

## THE REPORT CARD

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*Reviews may contain information that could be considered 'spoilers'. Readers should proceed at their own risk.*

**Publisher****Viz**<http://www.viz.com>**Credits**

Writer: Kaneyoshi Izumi

Artist: Kaneyoshi Izumi

Distributor:

Translator: Naomi Kokubo

ISBN: 1-59116-908-9

**Grade: 8**

"I'LL STILL BE A VIRGIN AT 30!" The horrifying thought drives junior high geek Ai Maekawa to use all a modern girl's weapons to transform herself before starting high school. She succeeds too well and isn't prepared for the avalanche of attention she gets from the guys at her new high school and the envy and hate from the girls. The most forward of those guys is Sou Ichinose, who can be as intimidating and arrogant as he is popular. Best bud Yuichiro Kato, besides amusing Sou, helps rein him in.

High school would be more fun if Ai could hit it off with ganguro girl classmate Mina Sato. "High school is like ... *psychological warfare*," Ai moans hiding her face in her hands. The brash Mina, a.k.a. Froggy (Ai's private name for

her), sports a deep tan, bleached hair, white eye shadow and lipstick, and plenty of up-yours attitude.

But Ai has worked too hard to back down so easily. She also has a new goal of becoming Sou's girlfriend. Still, even applying the earnestness she did to her junior high studies, Ai has stiff competition that isn't above dirty tricks to get what they want.

Tacked onto the end of the main story is "The Day of Finals," an amusing 16-pager featuring a cutaway of the thoughts of a nervous and frustrated Aki Hazekura as she takes final exams in classic literature and biology. Share the pressure as precious test-taking minutes tick away.

Kaneyoshi Izumi's ***Doubt!!*** is a smart and sassy title, enhanced by an English adaptation that is successful in capturing the way contemporary teens talk. Normally I dislike it when editors take too many liberties with the translation, because there are enough bad editors who do not properly respect the manga writer's choices and who rewrite the manga for themselves. In this case, Kelly Sue DeConnick gets a high five for the good rapport she has with Izumi's writing and artwork.

There's Ai turning on the charm for Sou on page 30; the intention of the medium shot makes the succeeding panels extremely funny. Another resonant panel, on page 82, is the large close-up on the hurtful somber look Sou gives Ai after she refuses his help. When you turn the page and find yourself looking straight into Sou's eyes with that expression on his face, you understand the dismay Ai feels in the next panel.

The longer I look at Izumi's artwork the more I find to like about it. At first I didn't care for the clear bubble sitting on the bottom rim of her characters' eyes, as though her characters were always close to tears. Now it doesn't bother me. The bubble brings out the reflective quality of the eye surface better than other styles, making the eyes sparkly and alive.

I also like the vertical "sheets of rain" linear backgrounds to accent strong emotional content in a panel. Other noticed details are duckbill lips for comedic moments, speed lines

integrated with the form outline and not over it, effective facial toning to express a slow burn or sudden shock, and expressive hands.

***Doubt!!*** has a great clique of strong female and male characters. While the storyline about geeky students remaking themselves into Ms. Popularity (or Mr. Popularity) is a common one, the snappy dialogue and attentive artwork make ***Doubt!!*** worth sampling.

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