously, so we can move on:

The Detective/Assistant: Sayaka already felt Makoto was the only one she could trust going into this uncertain situation, but even that started to falter when Byakuya said his piece to her about looking out for oneself being the "smart" thing to do with the stakes (their lives) being that high. Of course, that really stuck with her; and she almost shifted back towards his viewpoint—or rather, how she would've been before she met Makoto—until she saw Makoto attempt to reason with Byakuya and an angered Mondo, before getting knocked out by the latter.

That moment got to her more, because he risked his own safety just for the sake of trying to get everyone to cooperate against this very dangerous, unknown mastermind, all while *she* was about to revert to her previous, entirely cynical self out of pure selfishness. She'd been in this to try and cooperate with everyone to keep herself safe *and* ensure everyone escaped the school, but then she'd slipped into wondering whether it'd really be bad to only care about getting herself out and not even going near the others unless she had to, assuming the worst from them.

So, as she voluntarily carried him to his bed, she realized she'd started losing her way—the inspired self she'd become from the hope he'd shown her. And she promised to herself that she'd try her best to do well with everyone. However, she not only promised that, but she pledged she'd help Makoto get out in

any way she could, as the metaphorical "assistant" to his "detective"—because he helped her come back from the utter suspicion of and, honestly, unconditional scorn for others *twice* now.

The Self-Defense Weapon: This is admittedly bit longer. Later, Sayaka asks Makoto for a favor. Up until now, she's tried to live up to her declaration of helping him out however she can, and she hasn't had outward feelings of doubt with regard to what her convictions became thanks to him.

What changes here is that after several days, she starts losing to her negative thoughts and growing afraid of Monokuma. She soon feels the need to protect herself in case he decides to attack because they're disobeying his wishes by not killing each other. Let me explain:

"(Sayaka) I've been thinking that... there might be something around here I could use for self-defense."

"(Makoto) Self-defense...?"

"Well, I mean... whoever's keeping us here could show up and attack us any time. You never know..."

([Makoto] Whoever trapped us here... Whoever presented us with rules for murdering each other... Whoever put us in this insane position... She's right - we never know when they might attack.)

"Whoever". In other words: Monokuma. Considering what Monokuma's goal is revealed to be later on by Kirigiri (meaning he won't...*usually* outright attack other students to keep up his televised image of despair), her fears seem somewhat unfounded. At least, immediately, they are. But that aside, it's her being completely honest and plausible with Makoto and herself for the time. She can't deny she's afraid to Makoto or herself (what "mask"), and she states she was going to go out and find a self-defense weapon just for safety even if Makoto hadn't showed up at her door.

Although, to be really technical, Sayaka *does* sort of have a point if you think about it. After all, Junko/Monokuma does start to break his own rules when he isn't getting his way. Junko goads a disguised Mukuro into attacking Monokuma so she can be murdered, and Junko tries to murder Makoto and/or Kirigiri when she starts feeling pressure due to their detective work—work that Sayaka had planned for her and Makoto much earlier on.

Moreover, we see that Makoto believes she has a point here too. With the limited knowledge they had that early on, plus the fact that Monokuma had nearly killed Mondo and probably some others as well in that blast, they had no reason to think he *wouldn't* attack them.

So then, where did that fear come from at this point, besides nearly Monokuma's killing Mondo and the rest of them?

Well, there was Byakuya's remark, and few other skeptical comments by other students which fed the negative worries she was trying to push through.

There was also...

"(Celes trolling) The way things are now, every time night comes we will all start to get worried and anxious. We will all be afraid someone might try and come kill us."

"(Sayaka) What!?"

"If we have to worry about that night after night for who knows how long, it will wear us down in no time."

All of this took a toll on Sayaka. Not as much as events would later on, but it worried her enough to at least make her fear for her immediate safety, when she hadn't before. We know that she slipped back into her "pre-Crane-event" self later, though, because she continued to work with everyone else without hesitation. Because of Makoto's words. Other than Monokuma's first action, the examples of potential betrayal are rather sketchy, just nervous words. Nothing to ignore, but nothing to be dwelling on so seriously after so many days have passed without an incident.

...or rather...

"(Celes trolling) The way things are now, every time night comes we will all start to get worried and anxious. We will all be afraid **someone** might try and come kill us."

"(Celes) Well, I mean... **whoever's keeping us here could show up and attack us any time**. You never know..."

Maybe it's clearer why her fears actually *were* probable now. It seems as though Sayaka was thinking out of the box. If you didn't notice, her real reasoning following Celes' logic and the above is, then, also based on Monokuma's actions.

Logically speaking, if you follow the evidence and her dialogue, her fear is that, since everyone at this point is working together with only a few hitches, Monokuma might come and "jumpstart" things to get the killing game started. We later find out that Monokuma was going to do this with two moles (Sakura and *Mukuro*), but her reasoning was still absolutely correct. It's doubtful that either of those two would've went with the script. Even Mukuro was starting to soften up and admitted to Makoto she wasn't planning on killing anyone—and this is apart from her visible bad acting. But the moles' rebelling against Monokuma...that would've pushed Monokuma to do something even more drastic. Because we know how much Junko wanted to see that despair for *herself*.

Now, Makoto then decides to go ahead and find a place for a good weapon with her. They go ahead and look at a wooden practice katana, sitting behind a display window next to the gymnasium: and she doesn't take it. Instead, she convinces Makoto to take it for himself as an adornment—*insists*, actually.

Go figure, right? She fears for him as well:

([Makoto] Is that... a real sword?

Nope. It's an imitation wooden sword.

Nevertheless, it's really impressive. It's completely painted in gold. Not a spot missing.

But...)



Uwaa...! I just touched it a little bit and now there's gold paint all over my hand!



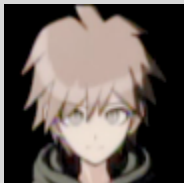
Your hand got really dirty. I don't think that would work as a self-defense weapon... / Wow, you're right. Your hands are totally gold! Even just for self-defense, I think it's a little...



Really? I still think it's better than nothing...



If you think so, how about you take it for yourself, Naegi-kun? It can also look good as decoration for your room. / You should take it with you! It might help liven up your room a little.

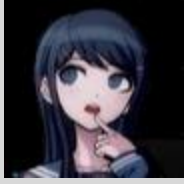


Decoration...? / You think so?



But please be careful carrying it back. It would be best if we could wrap it in newspaper or something.

([Makoto] She already decided I'm taking it with me...)



I don't see anything else suitable for self defense in here...



I... I think even if you're worried, we probably won't need anything for a while.

It's not simply that she insisted, though. Sayaka personally believed the imitation katana wouldn't have made a good self-defense weapon because of the dirty, wet grip. And Makoto thought it *would've* been an adequate self-defense weapon...

...so despite her views, she suggests Makoto take it so he could at least have something to defend himself with. If not her, since there was nothing else there, she wasn't going to let him abandon the chance to have a weapon he thought was useful.

Was it really necessary? Probably not. But Sayaka cared that much about him, even with something that most people would've considered a triviality. She, at that moment, felt self-protection was important. So she wanted Makoto to be safe even if she couldn't find anything right then. And just to hammer the point in, before Makoto could even begin to *possibly* be skeptical, she adds in that it'd look good in his room even as just a decoration. She's not going to outright say that, "Someone might attack you too," as that'd ruin *both* their moods. Still, she wants to assure he'll take it for that very, generally distrustful reason. In addition, the original translation shows he was on the verge of considering her recommendation anyway, prompting her to go along with *him* going along with *her*.

[Now, just in advance for anyone who knows what happens much later: Sayaka didn't view the imitation katana as a practical self-defense weapon—she knew Makoto did, and that's why she wanted him to have it, regardless of the "it can also look good as a decoration" excuse. But she most likely did not *remember* it when she went in his room later on.]

And while she's thinking of what else she could get, Makoto convinces her to forget about looking for another weapon because he says he'd protect her himself. A statement which really throws her back because she'd never expect any of the good traits she applied to Makoto to be used *for* her, if you will. She didn't expect *anyone* to say anything like that to her, even him. He was trying to protect her as a person, never minding how famous she was, and when the situation was that dire too. Everyone else she knew—but her dad and maybe some of her idol friends—only liked her for her idol career.

So, taken aback and starting to like him even *more* than she had before—**intimately**—she suggests they talk because...why not? They came all this way here. But they just stand there as she doesn't know what to say—she's always been so busy working that she never had much time to make small talk. After a choice response by Makoto reminds her of her life outside, she tries to talk about it with him but gets so angry and scared that she loses her composure and snaps in front of him...or rather, *at* him.

But when she realizes what she did, she apologizes to him, hoping she hasn't made him feel any differently about her. But no: he doesn't. Not in a negative way: he only respects her more. Then, when he tries to change the subject to getting food, clearly abashed, she notices his embarrassment as well

and tries to lighten the mood by making a cooking joke. However, he mistakes that for her trying to put up a mask to hide the fear and anger she showed.

In this way, the "Self-Defense-Weapon" scene was essentially a *segue* into that first crucial meltdown of hers, but not without giving her more depth. As of that scene, it's a little clearer why Sayaka's afraid. And it's also clearer that Sayaka has feelings for Makoto.

Can these two opposing emotions exist together as she deals with each day in that school? That's becoming the important question now—since, as I've covered, she's suffering with utter anxiety more and more, every passing hour.

The Crane: Later on, Sayaka's still feeling depressed over what specifically happened a while ago...



Though, with Celes acting like *this* before Sayaka melts down...



...Sayaka being fearful isn't too hard to sympathize with:



Luckily, they were already on the way to pick out her weapon, with a purpose. So she just wanted to calm down, hurry up, and get there.

Then, the reason for Makoto spending time with her hours after that meltdown is, again, that he wants to cheer her up once he hears she can't get to sleep or even calm down, due to restless anxiety.



Again, notice how after she tells Makoto how she's feeling, she apologizes for making him spend his free time with her, even though he doesn't have a problem with it and would've wanted to spend time with her anyway.

(*[Makoto, before the katana scene]* Apparently, it's morning... But thanks to the total lack of windows, there's no way to know for sure. Anyway...what should I do now? ... Maybe I should go find Sayaka, and we can figure out where to go to from here together. She did say she's my assistant now.)

Why else would he have come to her *twice* in a few hours?

After they spend some more time together, with him comforting her, she asks him in an extremely polite manner if she would be able to...ask him a question. In the original, note that she's speaking very formally to him, and she's pausing nervously in both versions. But when Makoto brings her formality up, she straightens up and explains that it's because she knows she can trust him.



She also reveals that she didn't even realize she was speaking formally. That's an important fact to take in: her being extra polite with Makoto without *realizing* it. Despite her straight face (which is really just her trying hard to be square with him), it stems from nervousness, as the ellipses convey. And she does it again in the next scene.

For here, and I've summed it up a trillion times, she explains that she's relieved to have *him* with her now, and not just *someone she knows*. We can see the progression unfolding right before us. And she goes on to say that she'd be completely lost without him, meaning she literally doesn't know what she'd be doing if it weren't for him, meaning she'd probably be taking the Byakuya Togami route—or worse, plotting to kill to escape for herself.

Yet even though she knows this, she obviously doesn't say this. She smiles and thanks Makoto when he says he feels the same way, even though he's not familiar of the extent to which she meant that. She knows this as well, but it doesn't matter because he's still being sincere from his point of view. Then she brings up that they had never spoken, despite her always watching him and trying to find a moment to speak to him because of his having saved a lost crane that wandered into their middle school pond one day. Ever since that moment, she says, she's been fascinated with getting to know him more; but he never even looked her way, and they never ended up meeting each other or even talking. In the end, though, she still pictures herself as the crane, a metaphor I already explained that means she's essentially relying on him to support her.

Two details in particular: One is when she makes the crane joke, she's not literally asking him to save her. Not yet. She's almost completely confident in him as of now, and she's merely acknowledging that she has faith in him standing by her side. She's thanking him for being by her side up until now as well.

But further in the story, right her major turning point of having seen the DVD, we'll be able to contrast this with another tone she speaks to him where she's asking him again, rather uncertainly and multiple times, the same question. Then begging him again to be there for her afterwards. Just that symmetry alone is subconscious and will let you know that it's not "acting," when some people think otherwise.

The second detail is that she says, "Honestly though, I was so *impressed...*" at his actions that day. By that line, she's telling him that the *sole* reason for her becoming so deeply interested in Makoto is that he impressed her with kindness she hadn't seen in forever. It's literally all he did, and she doesn't mind admitting something as simple as that touched her, even if he genuinely thought it wasn't that important. Hardly matters. They come from two different backgrounds; have two different perspectives.

In any case, Maizono's feelings for Makoto are growing more and more. It's only logical to assume they have to culminate somewhere.

The Do-You-Have-a-Girlfriend: Okay, I'll be serious for this part and keep it short since I literally went through and explained the meaning of every line in this scene. Here, though, it's finally clear that Maizono's feelings for Makoto are *for real* now. She not only starts out nervous and formal again when she tries to ask him the question, she struggles to but tries to confess to him twice in a row, nervously trying not to offend him the entire time. Moreover, she accidentally blushes at him when she basically does confess to being interested in him, and she doesn't mind at all that he realizes:

1. She's blushing at him
2. They love each other mutually

By those facts alone, only a cluck or someone who's willfully ignorant wouldn't be able to see that Sayaka is not only completely trusting in Makoto and putting all her faith [that there can be good in people] in Makoto's example, but that she's actually romantically interested him too and doesn't want him to think less of her than she does of him. At least, relatively speaking.

After these four important scenes, it seems that Naezono is practically ready for takeoff. The only problem (besides the shaky foundation of the shipping in general: The Tragedy) is Sayaka's not ready to go further while their futures and lives are still at risk. Makoto feels the same way, and that's not a bad way to think. It's realistic.

So, because nothing changes for them up until a certain fateful scene, let's go into right where the problems begin:

Simply put, while the class is trying to figure out who Monokuma really is, the bear suddenly shows up and tells them that he has a new motive for them to want to kill each other and escape from Hope's Peak. He reveals he hid movies of the outside world somewhere on the floor and leaves it up to them if they want to find them. Naturally, he leaves on a suspicious-yet-curious note, and everyone wants to know what those videos are. Mondo rather forcefully elects Makoto to go look for them, and Sayaka elects to go with him as it's dangerous for him to go alone. At which point, she remarks that Mondo might seem to be a terrible person even though he appears reliable. She turns out to be completely right later on, but that's another story.

The two, her and Makoto, find a box of DVD's with the students' names on them in a movie room, and Makoto realizes that these were the motive Monokuma was referring to. Sayaka runs to gather the others and Makoto goes ahead and looks at his DVD, which shows his family in a very...

...uncertain fate.

When Sayaka returns with everyone, she sees him shaken and angry and this plays out:

"(Makoto) I have to get out of here. I have to get out, right now! I need to make sure everyone's safe!"

"(Sayaka) Makoto...? What happened? Make sure who's safe?"

He notices everyone's staring at him but can't bring himself to answer because he's so beside himself. And because he generally doesn't want to tell anyone, nor admit once again, what he just saw. Instead, he just points at the DVD's in the cardboard box, and everyone finds and looks at theirs. Afterwards, they're almost all shaken, angry, scared, or some combination of that, and that finally gets them to talking about what the purpose of Monokuma showing them these videos were. Then Makoto starts to wonder what everyone actually saw, starting with Sayaka—who's still sitting in her seat unlike the others.

And I think the dialogue can explain this part easier than I can:

"(Makoto) I wonder what was in everyone's videos... I'd be lying if I said I wasn't curious."

"(Makoto) Hey, Sayaka..."

"(Sayaka) ..."

"(Makoto) What was in your video, Sayaka?"

"(Sayaka) ..."

"(Toko) What's wr-wrong? Just hurry up and t-tell us..."

"(Sayaka) ..."

"(Makoto) Sayaka?"

[(Makoto)] I gently placed my hand on her shoulder.)

"(Sayaka) ...STOP IT!!"

[(Makoto)] She pushed my hand away and suddenly ran off.)

"(Aoi) Sayaka!?"

"(Byakuya) Let her go."

"(Makoto) I-I can't do that! I have to go make sure she's okay!"

Now...I'll try to paint a clearer picture of this scene as tersely as possible.

Sayaka was still sitting in one of the lab's several chairs after everyone had gotten up and started talking. She'd finished watching her video but was now staring fearfully at the blank screen.

When Makoto notices she's not responding to him and everyone starts to get anxious and worried, he touches her shoulder—and *that* sets her off. She throws his arm aside, yells at him not to touch her, and runs out of the room before he or anyone else can react.

Recall what I said earlier:

"With each passing *hour*, the chance of her friends abandoning her and breaking off after all the work she put into building them up grows greater. The chance of her never being able to inspire anyone again like she had grows greater. The chance of her losing her very identity and becoming nothing...grows greater. The chance of forever losing the one thing that ever made her truly happy grows greater. The one thing she spent years of her life trying to reach no matter *what* the cost and *what* the toll.

It's one thing to lose everything you know after a hard fight, but to just have your life whittle away completely because you're powerless to do anything? While everyone else knows they can continue dreaming after they just get out of this place, Sayaka doesn't have that luxury. If it's too late for her, the field wouldn't want her back: idols are usually short-lived anyway, and they're in abundance. She's going through each day in that school with the anxiety of not knowing whether it's all over for her or not. No one else there is in this kind of pressure."

Now imagine what happens when you suddenly tip off something already loaded with that kind of pressure.

That's what happened to Sayaka. In a word, she exploded. Figuratively speaking, and thus it's not just because she saw her closest friends lying dead in a video she had no idea was real or not. There's actually—yep, again—two reasons why she exploded the way she did and rushed out of the room. I'll explain them real quickly here. Seriously this time: "real quickly".

1. Previous pressure: This is what I've been saying. In the original version, before the mind-wipe, she knew what had happened and—though she was definitely reluctant and depressed—accepted sealing herself away from her probably dead friends and father, and the millions who looked up to her, as her only choice.

However, the events of Danganronpa are different. After all that pressure (anxiety) building up within her, not knowing what's going on outside or at all, she suddenly sees her friends dead and loses it. She doesn't know whether or not it's just something Monokuma made up to intimidate her, but now all the worries she had about what she might've had to do to escape...they've been triggered in her mind. Those worries, along with the sadness of apparently losing her only family, dream, goals, and purpose in life. Out of nowhere, it looks like she's lost it all, and without even a warning or a fighting chance.

But most of all, she wants to get out to know the truth. If it's true that she lost everything, she doesn't have any reason to go on anymore. Not in her mind. Yet if she stays locked in that school, not facing whatever the truth is, she *definitely* doesn't have any reason to go on anymore.

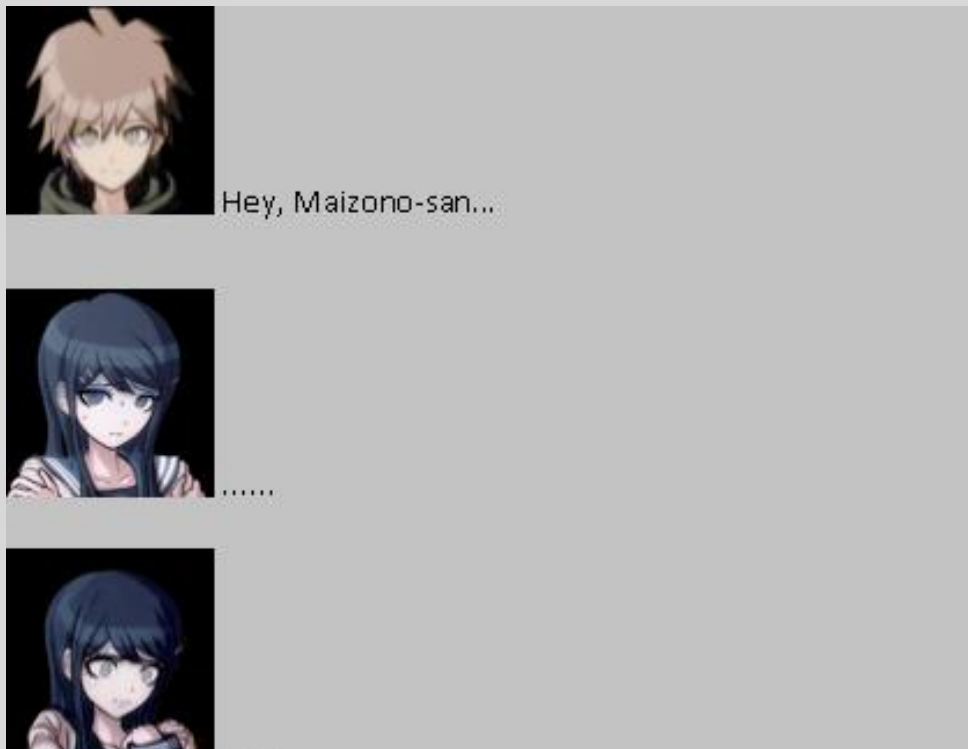
But to kill? Not only is she scared and afraid of just the *thought* of having to go that far as her only chance, *she's pissed off like never before that she's being forced into having to make that choice*. She never wanted to consider that a genuine out.

And she can't take all of this pressure; she can't take sitting down as all the fears, doubts, worries, frustrations, sadness, and regret wells up within her—so she just has to run away. To anywhere. She doesn't know, and she doesn't care—and for a while, she's hardly thinking about it either. As long as she isn't in that seat, in front of that screen.

Makoto triggered her: And this is what a lot of people never notice. As Sayaka's sitting there suffering, don't forget that she still had feelings for Makoto. Makoto hadn't done anything to make her dislike him, and the next scenes show this.

The problem is that her feelings for Makoto are completely contrary to the rush of negative emotions tormenting her at the moment. Right now, the last thing she needs to hear are comforting words from the one she loves. I'm sure you can think of several analogies for what happened in her head when Makoto tried to get closer; his actions are what sets off that pressure building up within her. If not for him, she would've kept sitting there in that seat. She might've eventually calmed down: even if she remained extremely tense, not to the extent that she'd have screamed and ran as she did.

But she obviously heard him and *didn't* want to hear his reassuring voice in the middle of her pain, causing her to get even tenser.



She tried to ignore him for a good second. Though it was clear: she couldn't process his caring voice, the only thing she could rely on in there—*and* the fact that her newfound terror was overriding it. Hearing him made her condition degrade from bad to worse. It made her *frantically afraid*.

And when he finally touched her, she lashed out, telling him to get away because she couldn't take it. Part of the reason she ran, at least while in that mindset, was to get away from Makoto in particular.

Makoto runs out of the classroom to look for her, and he comes across her in a random classroom that she randomly chose. That's because she just wanted to be alone, wherever she went. Yet she was completely drained: she didn't even have the mental strength to go back to her room. This time to herself has somewhat calmed her volatile, frantic mentality. Even though it hasn't eased her worries.

What he sees when he finds her is that...

([Makoto] I found her in one corner of an empty classroom.

She was sitting in a chair, hands on her knees, staring absently at the floor.

She looked like maybe she was upset, or angry. Or, no...

...She didn't have any expression at all.

There was nothing on her face that you could call emotion.

It was as if her original mask had been stripped away.)

"(Makoto) S-Sayaka? Are you okay?"

"(Sayaka) Yeah... I'm fine."

Actually, no... how could I possibly be fine?

What did we do to end up like this...?

Why are they doing such terrible things to us...?

I want out! Let me out of here right now!"

"(Makoto) Sayaka! Calm down!"

([Makoto] As she thrashed around, I grabbed her by the shoulders.)

"(Sayaka) ...!!"

"(Makoto) I understand. I know how you feel right now. When I think what might have happened to my family...

But now more than ever we have to stay calm!

*This is exactly what they want. They *want* us to lose our composure and stop thinking rationally.*

Think about it - those videos have to be fake!

Because if those things really had happened... ..people out there would be in an uproar. Our families, the police, everyone!

Right?"

"(Sayaka) ..."

"(Makoto) So let's just calm down, okay?

Otherwise, we've already lost."

[[Makoto] I knew I was trying to convince myself just as much as her.

I kept repeating those words to myself, to clear away the images that had been burned into my brain.

Be calm, okay?

Just be calm...)

"(Makoto) As long as we work together, I'm sure we can find some way out of here.

And help might even come before that."

"(Sayaka) But... what if there **isn't** a way out? What if help *never* comes?"

"(Makoto) I-If that happens...

...then I'll get you out of here myself! No matter what it takes!

[[Makoto] When I said that, I paused... I had no idea what had come over me.)

"(Makoto) Sayaka...?"

"(Sayaka) Please... help me..."

[[Makoto] Her voice was small and shaky.)

"(Sayaka) Why...? Why is this happening to me?

To kill, or be killed... I just can't take this anymore...!"

"(Makoto) Sayaka..."

"(Sayaka) ..."

"(Makoto) Finally, she raised her face up from my chest.

She looked at me with those big, wet eyes of hers."

"(Sayaka) Can I... can I believe what you said?"

"(Makoto) Huh?"

"(Sayaka) That you'll help me get out?

No matter what it takes...?"

"(Makoto) A-Absolutely!"

"(Sayaka) Makoto... You're the only one I can trust. So please...

No matter what happens, please always be there for me. I need you on my side..."

"(Makoto) Huh?"

O-Of course I'll be there for you!

No matter what, I'm always on your side. I mean...

...you are my assistant, after all."

"(Sayaka) ..."

Thank you, Makoto.

Hearing you say that, I feel like I can keep going.

I can get through this... as long as you're here with me.

Like you said, I'm your assistant."

"(Makoto) The smile I'd come to know so well returned to her face.

It felt a little forced, but still...

It was a huge improvement over how she was before."

Just because this lets me be more thorough, I'll go through the dialogue again and highlight what's really significant in those scenes. You know the drill.

([Makoto] I found her in one corner of an empty classroom.

She was sitting in a chair, hands on her knees, staring absently at the floor.

She looked like maybe she was upset, or angry. Or, no...

...She didn't have any expression at all.)

In fact, Sayaka was definitely upset and angry, to say the least. But by now, as stated: while still frantic, she'd gotten a seat and tried to calm herself down, as she knew she needed to.

And she did calm herself down. Not in a good way, though. Having had some more time to reflect, she was completely empty with frustration and fear here.

(There was nothing on her face that you could call emotion.

It was as if her original mask had been stripped away.)

He's wrong about that idea, of course. And I view just images and can make out "emotion," so maybe he meant joyous emotion? But to him, the "mask" was a joyous mask.

So Makoto's just *really* bad at this "understanding people" thing. It's arguable that if he'd been kind *and* honest about his powerlessness....Sayaka would've respected him even more and not have fallen into despair when his powerlessness finally became evident to her, in front of her own eyes.

"(Makoto) S-Sayaka? Are you okay?"

The fact that she's so silent is shocking to him. That and how she didn't suddenly want to be near him earlier: he's hesitant to even call her name. He doesn't want to make her any angrier.

"(Sayaka) Yeah... I'm fine."

Actually, no... how could I possibly be fine?

What did we do to end up like this...?

Why are they doing such terrible things to us...?

I want out! Let me out of here right now!"

How can I best describe this...

...this section isn't what it seems. Sayaka's not lying to Makoto in the beginning to reassure him or anything. And she doesn't go back on it, suddenly changing her mind.

Instead, this entire time, she barely notices he's there. She only faintly realizes it when she hears his voice—and by then, she's still enwrapped in her own worries. So, when she replies to Makoto, she's just giving him—or whoever—a generic, default agreeable reply as she's still pretty much out of it.

But then, she comes to and realizes Makoto's there—and *what* Makoto just asked. That's when she gives him her true answer. And that's when she starts expressing how utterly frustrated she is to him, in a way she *wouldn't* with anyone else. He could've felt *honored* if it were anything else.

At the last moment, she loses control again and screams out. But she isn't really talking about or to him when she says, "I want out! Let me out of here right now!"

He's standing right over her chair, looking down at her, when she jumps out and tries to run away again. The stress is literally too much for her to take staying still. She has to move.

He *catches* her this time as she's screaming and trying to break free—I really don't know what she would've done had she broken free. Either calm down, try to physically escape right there, or go to her room and plan from there. All three are equally likely, but she'd already just done the first.

What we know for sure is that, even though she doesn't mean for "Makoto" to let her out, it *sounds* like she's yelling at him. Literally speaking, she is because he's the one there and this is how she really feels. But in reality, that doesn't even make sense: Sayaka's actually half yelling at the mastermind, wherever he is, and half just crying out.

"(Makoto) Sayaka! Calm down!"

([Makoto] As she thrashed around, I grabbed her by the shoulders.)

Self-explanatory. But it's worth noting that Sayaka's so desperate and broken that now she's throwing an utter fit instead of actually trying to push Makoto aside and run off again.

Furthermore, there's something in Makoto's forceful tone that triggers her again, just as he did in a certain School Mode Kokoronpa. I've explained this, but we'll get to it again, later.

"(Sayaka) ...!!"

...I'll explain this later too. Not *that* much later, as it's pretty immediately relevant.

"(Makoto) I understand. I know how you feel right now. When I think what might have happened to my family...

But now more than ever we have to stay calm!

This is exactly what they want. They *want* us to lose our composure and stop thinking rationally.

Think about it - those videos have to be fake!

Because if those things really had happened... ...people out there would be in an uproar. Our families, the police, everyone!

Right?"

The first line is interesting. As this is the first time he can truly claim to have a degree of worry that's objectively comparable to Sayaka's. He didn't have anything personal to lose unlike her, but now people close to him appear to be in danger. Whereas before, he thinks her worries are something he can never comprehend due to his lower standing:

([Makoto] As my eyelids began to slide closed...the conversation I'd had with Sayaka that morning began to replay. In a way, it's almost frustrating... Even if I understand where her desperation is coming from, I can't share in it. The pressure she's under is way different from anything a normal high school like me goes through. She didn't just stumble into this school the way I did. So I can't say I feel things the way she does. Compared to her...no, compared to everyone else here...there's no doubt I just don't match up. I guess that might explain my own frustration...)

For ease of reading, I won't underline all of that. But these thoughts are from the original translation, after he's comforted Sayaka, following her first meltdown. Where she prompted herself to bring up the Crane Scene with him.

The rest of what Makoto says to her in this room is, again, self-explanatory. If I'd included the images, though, you'd see even clearer that Makoto was starting to doubt his own words around the time he says, "Think about it—" before hesitating and then saying the videos "*have*" to be fake. Justification, plain in his tone. He also imagines his family during the ellipses, which further discourages him to where he makes up a bunch of hectic guesses and asks for *Sayaka's* validation at the end. This isn't the only section where he does this: where he doubts himself all throughout this very *scene*, albeit subtly...

...but regardless, Sayaka notices.

"(Sayaka) ..."

Here, for example...

"(Makoto) So let's just calm down, okay?

Otherwise, we've already lost."

This is true, but it's also easier said than done. Makoto was getting worked up over the video he saw as well; he just prioritized making sure Sayaka was okay.

Even after finding her, he knows that those are just words to both of them.

[[Makoto] I knew I was trying to convince myself just as much as her.

I kept repeating those words to myself, to clear away the images that had been burned into my brain.

Be calm, okay?

Just be calm...)

This should explain it well. But at the same time, that means he's lying to both himself and her, making up things that he doesn't know are true. That he personally doubts are true. Just simple, "reassurances" he's repeating over and over, for both their sakes. Yet without any substance whereby Sayaka can actually feel a solid reason to believe him. Again, she knows this. She knows this is what's going on.

It isn't until *after* the tragic 1st Trial that he actually gets the conviction to escape at *any* costs.

"(Makoto) As long as we work together, I'm sure we can find some way out of here.

And help might even come before that."

Empty "reassurances" such as this—especially the second part. He's still going with the obvious empty words. I'm pretty sure he knows it's been four days by now—or he actually remarks to himself it'd been three days the day before this:

[[Makoto] The third day here has already come to an end. When will I--no, we... When are we gonna get out of here? I laid on my bed and stared blankly at the ceiling. And before I knew it, I'd fallen into an uneasy sleep.]

"(Sayaka) But... what if there *isn't* a way out? What if help *never* comes?"

Though she doesn't realize it, she has a tragically good point: there more or less *isn't* a way out until Monokuma opens access to the other levels. Mukuro is the only other person who can possibly escape from the school, and they don't even know she exists. Also, "the help" (Sayaka's sympathizers) does try to come around Chapter 2 after Sayaka final scene. And they're massacred by automated machine guns and missile fire.

Not to mention she knows Makoto is, for all intents and purposes, BS'ing. But she's still trying to give him a chance to respond to her question here, because she earnestly *does* want to hear something from him now that she's calmed down from before.

"(Makoto) I-if that happens...

...then I'll get you out of here myself! No matter what it takes!

Another filler promise. By that, I mean he's saying it simply to convince her. Besides the earlier mood of the scene and his own thoughts where he says he's trying to convince himself and her, you see him nervously stutter his reply and pause before thinking up the last line.

([Makoto] When I said that, I paused... I had no idea what had come over me.)

In other words, he doesn't know why he said something that unrealistic. It sounds good, but he knows he can't mean that. He just said what came to mind without being rational about it.

At that point, Sayaka falls onto his shoulder. I think we all know the scene:



However, she's not **fully** crying.

This is important.

Her expression is the same as it's been since "...!!!"

That being:



"(Makoto) Sayaka...?"

Makoto doesn't know what she's thinking, though, and he doesn't know what to think at all when she silently falls into him.

"(Sayaka) Please... help me..."

It sounds self-explanatory, again. But I'll explain it more at the end, along with the other sections we've been saving. There's more to this line than it seems.

Besides that, she falls on him but *doesn't* hug him. Instead, she keeps her fists clenched against his chest. Really showing the harsh fear pulling her mind apart, to where she's too afraid *consider* doing anything but just falling on him, totally helpless, genuinely begging him for help.

[[Makoto] Her voice was small and shaky.)

This is how she sounds when she's terrified to this extreme. *Vastly* different. It's important to remember for when she goes into Makoto's room in her final scene, but I'll bring that up again then.

"(Sayaka) Why...? Why is this happening to me?"

To kill, or be killed... I just can't take this anymore...!"

Actually, I'll explain *all* of these italicized sections later: they're *all* connected.

"(Makoto) Sayaka..."

He doesn't realize where she's *really* coming from—and this is true: he himself said before the videos that he can't understand what she must be going through, even though he now he thinks he has a better idea, having seen his video.

So, the sadness and frustration he hears in her voice is enough for him to sympathize with how he thinks she feels anyway.

"(Sayaka) ..."

(This is in italics too.)

"(Makoto) Finally, she raised her face up from my chest.

She looked at me with those big, wet eyes of hers."

Again, she wasn't *fully* crying. She was tearing up but *not* crying on his shoulder.

"(Sayaka) Can I... can I believe what you said?"

Italics

"(Makoto) Huh?"

"(Sayaka) That you'll help me get out?

No matter what it takes...?"

"(Makoto) A-Absolutely!"

"(Sayaka) Makoto... You're the only one I can trust. So please...

No matter what happens, please always be there for me. I need you on my side..."

"(Makoto) Huh?

O-Of course I'll be there for you!

No matter what, I'm always on your side. I mean...

*...you **are** my assistant, after all."*

"(Sayaka) ..."

Thank you, Makoto.

Hearing you say that, I feel like I can keep going.

I can get through this... as long as you're here with me.

Like you said, I'm your assistant."

"(Makoto) The smile I'd come to know so well returned to her face.

It felt a little forced, but still...

It was a huge improvement over how she was before."

Actually, let's just explain all of this right now. We'll group it together on the next page.

First, let's see this how the italicize part's starting images play out again:



Let me out of here! I want to get out of here right now!!



Maizono-san! Calm down!

As she started to move violently, I grasped both her shoulders.



...!!

Notice how pale she looks...though not just that. It really explains her condition better than I can, but I still think I'm doing not half bad.

You can see that Sayaka's yelling out, as I said before. But when Makoto *yells at her back* to calm down, she not only calms down: *her expression changes*.

This expression, chronologically shown only a couple times before (in the computer room and in the katana scene), always comes up right before she lashes out at someone or something. So, it's a dismaying display of her trying to hold her abundance of worries in. *Not lose control. Keep herself composed.*

In fact, that's what she's literally doing.

Since Makoto's there every time, though...she usually fails every time. He triggers most of her emotive outbursts.

But this time, it's a bit different. What does her dialogue read?

It reads this:



"...!!!"

Very crucial. This is the one time Makoto gets her to calm down, ever slightly from when she lashes out.

But it isn't just her merely calming down. There's a lot of significance hidden in her reaction. Before that, we can say based on the general context of their relationship that it was Makoto's sudden, sharp tone that snapped her back to composure. Somewhat...but that's to say it most likely *wasn't* his actual words.

Now I'll be blunt with my explanation. Hopefully, it'll make things clear from the start:



"(Makoto) S-Sayaka? Are you okay?"



"(Sayaka) Yeah... I'm fine.

Actually, no... how could I possibly be fine?

What did we do to end up like this...?

Why are they doing such terrible things to us...?

I want out! Let me out of here right now!"

Maizono barely even notices him or his question and gives him a sort of blank answer with no emotion behind it as she's not thinking of anything but her disaster at the moment.

Yet Sayaka comes to and realizes he's back and stupidly asking her about her situation. Her "how could I possibly be fine" is first and only time she *ever* gets snarky with him. Then Sayaka starts begging him for answers—but as she asks him, she realizes it's useless, gets even angrier, and starts shouting. Unlike in the computer room with the DVD's, she's fully aware she's shouting, and it's less of a reactionary, hysterical trigger and more—being pissed off now. She's so frustrated that she's not even shouting at *him* but at targets *who aren't there*.



"(Makoto) Sayaka! Calm down!"



[[Makoto] As she thrashed around, I grabbed her by the shoulders.)

Right after, she gets up and tries to run out again because she's exasperated and doesn't want to stay still—but Makoto manages to hold her back while forcefully telling her to relax.

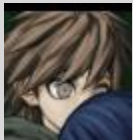
From being furious and frantic, her reaction changes to the image you saw above.

So, why *does* Sayaka immediately freeze up like that and react with "...!!" ?

Well, aside from seeing her freeze up, we know that the "!!" denotes she's surprised. As we've gone over a few times now, it should be clear that Sayaka always responded much better to Makoto when he was taking charge in that forceful (and more importantly, *confident*) way. It's what helps her feel safer and surer, in a way. Because she's trusting him and depending on him, and he shows he's more confident when he gets that way.

But in this case, she doesn't have any reason to stop and listen to what he says other than the fact that she'd calmed a little from when she had her first reaction to watching the video. She's still frantic, furious, and panicking before he shouts at her.

Alright. Now note her next lines *after* she calms down, then read on:



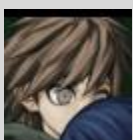
"(Makoto) Sayaka...?"



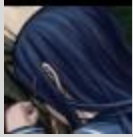
"(Sayaka) Please... help me..."



Why...? Why is this happening to me? To kill, or be killed... I just can't take this anymore...!"



"(Makoto) Sayaka..."



"(Sayaka) ..."

My personal view is twofold. She either:

- 1) Respects him highly enough as a person enough to know what he's saying has to be worth yielding to. Even though he doesn't reply to her afterwards, she knows he just didn't expect her to fall on him.
- 2) Loves him and doesn't want to upset him. If nothing else, not right next to him.

In both cases, these are strong, conscious feelings that she likely would've considered right when Makoto up and yelled at her. In a word, since she was far more manageable at this point compared to in the computer lab, her thoughts might've been something like:

"He's the only *good* person I know...I-I have to listen to him."

And considering she begged him to help her, that's our solid proof there for either or both of these two being her mindset then. She wishes there were a better option, but...he's all she has, and he's not a bad person anyhow. She knows she needs him.

But anyway, there's more to it than that. First off, the ellipses are different. The "..." in "...!!" is just as important as the "!!" if not more.

See, the ellipses absolutely didn't have to be added there, but they were added for a definite reason. To properly convey her reaction.

The reason is, Sayaka still wasn't "there" yet.

To explain, she'd just had a crazed fit and who knew what she was going to do? Then Makoto suddenly called her name and shocked her enough to calm her down, right?

Well, at this point, Sayaka is completely ambivalent and being torn apart by the two choices she had in front of her. She couldn't decide what to do. And now she was scared.

That choice were "believing in Makoto" and "believing in herself".

I would've said "believing in the mastermind" instead of "believing in herself," but the mastermind wasn't forcing her to do anything. He was encouraging it, yes, but her reaction and actions afterwards were strictly her own, the result of her own fears and demons. Later, we see that she didn't have the coldheartedness to go through with her *final plan*, but it was "herself" that pushed her far enough to

form and nearly act one out. And it was "herself" who never *totally* trusted Makoto. He opened her eyes and her heart *greatly*, to things she never imagined seeing in the midst of her weary depression. Her dissatisfaction with everyone around her—but she knew he wasn't *100%* there.

At times, he wasn't entirely honest. He just said things for her sake. What she wanted to hear was his honesty—but he felt he had to tell her what he *thought* she wanted to hear. Which is what he did, and Sayaka knew by now that this was his biggest flaw: acting unlike himself just to try and please her.

And so, though she wants to believe him—*really, she does*—she doesn't want him to feel forced to please her, because she doesn't view herself as this ideal he should aspire to, and it actually makes her feel worse—*guilty* even—that he's going to lie to her some more or force himself to do things he doesn't *truly* think he could do. All for *her* sake. The prospect of his honeyed words and *acting* is too much to handle while she's dealing with the practically tangible horrors that video has instilled in her mind, and she tries to get away from him.

When he finally catches up to her and she breaks out into her rant, the latter half is directed at nobody—but the snarky former half is strictly at him as she says, "How could I *possibly* be fine?" A period where she—having successfully fled from her crush and just run into him again—now can't help but just slightly start to lose her temper with him and his innocent, *ignorant, white-knightish, mindless* caring for her without any disregard for his own video. For his own safety and emotional health.

She *does* love his desire to do good and comfort her. She loves it *like almost nothing else*.

But he's *not* gonna be able to do anything for her.

Not here.

Not now.

So she needs to get away from him again and focus on what *she* can do to get out of this mess.

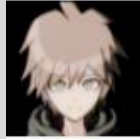
And this is what's going through Sayaka's mind. It's very dark, yes. Though her past and behavior always had a dark shades to them, of varying intensities. This here is just the culmination of the worries and stress she's felt, along with the culmination of the slight skepticism she's had of even Makoto.

But then he yells at her. Tells her to calm down.

Let's look at the image again:



Let me out of here! I want to get out of here right now!!



Maizono-san! Calm down!

As she started to move violently, I grasped both her shoulders.



...!!

She'd been screaming at Makoto, and then she suddenly stopped—she said *nothing*, and Makoto went on to add:

"I understand. I know how you feel right now. When I think what might have happened to my family..."

Which she knew was his way of *self-comforting himself*. For one, she can read minds. I'll get into *that* later as well, though you should honestly believe me by now if you've read this straight through. And two, he's easy to read in general.

And three, he's in a very visible fit *himself* when she sees him upon her return to the computer lab with the rest of the class. She knows he's seen some things. He's gone through some things. Their lives, what they have to lose, might not be exactly the same...but he's got something precious and dear to him, and it's threatened or gone. And he's shaken up about it.

She realizes this.

While he was saying the above and holding her shoulders, she understood...

...yet she was staring down at the ground, shivering and worrying—because now she really *wanted* to trust Makoto again. *Completely* this time. Even if just *one* more time. Because she did **not** want to think about killing and she **didn't** know what else to do...

...but everything was looking so utterly horrible for her at the moment, she just didn't know which side to take. So...she completely froze up. Unable to decide whether she should've followed him or not.

In short:

"!!" = shock.

"..." = doubt.

So then, still: What's so important about this one moment? Well, this is where the rest of that italicized text follows:



"(Sayaka) Can I... can I believe what you said?"



"(Makoto) Huh?"



"(Sayaka) That you'll help me get out? No matter what it takes...?"



"(Makoto) A-Absolutely!" [There goes that confident guise....]



"(Sayaka) Makoto... You're the only one I can trust. So please... No matter what happens, please always be there for me. I need you on my side..."



*"(Makoto) Huh? O-Of course I'll be there for you! No matter what, I'm always on your side. I mean... ..you **are** my assistant, after all."*



"(Sayaka) ..."



"(Sayaka) Thank you, Makoto. Hearing you say that, I feel like I can keep going."



"(Sayaka) I can get through this... as long as you're here with me."



"(Sayaka) Like you said, I'm your assistant."

[(Makoto) The smile I'd come to know so well returned to her face. It felt a little forced, but still... It was a huge improvement over how she was before.]

Of course it's forced. She was literally just—but anyway, after all that, a sudden completely "natural" smile would've been more of a "mask" alarm than a genuine, "unnatural" one. He just doesn't get it.

To be perfectly honest, the principle reason why this scene's important is because of this sole moment. After Sayaka's frozen up from Makoto's raising his voice, this moment shows a visible crack in her armor.

That "armor," though, probably isn't what most think it is.

That "armor" is Sayaka's iron trust and faith in Makoto. She overreacted before when she ran out of the video room. But here, she was actually *thinking* about wanting to sincerely believe in him, and having trouble bringing herself to. As Sayaka said, her believing in him was the only thing keeping her going in that school. Without it, she'd be lost. But never before had she *hesitated* to believe in him for a second. Tentatively, she'd always doubted him as everyone else. Only, it was just a *little*. Barely worth even

mentioning in the overall feelings and trust she had for him.

And more importantly, she never actively *decided* to doubt him when she needed some hope to rely on.

And *more importantly*, this moment shows that she knows once and for all:

This guy is the most *trustworthy, pure* person she's *ever* met and likely *ever will* meet. That's *regardless* of her feelings as to how smart it'd be to trust him—she *does* believe Makoto would try to help, but would he really be able to do anything is the question....

And yet, he was always kind to her and others, and he wanted the best for everyone. That was all she saw. And now, regardless of her past skepticism...now she was seeing him up close.

Up close, desperately trying to calm her down however he could. Even if he had to suddenly lie from within himself—and then convince *himself* of that lie.

As we'll see, this is the absolute most trust Sayaka has ever had in a person—and it's the lowest trust she's had in Makoto as well.

It's not a contradiction. It's trust in his genuineness regarding *intent*. And distrust in his genuineness regarding *capability*. This is why she felt she could only betray *him* in the room switch plan...later on. Because he intended to always be there for her, even knowing he couldn't *possibly* always be there for her. To his detriment, he wanted to assure she was comfortable.

Okay. That being said, this scene wasn't the moment where Sayaka thought to betray Makoto. Spoilers, if you so happened to read this far without knowing the plot...though the sequence of events sort of indicates something like that'd go down. At least in hindsight.

This scene, however, was the moment where Sayaka was actively *considering* it. Because—as most of us know—she wasn't aware of the Class Trial and how Makoto could die if she got away with her crime. That Class Trial rule, which I explained on Page 5, was only brought up by Monokuma *after* her death.

In all honesty, she was probably thinking of what she might've had to do from that chair she sat quietly in. Remember the "*(Sayaka) ...*" that I italicized at the beginning: her mulling it all over.

Everything. But she didn't *want* to do it. Up until the end.

We'll see that when we cover her final scene, though.

The point is:

- 1) She more than likely had the possibility of betraying Makoto on the mind because, along with what I'd just said about his trustworthiness, she brought up killing with him when there was no reason to go straight into *that* option:

"*(Sayaka)* Why...? Why is this happening to me?"

To kill, or be killed... I just can't take this anymore...!"

2) She hadn't *decided* to frame Makoto yet, for the opposite reason:

"(Sayaka) Hearing you say that, I feel like I can keep going.

I can get through this... as long as you're here with me."

The latter of which could've simply been a lie, that quote. Though it's more likely, by the pause, that she's coming to terms with things and willing to trust in him one last time. Because there's stronger evidence after this for the moment when she'd definitely decided she had to *make her move*.

While we don't know at exactly what point Sayaka decided she didn't have a choice but to kill, I believe it's in the very next scene that she regretfully came to that conclusion.

Well, I guess it's the same scene as this, only it's when the moment's ruined. And I'm referring to the part where Monokuma suddenly barges in moments later after she's raised her head from Makoto:

"(Monokuma) ...It's standing up!"

"(Sayaka) Kyah!"

"(Monokuma) Makoto! It's standing up!"

"(Makoto) What's standing up!?"

"Do you even have to ask?

Your flagpole!"

"Get the hell out of here!"

"No! No! I wanna join in!"

"Damnit! Well if you won't leave, then tell us what the hell is up with those videos!"

"Ahh... it's about to come out..."

It's gonna come out! My pristine, pure white...

...stuffing!

My honest, innocent stuffing is about to come gushing out!"

([Makoto] I balled up my fist, took aim, and swung as hard as I could.

I had never put so much energy into a single motion before in my life.

I leaned back, channeling all my power, and let go with everything I had...!)

Crash

"(Monokuma) Guwah!"

"(Sayaka) A-Are you okay!?"

"(Monokuma, before leaving) If I hadn't avoided your punch, you would have just violated school regulations.

But boy are you slow slow slow slow SLOW!

I could've downed a thousand-dollar full-course dinner in the time it took you to finish your swing!

Your speed, agility, alertness, passion, boldness, sense of despair, antagonisation, it's all lacking!"

"(Makoto) ..."

"(Sayaka) What the heck was that just now...?"

"(Makoto) He just wanted to mess with us..."

"Well, for now... you wanna just head back?"

"Yeah..."

[(Makoto) Monokuma had come along and swiftly destroyed the good mood we'd just created.

Sayaka and I headed back to the dorms.)

"(Makoto) You should get some rest, Sayaka. You still look pretty shaken."

"(Sayaka) I'm sorry for making you worry about me..."

You're right. I'm going to lay down for a bit."

[(Makoto) With a nod and a small bow, she disappeared into her room.

Now on my own, I headed off to tell everyone that Sayaka was okay. Once that was done, I decided to go back to my room. It was hard to think after watching that deranged video. I needed some rest of my own.

Jeez... Seriously, what's going on here? There's just so many problems. I can't even decide what the biggest problem is... That we're trapped in here? That what I saw in that video might be real? Monokuma? What the mastermind has in store for us? Or...are we our biggest problem? ... I want to get out of here. But I could never kill someone... Do the others all feel the same...?

Yeah that's definitely the biggest problem right now...)

All from the original translation, and I'll keep using that for the ease of it now unless I'm remarking otherwise.

Yeah, that really did ruin the mood, didn't it. That scene didn't even *have* to be there since it seems like filler, right?

But that's just it: this is the absolute tipping point for Sayaka. Where it all goes downhill.

To start, Monokuma wouldn't have come there to just lie and say he wanted to get "involved"...just for the sake of it. Monokuma's a pervert but doesn't lie unless he has to. And by "Monokuma," I mean "Junko".

The thing is, Monokuma was telling the truth about Makoto's "flag pole". Take that however you want, but Makoto already said multiple times by now that he was mesmerized by Sayaka. And there she was hugging him. Sort of. And crying on him.

That *isn't* the issue for Sayaka, though—she doesn't care that Makoto was turned on. She doesn't even care that he might've been more "interested" in *her* than in *helping* her (though she knows that's not true anyway).

At this point, Sayaka simply felt she couldn't win over Monokuma.

He was everywhere. He knew everything. And he was powerful, and they weren't making any progress in days—and it didn't look like they were going to find out who was *behind* him and his supposed thousands of clones, *let alone* find out how to escape without his say.

And since she could *not* afford to waste any more precious time—the stress was becoming unbearable—she decided that everyone's efforts, including her own, were a lost cause: she had to do what he said in order to have any hope of being free.

She started to lose it once again. But she tried to hide that fact from Makoto...even though she was still visibly shaken around him. At the rate things were going, there was simply no way to win against Monokuma. Meanwhile, she had no idea what was actually happening outside...

In any event, while she's in her room, we don't know whether she actually went to bed until that later that night or stayed up, planning her next move. Considering how...and I'm going to just say it...

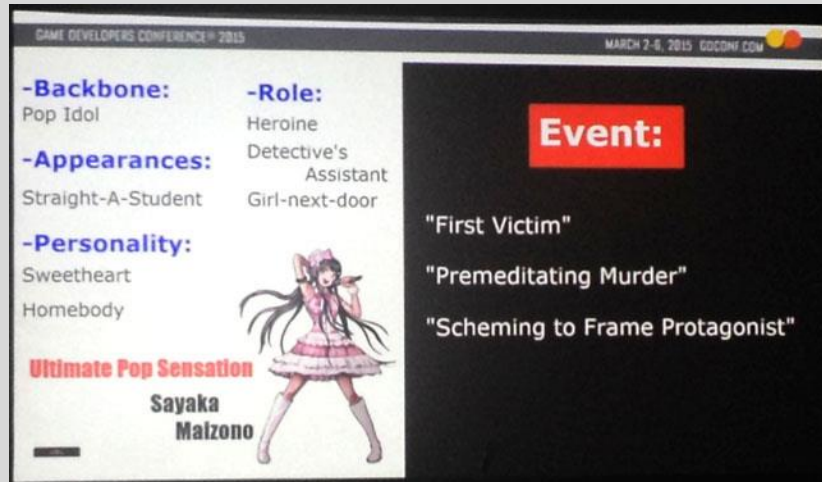
...*perfect* her plan was, I'm going to assume she stayed up. But we don't know for sure, so I'm not claiming this as a fact. There's also her restlessness to consider, a major problem she was having which undoubtedly struck harder after everything that had just happened.

However, besides the question of whether Maizono stayed up, a lot of people seriously say her plan was half-baked and poorly thought out. I'll be thoroughly destroying that argument shortly. Once I actually go into what happened leading up to that plan.

So then, let's talk about her betrayal.

Yes, her "betrayal". She "betrayed" Makoto, and we can admit this for two reasons:

- 1) It's been stated by the creator, Kodaka, and he even had it on his presentation conference slide:



- 2) She went out of her way to fake being terrified and trick him in an elaborate plan with multiple fail-safes, both of which in large part centered on framing him for a murder/murder attempt when they'd both told each other they counted on each other and would help each other escape. She had hours to think up this plan as well.

With that out of the way, the actual scenario of her betrayal. Just so you know, I'll be dividing Sayaka's last scenes into three sections. The first of these, right now:

Later that same night, Sayaka suddenly knocked on Makoto's door and he, surprised to see her there a few minutes before 10:00 PM (where it's then officially "Nighttime," and the class' "don't-go-out-at-night" rule takes effect), asked her what was up.

It wasn't just the fact that she was at his room so late, though: despite her feelings for him, Sayaka almost never came over to Makoto. She usually kept to herself, dealing with her own personal turmoil until Makoto would approach her. And not only *this*, but the obvious: she looked absolutely *terrible*.

I think Makoto describes it rather accurately himself in the following dialogue between them:

"(Sayaka) I'm really sorry to come by so late...

([Makoto] Sayaka!?)

"(Makoto) Sayaka? What are you doing out so late?"

([Makoto] That's when I noticed...

Her body was trembling.)

"(Makoto) I-Is everything okay...?"

"(Sayaka) Sorry to bother you, but... something really weird just happened.

"(Makoto) Something... weird?

"(Sayaka) Just a little while ago, I was laying down in my room...

And all of a sudden, my door started rattling and shaking."

[(Makoto) Her voice sounded like all the air had been squeezed out of her lungs.

Just hearing her talk made me tense up.)

"(Sayaka) It was like someone was trying to force the door open.

My door was locked, so they couldn't get in, of course.

But they started shaking the door harder and harder.

I was so scared I couldn't even move."

"(Makoto) S-So what happened!?"

"After a while, it just... stopped.

I let some time go by, then I got up and opened the door to check outside...

But there was nobody there."

"Someone tried to force their way into your room...?"

But... who would do something like that?"

"It's not like I'm suspicious of anyone here, but still... it makes me nervous.

What if something like that happened in the middle of the night? What would I do then...?"

"Y-You don't have to worry about that, right? I mean, we can't go outside during nighttime."

"But that's just a promise we made, right? If someone decided to break that promise..."

"Th-Then... Why don't you stay in my room tonight? Would that make you feel a little better?"

"What!?"

"All it said in the school regulations was that we had to sleep in 'the dorm rooms', right?

It didn't state specifically *which* room each person had to sleep in. So..."

" B-But... two people sharing one room is... you know..."

"...Ah!

Oh jeez, I'm sorry! I didn't even think about that!

Honestly, that didn't even cross my mind!"

"No, I know, me either. It's not even that I mind the idea, but..."

...

Um, if you don't mind, could we maybe switch rooms? Just for tonight?"

"Switch rooms...?"

I-if it'll help put your mind at ease, then it's totally fine with me."

"But... I don't mind you staying in my room, but..."

...are you sure you're okay with me staying in yours?

That doesn't, like... concern you?"

"It's fine. I trust you..."

"In that case, then..."

Ding dong, bing bong

"(Monokuma) Mm, ahem, this is a school announcement. It is now 10 p.m. As such, it is officially nighttime. Soon the doors to the dining hall will be locked, and entry at that point is strictly prohibited. Okay then...sweet dreams, everyone! Good night, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite..."

"(Sayaka) Oh man, it's already nighttime..."

"(Makoto) Okay, so it's settled. I'll head to your room right now."

([Makoto] Oh, if we're gonna trade rooms, we'd better trade keys, too.)

"(Sayaka) Ah, that's right. We'll have to trade keys."

"(Makoto) Again!?"

"Like I said, I'm psychic. ..."

"...Huh? Hey, aren't you gonna say you were just kidding?"

"What if I *wasn't* just kidding...?"

([Makoto] Something resembling a smile had made its way to her face.

Thank goodness. It looks like she's already started to get back to normal.)

"(Makoto) Okay, we'd better trade keys, then."

"(Sayaka) Yup, let's do it."

([Makoto] We exchanged keys, and when I looked back up at her again...

...there was another worried expression there.)

"(Sayaka) Makoto... please be careful. If someone comes to the door, don't open it no matter what."

"(Makoto) I won't."

The same goes for you, Sayaka. No matter who it is, don't open your door for anyone."

"(Sayaka) Even if I'm sure it's you, I absolutely won't open it. Otherwise, what's the point of even switching?"

"(Makoto) Oh, by the way... Just so you know, my bathroom door tends to get stuck.

There's a little trick to opening it...

You have to turn the knob, then lift up on the door while you pull it out.

Just do that and the door should open no problem."

"Okay, but the showers don't work during nighttime anyway, right?"

"Oh, that's right. I totally forgot..."

"But I guess I might use it when I get up in the morning. So thank you."

"Okay, well, I'd better get going.

See you tomorrow, Sayaka."

"Oh, and about what I said before..."

"Hm?"

"When I said I was psychic, it really was a joke. Honestly, I'm just very perceptive."

"Yeah, I know."

"...Good night, then.

See you in the morning."

([Makoto] Sayaka gave me one last parting smile, and I headed off to "my" room.)

Now, let me clear up one thing for those of you who've misunderstood. We know that Sayaka was manipulating Makoto in this scene and was using his reactions and feelings of having to protect her and make her feel safe however he could for her own ends of committing the murder she'd planned out and framing him for it. Yes, that's definitely true.

That being said, it does *not* mean her mood here wasn't completely, utterly, 100%, totally authentic.

It was *forced*, yes. It was even brilliant insofar as it took the negative emotions she knew she'd have trouble controlling, using them to manipulate Makoto even easier by hiding behind a ruse of...negative emotions.

Yet it was still *entirely* authentic.

Many people don't understand this. They think she was completely faking *everything*, including her awful appearance and disposition, when she went to Makoto's room. They think she was trying to use her superstar idol charm/womanly charm to sway him into doing what she wanted. While it's true that her story of hearing someone knocking on her door was fabricated, common sense would make it obvious that the fear she showed Makoto wasn't made up at all.

Also, anyone who believes the latter of those theories, that she was trying to "charm" him, fails to understand the rudimentary stupidity in the thought of someone who's hopelessly in love with and attracted to someone else working herself up into basically a fever just to play on her own feelings and mock his.

I know: she's a good actor. Part of the idol package. But that's just it:

It's called "playing the role". People are most often going to try to *convince* themselves of a lie first if they *really* want to make it seem convincing to others. Especially good actors (liars) like her. Especially good actors who got to the top by pretty much any means necessary, for example—like her.

If I want to seem like one thing (in this case, petrified), I'll think nothing but thoughts related to that one thing so I can empathize with it and convince *myself* of the threat. Then others will see my change and be more convinced than they otherwise would've been if I myself wasn't convincing.

Many people don't understand the significance of this. What I'm getting at is that even though Sayaka was lying in order to play the role, she had to purposefully worry herself sick to the point where she *looked petrified, sounded terrified, shivered, sweated, and turned paler*.

As I said, essentially a fever:



We've seen before that she can get that way when she's genuinely worried about something *extremely* important to her, or genuinely afraid of something.

So the only way that she can look and sound like this is if she literally forced herself to simmer in the thoughts of all the terrible things that were happening to her, and that could happen to her. Losing her friends and family. Being trapped in that school. Maybe losing Makoto and never seeing any of that class again. Maybe losing her life's work and the identity she worked so long and hard to create. Never being able to inspire depressed and lost children like her ever again. *Those* children suffering.

—and dwelling on that intensely, so *she* could sincerely suffer and grieve inside and convince herself in her agony that it looked as though she most likely *had* lost everything she'd ever cared about. As though she now probably really *did* have nothing. That what she was doing now was *all* she could do in order to desperately, hopefully hold onto whatever remained of the life she had.

Notice I said "convince herself". So, in short, she knew her story was made up—but the fear she showed was real. *Absolutely* real. And with her state as tragically volatile as it was back in her room, it wasn't as if she had to search "long and hard" to feel awful. She just had to open herself up to the horrible, painful thoughts she'd been trying so hard to hold back.

Part of that fear, though, was in what she knew she was getting herself into. She honestly *didn't* want to betray Makoto, and she most likely didn't want to kill Leon Kuwata either. She had no reason to dislike him: yet her plan was to target and kill Leon, then blame it on Makoto after she'd switched into his room and switched the nameplates on their rooms while everyone was asleep. The crime would've happened in Makoto's room.

Now, Maizono didn't know about the class trial, but she also didn't know whether she would've been able to go back and help the others if she made it out. I'm not suggesting whether she wouldn't *or* would've done that if given the chance either way—I'd like to *assume* she would've tried to go back and help Makoto. But she felt for Makoto to such an extent that I believe it'd be remiss to assume she wouldn't at least seriously *consider* it. Especially since she had people on the outside who survived The Tragedy and were willing and trying to help them.

What we *can* say is that, when her plan failed, she was thinking of Makoto. There's a lot of evidence to support this (for later), despite how open the game and creators try to make that notion seem, so I don't know why she wouldn't have had Makoto—someone she would've betrayed to escape—on her mind if she hadn't failed.

That being said, had Maizono's plan not failed...or more accurately, *had she not failed to carry out her plan*, she would've probably given herself up soon enough after hearing about the class trial and the consequences for winning (everyone else dying).

She truly didn't have the heart to betray Makoto and *everyone* else to that level, so she was unfortunately doomed from the start. Doomed as soon as she woke up in that school.

Well anyway, there are two main elements of Sayaka's plan that I'm going to cover. Those are:

- 1) Why her plan was completely, without a doubt, perfectly flawless in notion—which it was. And why this supports her as an incredibly bright and shrewd girl who would've been poised to escape had she not lost her nerve.
- 2) Why she was thinking of Makoto when she wrote Leon's name on Makoto's bathroom wall. Because her plan to kill Leon failed, she was stabbed by him, and she wrote Leon's name in blood on Makoto's bathroom wall just before she died.

That said...

It's one thing to say she thought of Makoto but mainly wanted to expose Leon as her murderer, which is false...but it's *dead wrong* to claim she might not have been thinking of Makoto at all, but something else instead. That makes literally no sense, and I'll go ahead and explain that fallacy second.

To start with the first section:

Why Sayaka's Plan Was Flawless

The answer lies in the differentiation between her failure to enact her plan as she'd intended to, and the intentions she had when formulating her plan. A lot of people who lack basic logical reasoning blindly assume that these two are related. They assume that because Sayaka failed to murder Leon and died, that meant she screwed up when planning and chose the wrong person and/or went about thinking up her crime the wrong way. Basically, they assume that Sayaka's failure meant her plan itself was flawed.

Well, I'm sorry, those opinions are dumb. If you've been influenced by that kind of thinking, just pretend you never saw anything like that, since that thinking's the mark of someone who doesn't understand the story of Danganronpa. I mean, at the *very* least, the story Danganronpa.

Now, let me briefly go over what Sayaka's plan was. And though this is the in-depth section, I do mean "briefly". I'd already summed it up a minute ago. What made her plan so brilliant was that it was almost completely infallible in concept and in practice, barring intervention by Monokuma or two or more people *besides* Leon leaving their rooms and noticing her dealing with Leon...meaning she'd have to be completely inattentive. Yet it was incredibly simple at the same time.

What Sayaka wanted to do was lead Makoto into agreeing to switch rooms with her. Once they were in each other's rooms, she wanted to go back out and swap their rooms' nameplates so her name was on his room and his name was on her room. Then she wanted to slip a note under Leon's door, inviting him to her room under the guise of wanting to have a "very important, private conversation". He'd end up going to Makoto's room while trying to go to hers, because of the nameplate switch, and she'd be waiting in his room with a butcher knife that she secretly stole from the kitchen.

[Note: She'd already taken and had this knife hidden somewhere secret while speaking to Makoto—Aoi noticed one of the dining-hall kitchen's knife set was missing shortly *before* the nighttime announcement (which is when Sayaka was starting the room-switch) and *after* she'd left to drink some tea she'd made, when she swore the entire set was there. Sayaka never left Makoto's room again besides to send Leon the secret note, meaning she'd hidden the knife somewhere else in the meantime before first confronting Makoto and went back for it *after* Makoto went in her room and *before* she went to Leon's room. That, or she had it hidden on her person—but it honestly wouldn't make any difference.]

And soon as Leon closed Makoto's door, she'd kill him, get rid of any evidence, and switch the nameplates back so Leon's body would be in Makoto's room. Then she'd leave Makoto's room and ideally get her room key from him the next day, without anyone noticing. Once someone would eventually discover Leon's body in Makoto's room, Makoto would be blamed and everyone would believe Sayaka over him if he tried to defend himself by bringing up the fact that they switched rooms. As she would deny it.

That's brief enough, right? Keep in mind that this all started due to Sayaka's considerable acting skills and charisma in general. Look at how efficiently she gets Makoto to do what she needs in the dialogue too: she not only convinces him she's actually frightened, but she persuades *him* into suggesting to *her* that they share a room, then persuades him to accept switching rooms completely, all without him getting suspicious at all. Again, it's no exaggeration to say that these are the skills of someone who rose

from virtually *nothing* to the very *pinnacle* of an exceptionally competitive industry through *any* means necessary. Mainly an exceptional charisma and sociability.

But Sayaka died.

Now, I think the circumstances and, to an extent, "mystery" surrounding her death added a lot to her character. So I don't mind admitting she died and she failed in her plan. Bringing that up is never a touchy subject with me; and so, I can discuss it straightly and without any bias here.

What baffles me are the excuses people make for why she failed. Her plan failed for one simple reason:

Deep down, she didn't want to go through with it.

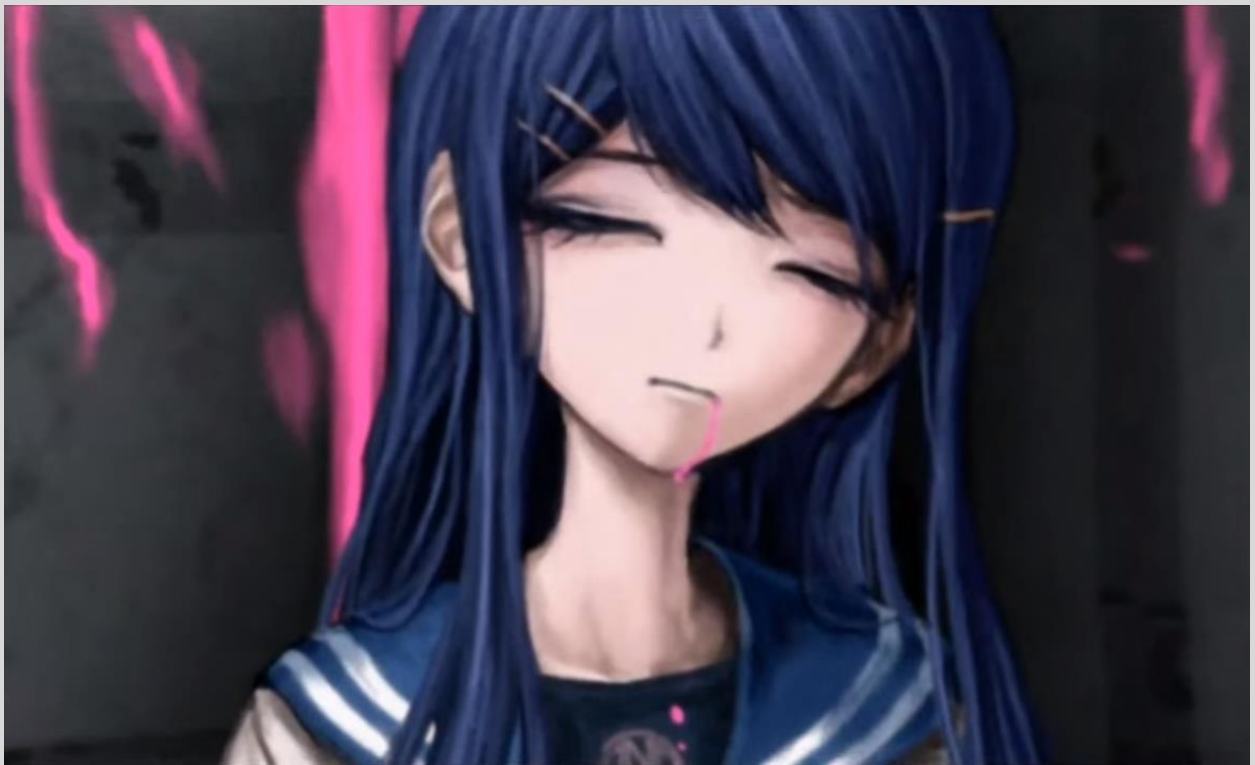
Sayaka was definitely poised to kill Leon. She's healthier and fitter than him (which I'll go into), faster than him, logically more motivated than him, and she has the element of surprise; and, by the time he enters the room, she has a butcher knife hidden somewhere on her person that is bigger than his face. And she intended to kill him as soon as he closed the door, making sure no one saw him so they could "meet" in private—he wouldn't have even been facing her at first as he closed—and possibly locked—the door. If she ran at him, intending to get it over with, he wouldn't have stood a chance. Just a second or three, and he'd be cold dead.

Yet people argue that Leon overpowered her. They argue she tried to attack him multiple times and he weaved and dodged everything like it was a bad shounen. They argue he did that and then, without any attempt at engagement, backed up into a katana sheath that he freely picked up before they clashed, with her wrist getting broken the second time. And some even go further to quote the ridiculously non-canon manga spinoff that has him trying to calm her down *during* that "exchange" and *after* she runs in the bathroom, hysterical, causing him to accidentally stab her in the stomach while she's struggling to get away from him. It doesn't at all explain the blood from her mouth, but that doesn't seem to matter to people.

Graphic Image Below



Yes, there's blood coming from her mouth, though that's hard to see in this resolution.



Now, those things I listed that people say...that's all a bunch of nonsense.

I suppose many otaku love to live in their little fantasy world where guys are invincible and a woman with a knife can do them no harm as they use their superior reflexes to clown her and disarm her at the same time, then maybe beat her up too.

I'm not going to argue why that's inane and childish to believe. And I'm not going to argue with anyone who thinks "Oh, well, this is just a game, so it could happen." Which I've heard many, many times.

Nope. Go get yourself into a situation like that, with you in Leon's shoes, and tell me how well you fare. I'm really interested—but I want to see the proof that you pressed charges or she went to jail after your flawless victory.

Yeah, you'd be dead. If she *really* wanted you dead, that is.

But the second knock against her "faltering at the last moment" (you know: "the truth") is that Leon wasn't an ordinary guy. He was a super muscular, super fit, athletic machine. The best baseball player in the country! Who never lost a game! How could he get hurt when a girl unexpectedly charges him from behind with a butcher knife? Pft.

Well, no: let me explain first why Leon isn't nearly as athletic as Sayaka. The butcher knife aside, Leon wouldn't hold a candle to Sayaka in any physical competition:

For one, I do acknowledge that since he's a guy, he would supposedly have more initial muscle mass than Sayaka—supposedly. He's less toned than her, but that visible muscle mass isn't what matters in terms of muscle density, which men usually soar in.

However, besides his lankiness, he's unconditioned, unlike her. The truth is, in baseball, he himself rarely even practices because he wants to quit soon and work on his singing skills. He doesn't like the sport at all, actually. He's one of those "all of the natural talent, none of the hard work" types—the complete opposite of Maizono:

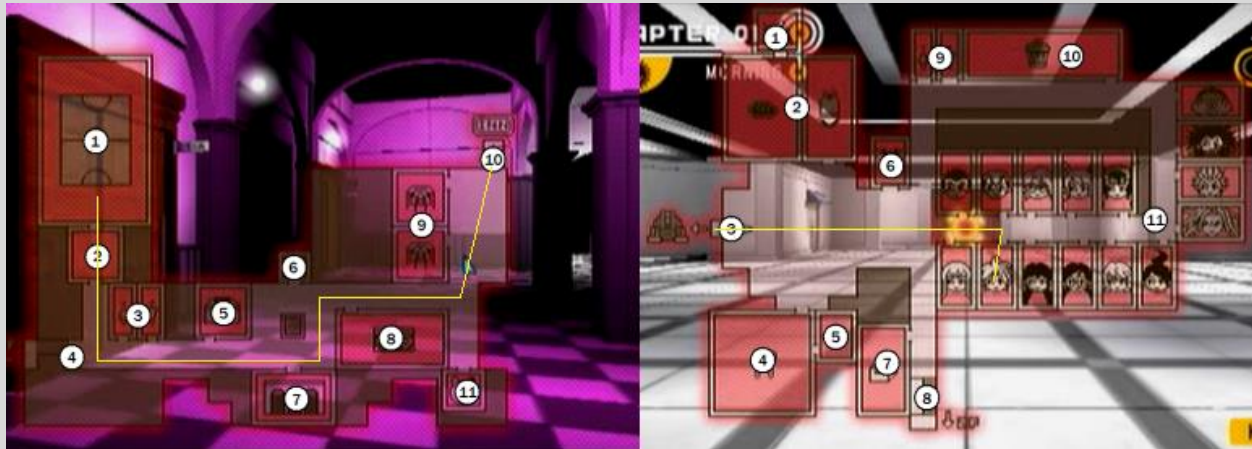
"(Leon) I don't like baseball. Like, at all. I've never gone to a single practice. And as soon as I got accepted here, I quit baseball for good! I have my own dream for the future!"

Maizono, on the other hand, is very fit, which she also tells Makoto:

"(Sayaka) I know how I look, but I've actually built some pretty good muscle jumping up and down on stage!"

The scene from that line is directly after she easily picks up and carries Makoto to his bed by herself after Mondo knocks him out, as stated in the canon *Danganronpa Reload Artbook*. Keep in mind that Makoto weighs over 100 pounds, and more than her entire body weight. Even Sakura's impressed that she carried him by herself because of how far she had to have walked (out the gymnasium and down a few halls) while making sure he was being held steadily—since he literally flew across the room and had a concussion.

From left to right, *this* is how far she carefully walked:



On the other hand, Sakura called Leon *weak* at around the same time she was impressed with Sayaka's physical strength.

About Sayaka:

OR ARTBOOK TRANSLATION: EVALUATION OF SAYAKA'S CHARACTER

Naegi, Ishimaru, Togami, Mondo, Leon, Yamada, Hagakure, Sayaka.

Text in upper corner: Maizono finds something likable in everyone, with a smiling face and scrupulous care. Due to the nature of her work, her "top idol" department lets her provide a word of encouragement, refreshing in the strained atmosphere of the daily life of mutual killing!

- **Togami:** An idol? I don't know about that.
- **Ishimaru:** So this is the meaning of "a woman graced with intelligence and beauty." [he looks SHOCKED AND AMAZED]
- **Naegi:** C...cute...!
- **Kirigiri:** She's pure, isn't she.
- **Aoi:** She has an amazing aura!
- **Fukawa:** Hah... what's an idol for....
- **Sakura:** It's hidden, but she's really quite muscular, isn't she.
- **Celes:** She's a very capable person, isn't she. [apparently the term she used for "capable person" can also mean "shrewd person" or "brothel madam" for the record.]
- **Junko:** Does she know some great diet?
- **Chihiro:** Woah... she's just like on television.
- **Monokuma:** The world of showbiz sure is scary~
- **Hagakure:** Chili oil is her specialty?!
- **Yamada:** Hmm, it looks like her bust is 83cm, and....
- **Leon:** Wooooah! Sooo cute!
- **Mondo:** I-is she for real....

"(Sakura) It's hidden, but she's really quite muscular, isn't she."

About Leon:



"(Sakura) Nantaru nanjakusa!/What weakness!"

[Credit to PDA on Tumblr for those uploads. For *most* of the Artbook Evaluations, actually. Those were awesome scanlation jobs and very helpful.]

To note, 軟弱さ often refers to one's weakness of will, which makes sense: she's saying he never pushes himself. That he's unwilling to do anything for himself, including work out. That he's pathetically lazy and soft.

But it also can refer to one's literal physicality. For example, "flabby" [and sick]. Which accurately describes Leon's body type. Either one would work: she's essentially saying Leon's frail.

The clinch is that Sakura calls Leon frail *while* being impressed with Maizono's physical strength, so this comparison actually has more to do with their comparative strengths than just that one scene of her carrying Makoto, and Leon not showing anything like that.

Since Sakura's equally impressed by Aoi who's perhaps the 2nd/3rd strongest and fittest person there along with Mondo and Ishimaru (not counting Junko, Mukuro, or Sayaka herself), she's obviously not impressed with Maizono simply because she's female but because she gives off a misleading impression of being a cute softie despite actually being very strong. We also know that Sakura isn't one to defer to a man's strength anyway. So, this analysis stems from the result of Maizono's training and natural strength.

At the very least, Sakura's analysis supports that Leon would've been and has been out of breath long before Sayaka if they ever competed in something athletic (like fighting), so that's why he was lucky to have gotten near the katana in the first place. Even with his supposed superior strength, a knife would cancel *all* of that out. And then some. He wouldn't have had the endurance to fight her off.

To reiterate: He states he hates going out on the field *at all*. Leon didn't beat her by being "strong". Even stronger than her, which is biological speculation, he's not that strong. He's just a regular, rather poorly conditional dude who knows how to swing a bat and throw a pitch very, *very* well. Of course, that also translated to swinging that katana sheath in Makoto's room well.

And, biology debates aside, there's no way he's as fit as her anyway. Idol training is mostly calisthenics, but anyone aware of their backgrounds should know she put in *far* more work towards being conditioned that Leon ever did.

That's what a fight comes down to anyway. It's usually not "strength": it's "conditioning". With adrenaline, you're not going to notice THAT much anyway, unless you're majorly hurt. Which usually

means, unless the other person is that much stronger: with Leon, that isn't the case. He's weaker than the average guy, and Sayaka's stronger than the average woman. And batting skills don't lend well to fighting at all unless he has something hard to swing.

The first one to lose most fights is the one who'd tire the fastest. Upon playing the game, it's plain to see that Leon has piss poor conditioning compared to Sayaka. Here's an example of him cringing (along with Makoto and Hifumi) while she's blowing past him in a simple sprint from the pre-mindwipe Hope's Peak events:



[Sakura obviously gave them a head start.]

To reiterate that other point: Even if Leon *were* that much stronger or fitter than her, which is incredibly unlikely and I severely doubt he was to any extent, she had a freaking *butcher knife*. And she could've snuck him; he had *no* idea what she was planning. She was actually *in* a position to sneak him. The *only* reason he overcame her is because she had last-second *doubts* in attacking him (which, I'll explain more soon) and allowed him to get the katana.

Unfortunately, Leon was always assumed *vastly* stronger for just being a guy by the more biased fans, even though he really wasn't that strong in any sense of the word. By virtue of weighing a couple dozen pounds more, could he grapple her easily? Most definitely, if that's what it were about.

But that's not what happened. He *somehow* took the katana sheathe and broke her wrist with it as she swung her knife at him. So, it's about the quickness of this type of encounter: which, aside from throwing someone down, is how most fights end.

Leon's got much worse conditioning than Sayaka and she's more toned than him—he doesn't have any visible muscle at all, which is mainly to say she's quicker than him for that reason. I assume she can throw a punch better than him as well, but that's a tossup as men tend to be better strikers in general. The baseball swings amount to little—the uncertainty is more so the fact that he's stated he *hates* physically exerting himself.

Which explains how he's still so successful...because, no offense to baseball fans, but he's playing a sport where he doesn't have to exert himself. Like, seriously: Not to attack baseball—but if every time he bats, his hits/pitches are excellent, that's nothing like a continuous exertion. Basketball or soccer, for example, where you're constantly running regardless.

But if he had to do cardio training and dieting for hours and hours and hours and days and days and months and years the same way Sayaka did, he'd be a goner. He'd probably collapse, to be honest: we see that he can't run 100 yards without being in serious physical pain.

Again, the outcome of her confrontation with Leon wasn't determined by strength. Otherwise, with her knife, he'd be dead regardless of his inherent masculine advantage.

You really can't argue that a guy who says this:

"(Leon) Even though I didn't even want to go out and play, the coach always came to ask me personally, so I couldn't refuse!"

"(Leon)Who would like such a thing, running around on a dirty field?!"

"(Leon)It's so unfashionable, being all covered in sweat and dirt... putting all that effort into practice... It's just baseball, isn't it? I don't even need practice!"

"(Leon) Anyway, I planned to quit baseball once I entered this school... I used baseball as a springboard, but what I really wanted to become after coming to this success-guaranteed academy is... A "Super High-school Level Musician"! I will definitely be a hit!"

"(Leon) No, that's out of the question! If there's one thing I really hate, it's practice!"

...would somehow overpower a desperate, far better conditioned girl with a butcher knife. Who'd have been charging him from behind right as he's closed and most likely re-locked the door she's locked. Not without the scene looking incredibly stupid and unrealistic, as Makoto had and many fans still do imagine: as if Leon were so cool the scene literally went down like a Shaw Brothers flick.

He *probably* had more muscle mass just because he's a guy. But he probably couldn't use as much relatively, because he's a lazy-ass who only ever comes to his games and games his forced practices if he ever comes to *those* at all (because, most often, he skips them).

Actually, if Sayaka and Leon got into a fight without that knife, I'd side with Sayaka anyway because she's proven herself to be as strong as, if not stronger than, the average man her size. Unlike most women who lack upper-body strength compared to men, she's proven she can *very easily* lift and slowly carry more than her bodyweight for long distances. Yes, it doesn't make much sense—but it is what it is.

Leon is both a nearly-professional batter and pitcher, true. But baseball's more of a technical sport than pure calisthenics or resistance. And at the professional level—which he hasn't entered and doesn't plan to enter—it requires a level of strength that he doesn't have. He just has the techniques to succeed at the high school level. Another thing many confuse about "Ultimates": they are picked because they stand out as future prospects for the real world. Very few Ultimates (Sayaka, Byakuya, Mukuro, Sakura, and debatably Toko for the 78th Class) are already world-class in their talents.

So to contrast, Sayaka has, according to Sakura, more muscle than him. And Sayaka's put more physical work in than him all her life. Muscle is muscle, male or female. Though men almost always have more, amount of *and* control of twitch muscle fibers, man or woman, is what determines someone's strength. And not every man in the world leads laughably in both categories.

To imply Leon doesn't have the latter compared to Sayaka is more of a knock at him as opposed to *all* men—something that should obviously go without saying, but I know how people are.

But that's the first topic people go to for why Sayaka's plan failed. But since that can be easily disproven by anyone who's viewed the game of life *objectively*, let me tell you what really happened to Sayaka after Makoto left for her room:

After Makoto went to her room and she changed the room nameplates, she slipped her note under Leon's door and went back to Makoto's room. She told Leon to be at her room in five minutes, and there was nothing to do for those five minutes but wait.

What was she thinking of in those five minutes? Well, I don't want to sound redundant, but everything I've already brought up. All those worries, all those fears—and more importantly, what she was about to do soon.

Despite how cynical Sayaka is, and despite how pushed she might've been, she was not the type to kill someone. We know that because she spared Leon—he was completely vulnerable coming through that door and she obviously didn't charge him; he didn't even have a *scratch* on him. But before that crucial moment, she was definitely mulling it over because she just *had* to escape. It wouldn't have been worth going on and living another day in that school if she wasn't spending it planning to get out as *fast* as she could.

Sorry if this isn't being explained well, but I'm trying to say that Sayaka was worried for another reason. In fact, *deathly afraid* for another reason.

She was afraid of killing.

She couldn't stand the thought of staying trapped another moment—but she couldn't stand the thought of killing someone either. Both of those extremes were tearing her apart, and that's why she'd collapsed onto Makoto, begging him for answers. In her room, she'd been literally fueling herself with negative emotions in order to work up the courage to go through with her plan—it was a spur of the moment decision she made a couple hours before going to his room, a decision motivated by fear.

But when it came to moments where she had silent time to reflect, moments like this and the last one in the classroom, she really had time to think about both sides of the dilemma she was in: how she could possibly be saved *or* damned by either trying to stay *or* trying to kill.

In a word, Sayaka was just *morally* against killing. We saw how heavily the thought of possibly having to do that weighed on her in the last scene. With the teary eyes and all. It weighed on her: as it should've. So when Leon finally came in the room and they said "hi" or whatever, the sheer terror of what she was about to do was crushing her. At some point after closing the door, Leon realized what a now-frozen and panicking, barely speaking (likely silent), Sayaka had prepared to do. Most likely, she'd already taken her knife out; but since Leon was revealed to be completely uninjured, she obviously didn't attack him.

Instead she hesitated as she brandished the knife, terrifying herself *further*, and allowing a now-frantic *Leon* time to determine she was trying to kill him.

But even though she couldn't, he obviously wasn't thinking about that. He was in a rush and fearing for his life—and in his mind, he'd just closed himself in, completely trapped. So, when he looked around the room and saw the katana sheath, he immediately ran to that. Meanwhile, Sayaka was still beside herself with fear and didn't realize what Leon was doing even as she stared at him: she was just too afraid to process what *he* was planning now. And because of this mutual misunderstanding, Sayaka *really* freaked out when he saw him grab the katana to defend himself. The entire scenario would've taken 4-5 seconds at the most.

Right then, Leon would've either attacked Sayaka using that sword, forcing her to defend herself with the knife, or Sayaka would've attacked Leon first, forcing him to defend. Or, they would've had a near-equal/equal clash. In the second case, Sayaka would've only been striking Leon out of fear that he was going to strike her, but Leon would've seen that Sayaka had planned to attack her: he would've been going after her just to be safe—she'd already had him targeted. And this is supported by what happens next.

Once Sayaka and Leon clash, he manages to break her wrist with the sheath afterwards because of its greater reach. In agony, now Sayaka *knows* Leon's trying to attack her in return (whether or not she should've known is beside the point), and she can't defend herself because she dropped the knife. She runs into the bathroom and shuts it to desperately get away from him—while Leon finally grasps what's just happened and realizes that, if he lets Sayaka live, she might try to kill him again later. Even if she's harmless now. She might also try to claim he tried to kill her just then.

Whether or not either is true still isn't the point, although at least the first probably isn't.

After all...Sayaka trying to kill him at a later point? Sayaka, now, was literally fearing for her life and starting to regret every single mistake she'd *ever* made. That and she hadn't wanted to kill Leon *in the first place*. But Leon didn't consider this, perhaps because he didn't want to. Perhaps because he was feeling hectic now. And he tried to break into the bathroom by merely opening the door which was supposedly locked. Believing this was Sayaka's room, one can only assume he had a brief slip-up in forgetting what Mukuro said about the women's bathrooms locking—but Makoto's door was faulty, making it practically impossible to get in without destroying the door hinge unless the person entering knew the trick to open the door: to lift the knob slightly before pulling it after it's twisted.

Makoto showed Sayaka that, and that's how she got in (important to remember). Leon, of course, couldn't guess this and couldn't get in. So he went back to his room to get his toolbox. Why didn't he get Makoto's? He thought he was in Sayaka's room—which was "switched" from Makoto's because of their nameplate switch—and didn't expect her to have a toolkit: the women weren't supposed to have those in their rooms. Only sewing kits with weak sewing scissors and...diagrams of the human body and its vital points.

When he got his, he came back inside, picked up the knife, and used a screwdriver from the kit to break open the door. Seeing the knife, Sayaka tried to run, but he cornered her and stabbed her in the abdomen, severing one of her arteries. This got blood all over both of them. She still tried to struggle and get away, but Leon kept her against the wall, slamming her face-first into it as well, and busting her lip, before she slumped down back-first, getting blood over the wall behind them. When he saw that she wasn't moving, he left her there and turned his attention to trying to clean up the evidence.

But somehow, Sayaka held on right as he started cleaning up. That's when she remembered that they were still in Makoto's room. But she couldn't get up, and she was losing consciousness. She could hardly move an inch. All she knew, her only choice was to write Leon's name with her own blood to at least try and clear Makoto of suspicion. She knew it wouldn't have been much, but it was all she could do. And through the pain, she managed to finish before finally collapsing. Leon finished his not-so-thorough clean up later, including slashing the walls and floors with the knife to make the crime scene more confusing, before leaving to burn his shirt in the furnace.

In the end, he never thought to switch Makoto's and Sayaka's nameplates back because he didn't notice it'd been done. The crime therefore appeared to have happened in Sayaka's room.

Nevertheless, Monokuma states, inadvertently for Sayaka, that the crime happened in Makoto's room. This left Makoto as the culprit of her murder, implying he could've also killed Syaka and then baited Leon, possibly attempting to kill him as well. But as Leon was not aware of Sayaka's plan and couldn't argue the aforementioned, Monokuma's statement eventually revealed the other possible truth regarding Sayaka's original intentions and who the second person in Makoto's room actually was (Leon, the first being her). Those unfixed nameplates were one of many pieces of evidence Leon left behind that she wouldn't have had she lived.

This is the *truth* of what happened. If you disagree, please tell me why, and we'll have a nice discussion. Although, there's no logic found in the game or simple common sense that justifies anything else happening. Sorry, there's simply none.

The only thing that's potentially variable is the initial confrontation: it's possible that Sayaka staggered towards Leon with the knife ready, so beside herself with fear and sadness that she couldn't bring herself to rush him. Or even that she made a terrible, pained effort to attack him—enough to alarm him but really *not* wanting to hurt him—because she was still struggling with what choice she had left.

In anything.

Although the above two are *possible*, her mood was one of utter desperation. And so, if she picked up that knife, knowing what it entailed, the chance of her doing a "zombie" or "drunken" swing is exponentially low. And not too realistic. Even compared to standing still with her knife raised.

Moreover, the corridor from the door in Makoto's room to the katana and the desk Sayaka was sitting at, writing her note to bait Leon...that corridor is far too narrow for Leon to just run past Sayaka without bumping into her. It completely contradicts what the game shows, as she'd hardly have to extend her arm to strike him. We're talking without taking a step. Unless she was so senseless with hopelessness by then that she essentially, unconsciously let him through with the knife drawn, not realizing he was fearing for his life at that point...

...if not that, nothing else makes sense in him getting to that katana sheath. Her anxiety stopping her is the only plausibility.

Here is the corridor in Makoto's room for good measure, just as a note. The black circle indicates where the confrontation most likely began, unless Sayaka allowed Leon to walk that much deeper into the room, which, regardless of the reason, would denote that she did not want him immediately dead.



We don't know exactly where Sayaka was. Hence, "most likely". But she was probably somewhere within the circle, in terror, counting down the five or so minutes she gave Leon to see her.

However, we do know where Leon was: coming through the door. And we do know that Sayaka had Leon in her sight when he came in since she was waiting nervously for his arrival, knowing everything in her very life was coming down to this "private talk".

Her message to Leon, written in Makoto's notebook (from *orenronen's* LP): *"There is something I want to talk to you about discreetly. Please come to my room in 5 minutes. Please check the name plate to make sure you have the right room."*

That note, she signed it with her full name.



That would've gotten him within range without her having to literally attack him at the door, with it open for people in the hall to see. People were *supposed* to be in their rooms by then (as per the group's Nighttime Rule that Celes invented), but Sayaka wasn't about to trust that for obvious reasons, including Monokuma's never having said what would've happened if a killer was caught in the act or after the fact. It could've meant...an execution.

So she was going to avoid going near the hallway as much as possible.

[And here's the last piece of Naezono before the end of the trial if you're interested. The very first time Makoto saw her body, he screamed and fainted. But here is from when Makoto investigates and sees the aftermath of this sad scene for the first time:

([Makoto] The bathroom...

And on the other side of this door...

...

No... I can't let it get to me...!

I can't afford to freeze up now!

Forcing myself to push my panic down, I stepped into the bathroom.

Looking at her made it painfully clear it wasn't a dream, or an illusion.

She had lost everything that made her "her"...)

"[Makoto] Sayaka..."

(All at once I was overcome with dizziness, nausea, the urge to burst into tears...

But I can't... I can't hesitate now...

Why...? Why did Sayaka have to die?

I have to uncover the truth...

I have to find out what happened!

I wanted to give up, I wanted to collapse. But that thought held me up and supported me.))

With that said, Sayaka would've gotten away with everything had she gone through with killing Leon and not lost her nerve. I've personally tried to come up with as many points against her plot as I could—and none of them succeed. Here's a list of cases in which Sayaka's planning could've been intrinsically flawed.

And why they don't work (this is from my GameFAQs thread that's fairly outdated compared to this):

- 1) *Like for instance if she was caught taking the knife back to the kitchen, she'd be suspected.*

We can't say she would've been caught. That's a biased what-if. We can't say she would've taken the knife back either. It would've been more advantageous to keep the clean knife, in fact, as it'd still fit with her statement to Makoto of wanting a self-defense weapon. Simply having a knife isn't incriminating, especially since the girls had scissors and Makoto by happenstance had a sword in his room that she could've used to mislead everyone as the murder weapon. Makoto had already touched the wet paint, even.

Ideally, she'd have washed off the knife, held the sword sheath with the bed blanket, turned the blanket inside out on the bed (to simulate Makoto trying to clean his hands after holding the sword), then taken the knife back to her drawer after waking him up or waiting for him to step out of her room. Yes: She snuck it into his room, probably up her skirt, shirt, or stockings—if she didn't leave it somewhere outside until she'd spoken to and switched with Makoto. And she could've snuck it back to hers.

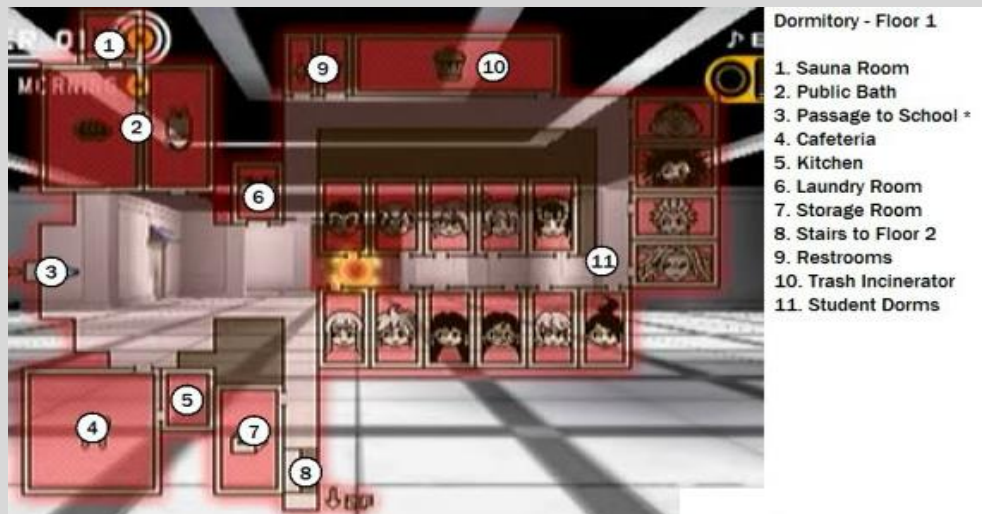
Not only that, but she also had more than enough time to go get another knife to further incriminate Makoto in case she didn't want to use the sword. She died before we could see how she'd exactly handle the cleanup. But, as you'll see, the intrinsic nature of her plan was remarkably secure at every angle. The only thing she *couldn't* say was that Makoto used the knife she had in her room. Even if she claimed it was for self-defense, Makoto couldn't have taken it to his room to kill Leon because Sayaka "*should've*" locked the door. If not, that puts suspicion on her for lying and for not having an alibi. Supposedly would, anyway, but there was even a way around that, which I'll get to later.

a) *Now, the chance of her getting caught's always present. Or else you're already assuming she gets away perfectly.*

We don't know for sure if she would've gotten another knife. Just saying the plan was secure isn't enough. Also, it didn't look like she even noticed the katana. That's why she let Leon get to it in the first place.

No, because I'd still have to say how she could've actually covered her crime and provide convincing evidence. Simply saying she'd simply be caught, however, is automatically assuming failure without factoring in anything else that can happen. It's begging the question, in fact, as it assumes the question of whether she'd fail is true by default—simply because she already had under *far* different circumstances.

I don't think I'm being too unreasonable here by looking at her plan in general. She had more than eight hours to get a second knife before the majority of the class work up. As soon as Aoi and Sakura left, and it would be easy to go there and spy on them (since she'd have an entire hallway and the cafeteria to work with), she could get another one and use it with no problem at all. Here's the (incomplete) cafeteria and floor layout:



Credit to *orenronen* for the cafeteria view and *Howl_By_The_Moon* of Roleplay Gateway for the map layout.

Well, to add to all the available space there was to work with, no one else was outside that *entire* time from the moment Leon left his room hours after Aoi and Sakura went back. Even if Sayaka wanted to put her knife back, she could've hidden the knife she had on her, like she possibly did when speaking to Makoto, if someone supposedly *were* there.

She let Leon get to the katana sheath because she was hesitating: not in a stable state of mind. If we take Kirigiri's words at face value, Sayaka was only thinking of what she should've done at that moment she had the knife drawn, and she was trying to run through what was "helpful" to her versus what was "right," period.

Truthfully, that summary doesn't do her mindstate justice, but it explains the situation in her head well enough. Needless to say, in that time, she obviously wasn't calm. And in the adrenaline rush, she didn't become aware of Leon who likely quickly noticed the katana, rushing over there to defend himself. If she did, she didn't put two and two together until he already had it: simply "noticing" and "becoming aware" are two different states of observation. Point is, in what would've taken 4-5 seconds, there wasn't *time* for such sudden, drastic hesitation.

2) *Also, if Makoto happened to see her cleaning up because he wanted to check on her...*

If Makoto happened to see her cleaning up, she'd be busted. That's another biased assumption to make, since we can't say she'd have been seen. It's important not to keep begging the question when thinking up counters if we don't want to commit logical fallacies: the fallacy in this case being...why would he have seen her *or* wanted to check on her?

It's hardly relevant to bring up in any case anyway. As things went, Makoto fell asleep in her room and woke up when Monokuma woke him up. At 7:00 in the morning.

Really, if we're going by biased what-ifs, she could have killed him with the knife when she spoke to him, or knocked him out then if she really wanted to, using her manipulative subterfuge, then left his body in his room, re-swapped the plates so it'd clearly be his room (not necessary, but it'd help), and strengthened the crime even more by saying they had fought each other in his room and she had nothing to do with it, claiming she kept the knife she fetched with her as she slept in her room. For the obvious reason: being worried about her safety. She'd just need to get a second knife, bloody it and plant it, or bloody the screwdriver or such from Makoto's toolbox. She probably could've even killed both Leon and Makoto with that knife if Makoto came in while Leon was still alive and being attacked. Butcher knives should *not* be underestimated.

The only danger in either case is Makoto somehow getting away from Sayaka, as he wouldn't be completely inside his room, and him being able to ring one of his classmates to warn them. But Sayaka, so long as the note was destroyed, would've easily been able to say Makoto was

attacking *her*, to plausible effect, especially if she were willing to injure herself to make it seem convincing. Otherwise, to use more hindsight bias, she could've killed him in the *hallway*, and no one had left their rooms that night.

- b) *Things went alright but that doesn't mean the plan was foolproof. There were still things that could've gone wrong at any moment.*

It's seriously dubious that she'd have killed him or anyone though just for seeing her clean.

That's fair enough, but that's also not an intrinsic hole in her plan. She could turn off the lights whenever she creaks the door open. If she saw someone, she could silently close it back and lock it. If someone saw the door open, they wouldn't have seen her, and she could have blamed that on Makoto. No one would be able to disprove her—and he'd be pressured.

Anyway, this is assuming something we know people are unlikely to do, so the above response involves legitimate, reasonable reactions to such unforeseen, "what-if" situations. Makoto would never have just "left to check on her". When they agreed on her not opening the door for even him. And vice-versa. And it was a *very* specific moment where he would've had to catch her anyway, since her door would've been locked the entire time after killing Leon until the moment she was about to finally leave.

It's true that she didn't have to kill him. But from a strictly efficient point of view, doing that would've only made her plan better. Provided her clothes were clean, she could've just thrown the knife aside as soon as she saw him and ran towards someone, pretending someone was after her or Makoto was after her *and* Leon. Leon being already dead makes Makoto's counterclaim dubious: the room-switch and everything around it could've been blamed on Makoto.

Yet she could've also cut herself and claimed the same thing. She could've cut/sliced/stabbed Makoto and *still* said the same thing. She'd only have to make sure Leon was dead before making that move and that the note to Leon, which logically would've been the first thing she got rid of—was gotten rid of. But getting rid of the note only makes her plan stronger; it isn't a failure if she doesn't, for reasons that were already stated. Just blame Makoto.

As far out as this sounds, that's only a response to far-out criticism that's directly contradicted by the game itself. Sayaka was more liked and more trustworthy than Makoto, plus the crime occurred in his room...we already saw how quick to blame him everyone was *without* her presence.

What I'm trying to prove is that at every turn, there's no shortage of ways in which her plan would've worked had she killed Leon. All of these paths rely principally on her acting skills too, which she knew and prepared for, so getting a majority vote against Makoto would not have been hard at all.

- c) *But how can you say that for sure? She relied on Makoto not coming to check on her which she would've had no control over, and we know she would not've killed Makoto.*

For one, she had the door locked as soon as he left. She stood at the door-hole with the door locked, unlocking it as she saw *Leon*, then backed up and got into position—she would've wanted to make sure it was *Leon* coming and not someone else like a random *Yasuhiro* or a random *Aoi*. So no standing behind the wall like in the dumb Climax Reasoning scene of *Makoto* searching his memories and "solving" the case. That scene being wrong for other reasons as well.



If the random person *did* come instead, *Leon* would've been right behind them and she would've—probably relievedly—had to postpone her plan. The door was locked during the cleanup as well, since *Sayaka's* not an idiot.

Two, she wouldn't have killed *Makoto*, but *Makoto* immediately fell asleep because he was tired. And with his (*Sayaka's*) door locked, on their promise, he saw no reason to go out after hours.

And three, he was tired and already sleeping anyway before she first rung his doorbell.

- d) *What if they saw her face? She needs the light on or she can't see them.*

She only needs to know that someone's in the hallway, not exactly who it is. After killing *Leon*, all that's left is to leave and switch the room nameplates back on her way out. They wouldn't see her face at all because she would be peering, not sticking her head out. And because the lights would be off, as stated.

You don't need super senses to see or hear a silhouette in a quiet hallway. There's a blind spot to her right when she opens the door, as it opens left-to-right—but most of us have snuck out our rooms that way as kids: that's not a big deal at all.

3) *If someone noticed the room nameplates were switched...*

No one noticed Leon doing all his cleaning, running in and out of rooms...so why would someone have noticed her switching the roomplates in seven seconds? Those were dangers, yes, but they never amounted to anything. Sayaka's no klutz, definitely less so than Leon, and the switch takes seconds. Plus, the rooms were right next to each other: along with his personality, that's the second part of why she chose Makoto's room and Makoto as her frameable target. She also could've blamed this getting caught in the act on Makoto, as you'll read.

But alright. Though there was little danger in switching the nameplates, she did risk someone suddenly leaving their room and seeing her in the middle of the switch (it'd be at random, as the rooms are all soundproofed from outside noise). Despite this, she could've always peeked out the door beforehand or just ran back inside the instant she, in her heightened state, was alerted. If anyone noticed the semi-switched signs, it would've been one sign that was down. So, not enough to suspect anything more than the sign having fallen down. Otherwise, if they recognized her *entirely* or recognized the one sign that was up being on the *wrong* person's door...well, she'd have to kill them as well. That'd be her two-murder limit. Anything more than that is just near-impossible; actually impossible from what we've actually seen goes down, and she'd have to be more or less daydreaming the entire time to let three people spot her working with Leon and/or the second body.

The only other danger was someone seeing her and Leon (alive) if Leon opened the door wide (very dumb and essentially impossibly bad luck). That, or Leon noticing the nameplate switch (the second being unlikely, since he was excited and only focused on Sayaka's nameplate in the moment). But those wouldn't have automatically incriminated her, so those weren't holes in her plan: she could've kept the knife hidden and thought of something else in both cases—she could've also blamed Makoto, etc. for the second. ("I admit, we switched rooms because I was scared...I don't know why he/someone would've swapped the nameplates, though....")

Again, all of these cases are *extremely* unlikely and only the scenario with someone seeing her in the act of switching, involving her *waiting outside by the nameplates twice*, would have incriminated her of being responsible for anything but *maybe* planning something.

That being said, this one scenario is missing the point. *Of course* a plan will fail if the perpetrator's caught in the act. The chance of this happening would make it riskier but not intrinsically flawed: whether there were actual *holes* in her plan leading to *evidence* against her is our main concern. Ease of execution is second.

e) *If Leon came over to Makoto's room with Makoto in sight, then what?*

This is definitely reaching for reasons explained, and there's no reason for Leon to have Sayaka open Makoto's door when someone's there (as she asked for there not to be anyone with him in her letter), not to mention he wouldn't know about the room switch. So he'd suspect Makoto would've wanted to see Sayaka. Suspicion wouldn't fall on her as long as she doesn't reveal the knife (anyone could've switched the plates, and it would've eventually been a dropped topic). But she could also say she didn't know about that letter, then act surprised at the nameplate switch when it's brought up—

implicating Makoto was planning something. She'd know whether someone were near Leon, as well, because of the peephole.

But if that peephole weren't used, she wouldn't have brought her knife out anyway until the door was closed and she felt she could get at him safely (reluctant as she'd be). If they saw the knife somehow, Sayaka could have simply mentioned it was for self-defense when she opened the door: in case someone wanted to hurt her. Makoto would've affirmed that, given their previous outing (the self-defense weapon scene) and her recent fearful remarks.

She would've probably apologized for going ahead and getting another weapon behind Makoto's back ("I just wanted to be sure...") and/or for not showing it to him earlier on ("I didn't want you to be too worried about me..." / "I didn't want to scare you..." / "It would've been hard to explain..."), but she wouldn't be in any certain trouble because of that. She just wouldn't have been able to attack Leon.

If the knife *and* the letter *and* Makoto/Leon showed up at the same time, she could've played it off as someone using those circumstances against her to try and make her look like an attempted-murderer. Ideally, she could've blamed Makoto, and Leon would've most likely believed her. But there'd be no need to be specific with blame, as that'd probably turn Makoto against her and secretly reveal her intentions to him; she wouldn't be punished either way, as she wouldn't have technically been caught in any act.

4) *If someone found her letter to Leon...*

The notebook-impression of that letter was only available to Kirigiri because Sayaka died and Leon forgot about it. Or rather, never knew about it: he got rid of *his* copy. That he probably left in his room—or he might've kept it on him; it doesn't make a difference.

Suppose Sayka didn't find her note to him, *on* his body. If Sayaka wanted to, she could've easily went back in his room, maybe using his key if the room were locked. That key would've been on him, unless he left the door unlocked...or just locked himself out—which we know he didn't: he got his toolkit in canon. Then, she could've flushed the letter down the toilet in Makoto's bathroom. On the other hand, if dead Leon had the letter on him, he was already in Makoto's room. The bathroom water stopped at night—but only at night. As soon as 7:00 a.m. struck, it'd be time.

And she could've used Makoto's toilet water to destroy the note without flushing it. Or, heck, even a public toilet if she wanted to. Or she could've marked the note up to make it illegible. Hell, she could've balled it up and eaten it. Anything really.

- f) *What about the way Kirigiri found her note in his [Makoto's] notebook? The impression. She wouldn't have noticed that.*

Sayaka probably noticed that too and never got the chance to get rid of it. After all, she would've been the one writing that heavily in the first place. For the entire page. Most likely due to her nervousness. Which, if she's that nervous and working that hard, there'd be no reason for someone as smart as her to not double-check everything *after* having gone through with murdering someone. Let alone to not be aware that she was nervously pressing that heavily.

It's not even a "smart" thing, really. Any person would know they were pressing down hard, nervous or not. If she just "somehow didn't" (begging the question), she could've blamed that on Makoto. As said. Like Leon tried to blame it on some random person writing his name to implicate him, despite his other screw-ups rejecting that spontaneous denial.

- 5) *Makoto telling everyone they switched rooms?*

If Sayaka woke Makoto up early enough, no one would see him leaving Sayaka's room, and she could've changed the nameplates in advance to where it'd look like it was actually her room, as normal. As they'd planned that night before, where Makoto'd back her up. In fact, if she really wanted to, she'd have probably gotten him to say they did that before Leon's body was even discovered, just to trap him.

She'd have 99% likely been up all night. If he woke up by himself, as in the canon, no one would've likely seen him anyway (and in the canon, they didn't). Or else, Makoto would be able to have a witness affirm he left Sayaka's room; but that wouldn't have been enough. The room nameplates would've still been switched back, so once she'd gotten her card back from him in secret, she would've immediately been able to claim he came over to her room in the middle of the night or early in the morning, without telling her what he did, just for an alibi. If he denied, there'd be nothing to support the notion of a room switch.

Even if they kept each other's keys, she would've just used the fact that she switched the nameplates back as a cover up. By saying that he convinced her to switch later that night for the same reason she claimed to switch with him the night before, their having each other's cards would've been perfectly justified, and Makoto would've been impossibly incriminated.

So, how and when would Makoto have "killed" Leon? By inviting Leon to his room with a forged letter he'd have written badly from his own journal, claiming that it was Sayaka's, and trying to frame her when Kirigiri points it out. He'd have disposed of it shortly after killing him. It all comes back to what "Makoto" did.

All of that's a hypothetical, yet incredibly easy and effective lie she could've told.

Or maybe she could've literally kept and used her own letter to Leon as "Makoto's" forged letter under her guise if she wanted to keep that. It's not impossible that they could've had similar

penmanship, and a penmanship test proving different styles wouldn't be conclusive evidence as s/he obviously could've been writing differently on purpose, before and during the test. Since Sayaka was generally sharper than Makoto and actually planned the room switch, and since Makoto didn't even get the concept of the room switch at first in the trial, she would've then brought up that he probably switched their room nameplates since their rooms were so close, to fool Leon.

The sheathed sword she made into evidence would've been the weapon (if she bloodied the blade, which wouldn't have hurt her case anyway...that or by simply claiming he used a knife/toolkit tool he'd put back), and the idea to switch would've been early in the morning after he'd allegedly killed Leon, without her actually unlocking Makoto's door since she'd have had no urgent reason to at that point.

And, shoot, she could've even claimed she stepped outside the room for a few hours due to nerves, left the door unlocked, then stated that Makoto took the knife she had in her room for self-defense and invited Leon from there with a forged letter, did the nameplate switch, killed him, and she not have found out until she came back to his room at the same time as everyone else, after the room switch. She could've said that she left his room until Makoto "discovered" Leon's body and called everyone, never having come back there because she couldn't sleep. As contrived as that would've been, they almost certainly would've believed her since they—literally all of them except Kirigiri who noticed the broken door handle—were ready to slash Makoto with definitively *less* evidence against him.

Since she would've been safely outside and his door would've been closed and locked in all cases, there'd be nothing to contradict her. The *only* way that would've failed would've been if she were caught leaving his room, after Leon's death, with the door unlocked, by nosy, snooping someone who was breaking the nighttime rule. Or by someone who happened to wake up and leave as soon as the Monokuma morning announcement came on. However, to cross out the latter, she obviously wouldn't have slept in his room. She was going to stay up all night, perhaps outside of the room and near the cafeteria so she could be there early (she was always early, so that wouldn't be suspicious).

For the former, she'd just have to pay attention since no one can hear footsteps from within their rooms. She had his key, so there'd be no way, even if he switched the nameplates in advance, that he'd be able to kill Leon in that room without her knowing.

...unless he opened the door to her again for whatever reason. Maybe so she could "get" something she left inside her room. And she then asked him if he needed to "get" something from his again real fast before they turned in for good. Maybe she wanted him to have a knife to "defend" himself with, because she was worried about him and didn't think the sword would help. At which point, with any such reason, they could've switched cards again to their proper owners, for any amount of time, without anyone being able to state otherwise. Up until they decided to "swap back". Essentially whenever.

The thing is, even *without* killing Makoto, Sayaka basically had...for what it's worth...

...the "perfect crime" readied. And considering she was one of the shrewdest people there, a skilled actor, and planned the case out for hours in her room, that's to be expected.

Moreover, I know this is all hypothetical, but no one saw Makoto leaving Sayaka's room anyway. And their rooms are so close together that the even the most astute people wouldn't have noticed they swapped after she changed the nameplates back. Only Monokuma's statement of her being murdered in Makoto's room while the nameplates were still unswapped back, showing a blatant contradiction where she apparently died in *her* room...only *that* enabled Kirigiri and Leon to understand what happened. And Makoto figured it out much later, when it was spelled out to him by Kirigiri.

Now if Sayaka somehow *forgot* to change the nameplates back (really...), she could've blamed that on Makoto just being forgetful, as she still would've "left with the room closed". It's just as likely as that contrived reason from before. But it's *unlikely* she'd give Makoto his card back without having swapped back the nameplates. That'd just be dumb. If she somehow forgot to change the plates but still had his card, her having *his* card and him having *hers* would be strong evidence to support *him* doing the nameplate change while she was out—because if *she* could claim he did that...why wouldn't she have just switched the signs back?

Unless she didn't *know* that switch happened in the *first* place. Is the point.

And even if her getting the knife is brought up by Aoi or Sakura, that would just go with her doing the room switch with him out of fear. Wanting a weapon to defend herself with.

g) *It's still possible that if someone saw Maizono leaving his room she'd be screwed, though.*

Again, this isn't a knock at her plan. This is still assuming Sayaka's incompetent and extremely unlucky here. It's still begging the question. You'd may as well say that it was a perfect plan aside from the possibility of Aoi bumping into Sayaka as she was walking out because Aoi wanted a random sleepover with her. The nature of Sayaka's plan is still just about perfect. Whether she could have pulled it off or not is separate argument, but there's no *evidence* to suggest that she would've just carelessly let someone walk in on her crime. Considering how tense with adrenaline (and thus, alert) she was, it actually suggests the opposite.

At any rate, only if someone else saw her with Leon's body *and* having the weapon, or if they saw her with bloody clothes, would they have had a concrete case to make against her.

Not even the latter, really, for reasons that were already given. Otherwise, she could've just closed the locked door, walked somewhere else as if nothing happened, and later used the fact that they both agreed to switch rooms to their advantage. Makoto would've again "invited" Leon to "her" room while she was restless and away, then he would've killed Leon, switched the room nameplates, etc.

6) *Kirigiri identifies the knife wound.*

Kirigiri isn't Mikan, the Ultimate Nurse. That aside, knife and sword stab wounds look very similar, and she wouldn't have had proof that Sayaka did anything even if she pointed out a knife wound.

h) Detectives should be able to tell the difference.

And Kirigiri would point Maizono out because Maizono was the only one who had the knife. Makoto couldn't have taken it from his room so Maizono would've had to sneak it in then.

What I'm saying is there wouldn't be any alarming difference to her. A knife and a sword are essentially the same, only one's longer and explicitly a weapon. The sword, however, was a fake (blunted) wooden katana and wouldn't have driven through someone like a real katana, making it harder to use. But not all stab wounds from the same weapon look the same anyway, and it's still very possible to stab with such a weapon. Especially in a manic state. Incapacitating someone and then killing them that way makes it easier. Wiping the bed (and body) with the sword points toward the sword being used as well.

Here's the short deal: Paint aside, it's not well known that sharpened bokken are as dangerous as katana. Sayaka probably didn't know this either, and she probably thought "Wooden sword? But a knife would be easier and less dirty [to hold]," as she'd have imagined bashing someone repeatedly with a freshly-painted sword-baseball bat. A sharpened bokken could easily stab, but I'm hesitant to imagine a training sword driving cleanly through anyone like a butcher knife. More specifically, a training bokken "katana," a weapon not naturally designed to stab (though it certainly can) but slice.

With enough force, even a blunt, wooden sword can stab, though. It's less likely to break if it hasn't been used as well—and this is the case here with the replica training bokken. What really matters for stabbing, dull training bokken or not, is how sharp the tip is:



Even if the knife were linked inextricably to the stabbing when the blood was on the sword—that's a "so what" case.

So to say, Sayaka had gotten a knife, but it would've been clean and either back in her room or back in the kitchen by this point. Even if they wanted to link it to her, by when she was seen in the kitchen, they wouldn't have had any evidence that the knife was used, and the rest would've fallen on Makoto. If she'd been able to get a second knife, even more so.

We already saw how willing everyone was to incriminate Makoto *without* the knife being directly linked to him. They thought he had to have used it since it was in his room; later, they thought that he took her own knife from her and used that—which was Leon's doing.

- 7) **Just an extra point:** The map of vital points given by Monokuma to the girls of the class were for those who don't know the "neck" or "heart" is a weak spot. As for why she chose the knife instead of what she was encouraged to use, there are differences between knife wounds and closed scissor wounds, it's more likely just a psychological thing. The scissors in the women's sewing kits (versus the men's toolboxes) were large but still just scissors and probably less effective in her mind. Sayaka wanted assurance with her murder weapon, and using scissors makes further actions from a stabbed victim much more likely if the weapon is harder to remove. This is usually the case—plus, only girls had scissors as an option: that would narrow down a list of suspects to females immediately.

- i) *She still could've just used the sword. Would've been much easier.*

Also, we see in her room as Makoto that the sewing kit was opened (by examining her desk before he goes to sleep), meaning she already looked through it. So, those scissors didn't do it for her.

The sword was wooden, so the same sure effect wasn't guaranteed in her mind. I don't think she wanted to worry about trying to bash someone in the head over and over with a wooden sword. That significantly lowers the chance of success. Not to mention the paint issue with the sheath, her main reason for not wanting to use the sword for self-defense in the first place.

She could have tried it, though; but it just wasn't worth the risk. That said, the sword was literally right beside her, and she definitely noticed or would've noticed it within those 8+ hours she had to get everything set up. She only forgot about it the moment she was tightening up when it was time to confront Leon.

- 8) *Other bad arguments:*

- a) *Makoto, or someone else, would've pointed out that there's really no imaginable way why a totally uninteresting guy like Makoto could lure Leon to his room in the first place.*

That's an awful defense. And Kirigiri and Byakuya, then everyone else, would call him out for trying to use it. Also, Leon was pretty cool with Makoto in the game and even shared his goals and secrets with Makoto. They never *didn't* get along, until *he* had to betray Makoto.

- b) *Of course, we're told that Sayaka counted on Makoto to not say anything about the room swap in the first place, but Makoto isn't someone who's willing to die for Sayaka, and surely Sayaka has no reason to assume this guy she just met is willing to die for her.*

This counterpoint fails because Sayaka wasn't even aware of the "Class Trial" itself where dying as a result of a wrong verdict was brought up. Her ignorance was why she even began to consider killing Leon. Immediately or soon after Monokuma would say the blackened (murderer) is the *only* one who gets to live, Sayaka would've broken down under her guilty conscience and confessed. That really isn't an issue. Likewise, she didn't count on Makoto to do anything but stay in his room. Nothing else about the crime's success would've depended on him—only on her ability to carry out the cleanup.

- c) *If Hiro can kill Sakura while getting the jump on her (knocked her unconscious, but obviously could've finished the job easily if he didn't panic) then Sayaka killing Leon is no more farfetched.*

This analogy was actually in Sayaka's favor. But it still doesn't do her justice.

Sayaka killing Leon is also not far-fetched *without* factoring in the element of surprise. Because Leon's a scrawny, out of shape weakling, while (for a woman) Sayaka's the exact opposite...

...with the largest butcher knife she can conceal. She's not a Hiro, and Leon's definitely not a Sakura. The comparison should probably be reversed. But really, whether you know these other people or not...their situation's not what happened here when everything went *wrong* for Sayaka, so it's not worth further addressing the red herring.

- d) *A considerable part of Chapter 1 was Kyoko sort of beating around the bush before breaking the bad news that Sayaka tried to murder Leon and framed it on Makoto. Byakuya, who has even less reason to trust Sayaka (he pretty much trusts nobody), would almost certainly react the same way as Kyoko did.*

Yes, Kyoko knew. Partly because Sayaka wasn't able to clean up; partly because Leon's interference added *new* evidence that Sayaka wouldn't have on her own.

In the game, Byakuya (for some reason regarded as the second-smartest of the class) had no definitive idea of what Sayaka actually did until Kyoko spelled it out. Then he jumped to Kyoko's argument because it made sense. He didn't even suspect a room switch in the first place, and he was hounding Makoto like the others. That's honestly not really surprising, and it's very much irrelevant in a case where Sayaka survives and doesn't leave all of this evidence behind.

- e) *Given the rooms are completely soundproof, that makes the dorm rooms basically a death trap. In the story (and not FTEs) there are only four instances of more than one character in the same dorm room in a locked situation: Celeste and Hifumi, Aoi and Sakura, Makoto and Sayaka, and Leon and Sayaka. Aoi and Sakura were literally best friends forever. Celeste and*

Hifumi had comparable backgrounds, since he had an otaku crush on her and she used him as a slave for her otaku fetish. Tension was high even this early into DR1. You didn't just walk into a random buddy's room at night time during a situation like this, as it's dangerous to you and the occupant. It'd be extremely difficult for Sayaka to defend the fact that she's one of the few people charismatic enough to pull this off.

We don't know for *sure* whether Leon locked the door behind him, because Sayaka never told him to in her letter. Only that he closed it. I was just assuming his locking it as a probability, because she didn't want anyone walking in on her crime and because she told him they needed to talk in private and he respected her. Since she'd ideally *want* to get away with the murder, she would've made sure the door was locked right after murdering him or as soon as he walked in (by asking him to do so), which would've likely taken a few seconds. If that.

That's still not a good argument, though. At all, honestly. An appeal to [a lack of] popularity from Makoto is a logical fallacy that has no business in a life-or-death case. Well, the dumb class might have certainly fallen for it, but that's for when Sayaka's attacking him and he's not defending himself. Because this type of argument relies on intrinsic biases instead of objectivity. On that note, Sayaka could've easily said what I'd stated before, in Makoto forging the letter before or after the room switch.

- f) *If Sayaka is truly this dream girl that no guy can say no to, then she should've gone after Hifumi or Hiro for the kill. Hifumi is obviously very out of shape. Hiro is basically too stupid to live and his normal physique would suggest it's an easier matchup than Leon. Unless the point is that Sayaka is too stupid to tell these two guys are easier to kill than Leon, it has to follow that even she isn't sure any guy that she just met for three days will come to her room in the middle of the night, and she's pretty much the most charismatic character in the game by description. That's why I believe there's no way Sayaka's plan would've stood up to scrutiny once anyone make the point (doesn't have to be Makoto) that Makoto could not have possibly lured anybody to his room because he's an uninteresting boring guy.*

Hiro has a better physique than Leon. One, he's older. And Leon's literally scrawny.

And she chose Leon over Hifumi because Leon's room was closer and he was actually infatuated with her. Sending that note to Hifumi would've been a risk to take since he wasn't as love-struck as Leon, he often tried to be very savvy, and she only had one night to try and couldn't risk two guys coming into her room at the same time. He did find Sayaka attractive, and he was very dumb and gullible—but she wasn't aware of that to the same degree.

Not only that, but Leon shared the same dream Sayaka had achieved and viewed her humbly as an awe-inspiring source of inspiration...

...and she knew she could take advantage of that. He of all people would want to respond to her letter. With one real chance, she went for the sure target she felt she knew better. Her reluctance to talk to people was her ironic downfall in terms of the choices she thought she had available to her. Besides Leon and Makoto as murder targets, she only really knew Aoi

and Sakura. That there is mainly implied rather than shown, and her reluctance to try and kill them already reveals that she had moral standards even in that deprived state of hers.

That aside, Hifumi also had a much better chance at noticing the room switch than Leon once he saw the signs. Also, it's harder to easily stab and kill someone with Hifumi's physique.

The only noteworthy caveat of her crime *besides* the possibility of being discovered during the nameplate changes is that she probably would've had bloody clothes to get rid of if she couldn't stay clean. She didn't really have a safe change at all, and she would've had to take her only set to the laundry room and pray no one saw her while running the cold cycle. Since it'd otherwise be kind of unfair, Monokuma would then perhaps given her a new change while she's dealing with the old pair. Though, maybe not: he wouldn't want the Killing Game to end that quickly, right?

But if she doesn't want to risk a wash, she could even make her bloody clothes out to be Makoto attacking her if she gets him to come outside first—Makoto's word, once more, means pretty much absolutely nothing unless Sayaka's literally caught in the act. Maybe remove the notes and switch the nameplates as well before playing that "Makoto attacked me" out. Couldn't hurt too think it over at least: she'd have had several hours to plan it all out. All she needed was to injure herself.

Though she probably wouldn't have been nearly as bloody as Leon was since she would've got him by surprise, and she definitely wouldn't have tried any incinerator nonsense. Unlike him, she's not an idiot. That's not to say she wouldn't have gotten bloody—but when your stabbing victim is at least mostly unaware and suffers from shock, the amount of blood you get on you largely depends on whether you stab an artery and blood spurts on you and/or whether the victim struggles and gets blood on you. If she stabbed him from behind repeatedly with the intent to kill him...it'd have been pretty clean.

No idea how Leon had another shirt to spare, though; but maybe it's a baseball thing (as in a plot-hole). Or maybe they all had spares since they lived there.....even though their lockers weren't on the same floor. What I personally think is that Monokuma gave him another pair, for the reason mentioned above, just as he'd ideally do with Sayaka. It'd be unfair not to since he never had a change from what we know. I mean...besides the fact that *Leon's* cover-up plan had a ton of holes in it.

Well, it doesn't really matter anyway, so long as she can get her clothes dry without being seen. No one would've heard the cycles, no one ended up getting out of bed, and the washing machine would've been dry by the time anyone got to it, if anyone ever did (no one even brought it up in canon).

Also, "leftover hair" wouldn't have been an issue unless hers was grabbed—since killing Leon was going to be *Makoto's* problem. If her hair were an issue, the lint roller was in Makoto's room and ready to use. Where would she get rid of the roll tape? Toilets, her pockets, eating it, etc. Leon did away with it, so she would've been able to. However, it's not guaranteed that she'd even need to use it. Let's be honest: it's not likely either one of them would've been grabbed by their hair. Leon only did when he slammed Sayaka into that wall.

The beautiful part about Sayaka's plan is that just about every potential mess up—of which there are few—could effectively be blamed on Makoto. Even if she has to think about how to go about blaming him in *real time*, it'd be excusable because she'd be seen by the majority of the class anyway as a kind and innocent girl who would've suddenly found herself being framed for murder. Other than literally

being *caught in the act*, which would ruin any crime, and Monokuma negatively interfering because her getting away would cut the Killing Game short, the plan was near-impeccable.

Basically, this flawless case means she's just intelligent and shrewd—but playing the game normally would tell you that. Her plan itself is so good because she planned it so well. She's undoubtedly an excellent planner; she became the face of Japan's entertainment industry. This alone doesn't make her character as complex as it is, of course, but it's definitely an element to support her brilliance.

As for what the Climax Reasoning conclusion of the class trial tells us about her final moments, we *really* have to realize these were merely Makoto's thoughts. And though this fallacy comes up a lot—as a *plot narrative*...the fanbase *really* struggles with differentiating what actually happened/could've happened from what the protagonist believed.

In both games, we have the protagonists arriving at conclusions that fit the bill "enough" but weren't exactly what happened. For example, Cases 2 and 4 of this game and Cases 1, 4, and 5 of Danganronpa 2. A certain case from Danganronpa v3.

In this instance, Sayaka didn't "recklessly lunge at him repeatedly with her knife while he somehow danced circles around her until he slowly eased back up against the desk where the katana was, then raised it in the air like a Spartan as she gasped for air, managing to clashing iron with her next strike".



Right....

Only in Anime Land. I'm not trying to make trivial complaints at this point, but recall that Makoto's lost a *lot* of self-respect for Sayaka by this point where he's narrating how he thinks things happened.



Why is the imitation training bokken so damned sharp? Why's it not in its sheath when he's hitting her wrist?

Even Kyoko knew Makoto's assumption wasn't plausible. Because Sayaka's *not* clumsy, she's *very* fit, and she and he *both* are in a small, confined space where Leon literally cannot attempt to do any of that Dragonsballs nonsense without hitting a wall or Sayaka herself. With the knife, her wingspan covers literally the *entire* entryway.

That's when Kyoko offered her alternative hypothesis—she *initially* implied that Sayaka's dying message was just to call out Leon too, and *not* to save Makoto:

(Before the Class Trial)



The message in blood on the shower room's wall. That's clearly a dying message...



It's a message left by a dying person in their last living moments. Most of the time, its purpose is to reveal the killer's identity...



...though usually, it's not written in a very clear and concise way.

But then, she explained further, just as Makoto was losing all of his respect for his former friend.

(After the Class Trial)



Do you remember what I told you before the school trial began?



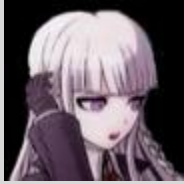
It's you who must unravel this case's mysteries...



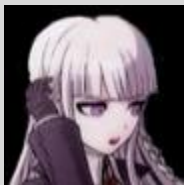
Did you want me to notice Maizono-san's betrayal by myself?



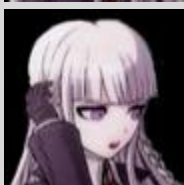
She made a fool of me without me suspecting anything... I believed in her, and she made me a suspect...



It's true that Maizono-san tried to frame you. That's the unescapable reality...



But I think she had second thoughts until she died. You see...



She thought of you in her final moments.



In her final moments... she thought of me...?



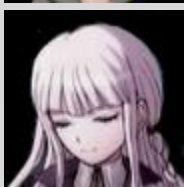
Please don't say such foolish things...



We have... no way of knowing for sure... after all...



There is no way... to ask her anymore...



Even though we can't ask her, we can reason it out, can't we?



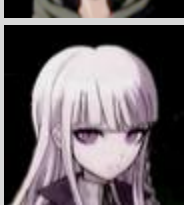
Her last thoughts...



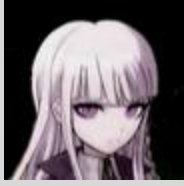
Were about how to save you.



...eh?



She used her last bits of strength to leave dying message. That's the proof.



If she didn't care what happened to you, she wouldn't have left a message at all...



Maybe she just... wanted revenge on Kuwata-kun who killed her...?



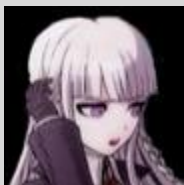
You're right. This is also a possibility.



But I don't think it's true, personally...



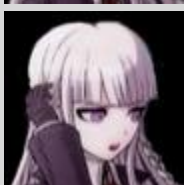
She was lost, that girl.



Her heart wasn't in it. Not in tricking you, and not in killing another person.



That's why her plan didn't succeed.



Her feelings of doubt... led to failure.



It's a little ironic, isn't it?

—an alternative hypothesis that Makoto quickly bought into.

Now, hopefully **that** should clear up a lot of the confusion regarding her murder plan and attempt. Because I see *a lot* of confusion. Everywhere.

The goal was not for every single detail of what happened that night to be unraveled. Junko asking that class to "play God" would've been...*pretty* unreasonable, I'd imagine.

The goal was simply to reason out who the murderer, the "blackened," was so that said person could be executed and the rest of the class could survive.

And in the end, Sayaka died, Leon died, and the others survived.

Now for fun, let me post a sendoff to the logic you too can use to counter a typical flawed analysis of Sayaka's character. Definitely nothing against the person who made that flawed analysis—but flawed is flawed. Truth is truth. And I've long since forgotten who wrote this.

Honestly, if you're reading this, I thank you for the example:

The discussion on Sayaka always made me wonder if the writer just thought it was supposed to be totally obvious that she acted very differently...

Of course. That's why Kodaka had everyone mention later how surprised they were that she kick-started the killing. They (now referring to the dialogue writers) knew she was unique for having that amount of will—but they also knew she didn't actually go through with it.

Thus, they constantly hammered that point at you and Makoto during the game that she was desperately afraid and insecure—but not a cold person. Instead, someone who knew she had an immoral side and despised it as well as the immorality she saw in others. Someone who cared about her own life and wanted to do good...yet was torn, worrying and fearing and hating—unable to bear that she might've had to do something more horrible than anything she'd done before, just to have that chance to do good. To possibly have her life back at all.

They also knew that she obviously didn't compare to someone like Celes. She wasn't callous. And she wasn't stupid like Hifumi either: she wasn't *tricked* into planning to commit her crime. **...compared to any normal person would've, given her limited—and in reality—, hopelessly optimistic interpretation of the rules, so they never explained it...**

You're referring to her not knowing about the class trial. Not having been told that Makoto would die if she escaped? It's really unreasonable for her to have expected him to die in the first place.

There's literally nothing that would give her the context needed to assume that. And none of the students—even Kirigiri or Byakuya—were prepared for the class trial concept when Monokuma first mentioned it. You're using the logic of a 3rd-person viewer with 3rd-person hindsight. This is extremely biased and unfair, but it's also irrational.

This is evidenced by your saying that she should have known because Monokuma apparently likes killing and said someone has to kill to escape in Rule #6. No: That's how *you* knew *after* you were already told this. If you were put in Sayaka's shoes, you'd have had no clue about the trial either. Especially because it was something Junko thought up just beforehand, in Chapter 1, in private, as spur-of-the-moment fun. It's a concrete scenario, the Class Trial, not an abstract concept that one can "reason out".

Just by being told "if you kill someone without getting caught, you get out," there's no way you can automatically know "and when someone discovers the body, we'll hold a trial where a majority vote on who the killer is decides whether they can go free and everyone else dies, or the killer dies and everyone continues living in the school until another killing happens".

In fact, if you think through it logically, Monokuma, who enjoys creative killing and trials, would definitely want as many of those killings as possible, as well as a way to encourage others to commit killings after they see someone's escaped a trial successfully.

...that can't happen if everyone dies all at once. And this would've been Sayaka's rationale.

Along with, as we see, everyone else's:



That's enough. Before we do anything else, I'd like to confirm something with the stuffed animal here.



If one of us really did kill her, that person gets to graduate from the school, right?



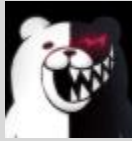
...Huh?



Don't play dumb! That's what you said, isn't it!? If you kill someone, you get to leave!



Puhuhu... Puhuhu! Poohohoho!



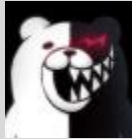
Bwaaahahahaha!



Why are you laughing!? [Why are you worried?]



Puhu...it's cuz...



Naive... You're just so naive! You think it's really that easy? You can just kill someone and waltz on outta here?



You're super naive! Devilishly naive! HELLISHLY NAIVE! No no no, the real thing has just begun.



The...real thing?



Are you ready!? Allow me to explain the second part of the rule regarding graduation! Just like I explained before, you must kill someone if you want to leave. However...even if you do that, there's still one more part to the agreement you have to [uphold], remember?



You are referring to rule number six of the school regulations... If you are the "blackened" that committed the murder, you can't be found out by the other students. That is what you are talking about, is it not?



Bingo! It's not enough to just kill someone. You have to actually get away with it! Which naturally means you need a system in place to assess whether or not it's been gotten away with!



So, a certain amount of time after a murder has taken place, a class trial will begin!

([Makoto] Class...trial?)



Yup! It'll begin a few hours after the murder! Everyone will gather together, including the blackened who committed the murder. And they and the spotless students will all engage in one big debate showdown! [We're still on the original translation, but I have no idea why that mind-reading "Yup!" was inserted; it didn't exist in the source text.]

...even though this subject is certainly a source of never-ending arguments online, there's no reason for any of them if we simply look at the plot. Sayaka obviously thought that whoever'd get voted as the killer wouldn't die even if they *were* the kiler.

Yes, and that shouldn't be a source of any arguing. It's just some people never factor what she *could not have known* in when they realize, "OMG SHE BETRAYED." Because some people are unwilling to think things through. This is something many people probably wouldn't like to hear, but...

...who cares. It's quite unfortunate that the majority of a community playing a visual novel mystery game with murder cases can't figure this out.

Then again...you can "beat" these games and discuss them by just watching someone else play them and seeing what the killer did. Doesn't require that much thinking that way.

That's how her plan to frame Makoto could even work!

Well, yes. Otherwise she never would've thought of framing Makoto. Would she have framed someone else? Perhaps, but I don't want to blindly speculate. I do, however, doubt that she would, in good conscious, be alright with risking everyone's lives for the chance to get out and *hope* the video she saw wasn't real. She already wasn't in a "sure" mindstate when it came to the *prospect* of killing Leon, even if we were to suppose she hypothetically went ahead and did it.

Let's say she just grabs the knife ninja-style unseen, kills Leon effortlessly, destroys all possible evidence, swaps the nameplates back, and then with a considerable stroke of luck, nobody saw Makoto came out of Sayaka's room the next morning. Even then, she'd be in a sticky situation if Makoto just said, "But I swapped room with Sayaka."

Okay. Well, let's break it down:

Let's say she just grabs the knife ninja-style unseen: That's irrelevant. She already told Makoto she was looking for a murder weapon, and Makoto wouldn't deny that. Unless they can prove that particular knife was the murder weapon, which they can't if she washes it (be it in the toilet, the sink, wiping it off on anything but her clothes, cleaning it in the shower, cleaning it in the laundry room, etcetc.), it wouldn't matter anyway whether she were seen with it or not, even if Makoto lies on her.

Kills Leon effortlessly: That also wouldn't matter. For one, she would've. Two, even had he managed to try and fight back, he wouldn't last more than a few seconds if she really wanted to kill him. Either way, she had more than eight *hours* to clean up any possible evidence *and* secure false evidence to frame Makoto.

Destroys all possible evidence: I know where you're going with this, but if she destroys *all* possible evidence, the only thing left against her is: the fact that the crime took place in Makoto's room and Makoto's claim that she was scared and they switched rooms. That sounds like a desperate excuse to me, with literally nothing to back it up.

Actually, if he has her key, he'd have a point. But like I said, she could *easily* claim he brought up the room switch without telling her of Leon being dead in her room. As long as no one sees her opening the door to his room, the ball's park in his court. And he can't throw it back.

Swaps the nameplates back: She was ready to do exactly that, unlike Leon, but Monokuma stated the rooms were switched anyway—enabling them to unravel her setup. The only difference between her swapping them and Leon swapping them would be the lack of extra evidence she'd leave behind. No one would've *known* of the swap but her and Makoto if she'd *completed* it.

with a considerable stroke of luck, nobody saw Makoto came out of Sayaka's room the next morning: You mean like in the canon where no one did as well? There's no need to try and exaggerate against her when the narrative itself blatantly supports her. Nobody was looking at the room signs, and their rooms were *right next to each other*. Even if someone noticed a swap and he then stated they'd switched rooms, there'd be no "sticky situation" since:

"She'd have 99% likely been up all night. If he woke up by himself, as in the canon, no one would've likely seen him anyway (and in the canon, they didn't).

Or else, Makoto would be able to have a witness affirm he left Sayaka's room; but that wouldn't have been enough. The room nameplates would've still been switched back, so once she'd gotten her card back from him in secret, she would've immediately been able to claim he came over to her room in the middle of the night or early in the morning, without telling her what he did, just for an alibi. If he denied, there'd be nothing to support the notion of a room switch.

Even if they kept each other's keys, she would've just used the fact that she switched the nameplates back as a cover up. By saying that he convinced her to switch later that night for the same reason she claimed to switch with him the night before, their having each other's cards would've been perfectly justified, and Makoto would've been impossibly incriminated."

Makoto, or someone else, would've pointed out that there's really no imaginable way why a totally uninteresting guy like Makoto could lure Leon to his room in the first place.

An appeal to popularity is *not* a defense. It's a sorry and desperate logical fallacy that wouldn't work in real life, and it's a sorry, desperate logical fallacy wouldn't work here. Unless Sayaka used it. But in that case, she'd have concrete evidence going for her as well. It's not *just* the appeal to popularity she'd have been using. If he pointed that out, everyone would tell Makoto to get serious and stop using a pathetic excuse like that. Also, again:

"So, how and when would Makoto have "killed" Leon?"

By inviting Leon to his room with a forged letter he'd have written badly from his own journal, claiming that it was Sayaka's, and trying to frame her when Kirigiri points it out. He'd have disposed of it shortly after killing him. It all comes back to what "Makoto" did.

All of that's a hypothetical, yet incredibly easy and effective lie she could've told.

Or maybe she could've literally kept and used her own letter to Leon as "Makoto's" forged letter under her guise if she wanted to keep that. It's not impossible that they could've had similar penmanship, and a penmanship test proving different styles wouldn't be conclusive evidence as s/he obviously could've been writing differently on purpose, before and during the test.

Since Sayaka was generally sharper than Makoto and actually planned the room switch, and since Makoto didn't even get the concept of the room switch at first in the trial, she would've then brought up that he probably switched their room nameplates since their rooms were so close, to fool Leon.

The sheathed sword she made into evidence would've been the weapon (if she bloodied the blade, which wouldn't have hurt her case anyway...that or by simply claiming he used a knife/toolkit tool he'd put back), and the idea to switch would've been early in the morning after he'd allegedly killed Leon, without her actually unlocking Makoto's door since she'd have had no urgent reason to at that point."

Since we have the whole amnesia going on, her normally awesome charm works against her, as she has no time to actually get to know anyone else to put on the innocent girl routine. According to School Mode (just ask everyone what they think to have Sayaka sing in the music room), only Chihiro and Leon qualify as her fans (Makoto would too, but obviously would change his mind in this case). Celeste, Kyoko, Junko, and Toko are jealous of her popularity, so that's 5 foes (Makoto is obviously going to try to save himself) versus 2 fans, while the rest appear to be undecided.

That's a very hostile environment and that's assuming that nobody thought the fact only Sayaka could've easily lured Leon out was worth any merit.

Again, School Mode isn't canon. It takes place in an alternate universe that never existed because the mode itself was designed as nothing more than a what-if version of the first game's plot. There are obvious contradictions in the half-baked plot and also contradictions in the gameplay itself, which includes the same dialogue you're trying to use as evidence, making your claim inherently flawed.

For instance, you neglected:

"(Sayaka) Let's give the toy machine a shot, Makoto!"

"(Sayaka, unwilling) I never used those toy vending machines much as a kid...would you like to give it a try...?"

"(Sayaka, unwilling) No thanks, junk food's a powerful enemy..."

"(Sayaka) Yeah drinks! Hey, I think I saw some cake in the fridge, want some?"

Of course, we're told that Sayaka counted on Makoto to not say anything about the room swap in the first place, but

According to ~30-40 pages of counterarguments above this section, this wasn't the case. Sayaka Maizono was *awfully* shrewd and would have never put herself in a position to entirely rely on someone she was attempting to set up. That's a recipe for disaster.

Makoto isn't someone who's willing to die for Sayaka, and surely Sayaka has no reason to assume this guy she just met is willing to die for her.

Once again, the trial wasn't mentioned until right before the investigation. You yourself mentioned this just above. Neither of them would be thinking about who's "willing to die" at this point. They wouldn't even be aware of that as a *possibility* until someone discovered Leon's body and Monokuma told them about the incoming Class Trial.

By the way, that's not even an unreasonable assumption, since Junko (or rather, Mukuro) got killed for attacking Monokuma and, even if you ignore anything that happened in DRIF [Danganronpa IF], you can assume that since Mukuro isn't suicidal she obviously believed 'punishment' can be non-fatal.

Mukuro has nothing to do with this. It's not a reasonable assumption either; it's just false. Sayaka at this point isn't even aware of any "punishment" being possible or even existing. Sayaka didn't know what a "punishment" *was* in terms of "Class Trial executions". Because she didn't know what a Class Trial was.

Monokuma hadn't brought up "punishments" yet in that sense, and Mukuro died after Sayaka did. Both her VA Makiko Ohmoto and Kazutaka Kodaka affirm this ignorance on Sayaka's part, but just playing the game would naturally reveal this to you.

Now should Sayaka have acted so early while not really sure what's going on? Probably not.

Honestly, that's a terribly ignorant paradox to levy on her. She had no way of knowing about the trial unless someone died, she acted early because she had no idea about the trial—and despite her fears, no one else at the time was likely to kill anyone, which she also didn't know.

See the flawed thinking? This is, once again, blaming her for not realizing something she had no chance of realizing, using player hindsight.

Maybe she's just not that smart or maybe she's just that desperate.

Again, ridiculous hindsight and incredible bias. The fact is, this entire argument lies on the awful premise that Sayaka's somehow supposed to know what no one else knows, and what hasn't even slightly been hinted at by Monokuma: a concrete scenario with multiple stages. You may as well say she's not smart for staying in the locked bathroom because he managed to break in and kill her—

—when she had no idea whether or not Leon was armed and waiting for her just outside. Because we know, after they've *both* died, that he didn't pick up a weapon until he came back, we can call her stupid...?

Just because her somewhat harebrained plan...

Her plan failed, yes. Because of *her inability to conduct it*. But her plan wasn't "harebrained". Just because it failed doesn't mean it's "harebrained". Those two terms aren't synonymous with each other.

...actually fails even though normally any random guy can strangle Sakura and Mukuro at the same time when they attempt to murder someone in this genre isn't her fault.

It actually *is* her fault since she mentally checked out while drowning in her own worries and doubts, while gripping a brandished knife...until she suddenly realized a now-fearful and vindictive Leon had

grabbed a katana, ready to attack her. Or so, this is what she likely imagined, whether he were planning to attack her or not.

That's when she either feared for her life and felt she had to attack him or he attacked her and she barely managed to defend herself. Or a mix of the two.

The above has *nothing* to do with what happened with Hiro, who hit an unsuspecting Sakura in the back of the head with a glass bottle. Nor with Mukuro, who was impaled through the floor by automated spikes she had no way of anticipating. Sayaka gave Leon more than enough time to react, but Sayaka and Mukuro didn't get any time at all.

If Hiro can kill Sakura while getting the jump on her (knocked her unconscious, but obviously could've finished the job easily if he didn't panic), then Sayaka killing Leon is no more farfetched.

Doesn't matter. Sayaka is stronger than Leon, says Sakura, and she's fitter and more athletic than Leon if we want to restrict strength due to applying our biased notions of general biological limitations on her. She also has a 2 ½ foot long, sharp butcher knife (the 2nd largest in the set) with which he'll be repeatedly stabbed.

Hell, let's make it two example arguments. You've evidently got time if you're still reading:

Something that I personally think would happen is that at the start of the trial Kirigiri would make Makoto say his entire crime if Sayaka went through with her plan.

The thing is (you mean "her" crime?) :

1. Kirigiri wouldn't have any evidence against Sayaka.
2. Even if she voted for Sayaka, Makoto probably wouldn't have. To that's vote to kill her. And, most likely, no one else would have either: the crime would've pointed entirely to Makoto.
3. Makoto's extremely nervous and would look like garbage compared to Sayaka if Kirigiri cross-examines both of them. Sayaka was nervous too, but she'd hide it for an entirely different reason: she wouldn't screw up her one chance to get out of Hope's Peak if she *seriously* wanted to.
4. She only determined Sayaka was the one who instigated and Leon was the killer because she'd already seen the evidence Monokuma/Leon left and pieced it together.
5. Kirigiri didn't have any personal inclination towards Makoto until *at least* after he impressed her by predicting what she was going to talk to him about after the case, and then after he quoted Sayaka with the "I'm psychic" line.

Prior to that, she was only interested in objectively solving the case, objectively solving cases, finding her father, and getting out, and she didn't think of him any differently than the others. If the evidence points to him, she's not going to go out of her way to prove him innocent unless she has reason to believe he is.

Such a reason wouldn't exist.

Two more points? Why not:

"Sayaka Sucks! She was manipulative!"

She *was* manipulative. You know? There's no denying that, and it's part of what makes her character more human and interesting comparing to the others. Whether you hate that about her or not, that's cool. Just at least understand her perspective is all I ask. But when people make it out to be that:

- 1) Mentally, she had an easy time manipulating Makoto...
(She was literally sweating and pale and shivering and wanting more time to talk with Makoto [which I'll get into later])

- 2) She got off on manipulating Makoto...
(Yeah, okay)

- 3) She manipulated Makoto to have him killed...
*(The class trial wasn't even a thing yet; she could've easily killed Makoto herself or manipulated Leon into doing it if she wanted to; she loved Makoto and never wanted him hurt—she even said she didn't mind **[figuratively]** sleeping with him)*



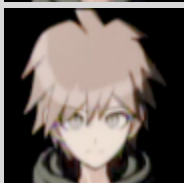
B..but... two of us sleeping together in one room...



Ah...!



I...I'm sorry! I didn't realize!!



It's the truth! I didn't notice! I wasn't trying anything dubious or anything!



Don't get me wrong, it's not like I can't stand the thought, but...



..... [But unfortunately, she realizes she can't even wish for that right now....]



*Hey, if it's alright with you, how about we... exchange rooms for one night?
[It wasn't easy...and she wished they could spend more time...but she managed to say it.]*

If they say of those other moronic things? At that point, they're just making garbage up that blatantly contradicts the game. Drones that mindlessly hate on characters with no rhyme or reason are some of the worst elements of *any* fiction-based community.

"Sayaka Sucks! They force you to spend time with her!"

Huh? That's not necessarily her fault as a character, though. Rather, it's not her fault at all. And that fact doesn't affect her character. At all. And at least we have an explanation for why Makoto's spending more time with Maizono first.

Two, actually: They're attracted to each other, and they want to be a personal team (detective/assistant) to solve these puzzles together. Fact is, when Sayaka dies, *that's* when he starts to really get involved with everyone else. But it's *never* to his and her level.

Plus, it's one freaking Free-Time event. Come on.

I've said this before. But seriously: it's *one. Event.*

Anyone complaining about one, stupid, two-minute event is...literally just bitching. In addition to the fact that it gives more depth to Sayaka's character than any of the other Free-Time events give to those other characters.

Anyhow, let's move on to the last case. No point in going on some kind of rant this late in the thing.

Was Sayaka Thinking of Makoto in Her Last Moments?

And now it's time to settle that second, long-argued debate as to whether Sayaka—

—Sayaka **was** thinking of saving Makoto when she wrote "**LEON**" in her blood on the wall. I don't even know why it's such an issue, but this doesn't even deserve a buildup paragraph. As a matter of fact, I'm just going to list point after point to explain my case and why anyone who thinks otherwise is wrong.

Nothing but wrong.

You might (probably) want this again first:

"(Sayaka) I'm really sorry to come by so late...

([Makoto] Sayaka!?)

"(Makoto) Sayaka? What are you doing out so late?"

([Makoto] That's when I noticed...

Her body was trembling.)

"(Makoto) I-Is everything okay...?"

"(Sayaka) Sorry to bother you, but... something really weird just happened.

"(Makoto) Something... weird?"

"(Sayaka) Just a little while ago, I was laying down in my room...

And all of a sudden, my door started rattling and shaking."

([Makoto] Her voice sounded like all the air had been squeezed out of her lungs.

Just hearing her talk made me tense up.)

"(Sayaka) It was like someone was trying to force the door open.

My door was locked, so they couldn't get in, of course.

But they started shaking the door harder and harder.

I was so scared I couldn't even move."

"(Makoto) S-So what happened!?"

"After a while, it just... stopped.

I let some time go by, then I got up and opened the door to check outside...

But there was nobody there."

"Someone tried to force their way into your room...?"

But... who would do something like that?"

"It's not like I'm suspicious of anyone here, but still... it makes me nervous.

What if something like that happened in the middle of the night? What would I do then...?"

"Y-You don't have to worry about that, right? I mean, we can't go outside during nighttime."

"But that's just a promise we made, right? If someone decided to break that promise..."

"Th-Then... Why don't you stay in my room tonight? Would that make you feel a little better?"

"What!?"

"All it said in the school regulations was that we had to sleep in 'the dorm rooms', right?

It didn't state specifically *which* room each person had to sleep in. So..."

" B-But... two people sharing one room is... you know..."

"...Ah!

Oh jeez, I'm sorry! I didn't even think about that!

Honestly, that didn't even cross my mind!"

"No, I know, me either. It's not even that I mind the idea, but..."

...

Um, if you don't mind, could we maybe switch rooms? Just for tonight?"

"Switch rooms...?"

I-if it'll help put your mind at ease, then it's totally fine with me."

"But... I don't mind you staying in my room, but..."

...are you sure you're okay with me staying in yours?

That doesn't, like... concern you?"

"It's fine. I trust you..."

"In that case, then..."

Ding dong, bing bong

"(Monokuma) Mm, ahem, this is a school announcement. It is now 10 p.m. As such, it is officially nighttime. Soon the doors to the dining hall will be locked, and entry at that point is strictly prohibited. Okay then...sweet dreams, everyone! Good night, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite..."

"(Sayaka) Oh man, it's already nighttime..."

"Okay, so it's settled. I'll head to your room right now."

([Makoto] Oh, if we're gonna trade rooms, we'd better trade keys, too.)

"(Sayaka) Ah, that's right. We'll have to trade keys.

"(Makoto) Again!?"

"Like I said, I'm psychic. ..."

"...Huh? Hey, aren't you gonna say you were just kidding?"

"Maybe it's a joke, or maybe it's not."

([Makoto] Something resembling a smile had made its way to her face.

Thank goodness. It looks like she's already started to get back to normal.)

"(Makoto) Okay, we'd better trade keys, then."

"(Sayaka) Yup, let's do it."

([Makoto] We exchanged keys, and when I looked back up at her again...

...there was another worried expression there.)

"(Sayaka) Makoto... please be careful. If someone comes to the door, don't open it no matter what.

"(Makoto) I won't.

The same goes for you, Sayaka. No matter who it is, don't open your door for anyone."

"(Sayaka) Even if I'm sure it's you, I absolutely won't open it. Otherwise, what's the point of even switching?"

"(Makoto) Oh, by the way... Just so you know, my bathroom door tends to get stuck.

There's a little trick to opening it...

You have to turn the knob, then lift up on the door while you pull it out.

Just do that and the door should open no problem."

"Okay, but the showers don't work during nighttime anyway, right?"

"Oh, that's right. I totally forgot..."

"But I guess I might use it when I get up in the morning. So thank you."

"Okay, well, I'd better get going.

See you tomorrow, Sayaka."

"Oh, and about what I said before..."

"Hm?"

"When I said I was psychic, it really was a joke. Honestly, I'm just very perceptive."

"Yeah, I know."

"...Good night, then.

See you in the morning."

(*[Makoto]* Sayaka gave me one last parting smile, and I headed off to "my" room.)

Now then, let's just cut to the chase and get a quick list going here:

- 0) She was written as the original love interest before dying. Just to get the facts rolling.
- 1) Her VA said that she wanted to save Makoto. Although that isn't necessarily absolute truth despite coming from her, we do know that she personally spoke with Kodaka about Sayaka's character before she made this statement, in order to get into Sayaka's mind while singing Sayaka's songs.
- 2) She was in **tremendous** pain and could've very well died a *less* agonizing death if she'd just "went with the flow" and let herself fall asleep. Even incriminating Leon wasn't 100% likely, since she didn't know who in that Japanese class knew romaji codes there. And she wouldn't have known whether he'd discover the blood-message later, or whether it'd be enough to turn things away from Makoto

But she *would've* known that she was in the midst of framing Makoto for her death.

Picture it: You're slumped down against a cold wall in immense pain, yet barely conscious and probably slipping in and out. You know no one's coming to help you, and you don't have much time...there's nothing you can do for yourself....

...but then you suddenly remember: you're in *his* room.

Makoto, the one Sayaka held so dear and *knew* she coldly betrayed, is going to be viewed as a murderer. Just as she'd planned. And what's worse, everyone's going to think he's the one who killed *her*.

But couldn't she just let go and die? It'd have been so much easier that way: Leon being discovered wouldn't have changed her fate. And if she just closed her eyes, the pain would soon end....

But no. She tries to think of a way to save him. She brought Leon on herself, but Makoto had nothing to do with this.

Yet she doesn't have the strength to write out the killer's entire name...so she does something *brilliant*: unable to even turn *halfway* around, she reaches *in* her wound, with only enough strength to weakly move a finger, twisting her wrist, about to keel over, half-consciously

writing his name, with her wrist *backwards*, in romaji. She not only had to do this under Leon's nose as he cleaned and inspected her nearby, she had to reach back into her agonizing wound several times to finish writing the name. Blood on a wall is *not* ink. It's not thick at all and only slightly thicker than water. Ink is thicker than *honey*.

She could only *hope* someone there knew romaji well enough to read it backwards from where she was writing, and she was so weak that her writing ending up looking more like a code. She couldn't connect the "N" (resulting in a: "I") and the rest of the backwards "LEON" looked like numbers: "11037".

Though it was fine. She was dead anyway. Her final minutes, unimaginable pain...and for something she knew fully well *wasn't* solid evidence...

...but it didn't matter. She wanted to help however little she could. Whatever she could do to clean up her mess. The mess she'd gotten them *both* into. Even if her efforts weren't worth much in the end.

If that sounds melodramatic, oh well. Nothing I said *didn't happen*, so that just means you found the scene very emotional. And it makes you uncomfortable.

Either way, it wouldn't change the point being made. Some people have tried to play the "melodrama" card on me before, and you can just chalk that up as just a trivial red herring, which it is.

- 3) It doesn't matter, again. Quite fitting to say that, really. But by (figuratively) spelling out Leon as the murderer, she was indirectly absolving Makoto of the blame she'd set up on him, whether she directly mean to or not. Simple, right? And she knew this.
- 4) In that scene, the only other alternative to directly thinking of helping Makoto is thinking of framing Leon. But as I said, by thinking of framing Leon, she has to be thinking of who she's taking the blame off. It's the same subject. Plus, she's in Makoto's room.
- 5) Specifically, she's in his bathroom, next to his shower. In order to even get in, she had to remember what Makoto told her about his bathroom door, because she didn't know at first. She didn't even plan on going in there at first:

"(Makoto) Oh, by the way... Just so you know, my bathroom door tends to get stuck. There's a little trick to opening it... You have to turn the knob, then lift up on the door while you pull it out. Just do that and the door should open no problem."

So, when she runs to the shower (likely before, hoping in advance Leon wouldn't know how to get in), she's remembered what he said about how to open the door, and now he's *definitely* on her mind...which would honestly...suck, at that moment.

(On a sidenote, she says in response to Makoto's statement, "Alright, but the water doesn't work at nighttime anyway, right?" And he says, "Oh, right,"—and that's when she thinks about washing the knife early in the morning afterwards, using his bathroom:

"I might want to use it after I wake up in the morning, though. ...Thank you.")

[After she wakes up, meaning: "When the bathroom water that's turned off at night gets turned back on in the morning."]

- 6) She trusted him but obviously couldn't be certainly sure when she went to him with the lie...whether he'd buy it. That's why, when he actually agrees, she starts to look happy, despite the terrified act (that she was self-convincing herself of to feed into it) and the actual despair and utter shame/sadness she's feeling:

"(Sayaka) Oh man, it's already nighttime..."

"(Makoto) Okay, so it's settled. I'll head to your room right now."

([Makoto] Oh, if we're gonna trade rooms, we'd better trade keys, too.)

"(Sayaka) Ah, that's right. We'll have to trade keys.

"(Makoto) Again!?"

"Like I said, I'm psychic. ..."

"...Huh? Hey, aren't you gonna say you were just kidding?"

"What if I **wasn't** just kidding...?"

([Makoto] Something resembling a smile had made its way to her face.

Thank goodness. It looks like she's already started to get back to normal.)

"(Makoto) Okay, we'd better trade keys, then."

"(Sayaka) Yup, let's do it."

- 7) But suddenly after exchanging keys, she looks worried. Considering she was relieved at Makoto's agreeableness, and considering the circumstances, it'd be impossible to fake being worried. Even if she's *forcing* herself to, she's still keeping Makoto's *safety* in mind just to fuel the act.

So, check this: She tells him that if someone comes to her door while he's in there, not to open it. In this case, it's really a warning that if she fails and someone (Leon) discovers the swapped nameplate then comes to "her" room, where he'd be, not to open it for anything. Even as a subliminal message, she, being the mastermind, knows that's a possibility. And she knows Leon might be in an agitated state after her attempt whether he notices the switch or not.

"(Sayaka) Naegi-kun... please be careful. If someone comes to the door, don't open it no matter what."

8) That last exchange. Makoto's already about to leave, but she stops him one last time:



"(Sayaka) Oh, and about what I said before..."



"(Makoto) Hm?"



"When I said I was psychic, it really was a joke. Honestly, I'm just very perceptive."



"Yeah, I know."



"...Good night, then. See you in the morning."

Why does she suddenly smile again and go on here? Then to pause before that goodnight. You can interpret that how you want, but she never had to say anything—Makoto didn't even expect her to. Let alone admitting something like that.

That's what I like about Sayaka—that one line can be initially interpreted so many ways. For example, from her being so grateful that she wants to be honest (but that'd be wrong), to her not wanting to leave Makoto (which she constantly implies in this scene alone) and not wanting to go through with this (she went from smiling to sadness after the nighttime announcement)—thus, hesitation—to actually, simply thinking she'd gotten one over Makoto, and thus giving him a tongue in cheek (which would also be contradicted by her unwillingness to say "good night" at the end). I'll go into it more in the, what I'll call, "bonus" section...

...but, evidently, we know the smile was forced. Although there really wasn't anything to mask at this point. It's self-reassurance, considering she'd just shown him all her fears seconds ago. She'd finally realized she had to get in soon (or else they'd possibly be caught outside).

9) And, of course the: "I'll see you tomorrow." at the end.

She didn't expect to die, and she never intended to kill him.

She didn't know about the trial, and she'd always felt something towards him. But to have a good minute alone in his bathroom, before Leon returned, just *thinking* about the past...

...one thing leads to another.

Of course, there can always be an exception, but the obscure notion of Sayaka just wanting to screw over Leon, not even caring about anything else, has *no* evidence behind it, and it's only suggested by haters and a salty Makoto who promptly got over it and listened to reason as Kirigiri spoke.

Feel free to try and rebut any of these as well. Not to sound smart—I mean, they're true themselves, but I can't use them to implicate with 100% certainty that she intended to save Makoto with her message. I can only suggest them as evidence...

...the thing is, they're *obvious* hints and some of them are obvious *common sense* points. Not to mention there's no—none at all—*zero* evidence to the contrary.

Well, cool. We're done.

With that.

Alright then, good. Really, that's about all I have to say about Sayaka, not including an overall summary of her character...

...which I won't do, don't worry.

So, let me just cover my last base and explain why the game points to—well, Sayaka being psychic instead of her amazing perception being just her "intuitions" as she constantly says. It hardly makes a difference in terms of the plot, but this'll be the "bonus section".

"Is Sayaka Psychic?"

We're finishing strong. There's three justifications for her being psychic:

1. She admits it.

In School Mode, Sayaka says something along the lines of "So, you're a psychic too, huh?" in reply to one of the options of the Kokoronpa events when you read her thoughts. In fact, you've probably already read it earlier.

Granted, it *is* School Mode, which isn't canon. But like I said, the difference between everything else said there and things like this is that these statements aren't influenced by anything non-canon/School Mode-related. It's simply a general, accidental acknowledgment of abilities she presumes Makoto to have—and, by extension, implies that she has. It goes without saying she'd have never said that outside of Makoto showing psychic tendencies, but that's the point.

And considering the somber mood of that scene (he implied she was strange, and she wasn't particularly content), she obviously wasn't joking around. Maybe Makoto was just being extremely intuitive like Sayaka always jokes about being, but she didn't assume so: if that's the case, she accidentally admitted she was a legitimate psychic while assuming he was one as well.

Simply put, because nothing changes those words between School Mode and the regular story, we can assume she's serious about her perception right there.

Then the question is why does she always play it off as a joke? Characters in Danganronpa like Yasuhiro and Gundham and Kotoko don't downplay their abilities like her. Furthermore, they're presumably just as real, especially in Kotoko's and Gundham's case (one more second and he would've gotten that barrier up).

Well...

2. Her jokes aren't jokes. They're to throw Makoto off.

I don't think anyone's ever brought this up; but if you look at her dialogue, you'll see the clearer picture.

First, why does she keep making a joke out of being psychic? We hear in the first game that Hiro's a member of the psychic community, with his own title. So is there something to avoid?

That's actually where it gets interesting. Personally, I think Hiro's barely psychic. The game leaves it up to you concerning whether he's: a psychic who just pretends to barely know what he's doing; a weak psychic who barely knows what he's doing but somehow gets it right at times; a non-psychic who just gets lucky with his predictions. I think the last one is a contradiction, according to the community's definition of "psychic" they're applying to him—whether he's just lucky or not, his successes still

involving uncanny predictions. But it's strongly implied that he's the second: a psychic who barely gets his own abilities and has little control over them. He's a clairvoyant in the weakest sense.

But even something like that is revealed in the psychic community, since 99% of the community's full of total fakes with no real talent at all.

What does this have to do with Sayaka? Well, she isn't a fake. But for some reason, she not only wants you (Makoto) to think she isn't *psychic*, she wants you (Makoto) to trick yourself (himself) with her joking around.

See, by saying "I'm psychic" before saying "it's just intuition", she masks the truth as a lie out in the open—so it no longer becomes a possibility to wonder. Otherwise, why would she even bring it up unless it were just an absurd joke?

For instance:

"(Sayaka) I'm not a doll. I'm very much alive!"

"(Makoto) Huh? Did you hear me!?"

"I can read minds."

"What?"

"Kidding! I just have a really good intuition."

([Makoto] She's too sharp...)

When they first meet, Makoto thinks the notion of her actually being a psychic is crazy and can barely form a reply. He goes "What?" and then she says she's just "Kidding, I just have good intuition! lol"

As a result, instead of suspecting her, what are his thoughts?

([Makoto] She's too sharp...)

He buys into the "intuition" excuse because he doesn't expect an actual psychic to be in his class.

Even *Hiro* probably wouldn't.

The fact that she able to joke around that much just solidifies that expectation. We have 4-5 more cases of her joking around the exact same way.

Why, then, does she keep reading his mind if it's a "joke"? Well, it can't be that she keeps getting lucky with intuitive guesses: she not only replies confidently to his thoughts: she replies naturally, smiling as if he actually spoke those thoughts and she was simply responding as usual.

Such as:

([Makoto] Yeah. If we'd met again at a train station somewhere downtown, that'd make for a nice dramatic reunion... But instead, it's this weird school.)

"(Sayaka) Maybe, but still... I'm sure you'll help me find my way out, just like that crane. You'll save me. It's just intuition, I know, but I still believe it."

...and...

([Makoto] Nobody was waiting for us. We don't really have much choice. I guess we should just wait here for now.)

"(Sayaka) Hmm... okay. Let's just wait here then."

"Eh!? You heard that!?"

"Like I said, I'm psychic. Just kidding, kidding! Seriously, I just have amazing intuition."

Among many other scenes that I'm sure you can find. If she were just guessing "intuitively," she'd have a different tone at least *once*. Because there's always an element of uncertainty with *guessing*, and especially because one wrong guess would ruin her "I'm psychic" shtick (thus, he'd know that she obviously wouldn't be psychic). In that case, Makoto would think it's merely intuition for sure.

But because she clearly doesn't guess—and because her replies nearly always break the fourth wall—there are only two (yet again, two) possibilities for why she continues the shtick:

- 1) She's messing with him for a reaction and wants to keep him wondering.
- 2) She's responding to his thoughts out loud by accident.

Both are plausible, but I lean towards the first. For the first, Makoto already thinks she's just super-intuitive because of how lightly she reacts to *his* reactions. We've just seen in the room-switch scene that he expected her to say "Just kidding!" when she said she was psychic—even though she didn't.

So, she's making a general joke of it and it's working for her in the truest sense: he's interested in her shrewdness, and he even gets curious about her sincerity; but he ultimately takes the notion of her being psychic for a joke. The gain for *her*, then, is that it still keeps things interesting between them as she isn't good at making small-talk. As long as Makoto didn't actually find out that she was psychic, of course. She know in advance, that would ruin the game. And possibly turn him off.

The second and the first both imply that she isn't guessing, but the second *also* implies that she's using the joking as a cover up for accidentally blurting out things she shouldn't have the context to blurt out. There are reasons why she'd want to hide her abilities from Makoto, but she blatantly-*yet-accidentally* admits that she's psychic in the Kokoronpa event when she's entirely serious—and mistaken of own his lack of abilities. And again, her responses outside of that are much too light for someone who'd be

covering up what they said—she's a great actor, but that excuse is unrealistic as she'd be caught off guard if her responses and his reactions weren't planned. She smiles as if they were. Lastly, during the talk about the crane incident, she brings the shtick up again on purpose (as she doesn't try to correct herself):

"(Sayaka) Maybe, but still... I'm sure you'll help me find my way out, just like that crane. You'll save me. It's just intuition, I know, but I still believe it."

Either way, each time she does this, it's implied that she at least has some sort of extraordinary perception. Even in saying she has "amazing intuition," she still doesn't contradict that she might be psychic. Since, again, she could have a psychic's "amazing intuition".

3. Visuals

This reason's less solid than the others and it's mainly an aside; but it is something unique to her, so it has some merit. It may just be for visual effect, but take a look at these Sayaka sprites anyway:





Notice the theme? She always looks normal, even when she's scared or not feeling well. Even in this instance...



...when she worries herself pale to convince herself she's afraid in order to set up Makoto.

But when she's truly and openly panicking...



...her eyes literally get paler.

You might laugh at how I'm using this as a case, and I know it doesn't hold as much ground as the others. But I couldn't help it anyway. Because *no other character* in Danganronpa has this quality like her. No one. And it's completely unnatural. Paranormal, in fact.

The *only* exception is (now) with a select few in Danganronpa v3. A game where the developers start *really* breaking...a lot of things. But that's a discussion for Danganronpa v3.

Don't hold me to only this, though. I'm not even sure what the specific connection would be, but besides knowing this quality and her being psychic both aren't normal, I just want to include everything possible.

However, the main question is:

Why did Sayaka hide this?

Meaning, why wouldn't she want to say she's truly psychic *unless* Makoto outright displayed the same abilities, and she were sure he was psychic himself? When he responds to the claim of him being psychic with:

"(Makoto) No, it's just...well, I'm not sure. Maybe I'm just starting to understand better?"

...it's too late for Sayaka to go back on what she said—the secret's out. But by then, it doesn't matter: by reading him, she would've known whether he were a real psychic or whether he just had a minor moment where he gained that superb insight necessary to completely read her expressions. He *could've* been truly psychic; but unlike her, he didn't know either way how to tell for sure.

So, there's an easy answer for why she didn't want to be open: Makoto's reaction would've been unpredictable.

Like I said, she's not an all-powerful, all-knowing, psychic mutant here. She's just a slightly blessed girl with the ability to read others using her superior intuitions. But in a way, those psychical moments are still intuitions. She can't go into his subconscious and read his deepest thoughts, and she can't read anyone's thoughts or feelings unless they're overt and clear. At least from what we've seen.

That's why she can't read Monokuma beyond his "I want to watch you kill each other" intentions. That's partly why she doubts everyone and later feels the need to defend herself, since she doesn't know their true intentions (and neither do they, though they're generally more trusting).

That's also why once the game changes with Monokuma's motivational video, she can't help but assume he might've done the worst to her friends and family even though we know in hindsight that the video was greatly exaggerated.

That's why she *suspects* Mondo might be a terrible person inside but can't probe his heart to say for sure.

Well, these reasons relate to why she doesn't tell Makoto about herself. She's not clairvoyant or all-knowing/powerful, and she can't know how Makoto would take a revelation of being psychic. What we know is that she obviously doesn't want to push Makoto away (in general), so revealing her psychic capacities is not a risk worth taking to her. She explicitly says this in the Kokoronpa event:

"(Sayaka) If we get too close, I'll just end up being a nuisance.

I...hate the idea of it.

I hate the idea of giving someone a reason to dislike me.

But I want to know more about him.

I wonder if he thinks I'm strange...

I don't think today is the day..."

In the main game, it's why she apologizes to him multiple times when she, fairly reasonably, lashes out at him over their being trapped—even if she started to get frustrated with his behavior, she was never angry at *him* per se. Snd he knew that. And she knew that he knew that, yet she apologized to him regardless, when he didn't call for it. And it's why she apologizes in advance about taking up his time whenever he goes somewhere with her. There are more instances of her trying to not make him uncomfortable too.

All in the words. The words and the tone:

"(Sayaka) I was just getting ready to head out. If it's okay, would you like to come with me? Maybe we could talk...?"

"(Sayaka) I should have said thank you then, but...is it okay if I do it now?"

"(Sayaka) Umm...

...I know I said I wanted to talk to you, but now that we're here... I don't really know what to talk about.

And I was the one who invited you to come with me, too. Sorry..."

"(Sayaka) I...it's fine... I'm the one who should be sorry..."

Just a few example lines from the main game; you get the point. It doesn't have anything to do with hiding her nature for her safety or the good of the world, or any of that. She just doesn't want to possibly turn Makoto off.

With all this in mind, there is *one* thing Sayaka said that possibly puts a hole in the idea of her being a psychic:

"(Sayaka) Oh, and about what I said before..."

"(Makoto) Hm?"

"When I said I was psychic, it really was a joke. Honestly, I'm just very perceptive."

"Yeah, I know."

"...Good night, then."

Well, there it is. And they're her last words.

At first glance, that there sounds like she's confessing she's that not psychic.

Right?

The truth is, there's actually *another* reason she said that. She's certainly telling the truth when she says it's her perceptive/intuition—and when she said she was psychic, it was certainly a joke.

Ironically, she's only telling a white lie. She really does have good intuitions (a psychic's intuitions); but she says she's "kidding" after she claims to be psychic, making her disingenuous. She can't probe thoughts or scan or anything: only read what one's already conveying. But there's more than enough evidence, from her own words and actions, to qualify her as a true psychic. Ultimately, Sayaka's being dishonest. She doesn't mean any harm, but that's what how it is.

But what matters is why, in this final moment, her final spoken lines, does she say this? As always, Rui loves to keep things questionable. Since she flat out admits to being psychic in the Kokoronpa, she's contradicting herself.

Still, I don't think she meant to deceive Makoto. Not here. There's nothing to gain from it, and he doesn't treat that statement as anything should've come as a shock. He'd assumed she wasn't an actual psychic the entire time. And so, his reply to this is a mere, "Yeah, I know." Because he expects it to be *obvious* that she isn't really psychic.

So then, there's only one reason for her choice of words.

...that's because, out of nowhere, she suddenly felt the urge to confess that she really was a psychic—before everything that would go down that night.

But at the last second...she just couldn't.

Even though she skillfully smiles it off, you probably got the sense that this was an awkward moment the first time you saw this scene. And that's why.

Makoto's already fallen for her "joke" in the past, and she just naturally repeated it again because she froze up and didn't know what else to say.

I won't pretend to know *why* she stopped herself that final time. Perhaps she didn't want to push Makoto away by admitting she'd been lying to him...and really *wasn't* normal all along.

However, one thing for sure is she wouldn't have considered that as just a "white lie". In her mind, she'd screwed up once again. She just couldn't be honest with him.

Sayaka didn't know what else to say afterwards either...but by then, she had to keep going. She'd already started her plan. And now she didn't know what else to do but...say goodnight and see him tomorrow. Then smile: self-assurance.

And y'know, who knows whether this moment was on her mind as she miserably regretted all her failings just before Leon broke in. If so, it would've been heavy. The little joke you played inadvertently turning into a hard lie. Right when you wanted to be most honest.

That hard lie being the last thing you ever say to them....