

Major League System

Chapter 161 - 161: Operation (1)

"What!? You've injured your shoulder?" Seiji Hanada couldn't believe his eyes as he stared at Ken who was currently had his right arm in a sling.

Ken had a guilty expression on his face as he tried to explain what happened to cause his injury.

Of course he didn't tell the coach that their manager's father had assaulted him, but it didn't seem too far from the truth.

"You ran into a steel pole?" Coach Hanada was flabbergasted.

"What were you thinking? How could you be so careless?"

The next 5 minutes was a stern lecture surrounding an athletes duty of care towards their own bodies since it was essentially their livelihood. He went on and on, not even noticing the small smile appearing on the corner of Ken's lips.

Ken wasn't mad, in fact he was quite happy inside. The way the coach was reacting told him just how much he cared about him, despite the occasional name calling in between the advice.

"So what did the doctor say?"

After finally getting out all he had to say, the coach calmed himself down and asked the important question. In truth he was quite anxious, worrying that Ken would have to take a back seat for the rest of the year.

"Doctor said it's a contusion and needs at least 2 weeks to heal." Ken replied.

A contusion was just a fancy way of saying a bruise. Something he did not know when the doctor gave him the news of his injury. His initial reaction was one of panic, only to be quickly reassured after he turned pale in fright.

Actually, the doctor had told him 6 weeks, but with his Fatigue Management skill he was certain that it would be all good in a couple of weeks.

"Haaah, you're lucky kid." The coach let out a sigh of relief, feeling some strength come back into his body.

Ken nodded seriously. He already knew what it was like to have an injured shoulder, and he would be lying if he said that he wasn't scared.

"I should still be able to do some running and fitness exercises if I wear this sling." He said, wanting to stay in shape.

Seiji rolled his eyes before replying ominously, "Yeah you're damn right you will."

"Eh?"

Ken felt a little bit of danger from these words, but he still managed to force a smile onto his face, lest he receive more punishment.

He quickly left the faculty office afterwards, using school starting as an excuse.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Ai who was on her way to class. As if they were strangers, they completely ignored each other and went about their business.

A rotund figure was standing near the stairs, his greasy hair seemingly stuck to his forehead. He adjusted his glasses, a triumphant grin appearing onto his face.

"Hehe, looks like my plan is working so far." He muttered to himself.

'Next I'll need to isolate her from everyone else. Once she feels alone, I can swoop in and become her savior. Hehehe.' Kohei thought, his twisted mind formulating even more devious plans.

As Ken was walking, he suddenly felt disgusted for some reason. He turned his head, only to lock gazes with a wide youth who was sitting uncomfortably on the stairs leading up to the second floor.

It was only for a second, but he instinctively knew that this was the piece of garbage that had played with his livelihood, putting his career in jeopardy. He felt his shoulder throb in response.

Unknowingly, Ken's left hand clenched into a fist.

It took all of his willpower to avert his gaze and continue walking to class. Thankfully, his poker face had once again saved him from alerting the enemy.

They could not afford to put Kohei on guard just yet. If he was spooked and released the photos, all that he'd been through so far would be for nothing.

Kohei felt his body tremble as the tall and foreign looking teen walked away from him. In the brief moment that their gazes locked, he felt small and insignificant, as if he were an ant that could be crushed at any moment.

He paused, before suddenly feeling a cold sweat flow down his back.

"Tch."

He clicked his tongue in annoyance, his facing scrunching up into a scowl.

'You think you're so much better than me you bastard? No one can be allowed to taint Ai... She deserves to be with someone who will treat her like the princess she is.'

The bell suddenly sounded, prompting him to stand up and slowly trudge his way up the stairs.

Tetsu made his way through the busy street, donning his tank top which revealed his defined arm muscles. If it wasn't for the vestiges of flour caught up in his stubble, he might appear much more intimidating.

"Tetsu!"

He heard a voice call out to him from across the street, gaining his attention.

It was an average sized man who was also wearing a tank top. Instead of being muscular like Tetsu, his arms were covered in traditional Japanese tattoos, making him look like he belonged to the Yakuza.

Were it not for his balding head and friendly smile plastered on his face, people would surely avoid such a character.

"Tsukasa!"

Tetsu's face lit up with a big grin as he walked forward to greet his old friend, pulling him into a bear hug.

"I haven't seen ya in 10 years ya old bastard!"

Tsukasa who was on the receiving end of a mauling, did his best to continue breathing. Only after he began tapping furiously on the other man's shoulder was he finally released from the submission.

After catching his breath, the man composed himself.

"You're still as savage as ever." He said with a wry smile.

"Where's the rest of the crew?" Tetsu asked, looking around expectantly.

"Heh. If we all grouped up in the same place, people might just call the police on us." He replied with a smile.

Tetsu looked a little disappointed, but he shook his head shortly after. He hadn't come here to catch up with old friends, he was on a mission.

Seeing Tetsu's expression change, Tsukasa knew it was time to get down to business.

"A few of our boys are surrounding the store at the moment so no one comes in."

"Mmm, good. Let's go have a look"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 162 - 162: Operation (2)

With that, the two headed back down the street and stopped out the front of a store with two conspicuous looking individuals partially blocking the door. They took one look at Tsukasa and stepped aside, allowing the two to enter.

Without a word, the two walked into the tech store which held both used and new electronics scattered around the place. Computers, laptops, radio's, TV's and even video cassette players filled the aisles.

"Tetsu? Tsukasa?"

A man in his early forties sporting glasses and a comb over called out in disbelief, not believing his eyes.

"Gomi...?"

Both Tsukasa and Tetsu looked bewildered as they stared at the person in front of them. The teen they used to know had been wide and sweaty, seeming like a typical otaku.

However, the lean and rather handsome figure in front of them was like a complete stranger. Some people said that men aged like fine wine, yet it was only now that the two truly understood the saying.

"What brings you two to my store today? Can I help you with some tech?" He seemed a little taken aback at first, but a smile appeared on his face.

Tsukasa looked at Tetsu who seemed to be lost for words before stepping forward and asking the question his friend wanted to know.

"Ah thanks Minoru, we actually came for another reason altogether. Do you have a son that's around 17 years old?"

Minoru tilted his head, clearly not expecting such a question. "Son? I only have a daughter who is 10 years old. Why would you ask me such a question?"

At the response, Tetsu suddenly felt deflated.

"There's a guy called Keiho Gomi who goes to Yokohama High. He's currently blackmailing my daughter."

Since the guy they were looking for had no ties to Minoru, Tetsu was lost. However, as he was about to walk out of the store, he was stopped.

"W-Wait, did you say Keiho?"

Minoru's face paled considerably, clearly showing that the name was familiar.

Tetsu's ears perked up and he quickly turned around. It took all of his strength not to rush up and fire rapid questions at the man in front of him.

Tsukasa took the liberty of answering affirmatively.

"That's my nephew's name... But that can't be right?" Minoru mumbled the last part of his sentence, not believing that his nephew would blackmail a girl in school.

However, seeing how upset his old friends were, he didn't try and speak up for him.

Without being prompted, he grabbed a piece of paper and jotted down an address before handing it to Tsukasa.

"This is my mother's address. My brother lives downstairs in the basement."

"Thanks Minoru. I just hope he cooperates..." Tsukasa replied, his tone serious.

"S-Sure. It was good seeing you guys again, I just wish it were under different circumstances."

Tetsu walked over to the counter and placed his hand on Minoru's shoulder, locking eyes with him.

"Thank you... I'm sure if it was yer daughter, you'd hunt the person down as well."

Minoru paused for a moment before nodding. Even he who could be described as a coward would still do his all to protect his only daughter.

The two then walked out of the store, leaving Minoru by himself. Now that the atmosphere had returned to normal, he felt his body begin to shake from the earlier tension.

"What have you done Kohei?" he muttered, feeling shame on his nephews behalf.

As Tsukasa made his way outside, he made a gesture in the air. Suddenly, around 15 people starting walking towards them. They seemed like a biker gang, wearing leather jackets and bandannas.

Instantly, the civilians in the street began to grow panicked, backing away from the congregation of unsavory looking gentleman.

"Meet us at this address." Tsukasa said simply, handing one of his lackeys the piece of paper.

"How many big bro?" The man asked politely.

Tsukasa looked at his old friend Tetsu, seeing the wrathful expression on his face.

"Bring everyone here."

"Yes big bro."

In the next moment, everyone dispersed, leaving both Tetsu and Tsukasa alone.

"How did you wanna do this?"

Tetsu didn't answer right away. Now that he had found out where the perpetrator lived, he felt an urge to rush over there and dish out some justice.

However, he managed to reign in his feelings. He had been rash previously, attacking Ken without knowing the full story. Having been forgiven for his actions by a mere teenager, he decided to not make the same mistake again.

"Me and you will have a nice civil discussion with Minoru's brother. If it doesn't go well, we can always use some persuasion."

He accentuated the final word, cracking his knuckles in anticipation.

"Hehehe. This feels like old times again." Tsukasa said, running his hand through his balding hair.

With that settled, the two made their way over to where Tsukasa had parked his bike. He saw a few of his members about ready to leave.

"Oi Chibi, ride with someone else. Tetsu will borrow your bike for now."

A large behemoth of a man with a long mustache paused for a moment before turning off his bike. He slowly got off and walked calmly towards the much shorter Tsukasa.

"Here big bro." With such a deep voice and mammoth size, even Tetsu was dumbfounded as to why this guy would listen to Tsukasa. He handed over the keys and looked to one of the other members.

Everyone seemed to look the other way, not wanting to dual ride with such a damn big guy on their bikes.

Eventually, the one they called Chibi walked over to the closest bike and lifted the rider off with one hand.

"I'll ride this."

With that he stepped over the bike and turned it on, nodding at Tsukasa and Tetsu before riding off, leaving the poor rider to watch his bike leave with no tears to cry.

"Ahem. Katsu, you go ride with someone else."

"Y-Yes big bro!"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 163 - 163: Confrontation (1)

"Hahaha! That's hilarious."

The sound of laughter came out from a large man sitting in his computer chair, watching what appeared to be Anime on the monitor. He wore glasses and sported an unshaven stubble with crumbs on his shirt, likely from his last snack.

He wiped the grease off his fingers with his shirt before leaning forward and typing on the keyboard in front of him.

"Love to Ru really is the best..."

After a few moments he moved the mouse and clicked post, sending his review on the Anime episode. Something he did often during his spare time.

He also had quite a following in the Anime and Manga circle, often being a source of truth for those who wanted recommendations.

DING

Manabu Gomi's face fell as he heard the notification come from his computer. He opened up the email and let out a grunt of displeasure.

He was an artist and graphic designer, also dabbling in post production for some photographers. The only reason he liked the job was because he could stay at home and work whenever he wanted.

However, his real passion was Anime and Manga. He loved to watch and read and even had dreams of joining an animation studio. Yet he was knocked back from every job he applied for because he had not gone to university and lacked experience.

He was on track to go to university, but things went pear shaped when his girlfriend at the time fell pregnant during the final year of high school. This put a hold on his life, changing its trajectory completely.

Initially he was scared, however the closer the due date came, the more excited he felt.

While it may not be ideal, Manabu had a great girlfriend who he'd known since middle school. He wanted to support her and would do his best to be a good father to their child.

Yet fate was cruel. While giving birth, his girlfriend lost her life, turning his world upside down.

Manabu was left with only the child whom he named Keiho, in order to celebrate the life that had been born from the sacrifice of his partner.

While he did his best for the first couple of years, he eventually became depressed. The boy looked exactly like him, showing none of his mother's fair features. He then slowly grew apart from the child.

Eventually he moved in with his mother and let her essentially raise him.

Manabu knew that doing so would be wrong, but he already knew that he was a terrible father. There was a part of him that blamed the child for his partner's death, even as unfair as it sounded.

"Manabu, you have some visitors."

An elderly voice called out from atop the stairs, breaking him out of his reverie.

"Visitors? Since when has that ever happened?" He mumbled to himself.

All of his work was done remotely, meaning he essentially never had to leave the house. With his mother doing all of the shopping, he was free to stay inside away from the sunlight and eyes of others.

He was a little suspicious, but he still said he would be there in a moment. After quickly dusting the crumbs off his shirt, Manabu slowly made his way up the stairs.

When he finally arrived, slightly out of breath, he almost turned tail and ran back down the stairs at the scary sight in front of him.

There were two men, both wearing a white tank top. One was a balding man with bright tattoos on his arms, while the other looked to be a gangster with muscular arms, instantly intimidating his weak psyche.

"W-Who are you guys?" He stammered, feeling his heart beat quicken in fear.

"Come, take a seat. We have some things to discuss about your son Keiho." Tsukasa said simply, his tone seeming friendly.

Tetsu on the other hand was doing his best to remain calm. The man in front of him looked exactly like he imagined the brother Minoru should have looked, making him feel uncomfortable.

Manabu looked at his mother for reassurance, only to receive a questioning gaze. It seemed that she also had no idea why these two gentleman had arrived to talk about Keiho. However, there was some concern in her expression.

He considered explaining to the two men that his mother was the one who raised Keiho, but his last shred of morality seemed to prevent him from doing so.

With his head bowed and his anxiety levels at a maximum, he slowly made his way over to the couch opposite the two gentleman and took his seat, trying to avoid eye contact with the scary men.

He gestured for his mother to leave the room, in case something bad happened. She was at first confused, but she listened nonetheless.

"What did my son do?" He asked after a few moments of uncomfortable silence.

"Tetsu, did you want to do the honors?"

Tsukasa called out his friend who was still glaring at Manabu with restrained anger, trying to move the conversation along.

The silence stretched on for an uncomfortably long time, causing the already high anxiety levels of the bespectacled man to reach its peak.

Just when he felt that he was going to faint from all the pressure, he heard a deep voice with a Kansai accent breaking the silence.

"Yer son has blackmailed my daughter. He doctored some photos ta make it look like she and a classmate had been having... inappropriate relations together."

Manabu's eye's widened in disbelief and he subconsciously lifted his head in order to look at Tetsu, as if to confirm his words were true. He saw the repressed rage behind the man's expression and could instantly tell he wasn't kidding.

Tetsu leaned forward and dug into his pocket, pulling out an envelope which contained the photos and note from Keiho. He placed them down on the coffee table in front of them before taking his seat once more.

Just as Manabu was about to collect the envelope, an elderly voice called out from the kitchen, startling him.

"Would any of you like some tea?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 164 - 164: Confrontation (2)

The intense atmosphere was instantly broken.

"Yes please grandma." Tsukasa said politely, "And one for my friend here."

"Excellent. We never have guests around so I'll bring out the special tea set." She said, oblivious to the seriousness of the issues being discussed.

After settling his nerves, Manabu finally managed to grab the envelope. He pulled out the photos first, but he kept his eyes closed for a moment, as if to mentally prepare.

The moment he opened his eyes, his body flooded with shame. The photos were distressing, showing a supposed intimate moment between two teens. Yet with all of his experience in post production for photographers, he could easily see the shoddy job that had been done.

He could see that whoever doctored these photos was inexperienced. They literally just cropped the head of the two victims onto another photo, making heavy use of the blending and blur tool in order to disguise it.

However, the photos were so confronting that no regular person would look close enough in order to see such a detail. If Manabu was not so experienced with photo editing software, he too would have not seen all the glaring defects.

Yet that was not all. Once he placed the photos back into the envelope and turned his attention to the note, his face darkened even more.

The twisted words which taunted and blamed the victim for his actions were too much for him to bear. After ensuring he read the whole thing, he placed it back into the envelope and slowly sat back into the couch, feeling his head spinning.

It was then that his mother entered the room, carrying a fine china tea set.

"Let me pour you boys some tea. It's a lovely Sencha that my daughter-in-law gifted me."

Unaware of the conversation, the elderly woman was a gracious host, serving up tea to her guests.

If Manabu wasn't being glared at by Tetsu, he would have tried to rush his mother out of the room. Yet he had a feeling if he did so, the muscular-armed man might lash out at him.

"Thank you ma'am." Tsukasa said, lifting the tea up to his lips and taking a sip.

Silence once again filled the air after Manabu's mother left the room. Only the sound of everyone drinking tea could be heard, creating another uncomfortable atmosphere.

"H-How do you know it's my son?" he asked, placing down his tea cup gently.

"My daughter said it was a boy who looks just like ya." Tetsu said calmly, bringing the tea up to his mouth and slurping loudly, his eyes never leaving the rotund man.

Manabu couldn't deny it. For his job, he had hundreds of dollars worth of photo editing software on his computer. It would be easy for his son to access his computer and use the programs without his knowledge.

He sat in contemplation for a while, only to stand up in the next moment.

"Oi, where do ya think yer going." Tetsu said, his deep voice oozing danger.

"I-I need to go check my computer. If I find the photos on there I can delete them so there's no way Kohei can spread them." He stammered, but his words seemed effective.

Tetsu nodded, but he still wasn't fully convinced. If this guy's son was a piece of work, what did that make the father who raised him.

"I'll come with you." He said.

Manabu was about to retort, however he was interrupted before the words could formulate in his mouth.

"It wasn't a request." Tsukasa said with a smile.

"O-Okay. Follow me."

The rotund man got up and led the two downstairs to his lair. He originally was going to speak up out of embarrassment. Since he never received visitors, the basement was a dump.

Tetsu's face scrunched up as he was assaulted by the smell of old food and damp sweat. If it wasn't for his daughter, he would have likely retreated back upstairs, not wanting to sully his nose with such a disgusting scent.

Unfortunately, the basement looked as bad as it smelt with dirty clothes and plates piled up. There were also bags of rubbish, filled to the brim scattered around, looking like a landfill.

It was only now that he had guests that Manabu suddenly realized what kind of squalor he was living in. His shame and embarrassment mixed together with his anxiety, making him feel gloomy and pathetic.

'I just want to get this over with.' He thought.

He sat in his computer chair and brought up the recent files in his photo editing software. After scrolling down a little, he saw some files named "untitled".

Without any fanfare, he opened up the file and lo and behold, a doctored photo of Ken and Ai appeared on the screen. Manabu's face darkened in response, quickly minimizing the screen.

"Let me just find the file location and I'll delete them permanently." He muttered, just loud enough for the other two to hear his words.

After a little bit of searching, he found a folder called "new folder", hidden within the local files on his desktop. When he opened it, there were a lot more files than he expected, causing his brow to furrow.

He wanted to open them to investigate, but he was worried about what he would find. There was also the additional pressure of the two scary men behind him.

"Open them all before you delete them." Tsukasa said, peering over his shoulder.

It seemed that he had a lot more computer knowledge than Tetsu who seemed confused by the direction his friend had given.

Manabu let out a small sigh, but he did as he was told, silently praying that there was nothing even more nefarious in here.

He clicked the first photo, only to be met with a picture of a young girl and his son Kohei holding hands and looking at the camera with a smile. Once again, the photo editing job was shoddy, showing plenty of blur and blending had been added to the picture.

CRACK

Manabu suddenly felt the back of his chair crack, causing him to rise to his feet in a fright.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 165 - 165: Consequences (1)

Kohei made his way back from the train station with a smile on his face, catching weird looks from those around him as he walked past. The smile seemed like something a deranged villain would wear after they'd implemented their master plan.

He paid them no attention, too caught up in his own thoughts to care how others viewed him.

'Ai... You'll be mine soon. We'll finally get to be together.'

With his mind running wild, Kohei did not even notice the tattooed men who were hanging around in the street. He just wordlessly made his way back home from the train station, something he'd done hundreds of times before.

He opened the door casually and began to take off his shoes, only to notice there were a couple of extra pairs.

'That's odd, we never have guests.' He thought.

"Grandma, I'm home." He said warily, peaking his head around the corner.

It was then that he saw his father sitting across from two scary men. One was balding and had colorful tattoos which covered both of his arms, giving him an air of danger.

The other was a muscular man whose eyes were glaring at him with unadulterated hatred, causing him to shriek out like a frightened pig.

"A-Ah!"

Kohei called out in fear, almost soiling his underwear from the stimulation. He had seen movies like this which usually ended in death or grievous bodily harm for the victim.

His body instantly entered fight or flight mode, yet since he was a coward, it was essentially reduced to just flight mode.

Without uttering another word, he tried to flee through the open door but quickly fell onto his backside after running into something solid.

His eyes slowly crept up the gigantic figure in front of him until he finally met the fierce gaze of the behemoth. The long mustache and intimidating stature of the man in front of evoked a primal fear which seemed to be too much for him, resulting in a warm liquid pooling on the ground beneath Kohei.

Tsukasa pinched his nose as the smell of ammonia entered the room. He scrunched up his face as he complained loudly.

"Damn it Chibi, you've scared him so bad that he pissed himself."

The giant man stared at the sorry excuse for a human on the ground and turned his face up in displeasure.

"Sorry big bro. Did you want me to get rid of him?"

His deep voice bore into Kohei's psyche, the words scaring him even further.

"G-Gah!"

He let out a gurgled scream before fainting in a puddle of his own urine.

Tsukasa let out a deep sigh feeling a headache coming on.

"Go get your son and clean him up." Tetsu said, his voice shaking with barely repressed rage. If he was honest, he wanted to go kick the sorry excuse for a human being until he woke up.

"Y-Yes sir!" Manabu answered, swiftly acting to move Kohei to the bathroom.

Once the two left, it was only Tetsu and Tsukasa in the lounge room while Chibi stood silently at the door.

"Chibi, go ask grandma for some cleaning supplies and get rid of that mess. I can't even think with this smell."

"Yes big bro."

In the bathroom, Manabu splashed some water on his fainted son, hoping to rouse him. Only after dousing him with cold water a few times did the teen finally come to his senses.

"D-Dad? What happened? Was it only just a dream?" He asked groggily.

Yet the first thing he felt was wetness in his underwear and the pungent smell of urine, telling him that everything was true.

"Kohei listen to me carefully." Manabu said, his tone firm. This was the first time that he had talked to his son like this, catching him off guard.

Kohei nodded, his expression was as if he finally found a lifeline in his father.

"One of these men is the father of that girl you blackmailed." He said gravely.

Instantly, Kohei's face dropped. He suddenly felt as if the walls had come crumbling down all around him, bringing with it a feeling of suffocation and despair which threatened to drown him.

Manabu saw his son's expression change and suddenly felt a sadness overcome him. He couldn't blame anyone but himself for not guiding and teaching his son properly, leading to such a situation.

In that moment, he made up his mind to sacrifice himself in order to save his son from those men, even if it meant giving up his mediocre life. At least then he might be able to give Kohei a chance to change.

Perhaps this was what being a father was meant to feel like, but it was only in this moment that he finally realized such a thing.

Unaware of his father's thoughts, Kohei waited expectantly for his dad to tell him what to do.

"Let's get you cleaned up first. When we go back out I need you to answer everything they say truthfully."

Kohei nodded, before grabbing onto his father tightly. His hands were shaking, but he still clung onto the only thing that could possibly save him.

"I-I'm sorry dad." He said, cutting a pathetic sight as he took off his clothes and hopped into the shower.

Hearing these words seemed to cut deep, bringing forth old wounds for Manabu.

'No... I'm sorry that I failed you.'

After around 10 minutes, the father and son duo returned to the lounge room. Kohei had recovered from his earlier situation, yet he still seemed like anxiety personified. He was currently standing behind his father, tightly holding onto his shirt.

Manabu's expression had changed considerably, surprising Tsukasa.

'I've seen that expression many times before' He commented inwardly.

It was the face of someone who was willing to put their life on the line.

Tsukasa briefly glanced at Tetsu before turning back to the duo, gesturing for them to take a seat. He then waited until they were seated before beginning the discussion.

"Keiho Gomi, 17 years old. 2nd year student at Yokohama High School, part time stalker and extortionist. Should we also add deranged creep into the mix? You tell me."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 166 - 166: Consequences (2)

The tone in which Tsukasa said these things made it seem like he was having a regular conversation, however his expression said otherwise.

Manabu looked at the tattooed man and could guess that he had done even worse than the crimes he listed. Unfortunately, even if that were the case, pointing that out would do him more harm than good.

"Well?"

"I-I don't know what to say." Kohei blurted out, feeling uneasy from the intimidating gazes sent his way.

"Haaahhh."

Tsukasa let out a sigh and was about to continue, however Tetsu interrupted.

"You went after my daughter and her friend. All because of yer obsession with her, you were willin' to ruin their lives. What kinda sick twisted boy are you?"

His accent was thick, barely hiding the rage behind the words as he finally said something towards the perpetrator.

Keiho paled, unconsciously sinking into the couch to create some distance between himself and the scary man. He looked at his father like a drowning man asking to be thrown a lifeline.

"Keiho. Tell them what you told me earlier." He said firmly.

The boy paused, his eyes silently questioning if it was the correct thing to do. However, he finally decided to trust his father and worked up the courage to speak.

"I... I love Ai." He said.

Tetsu felt his body stiffen as he tried to suppress the urge to commit violence.

Unaware of just how close he was to being pummeled, Keiho stared at his feet while he continued to speak.

"I met her in middle school at first. She was like a pure fairy, so gentle and beautiful in everything she did."

He paused for a moment, as if finding the right words to say.

"She was kind and thoughtful and her smile could light up a room. It was then that she began to get attention from all the guys at school, yet every guy who wanted to confess to her was gently declined."

"Ai never humiliated them, it was beneath her to do so."

A small smile began to creep onto his face as Kohei explained all this. Yet instead of being endearing, both Tsukasa and Tetsu felt disgusted, but they did not interrupt.

"I was happy when she came to Yokohama High. I intended to just watch her from afar until I noticed she had changed a bit."

"While she was still like a fairy, she joined the baseball club and started following after the tall guy. I saw her watching him and felt like he was corrupting her, so I went to talk to her about it."

Kohei's face turned up in a mixture of sadness and annoyance after mentioning this, his fists unconsciously tightening until his knuckles turned white.

"That's when I approached her to let her know about the dangers of that person. But she didn't even let me speak, mistaking my actions for a confession. She said that she already had someone she liked and wanted to spare me the embarrassment of asking."

"I saw them getting even closer over the next few months and knew that I had to do something. I had to save Ai from that boy, even if it meant using some unconventional means."

The boy was so caught up in his explanation that he seemed to have forgotten that the father of the fairy in his story was actually only a couple of meters in front of him.

If it weren't for the promise of restraining his anger for his daughters sake, Tetsu would have already flown off the handle.

"I paid someone to get close to Ken and snapped some pictures in hopes of discouraging Ai to continue hanging out with him. But I was afraid that it might not be enough to break the spell that she was under..."

He paused, as if he was feeling guilt over his next actions.

"So I edited some photos and forced her to stay away from him under the threat of releasing them..."

There was a bout of silence that followed, thickening the tension in the atmosphere.

"I-It was the only way to save her and preserve her purity." Kohei said, as if trying to convince everyone, including himself.

RIIIP

It was then that the sound of tearing fabric entered the ears of everyone present, a prelude to the danger that awaited them.

WHOOSH

Tetsu leapt up from the couch that he'd just torn, lunging towards the insane teen across from him and intending to beat some sense into him.

THUD

The sound of flesh colliding rang out, yet there was no cry of pain, just a small grunt.

Kohei cowered with his eyes closed, expecting the pain to come, yet even after a few moments he felt nothing. He slowly and carefully opened his eyes, seeing his fathers face staring back at him.

"Dad?"

His father had jumped in front of the blow, taking a direct shot to the kidney. He had moved out of instinct, awakening something that every father should be equipped with.

Tetsu was a little surprised at first, but he still connected once before standing over the two. With his gigantic arms, he grabbed Manabu's shoulders and tossed him aside as easily as taking out the trash.

Before the rotund man could react once more, he reached down and grabbed the kid by the front of the shirt, bringing his face closer to his.

Kohei felt as if he was staring at a beast, causing him to shrink backwards as much as he could. Yet the more he shrunk backwards, the more strength the man put into his arms. If he had any urine left in his bladder, he surely would have emptied its contents once again.

"What makes ya think you've got the right to decide what's good fer my daughter?" Tetsu said, his eyes blazing in anger.

"I-I..." Kohei felt his stomach seize with fear.

Staring at the murderous eyes of the gangster was like staring at death itself.

"Ya better get rid of all those photos you have of Ai and Ken. That includes the ones you made with you and her together."

For a moment, Kohei was so afraid that he couldn't even move, let alone utter any words.

"DID YA HEAR ME!?" Tetsu shouted, pulling the teen closer to his face until they were only a few inches away from each other.

"Y-Yes sir!" He squeaked, nodding like a pecking chicken.

"And if I ever see ya within 500 meters of my lil' girl again, they'll be searchin' for yer body in the Katabira river."

After saying these words, Tetsu let go of the boy and dusted off his hands as if to remove the dirt and grime he felt from touching such a person.

He then walked out of the house without turning back. Having to reign in his temper in front of the person who hurt his daughter had proved too much in the end.

Tsukasa eye's moved from the lump of flesh on the ground and the one on the couch and let out a small sigh, running his hand through his balding hair.

"I suggest you remove your son from Yokohama High and leave the prefecture if you want to avoid any needless violence."

With that he got up off the couch and walked towards the door before turning back once more.

"Ah, and don't think he's kidding either. I've got more than one way to make a body disappear after all."

After saying his piece, he was about to walk out the door, but then he suddenly remembered something.

"Tell Grandma that the tea was delicious."

With that he walked out the door, leaving the father and son duo in the lounge amid silence.

A few moments later, Grandma Gomi entered the room with a confused expression.

"Where did our guests go?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 167 - 167: Apology (1)

Tetsu walked in the door to his home and finally let the pent up breath out of his lungs, his whole body relaxing as a result. He felt a little bad that he left Tsukasa and the others so swiftly, but he just wanted to get as far away as he could from that son of a bitch.

Naomi was waiting for him behind the counter as he arrived, her eyes showing concern. She knew her husband enough not to ask for the details, so she came over and pulled him into her embrace.

After a few silent moments, she asked softly.

"Is it done?"

"Mmm."

Now it was Naomi's turn to breathe out a sigh of relief. Too many bad things had happened as a result from that person's actions, therefore she was glad that it was finally over.

"Where is Ai?" Tetsu asked.

"She's in her room. Go have a chat to her while I fix us some dinner."

Tetsu nodded. It was one thing for him to clean up this mess, but it was another to ask forgiveness from his daughter for the things he'd done as a result.

Sure he'd been manipulated by the photos, but that didn't excuse his behavior towards Ken in the slightest. Inwardly, he was always wary of Ken and all he needed was an excuse to try and drive him away.

If it wasn't for the photos, he likely would have found another reason to drive him away.

Knock knock

Tetsu rapped his knuckles softly on the door, waiting for an answer before coming into the room. One sure way to make his daughter pissed off was to barge directly into her room, something he'd had previous experience with.

"Come in."

Ai's voice was soft yet lacked any of her usual warmth.

He didn't know why, but a feeling of sadness suddenly overcame him. Perhaps this was what all father's felt when they saw their child in distress.

After gently opening the door, he found Ai sitting on her bed staring at her phone with a morose expression.

"H-Hey, how are you?" Tetsu asked, probing her.

"I'm fine."

These two words seemed to trigger some form of PTSD within him, spiking his anxiety. He knew enough about women to know that "I'm fine" generally meant they were the opposite.

"Ahem. I've dealt with the problem now. Ya won't be seeing that trash around the school ever again." Tetsu announced, his eyes glued to Ai.

Inwardly he was hoping for his daughter flash him a bright smile and give him a hug, however this did not happen.

Ai nodded before muttering a small thanks, leaving Tetsu bewildered.

He had just completely solved the problem right? So why did his daughter still look so sad?

"Umm, it's good news right? Now you can continue... doin' what ya were doing."

The small pause was evident that he didn't want to bring up Ken in this situation. Whether it was as a result from guilt or something else, he wasn't quite sure.

Ai still didn't react, her eyes glued to the phone.

"Ai... What's wrong? Why are you being like this?"

At these words, her face frowned before she snapped her gaze towards him.

"How can you not know? Are you playing dumb?"

Her harsh words made him step back in shock, clearly not expecting this reaction.

"What do you mean?"

Ai's expression fell even more since her father still wouldn't admit his mistakes. The light in her eyes seemed to dull before she finally spoke once again.

"Do you really think what you did was okay?"

She got to her feet, finally placing the phone down on the bed.

"It's one thing being an overprotective father, but you actually went into my room and breached my privacy. If this wasn't enough, you made a rash decision and beat up my friend who was also a victim, injuring his shoulder in the process."

Tetsu felt his body go cold as he saw his daughter slowly walk towards him with an angry expression. Every word was like a knife that dug into his heart.

"He came into school today with a sling on his shoulder and was forced to practice by himself. From the coach's expression, I could tell he was not happy. What if he can't pitch for the rest of the year?"

Her face changed from anger to sadness in a single moment.

"How could you do that?"

Tears began to flow from the corner of her eyes, breaking his heart even more. There was a feeling of guilt and failure that threatened to overcome him as he stared at his own flesh and blood in pain.

"How will I ever talk to him again? Will he even forgive me?"

Ai crouched down and placed her face in her hands, sobbing gently.

Tetsu reached out and was about to embrace her, however he paused midway. There seemed to be a mental battle going on inside his brain, yet he eventually took back his hand.

"I-It's not your fault Ai... Why would he need to forgive you?"

Ai lifted her head and looked at her father, her blue eyes were puffy and her face was stained with tears. She looked vulnerable, something he had not seen in a long time.

"If... If I had just spoken up then none of this would have happened! You wouldn't have injured him and we wouldn't be in this mess."

After saying so, she broke out into tears once more.

Tetsu could only sit back and watch, not knowing how to deal with this situation.

While it was true that a lot of the situation could have been avoided, or at least resolved if Ai had spoken up about the problem she was facing, it didn't absolve his actions

His face changed expression a few times before a look of resolve took hold.

Without a word, he left the room and went to the kitchen.

"What's his address?" Tetsu asked his wife.

"W-What's this about?"

"Just tell me... please."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 168 - 168: Apology (2)

Naomi paused for a moment, searching her husband's expression. She could see the determination in his features and could tell that he wouldn't do anything rash again.

Without a word, she wrote down the address on a small piece of paper and handed it to him.

"I'll keep dinner in the oven for you honey." She said with a smile.

Tetsu nodded before swiftly leaving the house.

A few minutes later, Ai came down the stairs after washing her face. She felt a little bad about how she acted in front of her father, especially since she knew that he had done what he did for her sake.

"Where's dad?" She asked.

Naomi smiled softly, not removing her attention away from the stove.

"He's gone to make amends."

"What? To who?" Ai was confused initially, however her expression changed to one of anxiety.

"Don't worry, your father may be stubborn, but he is a reliable man."

Seeing how her mother didn't seem worried, Ai decided to trust her father once more. But if he messed it up, she wouldn't forgive him easily.

By the time Tetsu arrived at the address given, the sun was sitting upon the horizon, giving off a glorious orange glow that painted the sky.

He took a moment to catch his breath before walking up to the door and knocking.

"I'll get it mom."

Ken opened the door and felt his eyes bulge for a moment. Ai's father was standing outside of his house, a sheen of sweat evident on his forehead, likely from running all the way here.

He saw the gruff man's gaze move to his right shoulder which was still placed in a sling, catching a tinge of remorse that flashed onto his features.

The two stood a few meters from each other, neither saying a word.

It was then that Tetsu bowed deeply, his body reaching 90 degrees.

'Eh!?'

Ken was taken aback. He thought of many reasons why Ai's father would appear here, but this was certainly out of his calculations.

Before he could say anything, Tetsu spoke out while he stared at the ground.

"I'm sorry fer everything that happened. I dealt with the problem so there is no need ta worry"

His Kansai accent seemed thicker than usual, likely as a result from his emotions running high.

"If yer gonna blame anyone, then blame me. Please don't hate my daughter."

'Huh?'

Ken was gobsmacked. Why would he hate Ai? It's not like she was the one who wanted to be blackmailed, if anything it was that turd Keiho that he really hated.

"Firstly, I don't hate your daughter, we are good friends. She was victim just like me in all of this."

"Secondly, there's no hard feelings. As long as you dealt with that piece of garbage, then we're even."

As far as Ken was concerned, as long as this all went away he would be fine. Of course it wasn't ideal that he'd been injured, but with his Fatigue Management skill it wouldn't take long for him to recover.

He may miss out on some of the mission rewards for the Kanagawa Tournament since he wouldn't get to play much, but it could certainly be worse.

Tetsu's eyes widened, his mind suddenly feeling blank. He had expected to receive some form of resistance from the teenager whom he had treated so poorly ever since they met.

Not only did he intentionally try to get in the way of this boy's relationship with his daughter, he also beat him up, injuring his shoulder and preventing him from pitching in the upcoming crucial matches.

Yet instead of malice, he was met with forgiveness and understanding.

'Is this guy a saint?' Tetsu thought.

'No... I saw his face back then after I injured his shoulder. He looked like he wanted to tear me apart.'

More guilt came rushing into his psyche, even after hearing Ken's forgiving words.

He lifted his head and moved closer to Ken.

"Punch me."

"EH!?"

Ken looked at the man who seemed like a crazy person and couldn't help but take a few steps back. Just what kind of person says something like that?

"Hit me Ken... I can't accept yer forgiveness, not after what I did." He said, jutting out his chin so as to give Ken a bigger target.

"What the hell man? I don't wanna hit you."

"HIT ME!"

"You want me to injure my damn fist too?" Ken said, a frown forming onto his face.

Even now his left knuckles still hurt from the two punches that he landed on Tetsu that night. If he were to take another swing, he was worried they might break on his iron chin.

"What's with all this commotion?"

Yuki appeared next to Ken in the next moment after hearing the shouting at the door. She looked at Tetsu for a moment, as if trying to remember his face.

"Ah, you're Naomi's husband!" She said, pointing her finger at him.

Seeing that Ken's mother had arrived, Tetsu pulled his chin back and calmed down somewhat.

"Ah ye, I'm Tetsu." He said, bowing slightly.

"Yes yes I remember." A smile formed on her face.

"What brings you here today? Did my son do something bad?"

Ken rolled his eyes, thinking it was a little funny that his mother would think he was in the wrong by default, despite the situation.

Tetsu felt a little awkward, but he still responded truthfully.

"Er no ma'am. I came here to apologize to yer son."

Yuki tilted her head in confusion, "What for?"

Ken's eyes suddenly widened and he began to panic. He had told his parents that he had injured his shoulder by running into a pole. If Tetsu spilled the beans, it wouldn't just be him in trouble, Ken would also cop it.

He tried to gesture at Tetsu to keep his mouth shut, but it was to no avail.

"I was the one who injured yer son, so I came to apologize." He said simply.

"Hmm? And how did that happen?" Yuki said, her tone changing ever so slightly.

Ken who was familiar with this tone suddenly felt the hairs on his neck stand up, sensing danger. However, he knew that if he tried to leave it would only make it worse for him.

He tried to send mental messages with his eyes to Tetsu, telling him to shut his damn mouth, but it was too late.

He began to explain how they had gotten into a fight thanks to a misunderstanding, sounding apologetic throughout. It wasn't until he mentioned that he had punched Ken a few times that he felt an icy cold sensation take hold of him.

WHOOSH

THUD

Tetsu felt the world around him spin for a moment before he was suddenly staring at the orange sky. It took a few moments to register that he had been knocked onto his back by something fast.

Ken's jaw dropped as he saw the entire thing.

'M-Mom just dropped iron-chin Tetsu like he was nothing...'

He couldn't understand how someone so petite could hold so much strength behind her punch. Yet the evidence was right in front of his eyes, no matter how unbelievable it seemed.

"I'll come visit tomorrow to see your wife. We can have a nice conversation over some tea." Yuki said to her downed opponent, not a shred of remorse on her face.

She then turned to Ken who suddenly shrunk in size, "Let's head inside, there's a few things we need to chat about Kenny~"

Ken paled, but he had no other choice but to comply. He looked at the grounded figure of Ai's father and felt like throwing a few pairs of shoes at him, but he was not given the chance.

'Damn you Tetsu!'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 169 - 169: Resolution & Finals (1)

Ken made his way into the school grounds the next morning with a somber expression on his face. His mother had been furious in the beginning, but she eventually calmed down after he explained the whole blackmailing situation.

Of course she still wasn't happy, especially since Ai's parents had known about it while they were kept in the dark.

After a good lecture, Ken had been grounded.

Since he did nothing else but workout and play baseball, it didn't really affect him too much though.

He spotted Ai from a distance, causing his mood to improve greatly. Without him even knowing, he had grown quite fond of her, no longer feeling the underlying guilt that had plagued him since regressing.

Since it had been a few days since they'd chatted, he felt even more anxious to talk to her again like normal.

Ai turned her head and locked gazes with Ken for a moment. Her beautiful blue eyes and tender features made her seem like a fairy who had descended into the mortal world.

Yet upon seeing him, a flicker of emotion appeared on her face before she turned and continued walking.

'Eh?'

'What was that reaction about?' Ken thought, his mind racing.

Before he could get lost in his thoughts, he quickly ran towards her and gently placed his hand on her shoulder.

"Ai, what's up?"

She froze in place before turning around slowly and staring at him. He could see tears pooling on the side of her eyes, ready to cascade down her rosy cheeks at a moments notice.

Puzzled, Ken inquired once more.

"Didn't your dad say that he took care of everything? So why didn't you acknowledge me?"

There wasn't any accusation within the tone, more curiosity.

As if sensing this, Ai's face also took on a confused expression.

"Y-You didn't answer any of my mails last night, I thought you hated me." She said, feeling vulnerable.

"Eh...?"

Ken blinked a few times before his face turned sour.

"Ah sorry. My phone was confiscated since I'm now grounded." He admitted, feeling a little embarrassed about the whole situation. It still felt odd for him to say he was grounded, considering his mental age and all.

"Oh."

As if realizing something, Ai's face bloomed into a smile as she felt a rush of happiness and relief overcome her.

"But wait, why are you grounded?" She asked.

Ken let out a deep sigh, "I lied to my parents about how I got my injury." He said with a wry smile.

"Ah, I see..."

Ai was silent for a moment before a hint of curiosity flickered across her face for a moment. She tried to act casually before speaking her next words.

"My dad came home last night with a black eye, you must have given him a good punch." She stated, trying to see his reaction from the corner of her eye.

"Huh? I didn't give him a black eye." Ken said, raising his hands in defense.

Ai seemed puzzled, "Eh? Then what happened?"

"Did your dad not tell you?" he asked, receiving a blank no as an answer.

However, once he thought about it holistically, he probably wouldn't want to announce to his family that he'd been knocked out by a girl either.

For a moment he considered whether or not to keep true to the bro code and keep the information to himself. But once he remembered that the guy had dragged him into the depths alongside him by telling his mother the truth, he changed his mind.

'Is this what they call poetic justice?'

Ken said a small prayer in his heart that Tetsu would suffer immense embarrassment from this.

'May the truth set you free~'

With his mind made up, Ken broke the news to Ai, starting from the beginning and making sure to relay every single detail. He even went as far as to reenact the devastating left hook that knocked her father down.

Ai's eyes widened as Ken eagerly told the story, all the way up to the point of the finale.

Silence.

Ken finished his tall tale and looked at Ai expectantly, ensuring that she had understood the detailed play-by-play of the interaction.

"Pfft..."

"Hahahaha!"

Suddenly, Ai bent down and began to giggle hysterically. With both hands wrapped around her stomach, it seemed as if she couldn't control the laughter that was pouring out of her.

Ken also couldn't help but join in, getting lost in the contagious mirth that filled the air.

All of the anxiety and pent up emotions between the two seemed to dissipate amidst the laughter, subconsciously bringing them closer together.

It seemed that the both of them very much enjoyed the justice served by Ken's mother.

After the laughter died down, Ken remembered that his mom had mentioned she would be visiting the bakery today in order to continue their conversation.

He quickly relayed this to Ai who rubbed her hands in anticipation.

"I can't wait to hear all the details from my mom later."

The two seemed to fall back into their friendship with relative ease, almost as if they hadn't gone through the past week's suffering.

They continued to chat all the way to the classroom, only being interrupted by the bell before entering.

"Can we start going home together again?" Ai asked, trying to sound casual. However, one could see that she was actually feeling quite vulnerable in that moment.

"Sure, if you don't mind the sweaty smell." Ken answered, a grin creeping onto his lips.

Ai smiled in response, pulling out some perfume from her bag. "I'll just spray you with this if it's too bad."

"Gah, please no."

Since the drama was all behind them, everything seemed to go back to normal. Since Ken was injured, he was unable to play in the game against Yokosuka High.

But it turned out he was not needed.

Yokohama's batters completely destroyed the opposing team, scoring a total of 20 runs in 4 innings and securing their spot in the finals of the Kanagawa Tournament.

As if it was fate, Shuei had managed to overcome Fujimi Senior with a score of 11-1 after 5 innings. This set up a finals clash between the two titans of Kanagawa, a rematch for their friendly all those months ago.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 170 - 170: Resolution & Finals (2)

"Alright team listen up."

Coach Hanada stood up at the front of the bus, addressing all of his players after the bus came to a stop. His expression was serious, though one could see he was excited.

Everybody quickly hushed, turning their attention to the coach. There was an air of excitement in the atmosphere, since they were just one win away from securing their position at Nationals.

"I know that we beat these guys in the friendly match a couple of months ago, but that does not mean the situation will be the same this time."

"Their best player won't be sitting on the bench anymore, and you remember how much we struggled against their Ace." Seiji paused for a moment, his eyes roaming over his players.

"But... We're not the same players we were a couple months ago." He said with a wide grin.

"Yeah!"

"Damn right."

A few hoots and hollers were shouted out in response. They could feel the confidence oozing from the coach and couldn't help but reciprocate, bringing the atmosphere to a fever pitch.

"Alright now let's show them how much Yokohama High has improved!"

"ORYAAAAH!"

The team then hopped off the bus and made their way to the locker room.

Coach Hanada moved his gaze across the field, looking for a person in particular. As soon as he saw them, a haughty smile unconsciously appeared on his face, making one want to punch it.

"Coach Goto! It's great to see you again." Seiji said, taking strides towards the opposition coach.

"Geh"

Coach Goto who had his back turned, suddenly felt his face twitch in annoyance.

However, he donned his trademark smile and turned around. Yet when he saw the expression on the other coach's face, he couldn't help but feel his eye twitch in irritation.

'This damn kid...'

Seemingly unaware of how annoyed the other man was, or at least pretending he wasn't, Seiji held out his hand and went for a firm handshake.

Coach Goto responded in kind, ensuring to pour all of his strength into his grip so as to punish his cocky rival.

But who was Coach Hanada? There was no way he would give his counterpart the satisfaction of winning, even in a competition of strength.

The cocky grin remained on his face, but inwardly he was cursing.

'Damn old man! How are you so strong!'

"Coaches, Can you please submit your lineup?"

One of the umpires arrived, breaking up the match of strength between the two.

"Ah, sure. I'll hand it over in a few minutes." Seiji said, feeling his hand throbbing after letting go of the handshake. Though his expression hid any discomfort from the earlier confrontation.

Coach Goto too retrieved his hand, casually placing it back into his pocket.

"Best of luck out there coach... You'll need it." He remarked, turning to head back to their teams locker room.

"Heh, we'll see who needs the luck."

A few minutes later, the coach walked into the locker room and his eyes widened.

"Ken, what are you doing getting changed?"

Ken lifted his head and stared at the coach innocently.

"My shoulder is all healed. Why wouldn't I get ready?"

Coach Hanada said nothing, walking towards the boy who was already almost 15cm taller than him.

"Take a seat and pass me your arm." He said, his tone not leaving any room to decline.

Ken did as he was told, sitting down and holding out his arm. The coach then began to move his arm around, evaluating the range of motion and flexibility of his shoulder.

Since he'd evaluated many pro players in the past, he was adept at judging things like this.

"Tell me if there's any pressure or if anything hurts. If you don't, it'll only make the injury worse."

The next few minutes, Ken sat patiently. He had no issues with what the coach was doing, especially since the system had already told him all he needed to know.

When he was injured, his pitching grade had reverted back to the C+ grade as a result from his bruised shoulder. Yet when he checked this morning, everything had returned the way it was, letting him know that he was fully functional once more. Just in time for this fated match.

Once the coach was satisfied, a grin returned to his face. He was already confident of victory earlier, but now that Ken was fully healed, things would go even smoother.

"Ah crap..."

It was then that he suddenly remembered he had already submitted the official line up to the umpires for his team. Now that it had gotten to this point, he would no longer be able to make changes.

'It's a good thing I put him as a reserve player...'
Seiji thought, fighting against the urge to wipe the non-existent sweat on his brow.

"You'll be on the bench at the start." He said simply, patting Ken on the shoulder.

Ken's face fell a little, but he wasn't too concerned. Unless Akira could shut down Carlos, they would need to use him eventually.

With that, he got everyone's attention once more.

"I won't say too much here. You have all worked hard to get this far, I'm proud of every single one of you regardless of what happens in today's game."

"This is our last match to qualify for Koshien, the holy grail for high school baseball. As long as you guys play as usual, then I have the utmost faith that you will succeed."

Coach Hanada smiled genuinely. If they lost here, this would be the last time these players would be playing together in a tournament together. Such was the situation with High School baseball.

Once this summer tournament ended, the third years would be forced to retire. It was a vicious cycle, but it also allowed the newer talent in the room to blossom.

Many of the third years would stop pursuing baseball seriously once leaving high school. Only those who wanted to go professional, would continue on in University.

This was why he believed that they should cherish this moment.

"Trust your training, trust your teammates and ultimately, trust yourself."

With that, he placed his hand out.

The rest of the team reciprocated, placing their hands on top of one another.

Makoto looked around at his teammates and grinned, beginning the chant.

"YOKOHAMA!!!"

"FIGHT!"

"ORYAAAAH! LET'S GO!"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 171 - 171: Play Ball (1)

The Yokohama team walked out onto the field and began their usual warm ups. The game was due to start in 20 minutes so they made sure to use the time effectively.

Some assistant coaches were sending ground balls towards the infielders, while the pitchers and catchers threw some balls on the other side of the field.

Since Yuta and Akira were starting, they were paired up. This left Ken with Shiro, his short and hardworking friend.

Looking at his friend, Ken couldn't help but feel a little bad.

Shiro had worked real hard alongside everyone throughout the year, yet he had not even had a single minute of game time to show for it. Having been on the bench for the entire tournament, he could only watch on as his teammates fought.

Of course he was not the only one who had been working hard. There were over 30 students who continued to train day in and day out in order to make it onto the bench for the first squad, yet they could never make it.

Ken even knew that there were some 3rd years who hadn't even sat on the Yokohama bench for their entire High School career, yet they were in attendance, cheering them on.

That being said, none of those players had the same kind of potential that the teen in front of him had. As long as he could hold on, he could turn into a great professional player in due time.

He placed his hand on the shorter kid's shoulder and smiled.

"I'm proud of you man."

"Huh?"

Shiro who had just been scrunching his nose up from the smell of the face guard was suddenly dumbfounded.

"What are you my father?" He complained, shooing his lanky friend away.

"Aw come on man, don't be like that." Ken stated with a grin.

He pulled the guy close and ruffled his hair, displaying his camaraderie.

"D-Damn it. Stop!"

Shiro was like a child compared to Ken's gargantuan height of 183cm now, which made the current scene look even more comical. He began to throw punches towards Ken who held onto his head at arms length.

Due to Shiro's short arms, the punches were not even close to landing.

"Alright you two, let's get some pitches in." Yuta said, trying to hide the look of amusement on his face.

Finally, Ken let go of Shiro who was mumbling profanities under his breath.

He sent a wink to Shiro and headed over to where the other pitchers were about to pitch from. At least that was until an errant ball came flying and hit him on the backside.

There was not too much power, yet that didn't stop the stinging sensation of being hit by a baseball in the fleshiest part of one's body.

Ken stopped suddenly and bent down to pick up the ball. He slowly turned his head, a stiff smile on his face.

Shiro who had thrown the ball in anger earlier, suddenly felt his body stiffen.

"A-Ah, it was an a-a-accident. Sorry Ken!"

He tried to cover for his error, fearing that he would be punished for such a slip up. However, Ken let out a small chuckle and waved him off.

"Don't worry about it... Accident's happen after all." He replied, emphasizing weirdly.

"Y-Yeah. It won't happen again." Shiro had a bad feeling, but he was currently in a bad spot. He needed to help Ken warm up after all.

He squatted down and felt his legs shaking from fear. Even though he'd been able to catch Ken's pitches recently, it was still tough trying to catch such bombs that could reach around 150km/h.

Shiro watched Ken wind up as he braced for impact.

Pah

'Ah...'

He breathed out a sigh of relief once the ball landed. It seemed that he had been too hasty in assuming Ken would take his anger out on him.

"Nice pitch." He said, sending the ball back to Ken.

The next 20 or so pitches were the same with perfect control, allowing Shiro to feel more at ease. Now that he thought about it, there was no way his friend would be so petty in such a situation.

"Alright guys, last pitch and then let's wrap it up."

One of the assistant coaches came over and called for them to finish up.

Shiro squatted down and held his glove out, ready to receive the last pitch.

Ken's eyes suddenly sparkled as he began his wind up. A small grin formed on his face before he whipped his arm out, sending the ball at great speeds towards Shiro.

Shiro's eyes widened, seeing the ball flying towards his face mask.

'D-Damn it! He's trying to kill me.'

He quickly brought his glove up in front of his face, only to regret it moments later.

THUD

Falling onto his knees, Shiro clutched his stomach and felt the air forcefully removed from his lungs.

"Oh crap. Are you okay Shiro?" Ken ran over, showing concern.

He knelt down and placed his hand on Shiro's shoulder, checking up on him.

Shiro looked up from his position on the ground and couldn't help but look at his friend who was donning a scary grin.

"I'm sorry, accidents happen ya know."

He paled, still not able to speak any words since he was winded. It looked like Ken had purposefully thrown a forkball towards his mask which had dropped and hit him in the stomach.

"Hurry up you two." Yuta remarked with an amused smile on his face.

He wasn't worried about Shiro and he also didn't buy into the fake concern Ken was showing for his friend. Still, that didn't mean it wasn't hilarious.

Even Akira couldn't help but let out a few laughs because of the situation.

Ken picked up his friend and dusted him off, slapping the dust off his back.

"Hehe. You'll be fine buddy."

Draping his arm over Shiro's shoulder, Ken consoled him. Soon enough they went back to their chummy ways, a smile blossoming on both their faces.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 172 - 172: Play Ball (2)

Ken's eyes moved to the curly-haired and brown skinned youth who had made an appearance in the line up. It wasn't difficult to find him, especially since he was blatantly staring in his direction this entire time.

Despite seeing Ken's carefree demeanor, Carlos looked as if he was ready to jump into battle. His brown eyes locked with Ken's, issuing a silent challenge between two worthy opponents.

As if it was fate, Ken found himself standing across from the half-Japanese youth in the lineup. Instead of reciprocating the fighting spirit, he was wearing a wry smile.

It wasn't that he didn't look forward to the showdown with Carlos, just that he wasn't the starting pitcher for this game. What kind of person in his right mind would issue or respond to a challenge from the bench.

"Bow."

"Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu"

(This is a commonly said Japanese phrase which can mean "I'll be in your care" Or "Thanks in advance." I felt like using it here since the English translation feels a little weird.)

Makoto and another player from the other team participated in the coin toss which resulted in Yokohama batting first.

The team retreated to the dugout and the two Aoyama twins got ready to enter the field.

Tatsuya had a grin on his face after surveying the crowd. Since it was the finals of the Kanagawa Tournament, there were a lot more spectators than usual. His sharp eyes saw a few potential girls amongst them.

As he made his way onto the field, a few squeals entered his ears.

"Kyaa! It's Tatsuya!"

"He's so hot."

"Hehe." A debonair smile appeared on his face as he waved back, basking in the attention of the crowd.

"His twin is also hot."

Jun heard the words and couldn't help but feel his cheeks heat up. He wasn't as confident as his brother, despite being an identical twin.

Kaori puffed her cheeks and sent a glare towards the owner of the voice in the crowd. She was about to roll up her sleeves and stomp her way over but was quickly held back by Yuko.

Feeling the large melons pressing on her back, Kaori blushed, feeling her anger dissipate.

"Yukooo, keep your big damn chest to yourself!" She complained, struggling to get out of their soft embrace, only to have them jiggle in protest.

A few of the players on the bench felt their bodies tremble at the sight, quickly turning away in order to save themselves from embarrassment.

Thankfully, Ken was too focused on the field to notice the disturbance, escaping the ire of the woman next to him.

There were only two players that he needed to be wary of this game, Kazuhiro and Carlos. One would become the starting pitcher for the Chiba Falcons in the future, while the other was a monster batter.

He couldn't remember what happened to Carlos in his previous life, other than returning to the Dominican Republic where his father was from. Ken had no doubt that he was talented enough to exceed wherever he played.

As he watched Kazuhiro warm up, he could feel the sharpness of his pitches.

'He's improved again...'

They say that pressure can make or break a person. It seemed that Shuei's defeat had resulted in the former, shaping them into a much more lethal team.

"Wow that pitcher has gotten even better."

A soft voice spoke out beside him, causing Ken to tilt his head.

"You're pretty observant." He said, quite surprised that Ai had noticed such a small detail.

Ai nodded, feeling a burst of pride in her heart.

"I've been trying to watch closely since it's part of a managers job."

Ken felt as if he had not given Ai enough credit. He wasn't sure why she had joined the baseball club as a manager, but it seemed that she was serious about helping everyone get better.

"Play ball!"

He was knocked out of his reverie by the sound of the umpire announcing the start of the game. Tatsuya was already in the batters box, wielding his flashy stance.

The first pitch came in hot, taking an inside path.

WOOSH

"Strike."

'Ah... That was lame."

Tatsuya felt his face heat up in embarrassment after whiffing the first ball.

"Strike."

"Strikeout!"

"Eh?"

Bewildered, Tatsuya made his way back to the dugout. He had swung at all 3 pitches, yet it felt as if the ball was almost running away from his bat.

Coach Hanada frowned. From his position he could see the movement of the pitch, sparking a sense of danger.

"This could be a problem..." He muttered

It wasn't just him that noticed. Yuta, Ken and Hiroki's expression suddenly turned serious.

As if to back up their concerns, both Jun and Makoto were struck out without being able to get bat on ball.

Despite striking out the 3 leading batters, Kazuhiro didn't look arrogant. It seemed that the previous loss had matured him a little, making him even more dangerous than before.

"Changeover!"

With that, the starting squad got their gloves and hats on and headed out onto the field, leaving Ken, Shiro and the other few players in the dugout.

As Akira began to warm up on the mound, there was one person who was currently upset.

"Why isn't he starting?" Carlos said, his tone showing his agitation and disappointment.

"Yeah why is their ace on the bench? Are they underestimating us?" Kazuhiro added, a tinge of annoyance in his voice.

Coach Goto also seemed a little surprised, however his trademark smile never left his face.

"Don't worry, I'll drag out the Ace in the first inning."

He turned his attention to his batter in the batters box and made a few signals, receiving a nod in response.

After finishing his warm up pitches, Akira stood on the mound and let out a breath. He'd been pitching well recently, ever since putting more effort into training with the team.

His gaze briefly turned to Ken who had his arms crossed on the bench.

'I won't give up the mound so easily.'

He then turned to Yuta who called for a fastball on the outside. In one fluid motion, his long and thin limbs retracted before whipping the ball out towards the open glove sitting over the plate.

DONG

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 173 - 173: Urgent Mission (1)

"W-What is happening?"

Akira stood on the mound, a cold sweat pouring down his back. He looked around and saw two players on base before turning his attention to the curly haired teen in the batters box.

From the very first pitch he threw, Shuei had attacked him, sending his balls wherever they pleased. He didn't understand why they could hit him so easily, especially since he had done rather well in their friendly match.

The score was currently 1-0 with no outs and a runner on first and third base. If this wasn't bad enough, the batter at the plate was giving off a tremendous aura which spelled danger.

"Coach, do we take Akira off the mound?" One of the assistant coaches came up to Seiji and asked, his voice sounding panicked.

Coach Hanada frowned as he shifted uncomfortably. He had not expected Shuei to be able to attack so aggressively from the beginning.

Although Akira wasn't their best pitcher, he was still at a good standard for High School teams, at least at the prefectural stage. Though this may not be the case at Nationals.

He looked at Carlos in the batters box for a moment before turning to Akira.

Akira looked a little lost, but his face quickly shifted as he turned his attention to the batter. A look of resolution appeared on his expression, telling the coach all that he needed to know.

"No. He's still got some fight left." He said simply.

The assistant coach seemed a little unconvinced, but he could only sit back and watch.

'I just need to strike the rest of these guys out...'
Akira thought, feeling his emotions stabilize.

Yuta who was about to call a time out, noticed the change in his pitcher and nodded. They needed to play this batter perfectly, otherwise they'd be down 4 runs before they knew it.

"Tsk, why is your ace on the bench?" Carlos asked with annoyance.

Yuta heard this and couldn't help but smile. He knew that Ken was injured recently, so he could only imagine the Coach didn't want to play him the whole 9 innings. However, he wasn't going to tell this to the opposition.

"Not telling~" He replied cheekily.

Carlos's expression fell and he gripped onto his bat tightly.

"I'll make you bring him to the mound." He stated confidently.

"Scary~"

With the pleasantries out of the way, Yuta called for a fastball on the inside, hoping to jam the batter and get an easy out.

Akira nodded, performing his wind up and whipping the ball out at a fast pace.

DONG

Everyone stopped and watched the ball sail into the air, looking as if it would never touch the ground. There was silence, followed by a few shouts from the opposition dugout.

"Foul."

"Nice hit Carlos!"

"Unlucky! Send the next one out of the park!"

Yuta let out a small whistle of surprise.

"Lucky~"

Carlos turned and raised his eyebrow, "Was it though?"

'Hmm? Did he do that on purpose?' Yuta thought, his face donning a small frown.

To send an inside pitch into the foul zone and for it to carry so far would require tremendous strength and impeccable timing. If that was the case, then it really would be scary.

Once again Akira sent his pitch towards Yuta's glove with perfect control.

DONG

"Foul"

DONG

"Foul"

'What the hell is with this guy?'

Yuta frowned, feeling a headache starting to brew. He'd called for 3 different pitches, all in different parts of the strike zone, yet this guy had fouled every single one of them with ease.

It would be one thing if Akira's pitches weren't sharp, but it was quite the opposite. If anything, this was some of the best pitching he'd done this entire year.

Out of frustration, Yuta called for a ball outside the strike zone, hoping to get an easy out. He placed his glove hovering just above home plate and sent the signal.

Despite getting hit around the park, Akira seemed to be holding on mentally. He fully trusted the 3rd year catcher, especially since they'd been a battery since the start of last year together.

WHOOSH

DONG

"Foul"

'W-What!?!'

Yuta couldn't help but stare at the ball which was once again belted into the foul zone. There was a sense of helplessness that began to take root within his psyche, causing a lost expression to form on his face.

It wasn't just him, everyone who was watching the game felt as if something was wrong. Every single one of the pitches were fouled off, shooting off into the distance like a rocket without fail.

Ball after ball was sent into the foul zone, regardless of where it was pitched to. It was as if he was toying with Akira, letting him know that he could hit a home run whenever he chose to.

Ken frowned. He could tell that Carlos was doing this on purpose, as if he had no care or concern about the game that they were playing. Like he wanted to prove a point.

While this was good for their team, Ken couldn't help but feel annoyed.

'What kind of person sacrifices the teams success on their own whims?'

They were currently in the middle of the Kanagawa Tournament final, a game that would decide which team advanced to the nationals. As far as High School baseball went, these were the highest stakes.

Yet this kid was left to do what he wanted in the batters box, not caring about the blood sweat and tears his teammates had committed to improving. It was people like this that gave baseball a bad name.

Without realizing it, Ken stood up from the bench and walked over to the coach.

"Put me in Coach." He said simply, his gaze glued to the guy in the batters box.

Coach Hanada was about to reprimand Ken for jumping the gun, but upon turning around he saw his pissed off expression. He was taken aback, not expecting him to act in such a way.

His impression of Ken was that he was mature and level-headed even under pressure. So what was it that pissed him off?

"I won't let him underestimate baseball." Ken muttered, clenching his fist.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 174 - 174: Urgent Mission (2)

Carlos saw Ken getting up from the bench out of the corner of his eye and smiled widely.

"It's about time you joined us! Hahaha."

Ken didn't respond, still awaiting the confirmation from the coach. He wasn't like Carlos who selfishly put his own desires above his coach and his team.

Even Coach Goto seemed a little embarrassed from the affair. Since they needed Carlos's talent, he had pandered to the kids demands more often than not.

Whenever he didn't want to play a game, the coach would relent. But that was where it usually stopped, he'd never seen the kid act in such a way before. It was as if he was obsessed with Ken for some reason or another.

Obsessed enough to forcefully foul every ball from the current pitcher in order to draw Ken off the bench.

Coach Hanada locked eyes with the opposition coach for a moment, almost as if he was questioning if it was Goto's idea. However, he only needed to see the exasperated and apologetic expression on his face to understand he had nothing to do with it.

He let out a small sigh before making up his mind.

"Alright. Don't let this kid continue to make a joke out of this game we love." Coach Hanada said, placing his hand on Ken's shoulder.

With his decision made, he walked onto the field and got the attention of the umpires.

"Pitcher change, Ken Takagi will be replacing Akira Matsui."

The umpire heard the coach and made the sign for a substitution, pausing play.

Ken grabbed his hat and glove and began to rotate his shoulder, stimulating the blood flow.

DING

NEW MISSION HAS BEEN ISSUED.

#MISSION: Baseball's Honor (Urgent Mission)

DESCRIPTION: An opposing player is taking the game lightly, willfully placing their whims above those of their teammates and jeopardizing their success. System has deemed this unacceptable and requested you teach this arrogant player a lesson.

*Task: Humble the arrogant Carlos Toro by striking him out 3 times in this match and win the game.

REWARDS:

>S-Grade Physicality Elixir

>Skill: Showdown

PUNISHMENT: (In case of failure)

>Pitching grade reduced by 2

MISSION IS MANDATORY AND HAS BEEN ACCEPTED.

Ken's eyes widened after reading the sudden mission that appeared in front of him. It seemed that the system also had a problem with Carlos's actions in this game, leading to such a result.

This was the first time that the system had done something like this, however...

'Pitching grade reduced by 2!? What the hell!'

He'd worked so hard to get it to A- grade and no matter how much he improved it wouldn't budge. But now the system was prepared to take it away from him? Even forcing him to accept the mission...

Although the punishment was harsh, a part of Ken felt even more motivated to punish Carlos. He already had the intention to destroy him, now he just had more incentive.

The easiest way to humiliate a slugger was to strike them out. To do so 3 times in a single match would have the ultimate effect.

The rewards were something he desperately needed since he intended to win the game and get to Koshien next. There would be much better teams at nationals than Shuei after all.

As for the punishment, he only glanced at it briefly.

'I have no intention of failing.'

Ken walked onto the field, this time a small smile pulling up the corner of his lips.

"Nice work Akira, I'll take it from here." He said, holding out his glove to receive the ball.

Although he seemed a little downcast, Akira eventually gave the ball over. He couldn't help but feel a little humiliated at this moment, since he'd been played with by the foreign batter.

"Make sure you get him back for me."

With that, Akira headed back to the dugout alone. Ken watched his retreating figure, feeling a little bad for him. He had made that walk from the mound to the dugout after being replaced before, it was not a good feeling.

However, now was not the time to dwell on such things. He turned his attention to Carlos who had been waiting patiently for this moment. A gigantic grin formed on his face, exposing his pearly whites.

"I'm getting fired up!" He shouted, gripping his bat tightly and getting ready to swing.

"Oi, get out of the batters box." The umpire said, giving the guy a weird look.

"What? No I want to bat..." He replied, a frown forming on his face.

"We need some warm up pitches." Yuta decided to chime in, considering the guy had lost all reason.

"Ah, of course of course"

Carlos stepped away from the plate and squared up a few meters away. He waited until the first pitch was thrown, swinging his bat in time and creating a whooshing noise.

'No no, it needs to be faster.'

WHOOSH

'Faster'

'Faster!'

'FASTER'

PAH

"That's it... That's what I've been waiting for."

A look of satisfaction crept onto his face as he heard the sound of the ball enter the catchers leather glove. There was a particular sound that was made when a fast pitch landed into a glove, that sound was his second favorite sound.

Of course his true favorite sound was the ball hitting his bat.

"Okay we're ready." Yuta told the umpire who then motioned for Carlos to return to the batters box.

Ken juggled the rosin bag in his right hand as he waited for the batter to get ready. Seeing the large grin on the man's face only made him want to humiliate the guy even more.

Since it was currently an 0-2 count, Ken only needed to throw one strike to complete his first strikeout of the mission. While they were ahead on the count, he had no intentions of trying to bait a swing with a well placed ball.

As if reading his mind, Yuta placed his glove in the center of the strike zone and gave the signal.

"Hehe, looks like we're in sync today Senpai." He mumbled, getting into his stance.

Lifting his left knee to his chest, Ken compacted his body before leaping forward and planting his foot, whipping out the ball with tremendous velocity.

Carlos's eyes widened as he took on the beautiful pitch he'd been dreaming of for the past few months. This was the moment he'd been waiting for, obsessing over night after night.

"Thanks for the meal."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 175 - 175: Catalyst for Change (1)

Carlos felt as if the entire field turned silent, his entire focus on the ball headed towards him with great speed and velocity. His body was in a state of flow, bringing with it a sense of thrill that he hasn't experienced in a long time.

'This feeling... This is it'

His eyes widened and a wicked grin formed on his face.

Ever since he picked up a baseball bat, Carlos had been the best player on his team.

At first he was able to have fun with his teammates, taking joy in the victories that came along with his tremendous talent. He was always popular, despite looking different from everyone else.

Yet as he grew older, things began to change.

The pitches he received were too easy, too predictable. Whatever was thrown at him, he was able to get contact on, no matter what, like his bat and the ball were magnetized.

He had outgrown the competition, resulting in resentment building up little by little. What made it even worse was that even if he hit a home run in every at-bat, his team had still suffered defeat.

Despite possibly being the best batter in the country, his team was knocked out in the first round of Koshien last year, suffering a humiliating defeat.

Since none of his other teammates were a threat, he was targeted. After hitting a home run in his first at-bat, he was walked in the subsequent innings and essentially taken out of the game.

He could only watch on from first base as his team squandered their opportunity away. This led to a bitter resentment that had been festering for a long time, causing him to isolate himself from the others, leading to the current circumstances.

Carlos threw away the team. If they weren't useful, then what was the point? He now only wanted to face the best pitchers and enjoy himself, who cared about what the team wanted?

With his priorities like this, he only wanted one thing in the match today and that was to face the pitches of Yokohama's ace... Ken Takagi

"Thank you for the meal"

WHOOOOOSH

The sound of the bat swinging through the air was almost deafening to the ears.

Yet it was eclipsed by another sound a moment later...

PAH

"Strikeout!"

Carlos held his follow through and felt a bout of confusion enter his mind. He had timed the swing perfectly, placing it right on the ball's course, so why did it not connect?

As his mind was racing, Ken was wearing a vindicated expression.

"Don't get so cocky."

"WHOAAA!"

"ORYAAAH!"

The players on the field and crowd suddenly went crazy, seeing the masterful pitch that was thrown against the batter who had been trying to embarrass them earlier.

"Who is that kid? Is he a first year?"

"I'm not sure but he looks so tall and handsome."

Since Ken had not been playing in the recent matches and because the crowds only tended to come later in the tournament, no one really knew who he was. They were surprised when Akira was taken off the mound at first, but they could see this guys was much better.

The umpire saw that Carlos was left standing in the batters box even after he'd called the strike out. He tapped him on the shoulder to try and get his attention.

"Please get off the field, it's time for the next batter."

However, Carlos didn't move an inch, as if he couldn't hear him. His gaze was focused on the mound where Ken was staring him down with a sly grin.

Just before the umpire was about to lose his cool, the curly haired teen laughed out loud.

"HAHAHA good, very good. It wouldn't be worth waiting all this time if your pitches weren't like this." Then he turned and made his way back to the dugout with a smiling expression.

When he arrived at the dugout, he spoke to no one, not even acknowledging the coach before sitting down by himself.

One might usually be downcast after being struck out, yet Carlos looked the opposite.

The next player up to bat was given a special instruction by the coach before stepping up to the plate.

Coach Goto watched on with a hint of anxiety. They had to capitalize on the strong situation they were in now that the true Ace had arrived on the mound.

He believed that as long as they were a few runs ahead, Kazuhiro would be able to defend against the batting line up.

Ken received the lead from Yuta and nodded. His eyes shifted to the left ever so slightly before springing into action and sending a pick off throw to first base.

Hiroki snatched the ball from the air and tagged the runner who had tried to dive, reaching out to first base with his hand.

"Out!"

"Damn it!"

The runner at first exclaimed in disappointment. The previous Yokohama pitcher had not thrown any pickoffs even during their friendly, making him complacent.

Yet this pitcher had only thrown 1 strike before catching him off guard and securing the out. All of a sudden, Shuei went from a great scoring position to suddenly 2 outs and a runner at third.

Coach Goto was forced to change his strategy, sending some different signals to the next batter. Originally he had called for a squeeze play, intending to give the runner at third base a free run.

Unfortunately they were no longer in the same position.

The opposing coach frowned. Ken had only thrown a single pitch thus far, yet he had already turned the game around for Yokohama. There was also the impact he had on his teammates surrounding him.

Their morale had soared.

A bitter smile formed on his face as he turned his attention to his own star player sitting alone on the bench.

'Both are stars, but they shine differently.'

PAH

"Strike"

The batter at the plate felt his body go cold.

'What the hell is with that pitch?'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

- Chapter 176 - 176: Catalyst for Change (2)

Chapter 176 - 176: Catalyst for Change (2)

The ball seemed alive as it streaked towards him, moving through the air as if it had no resistance. He'd hit plenty of fast pitches before, but it was so difficult to predict the trajectory of the last pitch, causing him to hesitate.

There weren't any changes with the next two pitches, resulting in the end of the 1st innings with a score of 1-0 in favor of Shuei.

However, judging by the expressions of each team, it didn't look like Yokohama was down a run right now. They were smiling and laughing amongst each other as they returned to the bench.

"Go get us our first runs Hiroki."

"Yeah don't ruin your streak."

Receiving a few words of encouragement and some verbal jabs, Hiroki put on his helmet and gloves before heading onto the field. The last time he faced Kazuhiro, he struggled to make contact with the ball.

But that was at least a few months ago now. He had changed drastically in that time, ascending to heights that he would not have thought possible before.

As he stood in the batters box, he couldn't help but turn his gaze back to the bench, his eyes fixing on one person in particular.

He looked at Ken, the teen with a sharp jawline and handsome face that sported slightly foreign features. If it weren't for this person, he would have been stuck at the same level, never being able to improve further.

It wasn't just him either, the whole team seemed to be influenced by this man for some reason. Makoto, Yuta, Jun, Tatsuya, even Akira had changed significantly after Ken had joined the team.

Just what was it that made him so special that he could influence those around him.

Hiroki shook his head, trying to focus on the task in front of him. It was time to show Shuei just how much he and his teammates had improved since their friendly a few months ago.

He turned his attention to the hawk-like face of Kazuhiro who had a determined expression painted on.

'Apart from their ace, this guy was the closest to hitting my pitches last time.' Kazuhiro thought, gripping the ball tightly in his hand.

'The coach is counting on me shutting their batting down. As long as I can keep them scoreless, we'll be able to hold onto this run.'

After receiving the lead from his catcher, Kazuhiro began his wind up before whipping the ball out on an inside course.

Without batting an eye, Hiroki stood still and let the ball pass to the catcher. He'd estimated that he wouldn't get enough power if he went for the swing, so he played it safe.

"Strike."

Shuei's catcher Shinji, couldn't help but grin at the favorable call. From his estimations the ball was outside the strike zone, but it seemed as if the batter was a little inexperienced.

If he had have flinched back a little from the pitch, the umpire would have likely called it a ball. Yet since he was so still, it ended up in their favor.

He threw the ball back to Kazhiro and squatted down once more.

'Heh, let's steal another strike then.' He thought, placing his glove in the same position.

WHOOSH

The ball came for the exact same position. This time, the catcher saw Hiroki's body move as if he was going to hit the ball, yet he stopped at the last moment.

PAH

"Strike."

Shinji suddenly felt cold sweat run down his back. The timing of the Yokohama batter was impeccable and likely would have resulted in a big hit if he had followed through with the swing.

'If we send it to the same spot, It'll get sent flying...!' he thought.

After throwing the ball back again, he gave another signal, this time framing the ball in the center just above the strike zone. That way no matter how powerful this batter was, it would be difficult to get a lot of distance due to the ball's height.

Kazuhiro nodded, performing his wind up.

WHOOSH

DOOOONG!

Hiroki's entire body seemed to increase in size for a moment as his muscles contracted. His bat was like a wrecking ball as it came swinging with sheer force and power, collecting the ball on its way through and sending it flying through the air with ease.

"YEAH!!"

"ORYAAAAH GUTSU!!"

"Holy crap! Look how far that ball is going"

The Yokohama crowd erupted at the sight of Hiroki slamming the ball into air and over the fence for a home run. They weren't the only ones celebrating the tying run, with the bench hooting and hollering with glee.

Ken couldn't help but shake his head and smile. Ever since completing the training plan, Hiroki had been improving at such a rapid pace that he had no idea what the future held for him.

"Wow that's his 8th home run of the Tournament so far."

A small voice sounded out beside him, getting his attention. He saw Ai with an open notebook, scribbling something inside with concentration.

"Eh? What are you writing down?" Ken asked, intrigued.

"Oh, this is the book with all the stats of our players. The other managers and I take turns on keeping track every game." She said simply.

In the next moment a cheeky grin formed on her face, "Why? Did you wanna see?"

Ken blinked a few times in response before shaking his head. He had no idea that they were keeping track of such things. Originally he was curious, however since he had only played 2 games so far, he didn't feel like comparing himself to the others.

Plus, he already knew the important stats thanks to his Kanagawa Tournament mission. He discreetly accessed the mission page and brought it up to see his current progress.

MISSION: Kanagawa Prefecture Tournament

*Task 1: Strike out 30 players [16/30]

*Task 2: Hit 6 home runs [3/6]

*Task 3: Make the finals of the Kanagawa Tournament [Complete]

*Task 4: Win the Tournament [In progress]

*Task 5: Win player of the Tournament [In progress]

A wry smile formed on his face afterwards. It seemed that missing 2 games had really taken its toll on his progress. Originally he hoped to complete at least the first 4 tasks, yet it was looking like he might not even get 2 in total.

'My major points...' he cried inwardly.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 177 - 177: Blazing Forth (1)

Hiroki finished his lap around the bases and grinned at Yusuke who was waiting patiently for him at home plate. Their hands collided, producing a crisp hi five that crackled in the air.

"Nice hit."

"Your turn now" He replied with a chuckle, heading back towards the dugout.

Once he arrived, dozens of hands came out of nowhere and slapped the top of his helmet. This was a ritual that had formed since his home run streak had begun over a month ago, much to his dismay.

He'd once tried to take the helmet off before entering the dugout, but it just resulted in the palms painfully slapping the top of his head instead of the helmet.

So rather than complain, he chose to grit his teeth and bear it.

"The slugger strikes again."

"Teach me how to hit Hiroki-chan~"

"Hahaha, who said that?"

The team broke out into a rabble, shouting and carrying on like a bunch of kids. Although it could be argued that at the end of the day, they were exactly that.

"Alright alright, enough about me. Let's cheer on Yusuke." Hiroki said, pushing his way through the crowd and taking a spot next to Ken.

Ken seemed to be separated from the rowdiness of the others, yet no appeared bitter because of it. They knew that he was just as invested in the game as they were, possibly even more so.

Although Carlos was also separated from his team, the machinations were completely opposite. He only cared for himself, never acknowledging nor celebrating with his teammates.

As Hiroki looked out over the pitch, he felt a sense of happiness.

'The Yokohama team this year really is great.' He thought, feeling a smile creep onto his face.

"Dude, put that smile away. You're creeping out Yusuke." Ken said, grabbing his attention.

He turned to Yusuke who shifted uncomfortably from his smiling face and felt incredulous.

"What? Does he think I'm ugly or something?" He replied, feeling a little offended.

From his perspective, he was neither ugly nor overly handsome. In fact, he believed he was slightly better than the average Japanese male, which may not be saying much depending on who one asked.

Ken couldn't help but chuckle at the response, shaking his head in amusement.

"How would you feel if another man was staring at you and smiling so fondly." He replied.

"Ah..."

DOONG

Both he and Ken quickly stood up after hearing the sound of the bat and ball connecting. Their eyes followed the ball which flew along the ground between first and second base for a single.

"Nice hit Yusuke!"

The bench yelled out their praises before turning to Naoki, the 3rd year with the fringe.

"Just try and get on base Naoki." Yuta said with a smile.

"Nah don't listen to him. Show us your guts and hit a big homer."

"Eh? You think it's that easy to hit a home run eh captain?"

Suddenly Makoto and Yuta started to bicker back and forth. It was a rather unusual sight to see the two going at it, but no one seemed too worried.

That was until the coach turned around and sent a stern look in their direction.

"Pay attention you guys. Yuta, you're up to bat after Naoki so go get ready."

"Ah, yes coach."

The game resumed once again with Naoki facing the sharp pitches of Kazuhiro.

Shinji evaluated the batter in the batters box and couldn't help but scoff inwardly, recognizing this player from the friendly match.

'This kid looks like one of those English Sheepdogs with his hair covering his eyes.'

The moment he thought of this, Shinji had to try not to laugh.

'There's no need to waste any pitches with this guy. Let's go for some fastballs.' He said inwardly, calling for an outside pitch.

Since the coach wanted Kazuhiro to pitch the entire game, he needed to keep the pitch count as low as possible. This meant Shinji was tasked with making the most of his pitches, using efficient leads to make this a reality.

Kazuhiro nodded, and began his wind up.

DASH

The sound of cleats hitting the dirt rang out in his ear, distracting him at the last moment. The pitch that was meant to be an outside course was off, heading straight down the middle of the strike zone.

'Ah crap!'

Shinji panicked, focusing his attention on the ball and shifting his stance slightly so he could throw it to 2nd base right away.

DONG

The ball was smacked, just before it could enter his glove, shooting directly over the right outfielders head. He did his best to run after the ball, but it was just out of his reach as it dropped to the ground and rolled away.

"RUN! RUN!"

Once again Ken, Hiroki and the rest of the bench were out of their seats and cheering loudly from the hit. Yusuke put on the afterburners, jetting around the third base and blitzing his way back home.

As he placed his foot on home plate, he gave a fist pump, celebrating the run with a guts pose. Since his knee was fully healed, he had regained the acceleration and speed that he was capable of.

This was at least on par with the Aoyama twins.

Naoki also looked pleased as he waved happily from second base towards the dugout.

Shinji almost couldn't believe what just happened. This was the first time that he'd seen Kazuhiro crumble like this, ever since they became a battery at the start of the school year.

He frowned and called timeout, making his way to the mound to address the first year pitcher.

"Hey Kazu are you all good?"

Since Shinji was a 3rd year student, he was a little more mature and level-headed than the 16 year old Kazuhiro. He needed to calm the kid down and make sure he went back to pitching like he was before.

"A-Ah sorry Senpai, I'm not used to having runners on base." He admitted, feeling a little embarrassed.

'Huh!? What kind of pitcher isn't used to having runn—'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 178 - 178: Blazing Forth (2)

It was only now that he suddenly remembered. They had only allowed a runner on base a handful of times during this whole tournament, none of which had tried to steal bases.

The revelation hit him like a ton of bricks. Usually this was something that pitchers would get used to over time, but it seemed that Kazuhiro lacked that experience because his pitching was too good for his age.

He could imagine the kid in middle school pitching against those younger than him. There was no way that they would be able to hit his pitches consistently.

"Ahem. How about you just ignore the runners on base for now. Let's focus only on the guys in front of you okay?" Shinji said after a while.

While it was not ideal, he couldn't exactly teach Kazuhiro what to do with runners on base in this exact moment. Therefore it would be better to just put their attention on facing the batters directly.

"Okay, I can do that." Kazuhiro said after a moment.

Shinji breathed out a sigh of relief.

"Just focus on my glove okay?" He reiterated, patting the kid on the shoulder.

Kazuhiro nodded. The roles were reversed from the first innings now, with no outs and a runner on base, they were in a dangerous position.

Shinji tried to calm himself down a little. This was where his experience would need to rear its head if they wanted to stem the bleeding.

His eyes turned to Yuta, the opposing catcher. The guy was a solid player who did plenty of research on who he was up against, using previous data to formulate strategies in advance.

'I don't think we'll be able to trap him easily.' He thought.

After a moment, he made his decision.

WHOOSH

"Strike."

'Good good!'

"Nice pitch."

Yuta felt a little incredulous at the moment. He had thought that seeing a freak like Ken appear amongst the first years was crazy enough, yet here was another exceptional pitcher in the same grade.

Despite being the same age and position, the two were rather different.

While Kazuhiro felt wild and unpolished, Ken was almost like a sharp and dangerous spear who had seen years of bloodshed on the battlefield.

His calm and immovable demeanor mixed with the threat of lethality painted a grand picture upon the mound, intimidating those who dare face his pitches.

Even Yuta who was forced to catch these pitches everyday, couldn't help but feel in awe.

The next pitch came barreling through the air on an inside course.

'Sorry kid, you're a little early to match up to him.'

Yuta's eyes widened and his body moved, digging his heel in and twisting his body to generate as much torque as possible.

DONG!

The sound of the metal bat chopping at the ball reverberated in everyone's ears, closely followed by an immense cheer from the crowd.

"NICE!"

The ball was struck with intent, flying over the left outfielders outstretched arm and onto the field where it rolled to the fence.

Naoki who was on second base managed to easily reach home before the throw was sent back from the outfield, putting Yokohama up 3-1.

Yuta stood proudly on 2nd base, having secured another run for the team, he felt quite pleased with himself.

Yuki, the right outfielder was up to bat next. While he was mostly a forgotten player in the team, he had solid fundamentals and was well versed in the rules of baseball down to the nitty gritty.

Ken knew this because he was the only player he'd seen with a Game Intelligence in the S grade.

Unfortunately, he didn't fare as well as the others and was promptly struck out after only 3 pitches. He was a little downcast, but he still sent a smile to Ken who was up to bat next.

Since he had replaced Akira in the lineup, he was stuck very last in the batting order. Yet he wasn't too concerned. He wasn't planning on letting Shuei get any more runs on the board after all.

The moment he stepped onto the field, he felt the intense gaze of Carlos lock onto him from his position at 3rd base. His curly brown hair hidden beneath his cap and wild eyes that radiated an unspoken challenge made him look exotic.

Yet Ken didn't give him the satisfaction of looking his way.

Right now he only had one thing in mind, and that was to hit the ball out of the park.

Kazuhiro's face fell when he saw Ken walking up to the batters box. His presence couldn't have come at a worse time, especially since he'd given up 3 runs already this innings with no outs.

The last time they faced each other, Ken had hit a home run after only seeing 3 pitches. He'd done it with such ease that Kazuhiro had suffered quite a mental setback.

But instead of continuing to mope, a burning determination began to flicker inside of him. He wanted to overcome the player standing in front of him, beating him in a one on one duel.

Shinji was debating calling another time out in order to chat to his teammate on the mound, however he saw the expression on his face and quickly changed his mind.

'He's ready...'

Ken rolled his shoulders and tapped the tip of his boots with his bat before getting into his batting stance. The stance was orthodox, one that was commonly seen from a lot of professionals.

The form was taught by his father, someone who had great knowledge of the pro scene.

Despite the intimidating aura coming from Ken in the batters box, Kazuhiro didn't falter. If anything, the burning sensation inside of him was telling him to devour his foe, drowning him in a blaze of glory.

Kazu felt his body move on its own, his mind becoming numb. It was as if he was just a spectator, watching from above as he performed the best pitch of his career.

WHOOSH

Ken's eyes widened as he saw the ball come towards him like a bullet. The course of the ball drifted away from him, yet it was not a curveball.

PAH

He resisted the urge to whistle in appreciation at the splendid pitch thrown his way. By his estimation, it was at least on par with the Amateur difficulty pitcher in the System's Image Training facility.

'Look's like he's leveled up.'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 179 - 179: Metamorphosis (1)

Feeling some of his confidence return with that last pitch, Kazuhiro squared up his shoulders once more and began his wind up. The next ball seemed to be an exact replica of before, beginning inside and moving slightly outside.

Ken almost shook his head inwardly. While he admitted that it was a good pitch, did he really think the same thing would work against him twice?

DOOONG!

With absolute confidence, Ken poured all of his strength into his swing, meeting the ball just outside of the strike zone and sending it to the outfield.

He only needed one glance to know that no one would be able to stop it from sailing over the fence. As he dropped his bat and began his victory lap around the bases, Ken glanced at Kazuhiro atop the mound.

There was confusion in his features for a moment, before a look of acceptance appeared on his face.

This came as a surprise for Ken who thought that the kid would get flustered or be depressed after giving up another home run.

'He's just an anomaly...!' Kazuhiro said inwardly.

Despite giving up a home run, he wasn't upset. He felt as if he had just touched upon a breakthrough, something that appeared as he was under the tremendous pressure of Ken's aura.

The reason why he threw the same pitch twice was that he didn't want to lose the fleeting sensation of that breakthrough. While it may have resulted in a home run for the opposition, he wasn't too upset.

'I need to keep pitching...'

Ken made his way around 3rd base and placed his foot down onto home plate, accepting the hi five from Yuta who was waiting for him. With his hit they were now up 5-1 in the 2nd innings, putting them into a commanding position.

Tatsuya walked past Ken and let out a small chuckle.

"Looks like the pitcher is throwing some meatballs now."

In actuality, he was a little embarrassed since he'd been struck out in only 3 balls in the first inning. Yet two of his juniors in Yusuke and Ken had big hits from the same pitcher.

He was determined not to fall behind.

Ken on the other hand sent a pitiful look towards Tatsuya.

'He won't be that easy from now on.' He thought, sending a small prayer Tatsuya's way.

"Didn't want me to show you up eh?" Hiroki said with a smile, holding out his fist.

"The only thing that matters is we win, I don't even bother comparing our stats." He said, however inwardly he was cursing the guy.

'I won't ever get to be MVP with this guy in my team!'

"Strike. Out!"

The sound of the umpires voice startled the few who were busy talking on the bench. They quickly turned their head only to see Tatsuya with a blank expression walking back with his bat dragging on the ground.

"What? So quick?"

"How did that happen?"

A few words of confusion spread around, making it's way to Tatsuya's ears.

"D-Don't look at me. I couldn't even get a whiff of his pitches, they're completely different to the first innings." He said with confusion.

Makoto stood up from the bench and began to limber his muscular body up, since he was batting after Jun.

"Listen Tatsuya."

His voice was deep and his tone indicated that he was about to impart some deep wisdom to his junior. It wasn't often that Makoto spoke up like this, so everyone listened.

"It's okay to fail. You don't need to make excuses for your failures, you just need to accept them. Everyone here has failed before, it's how you get back up from your failures that determines what kind of man you are."

Tatsuya stared blankly at the muscle-brained teen and felt like hitting him over the head with the bat in his hands.

Yet before he could, a voice rang out from the field.

"3 outs, changeover!"

"Eh?"

Everyone who was listening to their captain's impassioned speech regarding accountability and self improvement, suddenly turned their head to the field in confusion.

Like an exact replay of before, Jun wore a blank expression as he headed towards the bench, his bat dragging along the ground beside him.

"His pitches have changed..." Jun said simply, feeling slightly embarrassed.

Yet it wasn't just him who felt his face heat up.

Makoto who had just tried to act cool soon received the ire of everyone around him.

"I knew he was talking out of his ass."

"Psh, idiot Captain."

Everybody ignored the muscle-head and put on their gloves and caps before heading back out onto the field to start off the bottom of the 2nd innings.

Coach Hanada was probably the only person who was paying close attention to the Shuei pitcher, even as he walked off the field. His eyes narrowed as he thought deeply.

'That kid has caught hold of something.'

Seiji wasn't just spit-balling. He'd noticed that Kazuhiro was refining his pitches ever so slightly, beginning from the second ball he threw against Ken.

It wasn't a coincidence or fluke that Tatsuya and Jun had struck out so spectacularly.

He subconsciously looked at the score and let out a small breath of relief.

'I don't think we'll be getting any more runs this game.' He stated inwardly.

Ken on the other hand, slowly made his way up to the mound. From his standpoint, it didn't matter how well Kazuhiro pitched from now on. They had secured enough runs, so now it was his turn to hold onto them.

This was the Ace's job.

Like a cold and unfeeling machine, Ken dispatched the next 3 batters with ease, using only 9 pitches total. His balls were crisp, dangerous and almost impossible to predict.

The 2nd innings was over in only a matter of moments, not even allowing the players on the field to enjoy standing out in the sun for very long.

"Changeover"

"Nice pitching Ace."

"You're making it look easy out here."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 180 - 180: Metamorphosis (2)

Both Yusuke and Hiroki caught up to him on the way back to the bench, smiles adorning their faces. They didn't seem at all upset that they'd had nothing to do for the innings.

"Just a few more of those and we'll be punching our ticket to nationals." Yusuke added, in good spirits.

Ken's forced out a smile before looking at Shuei's bench, specifically at the lone figure sitting at the end.

"I don't think it will be that easy." He remarked.

When they arrived, the coach quickly gathered everyone, looking like he wanted to say something.

"Be careful of that first year pitcher. He seems to be going through a metamorphosis as we speak." Seiji Hanada said with a serious expression.

"Metamorphosis? Like those caterpillars who turn into butterflies." Shiro asked, trying to understand what the coach meant.

"Maybe like a tadpole turning into a frog?" Makoto added, scratching his chin in contemplation.

Coach Hanada paused, trying to keep his cool in front of the two dodo's.

"To put it simply, ever since the last innings he's been refining his pitching form, shedding unnecessary movements that don't add to his power or accuracy."

Ken's eyes lit up in understanding instantly. He too had felt as if there was something different about how Kazuhiro was pitching, but he never would have picked it so easily if the coach didn't point it out.

'As expected of Coach.' Ken thought, feeling his appreciation bubble to the surface.

Since Seiji had 15 years of assessing and refining professional athletes, it made sense why he was able to come to the heart of the matter so quickly.

However, even if they knew what Kazuhiro was doing, there was not much that they could do about it. At least that's what Ken thought.

"I want you all to watch his balls closely. Since he's refining his form, there are bound to be some wayward pitches that will find their way to you. This is when you'll strike." He said confidently.

"Yes coach!"

Everyone answered right away, although most probably didn't follow his line of thought.

'That's a good idea... But Hiroki and I could probably hit them without waiting for such a thing.' He thought.

Since he'd been doing image training on the Amateur difficulty, he'd faced plenty of pitches at and above Kazuhiro's level. Once he faced a few more, he was confident that he'd be able to hit them well enough.

As if reading his mind, the Coach gestured for himself and Hiroki to come closer.

"You guys can probably disregard what I said. As long as you think you can hit, swing for the rafters." He said with a smile, placing his hands on their shoulders.

Ken could only blink a few times, staring blankly at him.

'Is this guy in my head or something?'

"ORYAAAH"

Makoto made his loud entrance onto the field, warming up his shoulders on the way to the batters box. He squared up and turned his attention to the mound, waiting for his moment.

PAH

"Strike."

Makoto's eyes widened for a moment, not expecting such a fast pitch.

He tried to play it cool, letting out a few small coughs and readjusting his gloves.

'I'll get the next one...'

WHOOSH

PAH

"Strike."

Feeling a little more panicked than before, he once again got into his stance and awaited the next ball.

WHOOSH

PAH

Makoto swung his bat with nearly all of his might, intending to smash it to pieces. Yet only the sound of his bat crashing through the air followed by the ball hitting the catcher's glove entered his ears.

"Strikeout!"

"Ahem." The captain cleared his throat, feeling his face redden a little. Yet there was nothing that he could do besides head back to the dugout where Tatsuya was waiting, his face the perfect picture of schadenfreude.

"It seems that the coach was right, his pitches have significantly improved." He said matter-of-factly.

"Oho? Captain, it's okay to fail. You don't need to make excus—"

Tatsuya's words were suddenly drowned out as he was assaulted by a short and swift punch to the gut from the muscular captain.

The noise alerted the coach who sent a cursory glance towards the two on the bench. Seeing the coach looking his way, Makoto managed to respond with a smile, wrapping his arm around Tatsuya's shoulder in a brotherly hug.

Seiji's eyes narrowed for a moment before he turned his attention back to the game.

Hiroki was now in the batters box, wearing a calm expression. He waited for the pitch with a hint of expectation in his eyes.

Kazuhiro performed his hawk-like wind up and sent the ball flying towards him. Hiroki could instantly tell that the pitch was different, containing a lot more spin and intent than the previous pitches he'd faced.

Without waiting for another pitch, he calculated that he could get a good hold of this one.

WHOOSH

DONG

"Whoa! Hiroki hit it."

"As expected of our home run king!"

Yet it seemed that their words were too hasty.

The ball rocketed into the air and right down the throat of the central outfielder, making for an easy catch.

Kazuhiro subconsciously let out his pent up breath. Facing the average looking youth was a lot scarier than he realized.

Hiroki on the other hand looked a little annoyed.

'I was too hasty.' He thought, picking up his bat and heading back to the others.

While he had predicted the course correctly, he had underestimated the spin on the ball. This caused the angle of the hit to be much higher than he had intended.

"Wow, I think that's Hiroki's first out of the tournament."

"Eh!?" Ken turned to the location of the soft voice on his left.

Ai was looking through the notebook, as if to make sure she was indeed correct. Only after triple checking did she confirm it, much to Ken's exasperation.

'What the hell!?! 5 matches and that was his first out?!' His mind raced for a few moments.

"Just what kind of monster have I created..." he murmured.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

