

Major League System

Chapter 21 - 21: Rewards (1)

Ken got comfortable on his chair and opened up the system window with a sense of excitement. It was time to put his system to the test and see what kind of benefits it would grant him.

SYSTEM LEVEL: 1 (0/100 Major points to level up)

NAME: Ken Takagi

AGE: 15

TALENT ASSESSMENT: D+

POTENTIAL: D (S)

MAJOR POINTS: 20

USER MENU:

-STATS

-MISSIONS (1 unread)

-SYSTEM SHOP (Locked)

-LOTTERY (Locked)

Without taking a second look, Ken chose the Missions tab, eager to collect his rewards.

CONGRATULATIONS

You have completed mission "Get into shape - Weekly"

REWARDS:

>C-grade Balance and Coordination Elixir (Found in the inventory)

>Bronze tier Lottery ticket

>5 Major points

->Mission Summary

*Task 1: Run 10km a day (72/70km completed; Rating A)

*Task 2: Complete 100 sit-ups a day (800 completed; Rating A+)

*Task 3: Complete 50 push-ups a day (400 completed; Rating A+)

*Task 4: Complete flexibility enhancing regime every day (24 regimes completed; Rating S)

Overall mission rating: A+

Bonus rewards: 15 Major points

Ken looked at the wall of text and felt a sense of achievement flooding his body. He was pleasantly surprised that there were bonus rewards for going above the specified tasks.

He first decided to check out the lottery ticket, considering that the Elixir sounded rather self explanatory.

USER MENU:

-STATS

-MISSIONS (1 unread)

-SYSTEM SHOP (Temporarily Unlocked)

-LOTTERY (Temporarily Unlocked)

Not wasting any time, he selected the Lottery menu.

In the next moment, a large wheel appeared in front of his face with hundreds of tiles with different words and pictures written upon it. He couldn't read the words, but he could make out the pictures.

At a glance he could see a bat, ball, cleats, glove and a brain.

'This must be a classification of what the draws are?' he thought inwardly.

Above the wheel in bold writing was the words "Bronze Lottery Draw" with an arrow next to it. Out of curiosity he clicked the arrow, only for another smaller wheel to appear in front of him.

This wheel was completely greyed out with the words "Silver Lottery Draw" written in bold above it. He clicked the arrow again, making the screen change to a much smaller wheel.

"Gold Lottery Draw... I wonder what things I could get there?" Ken almost drooled at the thought, however he quickly shook his head. There was no point in dreaming, he still didn't know what benefits the bronze wheel would bring.

After composing himself, he returned to the much larger wheel and looked at the text beside it.

Notice: 1 Bronze tier Lottery Ticket to spin the wheel. User will have 1 chance to re-spin if they deem the skill unsuitable.

'Oh nice! Not only is it a skill, I'll also get to re-spin if it's garbage.' Ken thought with a smile.

He had never been a gambler in his previous life as he rarely had any spare money after spending it on booze and cigarettes. Therefore the prospect of spinning the wheel felt foreign and exciting.

Without further ado, he hovered his finger of the spin button before pressing down hard.

The wheel spun like lightning, quickly turning into a blur. Ken waited with bated breath as it began to slow down, producing the ASMR inducing clicks before finally stopping on a red tile with a picture of a ball.

[Congratulations, user has drawn the "Wind-up" pitching skill.]

[Wind up: Increases Pitching by 1 grade when using your wind up.]

Ken blinked a few times before a disappointed expression appeared on his face as he tried not to scream out profanities at the system.

'What the hell? First you tell me I can't pitch for a whole year, now you want to give me a pitching skill!?' Ken grit his teeth before pressing the Re-Spin button.

The wheel once again spun quickly, but he closed his eyes this time. His heart was beating almost as fast as the clicking noises of the wheel.

Soon enough, the wheel came to a stop, causing his anxiety to bubble up. If this was also a useless skill, he would probably cry.

[Congratulations, user has drawn the "Quick First Step" skill.]

[Quick First Step: Increase Agility by 1 grade when running one base.]

Ken peered through the gaps in his hands, trying to calm his anxious heart.

'Yes! A useful skill!' He pumped his fist in jubilation after reading the new skill. This was exactly what he needed if he wanted to rejoin the Seiko baseball club as a 1st baseman.

While this wouldn't help with fielding, this would certainly give him an edge in the batters box, or with stealing bases. There was a lot more to baseball than just swinging and hitting a ball, or even pitching.

His injury had forced him to take a step back from the pitchers mound and view the game from a different perspective. He had been reading up on the rules since his suspension, trying to fill in some gaps.

With this new skill, he was one more step closer to getting back into the team.

A dumb smile was painted on Ken's face as he sat back into his chair. Now that his anxiety had disappeared, he felt his body relax in response.

He contemplated jumping straight into bed, but he suddenly remembered that he had an elixir waiting for him to consume.

"Where is the inventory?" Ken mumbled, going back to the main window.

USER MENU:

-STATS

-MISSIONS (1 unread)

-SYSTEM SHOP (Temporarily Unlocked)

-LOTTERY (Locked)

He then clicked on the System Shop, the only menu he had yet to explore. Another window appeared with most of the options greyed out with the symbol of a padlock next to their name.

SYSTEM SHOP

->Purchase Skills (Locked)

->Purchase Elixirs (Locked)

->Lottery Coupons (Locked)

->Inventory (Unlocked)

Ken's eyes lit up. It looked like he would be able to purchase things like Skills, Elixirs and even Coupons in the system shop. If he had to make an educated guess, these things should use the Major Points as currency.

With his dumb smile still situated on his face, Ken opened the Inventory menu and saw what he had been waiting for.

INVENTORY:

1 x C-grade Balance and Coordination Elixir

Description: Improves Balance and Coordination by a small amount depending on current grade.

Notice: Selecting the Elixir will automatically administer it to the users bloodstream. Please ensure user is lying down so as to prevent any injuries in the event of losing consciousness.

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

Chapter 22 - 22: Rewards (2)

"Huh? Lose consciousness?" Suddenly Ken began to have a bad feeling. But that was quickly pushed to the back of his mind as he thought about the benefits of consuming such Elixirs.

"I'm going to bed anyways, so I may as well just use it." This was his reasoning as he quickly checked his alarm was set for 5am and crawled into bed with his covers pulled up.

[Are you sure you wish to consume: C-grade balance and Coordination Elixir?]

[Yes/No]

Ken clicked yes without any hesitation, waiting for the system to do its thing.

Yet even after a few minutes, Ken felt nothing.

"Huh? Did it not work?" He sat up and was about to open up the system interface before he suddenly felt a bout of nausea make his vision swim. It was as if he was in rough and raging seas out in the middle of the ocean with the way his stomach began to turn.

Ken was contemplating looking for somewhere to spew until he suddenly lost consciousness and fell back onto his pillow.

The next morning, Ken woke up to the sound of his alarm blaring. Out of habit, he sat up and turned it off before heading over to his closet to get changed.

In his zombified state, there was nothing but the discipline he had now ingrained into his body. This continued until he was about to walk down the stairs, when he received a notification.

DING

YOU HAVE PENDING MISSIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS - WOULD YOU LIKE TO VIEW THEM NOW?

"Ah." Ken finally felt his memory return to him in his drowsy state. He quickly walked back into his room to check them out with the few minutes he had left before meeting up with Daichi this morning.

[You have consumed: C-grade Balance and Coordination Elixir.]

[Balance and Coordination grade has been increased by 3!]

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. C-)

Balance and Coordination: C

Agility: D+

Strength: C-

Stamina: C-

'Holy crap! A C-grade Elixir increased my grade by 3!?' Ken gawked at the notification in awe, feeling as if he had hit the jackpot.

Although his expression reverted back to normal after he remembered that it was not a fixed amount. The description of the Elixir said that it would increase the grade depending on what his current grading was.

The reason he had jumped up 3 entire grades was probably because his Balance and Coordination was so low to begin with.

While this was the case, it still put him in a great mood. He quickly opened up the missions tab, only for a smile to form on his face.

MISSIONS:

#NEW MISSION: Get into shape (progressive overload) - Weekly

*Task 1: Run 11km a day

*Task 2: Complete 130 sit-ups a day

*Task 3: Complete 80 push-ups a day

*Task 4: Complete flexibility enhancing regime every day

REWARDS:

>C-grade random elixir

>Bronze tier Lottery ticket

>5 Major points

PUNISHMENT: (In case of failure)

>Loss of

>Life of Mediocrity

[ACCEPT: YES/NO]

He noticed that his tasks had been made more difficult, likely as a result of his increased fitness. Unfortunately the rewards and punishments remained unchanged, but at least he was confident of achieving these harder tasks.

Without taking a second look he hit the yes button and headed down the stairs. Ken wasn't sure if he was imagining things, but it felt like he could traverse the stairs a lot easier.

"Morning mom!" Ken called out in a chipper tone.

"Morning Kenny. Will your friend be joining us again for breakfast?" She asked, sipping her morning coffee.

"I think so, just make some extra in case. If he doesn't show up then I'll eat his share!" He said with a smile.

"I'll be leaving." He said after putting his runners on.

"Take care."

Ken once again found Daichi waiting at the same spot as last time. This time however, he didn't look so tired.

"Ready to go?" Ken asked with a smile.

Daichi gave a thumbs up before they both began their morning run. Despite it only being his 2nd day alongside Ken, Daichi did a whole lot better than yesterday.

Ken could not explain it. It was like he had almost double the energy reserves as the day prior.

A thought seemed to be nagging at him while he ran, however he decided not to confront Daichi about it, as it was none of his business.

The only thing that had changed between yesterday and today was that he had been fed breakfast and dinner by his mom. Ken wasn't so sure what circumstances his friend lived with at home, but could it be possible that Daichi was not being fed properly for whatever reason?

Ken frowned as the thought continued to nag at him. The fact that Daichi only ever had noodles or day-old rice for lunch every day seemed like another piece of evidence to back up his theory.

After running the entire 11km without a break, the two arrived back at the corner after a bit more than an hour. The two were out of breath, but Ken still managed to tell his friend to meet for breakfast in 30 minutes.

"I'm home." Ken said, feeling the beads of sweat rolling down his body as he took off his shoes.

"Welcome home son." A deep voice spoke out to him in English, almost causing him to jump in fright.

"Dad!" Ken froze on the spot and looked upon his father who was clearly mixed-race. His curly brown hair, chiseled jaw and tall stature would stick out within the crowd.

He felt his eyes moisten as this was the first time he had seen his father in this life. His heart was filled with regret from how he had treated him in the past, dredging up emotions from the depths of his psyche.

Before he knew it, he ran towards his dad and hugged him tightly, forgetting that he was drenched in sweat.

Chris Takagi was shocked and taken aback by the sudden situation. He couldn't remember the last time that his son had hugged him, especially since his job had forced him to stay away for long periods of time.

Suddenly, Ken's dad felt a stinging in his eyes. He felt as if that little boy who had idolized him as a child had returned, the one who would follow him around and ask him to play catch everyday.

Before he turned into a teenager and became cold and distant.

"Welcome home Dad." Ken's muffled voice sounded out, causing the last shred of self restraint to collapse in his father.

Chris knelt down and hugged his son back, tears flowing down his face unabashedly. Now that his son had returned to him, he would do his best not to let him down.

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

Chapter 23 - 23: Batting Pointers (1)

After their touching reunion, Ken's dad told him to go and get washed up before breakfast. Due to the season starting soon, he wouldn't have to leave the city for a while so they would have plenty of time to catch up.

Ken nodded, after finally composing himself.

Around 30 minutes later, the doorbell rang. Chris sent a questioning look to his wife, only for her to motion for him to answer the door.

Daichi's stomach rumbled loudly as he thought about what Ken's mom would be cooking for breakfast this morning. All that running had made him work up quite a large appetite.

"Can I help you?" A deep voice speaking a weird broken Japanese suddenly sounded out as the door opened.

Daichi looked up in fright at the tall man with curly hair and a defined jaw. Except for his eyes, the figure looked like a foreigner, or perhaps a half-japanese.

He felt his stomach churn partly from the hunger, but mostly because he was intimidated by the unfamiliar adult who had answered his friends door.

"U-Um... I'm here to see K-K-Ken." Daichi stammered, feeling his face redden as he tried to speak.

"Oh?" Chris raised an eyebrow, staring at Daichi with interest.

"Honey, you're scaring the poor boy. Come on in Daichi, Ken is just finishing getting ready." Yuki nudged her husband to the side and motioned for the boy to come in with a warm expression.

"Ah, sorry sorry. Ken has never had a friend over before so I was a little taken aback." He responded, feeling a little embarrassed by his actions.

Daichi bowed briefly before scuttling inside. Thankfully Ken was already walking down the stairs so he wouldn't have to deal with any awkward atmosphere.

The 3 men sat down at the table while Yuki brought the dishes onto the table. Perhaps because Ken's father was home, today's breakfast was extravagant.

Omelet over rice, bacon, toast, fried fish.

"Wow honey, you really outdid yourself today." Chris said in English, staring at the spread of food with a twinkly in his eyes.

"Don't think she made all this for you dad. This is all because of Daichi." Ken quipped back with a cheeky smile in fluent English.

Chris stiffened for a moment before throwing his head back in laughter at the unexpected joke. He ruffled Ken's hair and threw a big grin in his direction.

"Since when did you get so cheeky."

Ken's mother was also smiling from ear to ear, not minding being the butt of the joke as long as her two boys were getting along. It was then that her attention moved to Daichi who seemed utterly confused as he watched the duo, especially since hearing his name come up.

"Ahem. How about we speak Japanese while we're in the presence of company you two." She chided, sitting next to Daichi and giving him a warm smile.

"Oops."

Both Ken and Chris covered their mouths at the same time, realizing their mistake. It was only now that one could see their similarities in appearance, mainly around the eyes and nose.

The duo behaved throughout the rest of breakfast, and the atmosphere was positive as everyone dug into some delicious food. The topic quickly turned to baseball as both Ken and Chris were fanatics.

Chris talked about the players he had been scouting while away for the past couple of weeks. He had recommended 3 players to attend the upcoming training camp for the Yokohoma Warriors in a few weeks.

"Ken, your mother told me that you're starting to work out and take your fitness seriously." Chris said after a moment, his face turning serious.

"Yes, we're running 11km a day and doing other things like sit-ups, push-ups and even flexibility workouts." Ken responded between mouthfuls.

"Oh?" Chris couldn't help but look impressed at these words, feeling a sense of pride well up from within. However, he stopped after a moment, sensing something odd.

"Wait, you said we?" He asked with a raised eyebrow.

Ken who was in the middle of a mouthful of food, merely pointed at Daichi who was keeping to himself while eating heartily. Suddenly seeing a finger pointed in his direction caused him to panic and almost choke on his food.

"You're training with Ken as well? Are you also on the baseball team?" Chris's gaze fell on Daichi, seemingly scrutinizing his wide shoulders and figure. His old habit from being a trainer and a scout made him analyze people with a professional eye.

"N-No sir." Daichi stammered, feeling uncomfortable from the probing gaze.

"No? No to what?" Chris asked with confusion, his deep tone making it feel like an interrogation.

"Ahh. Yes I'm training with Ken, but I'm not on the baseball team." He quickly responded, feeling his cheeks redden.

Ken piped up after successfully swallowing his food. "Daichi has got really good reflexes, I think he would be a great catcher. He also managed to make contact with 90% of the balls in the 110km/hr batting cages even though he's never held a bat in his life."

Chris whistled in response, his eyes narrowing.

"How about I take you both to the batting cages after school today so I can check out your form." Chris suggested. Whenever baseball was talked about, he always got excited.

"Yes please!" Ken almost jumped out of his chair in excitement. This was exactly what they both needed, some tips on batting so they could make it into the baseball team.

"Honey. Daichi will need to talk to his parents before he can decide, we can't just take someone else's child without permission." Yuki cut in before everyone could get too excited. It was clear that she was the rational parent.

At the mention of his parents, Daichi shrunk down a little. Yet in the next moment he gripped his fist tightly, with a determined expression.

"It's fine, I'll get permission from my mom. We just don't have a lot of money." Daichi replied, feeling embarrassed. He already felt like he was a burden by eating Ken's family's food, so he was reluctant to mention anything.

But he really wanted to go. He wanted to play baseball with Ken, doing whatever it took to make the baseball team.

Chris looked at Daichi, feeling a hint of pity crawl into his heart. He turned his gaze to Ken who also seemed to be wearing the same expression as himself, before opening his mouth.

"Don't you worry about money young man. How about you aim to become a pro and pay us back then?"

Yuki's face flushed for a moment and she looked as if she was about to say something. However, a smile and a wink from her husband made the words falter in her throat.

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

Chapter 24 - 24: Batting Pointers (2)

Daichi raised his gaze up to Ken, expecting to see a laughing expression on his face. However he was shocked to see that his friend was nodding, sporting a serious look.

'Wait, does he think I can really become a pro?'

Daichi was mystified. Don't professional athletes require a life time of work and talent? He had only held a bat in his hands for the first time at the batting cages, yet Ken already believed that he could do it.

He tightened his fist, feeling a burst of determination flood his body. Daichi had never had anyone believe in him before, including his family. He wanted more than anything to try his best, so he wouldn't let down his first true friend.

"Okay, it's a deal. I will repay your kindness when I become a pro!"

Chris recoiled as Daichi stood up formally and bowed, declaring his intent. He had originally used this as a way to not make things awkward for Ken's friend, yet this boy had taken it to heart.

He turned to Ken who seemed happy, yet there was no doubt in his facial features. It was as if he had full belief that his friend would be able to achieve this feat without a doubt.

Chris could only shake his head and let out a chuckle, yet his eyes glowed with a sense of expectation.

'If Ken has such a friend, it might push him to do the same.' He thought, reaching his hand up and rubbing his chin in contemplation.

The atmosphere around the breakfast table eased after the declaration and the two teenagers head off to school in good spirits. They were both looking forward to this afternoon where they would get some good pointers in the cages.

Nothing out of the ordinary happened at school, besides Keisuke asking him why he wasn't coming to club anymore. Thankfully, Ken was adept at dodging questions after living a hermits lifestyle in his previous life.

Soon enough the two had arrived back at Ken's house before getting into the car with Chris and heading to the batting cages. Ken could see that it was not only them that was excited, his father also had a look of anticipation within his eyes.

Ken's mind started to wander, thinking about his previous life. His father had taught him how to pitch, even inundating him with personalized training programs and techniques in order to improve.

However, being a teenager, Ken had been ignorant. Once he had reached middle school and seen the effectiveness of his pitches, he disregarded all of the training his father had drawn up for him.

Would he have injured his shoulder if he had continued to follow his fathers training regime? Probably not.

A bitter smile formed on his face after realizing that he had thrown his potential away because of his lazy teenage self. Thankfully he was given another chance, this time with the added bonus of the system.

Everyone arrived at the batting cages shortly after. Being a baseball scout and fanatic, Chris had a bunch of gear, meaning they would not have to hire from the batting center.

They arrived at the row of cages, each labeled by how fast the pitching machine threw. Chris took a seat and unzipped the bag, passing a helmet and bat to both Daichi and Ken.

"Did you guys need gloves?" He asked, to which the both of them agreed.

"Okay, Daichi you go first. Head to that cage on the left and show me what you've got."

"But dad, that's the 80km/h machine. He can hit the 110km/h pitches easily." Ken said, confused at why they would go backwards.

"I'll be able to see his form a lot easier with the slower pitches." Chris smiled, patiently explaining his reasoning and motioning for Daichi to go inside.

"Ah... Makes sense." Ken felt a little stupid. He probably should have thought of such a thing himself instead of opening his mouth.

'Damn. Did my brain also regress?' he complained inwardly, lightly tapping his head with his hand.

Daichi did as he was told and headed inside. He stood at the batters box, his wide shoulders on a slight angle and his grip choked up on the bat.

It looked really awkward.

The first ball flew towards him, yet he could see it with ease. Keeping his feet flat on the floor, Daichi swung his bat, hitting the ball with the exact center of his bat. A clean DONG sound was heard as it was sent back to the machine along the ground.

The next 11 pitches played out the same way, all off the center of the bat and hit either in the air for a pop-fly or along the ground.

Chris had no reaction, but he felt really uncomfortable.

Daichi felt a smile grace his lips as he made his way out of the batting cage and stood in front of Ken's dad. Although the balls were slower, he felt that he did a good enough job to impress Chris.

"I must say. I'm certainly surprised that you were able to hit the ball with the center of the bat with that horrendous form." Chris said, feeling his back hurt from just watching the previous display.

The way Daichi's feet and hips were square and unmoving, even while swinging the bat made him cringe in pain. If the boy kept up that form then not only would he not generate any power with his swings, he would injure his body.

"Ah..." Daichi felt his enthusiasm drop at those words.

"Don't be disheartened. I guarantee you'll have an easier time hitting these balls if you copy my form." Chris said quickly, seeing the disappointment in the boy's face.

He grabbed the bat from Daichi and told him to watch closely.

"First of all, make sure your non-dominant hand is resting against this knob. Then place your other hand just above it. You shouldn't be choking up on the bat unless you're aiming for a specific pitch."

"Next, keep your feet shoulder-width apart and bend your knees slightly while holding the bat like this." Chris gestured, showing his form with the bat hovering at a comfortable position out from his chest.

With his tall frame, he looked imposing with a bat in his hands.

"When you swing, I want you to plant your right foot and lift your left leg right before you're about to swing. When it's time to swing, plant your left foot down and follow through with the bat."

Chris made a swinging motion, causing the air to make a whooshing sound.

"Once you've completed your swing, let go of the bat with your dominant hand and follow through."

Chris was patient as he explained the form and swinging motion, repeating the steps a few times before Daichi and even Ken began to nod in understanding.

Once he was satisfied the two had understood, he handed the bat back to Daichi.

"Now go try again."

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

Chapter 25 - 25: Three Weeks (1)

DONG!

The clear and crisp sound of the ball being hit by a metal bat with force rang out within the batting cages, causing everyone to turn at once.

Ken's jaw dropped, seeing Daichi mirror his dad's form on the very first swing. The additional power he had generated was enough to send the ball careening into the back of the cages, narrowly missing the home run target.

Chris's eyes widened before a smile bloomed on his face. He had heard that sound many times in his career, yet this was the first time he heard it from a newbie teenager. This kid had talent.

'I must train this boy, he has such raw potential. The best thing is that he has never played before so we won't have any bad habits to get rid of.' Chris's mind began to move, thinking of the best ways to mold and shape this diamond in the rough.

However, his face faltered a moment later, moving his gaze over to his son. He had just patched things up with Ken, what would he think if Chris was to pour all his attention onto Daichi.

It could lead to jealousy which could potentially cause him to push away not only Daichi but also him. Thus Chris was left in a huge dilemma.

It was such a waste to let this sort of talent wither away, yet he didn't want to show favoritism in such a situation. If it was before, he probably would have used everything at his disposal to nurture the talented youth, but now things were different.

He already made a vow this morning that he would never let his son down again, never putting him in a position where he would grow distant. Therefore, he shook his head, throwing all of his plans out the window.

'I won't put Ken through such a thing.' He thought inwardly.

However, Ken grabbed his sleeve with wide eyes, almost jumping up and down with excitement.

"See dad! I told you he had talent. You have to train him, I just know that he'll be able to make the professional leagues." He pointed towards Daichi who had been swinging consistently, hitting every ball with the center of the bat.

'Huh?' Chris couldn't believe his eyes as his son was so visibly excited at his friends success.

"Hahaha!" He couldn't help but throw his head back in hearty laughter.

'Looks like I underestimated you son.' Chris thought inwardly, feeling a huge sense of pride wash over him. He had been so caught up in his own feelings to realize that his son had truly matured.

"Okay okay you were right, your friend is pretty good. As long as he trains his batting skills and studies the game, he'll have a good shot at making the Seiko squad." His dad said with a smile.

"Seiko squad? Don't you mean the pro league?" Ken asked with a cheeky smile.

"Haha, it's a little early for that."

Daichi felt as if it was so much easier to hit the ball coming towards him. His body felt fluid from when he wound up to when he followed through, filling him with a sense of confidence.

Before he knew it, the 12 balls had all been hit. He was a little disappointed, but he decided to leave the batting cage.

As he stepped out, he saw the father and son duo speaking in English with large smiles on their faces. He felt a little awkward as he walked over, but that soon changed when Ken came over and draped his arm around his shoulders.

"Damn man! I told you that dad would be able to help your form. You sent those balls flying!" Ken said with enthusiasm, clearly happy for his success.

Daichi felt his neck heating up from embarrassment, but he was filled with a sense of pride. He couldn't remember the last time someone had complimented him in such a way.

"He's right. You did well to change your form so quickly." Chris said with a smile.

"Okay, Ken it's your turn. Head into the batting cages and show me how much you've improved."

"Yes sir!" Ken saluted, before grabbing a helmet and the bat from Daichi.

The first pitch came at him, feeling awfully slow compared to the 110km/h balls that he had been using beforehand. However, he still managed to hit the ball with the top of his bat, lofting an easy catch in the direction of the pitcher.

Ken felt a wave of embarrassment flood his body, yet he did his best to compose himself. One thing he noticed that it was much easier to control his bat, almost as if his dexterity had increased significantly.

'Ah, it's probably from the Balance and Coordination Elixir!' he thought inwardly.

'If I can get my hands on a few more of those, I might be able to match up to Daichi quicker than I originally thought.'

The thought of being able to hit huge home runs on the field filled him with joy and enthusiasm. Perhaps too much so, as he managed to miss the next couple of balls due to his inattentiveness.

Chris's face faltered after seeing his son missing the "easy" 100km/h balls that were being sent his way. Thankfully, Ken's form was pretty decent, it just seemed as if he lacked the control over his body to hit accurately and time the ball.

He resisted the urge to massage his temples, so as not to discourage the two boys. Even Daichi himself felt second hand embarrassment for Ken, especially after he had hit the balls so easily.

Daichi was also worried that he may make Ken feel inferior, possibly even giving rise to resentment which was something that he didn't want to happen. However, those thoughts were disposed of the moment he saw Ken walk out of the batting cages.

Ken had a big smile on his face, as if he was satisfied.

"I can already feel that I'm having an easier time getting contact on the ball. I just need to keep training and I'll catch up to you soon." He said, holding his fist out towards Daichi.

Daichi was startled for a moment before a smile formed on his face. Ken really was the best friend he could have asked for.

The two completed their fist bump, as if to symbolize their drive to get better together.

The three stayed at the batting cages for another hour or so as Chris corrected their forms and gave pointers from the outside. Daichi benefited the most from his teachings, becoming more comfortable and accurate with the bat.

Ken on the other hand still had trouble with timing and placement of the bat, however he was trying hard which was the main thing. As long as he continued to practice, things could improve.

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

Chapter 26 - 26: Three Weeks (2)

They returned back home and once again Daichi was invited over for dinner by Ken's mother. Feeling his stomach grumble, the teenager gladly accepted the hospitality.

Dinner was sumptuous, leaving everyone full to the brim. Before Daichi left, Chris reached into his bag and handed him a metal bat, telling him to get at least 100 practice swings done before bed tonight using the form he had been taught.

Daichi stared at the bat for a while before a look of determination crept onto his face. He bowed respectfully and said his thanks before heading home.

"Don't forget about our morning run tomorrow!" Ken shouted out, only to receive a positive response.

The next 3 weeks flew by as the duo continued with their schedules of school and training. Ken's father had been sent over to the United States to scout some potential Triple A players into the Yokohama squad, but he had left an indelible mark in the two boys.

Daichi had improved by leaps and bounds both fitness wise and with his bat. Despite his baby face remaining, his body had begun to show growth, particularly in his chest and arms, finally filling out his wide shoulders.

Due to him eating nutritious meals at the Takagi household, he was able to convert all of that energy into muscle and growth. Ken had talked to his mother about his suspicions of Daichi not eating well at home, prompting her to even pack lunch for his best friend.

Yet throughout this time, they had still not met Daichi's parents. It was as if they never existed, or didn't care enough to investigate the whereabouts of their son.

However, Ken did not care. As long as his friend was well fed and happy, then he did not pry into his home life. By the fact that he didn't know anything about his family in his previous life, he could guess that Daichi didn't like talking about it.

Ken sat down on his desk chair, feeling tired yet full of satisfaction. He felt as if he didn't have a chance to relax over these past 3 frantic weeks due to the sheer amount of training he and Daichi had done.

After today's final workout, he had finally finished his 4th "Getting into shape" quest. Due to how busy he had been, Ken had saved up the rewards from the system missions.

However he could no longer wait as the 4 weeks leave he had requested from the coach would end tomorrow. There was a friendly match at the end of the week, which meant he had to get himself and Daichi into the lineup by Friday.

Ken opened up his system window and quickly accepted his rewards.

REWARDS:

>C-grade Agility Elixir (Found in the inventory)

>Bronze tier Lottery ticket

>5 Major points

->Mission Summary

*Task 1: Run 12km a day with at least 500m sprinted (90/84km completed; Rating A+)

*Task 2: Complete 160 sit-ups a day (1200 completed; Rating A+)

*Task 3: Complete 100 push-ups a day (850 completed; Rating A+)

*Task 4: Complete flexibility enhancing regime every day (24 regimes completed; Rating S)

Overall mission rating: S-

Bonus rewards: 25 Major points

Ken smiled, seeing the list of his accomplishments and the rewards. With the completion of this mission he now had 2 Agility, 1 Strength and another Balance and Coordination Elixir to use.

However they would have to wait for now. The 4 bronze tier lottery tickets felt as if they were burning a hole in his pocket, even though they didn't have a physical form.

With a look of anticipation in his eyes, he brought up the lottery page and clicked the spin button straight away.

The familiar sounds of the wheel spinning and the clicking of the pointer rang out in his mind, giving him a rush.

[Congratulations, user has drawn the "Bunt" skill.]

[Bunt: Ability to bunt even the fastest of balls with optimal precision and strength.]

"Ah..." Ken's former excitement died in his throat as he saw what the pointer had landed on. His eyebrow twitched as he imagined his tall frame in the batters box, sending a gorgeous bunt towards the ground.

His finger hovered over the Re-spin option, however he quickly stopped himself. The bunt skill was indeed useful, especially to him who was looking to make it into the starting team.

"Damn it. I'll keep you for now, just don't screw me over again system." Ken muttered before using another Bronze lottery ticket.

His next few spins were over before he even knew it, yet he was caught grinning like an idiot. He quickly brought up the menu and took a look at all of his skills.

Chapter 27 - 27: Team Tryouts

Ken woke up the next morning fresh and full of excitement. Today was Monday, and would be his first day back at club activities since requesting a leave of absence to work on training his baseball skills.

He had told the coach to give him a few weeks until he was ready to take the starting spot of the 1st baseman. Of course Coach Yoshida didn't believe that Ken could improve so much in a small amount of time, but he was going to prove him wrong.

The reason for Ken's optimism? It was his .

After getting ready for his morning run and exercise, Ken pulled up his system window, only to see a flashing message greet him.

[You have consumed: C-grade Agility Elixir.]

[Agility grade has been increased by 4!]

"Whoa! Increased by 4 grades? Lucky~"

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. C)

Balance and Coordination: C

Agility: B-

Strength: C-

Stamina: C

He wasn't exactly sure how his attributes stacked up against actual professionals, but he should at least be good enough for middle school baseball.

'If professionals were ranked S, then that means my agility is only 9 grades away from the pro's!' Ken thought with a goofy smile.

Of course he wasn't sure if the S grade was the ceiling. There was a possibility that there were higher grades than S, even if that was the highest that he had seen.

Either way, Ken was in a great mood as he skipped down the stairs and headed out the door.

Daichi was once again waiting for him as usual, this time with a smile on his face. His friend had really started to come out of his shell, showing him glimpses of the Daichi he had known in his previous life.

The two went through their morning routine of running and stretching before getting changed and having a hearty breakfast. They then caught the train and headed to school, excitedly chatting about the baseball training in the afternoon.

Classes always seemed to drag on when one was looking forward to something else. But inevitably, the school bell rung, signifying the end of class.

"Let's head to the fields!" Ken said with a big grin, his face oozing with anticipation and excitement.

"Ken, you're on classroom duties." A female voice rang out from the front of the class, causing his expression to darken.

The class representative was holding onto a clip board with the duties schedule sitting upon it.

"Let's make a run for it." Ken whispered to Daichi, before getting into a starting pose.

"You don't want to get in trouble Ken, quickly go and grab the duster so you can clean the blackboard." Daichi murmured, stopping his friend from becoming a felon in the classroom.

"Ah I guess you're right."

As he said those words, he suddenly locked gazes with one of his classmates who had also been called up for classroom duties. He glanced at the blackboard duster before looking back at Ken.

"Don't you dare..." Ken mouthed silently.

However, in the next moment the male student quickly accelerated towards the front of the classroom, his form was flawless.

It was only now that Ken recognized the student as Haru Shinoda, a prominent track and field runner who had competed at nationals many times in his previous life.

Before he knew it, Ken was also flying towards the blackboard duster as if his life depended on it. He felt like the classroom had become a blur as he sped towards the front of the class.

Considering they had started out around the same distance from the blackboard, Haru was filled with confidence. He had yet to meet anyone that could match his sprinting speed over short distances, let alone the lazy Ace pitcher of the baseball team.

As he got closer to the blackboard, he felt that victory was already at hand and began to slow his speed as a result, not wanting to crash into anything and injure himself.

Yet his eyes widened in shock as he saw Ken enter his peripheral vision, his long limbs stretching out towards the prize in front of him.

'W-What!?' Haru was filled with shock as he tried to increase his speed once more, however he had lost too much time while he was assured of his victory.

Ken swooped in like a bird going for a worm, firmly grasping the blackboard duster in his outstretched hand before sliding gracefully to a stop, just before hitting the classroom door.

Haru stared in disbelief as Ken held up the duster towards him, like he was showing the umpire after a catch in the outfield.

"He he he" Ken chuckled to himself as he began to wipe down the board, humming a tune as he basked in his victory.

It wasn't that noticeable on his run this morning, but during this sprint to the front of the class he could feel how much his speed had increased. Once again the usefulness of the system was showcased to him.

Cleaning the blackboard was the quickest chore on the classroom duties list, therefore it was highly contested by those who did not wish to stick around for long. Soon enough, Ken bid farewell to his other classmates.

He sent a little wink to Haru and mouthed "Better luck next time." Before swaggering out of the classroom with a smile.

By the time he arrived at the locker room, most of the players were already dressed and heading out to the field. He saw Daichi within the crowd looking a little anxious, however his face lit up once he saw Ken.

Ken smiled at him before quickly getting his gear on. It had been quite a while since he had put on his baseball uniform which was mostly white with the words Seiko written in red with a black outline.

He was currently wearing the number 1, something that was reserved for the Ace of the squad and something he used to wear with pride. Ken knew that he would have to give up the number, however he wasn't as sad as he thought he would be.

Ken made his way out to the field only to see a few weird looks from his teammates. Coach Yoshida had been pretty tight lipped about Ken's circumstances, therefore the other players were curious.

"You're all here, good." Coach Yoshida addressed the team. His aura was much different than what he had in class, giving people the impression that he had multiple personalities.

"I have an announcement to make before we start today's training..."

He paused before continuing once everyone quieted down.

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

Chapter 28 - 28: Team Tryouts (2)

"Ken will no longer be the Ace for Seiko. Kouichi, you will be our starting pitcher henceforth. Is that understood?"

All of the players gasped in shock, turning their heads between Ken and the Coach, not believing their ears. However, seeing Ken standing there calmly after the announcement, they could tell that he was already aware of the news.

Kouichi Yamada was a third year who had always pitched relief throughout his middle school career. He was a solid right armed pitcher who had decent control for his age and great consistency.

Ken nodded in approval. The Coach had made the correct decision.

Kouichi was also mystified at the decision, however he felt Coach Yoshida's gaze burning into him so he quickly bowed and confirmed that he understood.

"Good. Now, we have a friendly match against Kanagawa this weekend before the spring tournament begins. Apart from training this week, this will be your only chance to state your case if you wish to be a starter. Do your best!"

"Ah, Coach... I'm not sure if you noticed but we have someone new to the team." Ken walked up, only talking once the Coach was done with his speech.

"Oh. Step forward and introduce yourself and what position you play." The Coach said, trying to find the unfamiliar face within the crowd of boys.

Daichi shyly stepped forward, only for the Coaches eyes to widen.

'Is that really a middle schooler!?' he exclaimed inwardly, looking at the wide shoulders and powerful chest of the boy in shock.

"I-I'm Daichi Suzuki, a 3rd-year transfer student. I've never played baseball before but I've been training with Ken and his father for a while now. I'll be in your care." He finished before bowing.

The baseball players sized up their new teammate, their gazes weird after hearing that he had never played the game before. Most of them had started in elementary school, or even in youth teams.

"Okay that's enough, I want everyone to run 10 laps around the field for a warm up." Coach Yoshida said, clapping his hands loudly.

The direction was met with a colloquial groan from the players, yet they all quickly got into formation and began their laps. Ken and Daichi both settled into the middle of the pack and jogged lightly.

The field was only about 400m in circumference, so 10 laps was only 4km in distance. Having run over 10km every morning for the past 4 weeks had made the run easy enough.

Coach Yoshida watched as the whole team ran the around the field, holding a clipboard in his hands. As he said before, the spring tournament was going to begin shortly so he needed to select the starting line up.

The loss of Ken as a starting pitcher was a real kick in the guts. It wouldn't be wrong to say that he had carried the team on his back to the Kanto Tournament last year with his arm alone.

Therefore he had been testing out the pitchers for the past 4 weeks before finally making his decision today. The other positions however, were a little tougher.

With the 3rd years retiring at the end of last year, it had left some significant gaps in the lineup. While they would be able to get by while fielding, their batting lineup was currently in shambles.

Basically, the 2nd through to the 6th batters had all been 3rd years and now needed replacing. They had played 2 friendlies in the past two weeks and they never managed to score more than 2 runs in the full 9 innings.

With their defense they secured a clean sheet in the first game and conceded 3 runs in the second and lost. There was no way that the team would be able to make it to the Kanto Tournament against the best teams in Tokyo with this glaring defect.

He took a cursory glance at the newcomer who had a large upper body, his hopes rekindling.

'I really hope that kid can hit a baseball...' he thought inwardly.

His gaze then moved to Ken who was running alongside the newbie and he frowned.

'I don't have much hope for Ken as a batter, but maybe he could surprise me.'

The team finally finished their 10 laps around the field and walked over to where the coach was standing. Most of the kids collapsed onto the ground or were hunched over and breathing heavily.

There was only 3 people who did not seem that effected. Ken, Daichi and Keisuke were looking fine and dandy, even having enough energy to chat with each other while they waited for his next instructions.

Coach Yoshida raised an eyebrow, before turning his gaze to the clipboard and making some notes with the pen. He had not expected the lazy Ken to have changed so much in a month.

"Okay gather up. Pitchers go warm up your shoulders with the catchers, the rest of you will be working on grounders while they get ready."

"Yes sir!" Everyone said in unison as they followed instructions.

The fielding lined up while the Coach grabbed a baseball bat and some balls and began smacking them towards the closest player. The ball bounced along the ground quickly while the player had to try and catch it in rhythm and throw to first base.

Daichi seemed a little nervous in the lineup next to Ken as he saw the ball being whacked towards the player. But as it was approaching his turn, the nerves turned into determination as he hardened his resolve.

'I'm going to catch the ball no matter what and make the baseball team with Ken.' He chanted inwardly, dredging up his fighting spirit.

Soon enough, he stepped out of the line and squared up against the coach. He was able to mirror the other players form, bending his knees and keeping his head up, waiting for the ball to be hit his way.

DING

"Ah crap." Coach Yoshida said aloud, feeling the crisp sound of the ball hitting off center.

The ball shot off the ground quickly and headed way off target to Daichi's left. Just when the Coach was about to reach down and grab another ball, he saw the newbie shift his body weight almost instantly.

He took a few quick steps and lunged out with his left hand before skidding along the dirt for almost a meter. The clear sound of the ball entering the mitt rang out over the field, causing everyone to let out audible sounds of amazement.

Coach Yoshida too was stunned by the desperate play. He couldn't help but feel a smile creeping onto his face at the sight.

"Good! Do another."

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

Chapter 29 - 29: Problem (1)

"Good! Do another. Make sure you throw to first base after controlling the ball." Coach Yoshida yelled, grabbing another ball out of the bucket.

"Yes coach!" Daichi called out excitedly.

The next ball was sent flying towards him along the ground, however it was easily scooped up by Daichi in a single motion. The ball was then rocketed out of his hand, appearing in the 1st baseman's glove in the blink of an eye.

Coach Yoshida's eyes seemingly sparkled as he watched the play, feeling a sense of excitement wash over him.

Ken saw the expression on the Coach's face and pumped his fist in triumph. He had been most worried about Daichi's fielding during the tryouts, mainly because that was what they had practiced the least in the past 4 weeks.

He was now filled with confidence that Daichi would be accepted into the team, possibly even into the starting line up from the beginning. After all, Daichi was a better batter than he was a fielder and the Coach already looked impressed.

"Next!" Coach Yoshida called out, his face still sporting a small smile.

'Okay let's do this.' Ken pumped himself up inwardly before stepping forward.

He passed Daichi and saw the dumb smile painted on his face before holding out a fist.

"Good luck." Daichi said, bumping his fist and heading to the back of the line.

Ken grinned and faced the coach, punching his fist into his glove with a determined look. He bent his knees and got into a ready position, nodding that he was ready to go.

The Coach said nothing, not wanting to put additional pressure on the youth. However, he was hoping for Ken's sake that he would not be disappointed.

DONG

The ball came speeding towards him, taking on a tricky trajectory as it bounced along the dirt with haste. Ken's eyes never left the ball, following it from the moment that it touched the bat.

He turned to the side, placing his knee on the ground with the glove sitting just in front of it to scoop up the ball. This was a technique that his father had drilled into him in order to prevent a difficult ball speeding past him.

Ken's eyes lit up as the ball rolled into his glove, almost as if it was magnetized. He then quickly got to his feet and motioned to throw the ball towards first base.

The ball flew from his hand, yet it floated in the air with little speed or power behind it.

'W-What is going on?' Ken's eyes narrowed in on the slow ball which slowly glided through the air and landed in the first baseman's glove.

It was not just him who was confused. The rest of the team began to speak amongst themselves, almost not believing what they were seeing.

"What's wrong with Ken?"

"His throws are usually really crisp and fast. What happened?"

A look of worry crept onto Daichi's face as he saw his friend who was seemingly lost and confused. He was staring at his right hand confoundedly.

It was only the Coach who did not seem surprised. In fact he let out a small sigh before shaking his head.

"Next."

Coach Yoshida's voice seemed to awaken Ken who was in the midst of despair. However, his face changed in the next moment, producing a fake smile that didn't reach his eyes and running back to the lineup to queue with the others.

Daichi wasn't sure why, but he felt his heart ache at the smile on his friend's face. Perhaps he too had also used that same smile in the past, probably far too often.

That was the smile that he would wear when telling others that everything was fine, all the while he would be suffering hell internally.

"K-Ken, don't mind." Daichi said, trying to cheer him up.

Ken who seemed preoccupied, finally realized his presence and smiled once again. He pushed out his glove into Daichi's stomach and said calmly, "Don't worry, that ball just slipped out of my fingers haha."

"Okay, you'll get it next time" Daichi responded, smiling back. Yet he didn't believe him for a second, especially since his keen senses had picked up there was something wrong with the throw.

Ken's expression was still cheery on the outside, however inwardly he was in utter turmoil. There was something wrong. He had thrown countless balls throughout his two lives, yet none of them felt like this.

He was hoping that it was a once off thing, only because the alternative would be much worse.

Before he knew it, Daichi had already had his turn and was walking back towards him.

"Next."

"Ken! Stop dawdling and come forward."

Coach Yoshida's yell finally broke Ken out of his stupor.

"Y-Yes coach!"

He ran out and took his position once again, his eyes turning focused as he awaited the ball to come his way. Not long after, the sound of the bat striking the ball rang out in his ears and he once again dropped down to collect the grounder.

This time, he paid close attention to his throwing form as he tried to whip the ball towards first base. His eyes lit up in shock as the ball once again slowly floated towards first base and landed in the outstretched glove.

Daichi frowned as he saw the same throwing action as before, mentally comparing it to how others performed the throws.

'Why does his shoulder look so stiff?'

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

Chapter 30 - 30: Problem (2)

It looked as if Ken could not fully rotate his shoulder while performing the throw, or perhaps he couldn't subconsciously do it. It was only now that things seemed to click in his mind, the puzzle pieces falling into place.

The reason why Ken was no longer the Ace pitcher for Seiko middle school and why he was so obsessed with becoming a first baseman.

'It must be an injury... But I never heard him or his family talk about it?'

While Daichi was thinking deeply, the coach yelled out that it was time to do some batting practice with the pitchers.

They moved the line off the pitch and onto the side, grabbing their helmets and bats to get ready for the training.

"Everyone will get 3 at-bats, I will be the umpire and call how many bases or if its an out. Understood?"

"Yes Coach!"

Ken's mind was still preoccupied, however he managed to get a hold of himself. As long as he performed well in the batting training, there was a chance that he could make the line up, even if it was just as a Pinch Hitter.

While he had improved his batting, it was nowhere near the level of Daichi's. He lacked the Coordination and power to slog balls like his friend, at least for now. He suddenly regretted not taking that Balance and Coordination Elixir last night instead of the Agility.

With this drill, he would not be able to showcase his upgraded speed, nor could he show the Coach his bunting skill.

Daichi turned around and almost let out an audible sigh of relief as he saw Ken's expression. He looked focused and ready to perform, unlike how he was on the field earlier.

He was terrible with pep-talks, so Daichi was thankful that he wouldn't have to make a speech and possibly embarrass himself.

Soon enough, it was Daichi's turn. He grabbed his bat and was about to head up to the batters box, but he suddenly felt a weight of a hand on his shoulder.

"Knock it out of the park." Ken said, a cheeky grin painted on his face.

Daichi didn't say a word, opting to put out his fist in response.

Ken chuckled before giving it a bump with his own fist and sending him off. He couldn't wait to see the Coach's reaction to Daichi's insane batting skills.

Coach Yoshida was standing behind the catcher, feeling his anticipation rise as the newcomer stood in the batters box. He was impressed with the newbies fielding and had already considered moving him onto the 2nd base from this alone.

However, inwardly he was praying that this wide-shouldered kid would blow him away with some otherworldly batting skills. His frame which looked more like a high schooler filled him with great hope.

'His starting form looks solid... let's see how he goes.'

Kouichi was standing on the mound, awaiting the signal from the coach. His pitches felt crisp today and they were moving well, filling him with confidence.

Seeing the large frame of the newcomer in the batters box made him feel a little intimidated. However, after remembering that Daichi had never played baseball before, caused his tense nerves to ease.

"Let's go!" The Coach said, putting his face mask on.

Kouichi nodded and began his wind up, aiming for the catchers glove of Hikaru. The glove was placed on the outside, barely within the strike zone.

Kouichi whipped the ball with his right arm after completing his throwing action, sending the ball speeding towards the outstretched glove. The ball was fast, approaching the 85km/h mark.

Daichi's eyes never left the ball, tracking its trajectory and making mental calculations in his head. His left foot rose slightly as he timed the first pitch.

When he felt the moment was right, he planted his left foot and swung at the incoming ball with nearly all of his strength. The shift in the weight to his front foot generated enormous torque which traveled from his arms to his bat.

DONG!

Daichi felt the sweet sensation of hitting the ball with the center of his bat travel up his arms as he followed through on his swing. His eyes followed the ball which rocketed into the sky, traveling towards the right side of the outfield.

The ball hung in the air and looked as if it was a bird which had taken flight. It felt like an age before the ball began to lose some speed and began to fall back towards the Earth.

Kouichi watched on with shock as the ball sailed over the fences, just barely inside the foul posts. His gaze moved to Daichi who was wearing an innocent smile, clearly happy at the shot he had just made.

"H-Home run!" The coach eventually shouted, half in shock and half in jubilation.

'What a monster!' he exclaimed inwardly, his gaze looking as if he had found a golden goose.

"Nice hit!" Ken shouted with glee, feeling almost as much pride as if he were the one to make the home run.

His teammates on the other hand were too busy picking up their jaws from the floor to make any comments. The look of disbelief was communal, yet Ken's shout made them remember that this monster was actually on their team.

Soon enough they also joined in on the action.

"Whoa! Nice hit"

"He's gotta be our new number 4 right?"

"How did he send that outside pitch so far? What a monster."

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

Chapter 31 - 31: Pact (1)

Daichi opened the door to his house and headed inside, his emotions conflicted. On one hand he was happy that he had performed well in the training today, fully showcasing his abilities with the bat and ball.

On the other hand, his thoughts moved to Ken who had not managed to achieve the same. Not only could he not throw properly, he had only managed to hit one ball straight back to the pitcher for an out.

He could still see the look of disappointment and frustration in Ken's face before he reverted back to a fake smile. While he tried to hide it on the train ride home, Daichi could tell that his friend was hurting inside.

He should be feeling happy that his friend was so supportive, yet there was something that niggled at him. Ken was bottling up all of his frustrations, internalizing them and suffering in silence.

"And where the hell have you been?" A female voice slurred, breaking him out of his reverie.

"M-Mom... I thought you were working tonight?" Daichi stammered, feeling his mood plummet.

His mother who was currently splayed on the couch with a bunch of beer cans spread across the coffee table. From the slurring of her words and the mess, Daichi could instantly tell that she had been drinking for a while.

"What does it matter when I work?" She said, struggling to get to her feet. When she finally succeeded, she almost stumbled back onto the couch.

"Why isn't the house clean? Do you think you can just freeload while I do all the work? Do you think I'm just a pushover and you can walk all over me? HUH?" She stumbled forward and put her hand on his chin, squeezing tightly as she stared at him.

"You're an ungrateful little bastard, just like your father." Daichi's mom spat those words out.

At the mention of his father, Daichi felt an overwhelming rage threaten to overcome him. His eyes bulged as he tried to quell the feelings that were rising in his chest.

"HOW DARE YOU LOOK AT YOUR MOTHER LIKE THAT?"

SLAP

"Wipe that look off your face right this instant!" she yelled, incensed.

Daichi recoiled after being slapped in the face by his mother, feeling the stinging sensation prickle his cheek. He had been hit before, but this one seemed to hurt a lot more because of who had thrown it.

Out of habit, Daichi put on the same smile that he always did to calm down his mother. Yet he felt such a strong sense of revulsion that it quickly dissipated.

His thoughts moved to Ken and his family who had shown him so much love, making him feel like he had another family. Then he looked at his mother who clearly saw him as a burden, someone she was forced to live with.

Then something happened, something that he never thought he would be able to do; he talked back.

"How can you call yourself a Mother? When have you ever shown me love or affection?" Daichi said, his face wearing an emotionless and cold mask despite the red hand print on his cheek.

His Mother paused for a moment in shock, clearly not expecting him to talk back to her. Yet in the next moment her face contorted and she started screaming and throwing her fists at him.

Daichi stood as still as he could while his mother punched him in the head, chest, arms, anywhere she could reach.

It hurt...

It really hurt...

But Daichi received it all without even a whimper, waiting for her to grow tired.

"What the hell are you doing!?"

A shocked youthful voice rang out within the room, putting an end to the rain of blows attacking him. Daichi's mind went blank as he suddenly turned his head to see Ken staring at the scene with utter disbelief from the front door.

Seeing his best friend's face at this moment caused all of his hurt and emotions to bubble to the surface. All of the pain and heartache he was holding inside poured out like a fountain, drenching his face with tears.

Ken took one look and was incensed. He saw who he could only imagine was Daichi's mother beating up her son while he stood there and took it all.

"What are you doing in my house? This is none of your business! Get out!" His mother screamed at Ken, lunging at him too.

"DON'T YOU DARE!"

Daichi bellowed like a cornered beast as he intercepted his mother and threw her onto the couch in one fluid motion. His powerful shoulders seemed like mountains as he protected his friend from this pitiful woman.

His mother seemed to finally snap out of her drunken rage and her eyes widened as she looked at her son. The vision of the boy's father overlapped on Daichi's wide frame, causing her to recoil in fright.

"Daichi... Come stay at my house for now." Ken said after a moment, trying to calm down the teenager.

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

Chapter 32 - 32: Pact (2)

Daichi didn't answer for a while, but he soon nodded and turned around to follow Ken. He didn't say another word to his mother who was still silently seated where he had left her.

The two walked out of the house and onto the streets. Ken gazed at Daichi and saw the bruises and swelling on his face, inwardly cringing at the injuries.

"A-Are you okay?" Ken asked, not knowing what else to say in this situation.

"Yeah..." Daichi replied, finally feeling the pain settling in after the rush of adrenaline.

The two walked in silence for a while before they had almost arrived at Ken's house. Daichi stopped abruptly in the middle of the street, his fists clenched tightly.

Ken walked a few more steps before noticing, and turned around to face him with a questioning gaze.

Before he could ask what was wrong, Daichi bowed at 90 degrees and began to speak.

"I'm sorry for keeping this a secret Ken. In the future I won't hold anything back from you. You are my best friend in the world. You and your family have made me feel love and affection that I never knew existed."

Tears began to fall on the pavement as Ken watched on in shock. What love and affection? Isn't that how families are supposed to be? He felt a sour feeling crawl up his throat as he looked at his dear friend.

Ken quickly moved forward and helped his friend up, he couldn't accept such a bow.

"There's no need to thank us man, you're my best friend, of course we would treat you well." Ken stated, trying to calm him down.

Daichi lifted his face which was covered in tears and bruises, yet he was wearing a stern expression.

"Then if I'm your best friend, then why are you acting like this?"

"Huh? Acting like what?" Ken was perplexed, not understanding what he was talking about.

Daichi continued, his eyes staring directly into Ken's.

"That smile at practice today after you failed miserably. Being overly happy about my performance and keeping your frustrations to yourself, it's just as bad as lying. Best friends don't lie to each other."

Ken's eyes widened in response. He didn't think that a teenager at Daichi's age would be so sharp that he could detect such a thing when he had tried so hard to hide it.

Yet Ken got a little angry, feeling as if he had done nothing wrong.

"So what if I'm happy for you? Isn't that what friends do? I don't want you to feel bad because I had a crappy showing, that would just ruin your success!"

"Do you really think that such a thing would affect my success? Friends confide in each other and experience ups and downs together. If you're not willing to be honest with me, then do you even consider me as your best friend?" Daichi countered.

Ken was taken aback and instantly went on the defensive. Perhaps it was his teenage hormones, or the fact that he felt attacked, but his response was not what he really wanted to say.

"Oh yeah? I could ask you the same question about keeping your mother's abuse a secret."

The moment the words came out of his mouth, Ken instantly regretted it. He could see the light from Daichi's eyes pale a little and his fists clench as he stood in silence for a while.

"I-I'm sorry Daichi, I should not have said something so insensitive. I had a suspicion that things weren't okay at home, but I didn't pry because you didn't want to talk about it." Ken admitted, feeling his anger dissipate quickly.

"I forgive you." Daichi said simply. He could understand that they were both youths and would be prone to an outburst every now and then.

"Tell me why you stepped down as the Ace Pitcher of the team." Daichi asked, however his expression made it apparent that he already had a guess.

Ken nodded. He had already resolved himself to come clean seeing as both of them were exposed.

"I have a shoulder injury. If I continue to pitch then I will destroy it for good." He admitted, feeling as if a weight had been lifted off his chest.

Daichi held his gaze for a while before he finally seemed satisfied. Without warning, he walked forward and pulled Ken into a hug, almost squashing him with his powerful grasp.

"Thank you best friend." He said softly.

Ken was startled for a moment before he finally hugged back.

For the whole time that he had known Daichi in his past life, he had never known as much about him until now. The abuse from his mother and his struggles with bullying, or how compassionate he could be.

If he were to be honest, just achieving these things during his second chance made him feel as if he had already achieved much more than his previous life, filling him with happiness.

"Once your shoulder heals, let's aim to become pro together." Daichi declared, stepping back from the hug and holding him at arms length.

Ken's eyes widened before a smile formed on his face. That's right, he wanted to live his life without regrets. This meant fulfilling his baseball dreams as well.

He nodded, "Yeah it's a promise. Let's get to the NPB and then the Majors!"

"Hahahaha"

The two laughed in the middle of the street like a couple of old men.

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

Chapter 33 - 33: Family (1)

After the two had made up in the middle of the street, they finally arrived at Ken's house in good spirits, almost forgetting the entire encounter with Daichi's mother. The amazing smell of a well-cooked dinner floated in the air as Ken announced their arrival.

"We're home."

"Welcome home. Did you fetch Daichi?" His mother asked before turning around.

Her smiling expression instantly sank as she saw the bruises and scratches on Daichi's face as well as the tear marks that had been left.

"Daichi dear what happened!?" She rushed forward and cradled his face in her hands, looking him over like a cat fawning over her kitten.

"Kenny, I certainly hope this was not your doing." Her tone lowered to an icy level, causing Ken to shudder unconsciously.

Thankfully, Daichi quickly cleared up the misunderstanding and explained what had happened. Although the truth had only made Yuki's face turn even more ugly as she heard the tale of abuse that he had been subjected to.

However, once he was done she took a step back and fixed her apron.

"Let's have some dinner first. There's a spare room you can stay in tonight and you can borrow some of Dad's pajamas, I'll wash your uniform tonight so you don't have to go home." She said, before turning her attention back to the stove.

"As for what happens moving forward, we'll wait till my husband returns from America tomorrow." Yuki's voice was quivering, clearly trying to hold in her anger.

Ken's adult brain kicked into gear as he thought along the lines of what his mother and father would decide. The most likely outcome would be that they would invite Daichi to move into the spare room, but would Daichi's mother allow it?

He quickly got out his phone and took some photos of Daichi's injuries after telling Daichi to trust him. The boy agreed and he quickly stashed away his phone containing all the evidence he needed to keep that woman away.

Despite the circumstances, dinner went well, with the two boys stuffing their bellies with all that they could contain. They were tired, not only from baseball practice, but they were emotionally spent after all that had happened.

"Kenny, show Daichi to the spare room and where the bathroom is. Your father is on a flight right now so I will have to wait till tomorrow morning to talk to him. Head to bed early and get some good sleep." Yuki gave her orders and began to clean the kitchen dutifully, albeit a little rougher than usual.

The boys only had enough energy to get cleaned up and head to bed. The thought of studying had never entered their minds as they finally got into bed.

Daichi was asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow, feeling the most safe and secure he had ever felt in his life.

Ken on the other hand felt his mind wander. He of course wanted Daichi to move in with them more than anyone else, but he had also been an adult at one point, so he was well aware of the things called bills.

He wasn't exactly sure what kind of financial circumstances his parents had, but he figured that his Dad would be decently paid by the Yokohoma Warriors. His mother on the other hand was a stay at home wife, meaning she had no income.

Ken was a little stressed that they may not be able to afford everything that came with adopting another 15 year old boy. However there was nothing that he could do about it.

The legal age to work in Japan was 16, which meant he couldn't help out even if he wanted to. He was technically from the future so maybe he could get money from betting? However he never really took notice of things that he could bet on because he never had spare money.

In the end, he would have to wait and see what his father decided to do tomorrow. He quickly said a prayer, hoping that everything would turn out okay and Daichi wouldn't be forced to live with that woman ever again.

Before sleeping, Ken consumed the last remaining Balance and Coordination Elixir, once again feeling a bout of nausea before his head hit the pillow.

The next morning, Ken woke up feeling a little groggy. He checked his alarm clock only to see that there was 1 minute until the alarm was scheduled to go off, causing a wry smile to appear on his face.

It was unlikely that the extra 1 minute of sleep would have made a difference, but there was still a tiny speck of annoyance that came with waking up before ones alarm.

He quickly brought up the system in order to see how effective the Elixir had been.

[You have consumed: C-grade Balance and Coordination Elixir.]

[Balance and Coordination grade has been increased by 1!]

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. C+)

Balance and Coordination: C+

Agility: B-

Strength: C-

Stamina: C

The wry smile stayed on Ken's face as he saw the subsequent notification. He was a bit disappointed that the Balance and Coordination Elixir had only yielded an increase of 1 grade, but there was nothing he could do about it.

However, it wasn't that bad in retrospect. He had a feeling that the C-grade Elixirs would lose effectiveness altogether once his skills reached a certain threshold.

He quickly got changed and headed out of his room to go wake up Daichi. However, he could already hear him talking to his mother downstairs while she sipped on her morning coffee.

"Morning." Ken said with a smile, making his way downstairs.

"Morning Ken." Daichi said, his face still sporting the battle scars of the previous night, yet he seemed in good spirits.

"How did you sleep?"

"Like a log!" He replied, breaking out into a stretch. "Ready for our morning run?"

"Of course. Mom, we'll be back in an hour or so for breakfast." Ken said, waving as he walked out the door.

"Take care you two. Your father should be home very shortly." She replied, returning the wave.

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

Chapter 34 - 34: Family (2)

The morning air filled his lungs as Ken pumped his legs and took in the sights. Ever since incorporating these morning runs into his schedule, he felt as if his quality of life had increased.

With the accompaniment of Daichi, the two could spur each other on, allowing them to go above and beyond their limits and push further and faster.

After about an hour of non-stop running with sprints in between, the two stopped at a park which was near home and began their stretching and flexibility regime. This allowed their muscles to cool down and prevent injuries.

Meanwhile, back at home. Yuki had just finished explaining what had happened last night and what state Daichi had come over in. Chris kept his composure and listened to everything that his wife had to say

However, inwardly he was seething. He couldn't fathom how a woman would be able to treat her child in such a way, especially such a good kid like Daichi.

"What do you suggest honey?" Chris said simply, sitting back in his chair and taking a sip of coffee.

"Well, of course we have to take him in! I can't imagine sending him back to his abusive mother." Yuki said matter-of-factly.

Chris nodded, he was of the same opinion. "However, it may not be that easy. Depending on what his mother decides to do." He replied.

"What do you mean? Can't he just move in without her permission?"

"No. To put it simply, we cannot force her to do anything unless we go through the legal system and have her stripped of her rights. Even if this happens, the courts will likely send Daichi to live with other family members or even put him in a foster home."

"Oh no... then what do we do?" Yuki looked stressed, almost as if it were own son that was in jeopardy.

Chris smiled upon seeing the huge heart of his wife. There were many reasons that he married her, yet none were greater than this.

He stood up and hugged her deeply, his tall frame encompassing her gently.

"There is one other option..."

A while later, both Daichi and Ken walked in the door, coated by a healthy amount of sweat from their earlier run. They were laughing and chatting away as usual, until they noticed that there was someone else in the room.

"Dad! Welcome home." Ken said with a smile.

Daichi also bowed and said something similar in turn. When he rose his head though, he saw Chris's smiling face flicker ever so slightly before returning to normal.

"Welcome home you two. Go and get cleaned up and changed for school, we'll talk more over breakfast." He said calmly, however he felt a seething rage bubbling beneath his cool exterior.

Once the two boys left he turned to his wife without a word, yet she instantly knew what he was thinking. She nodded before her face blossomed into a beautiful smile and tears welled up in her eyes.

Chris returned the smile, having now made up his mind.

Daichi and Ken returned to the dining table a while later, both dressed in their school uniforms. Yuki had washed and ironed both of their uniforms, something that Daichi was unaccustomed to.

"Have a seat boys." Chris said, gesturing to the chairs opposite himself and Yuki.

Ken nudged Daichi with his elbows and gave him a wink, trying to calm down his nerves. They had briefly talked about possibilities during their stretching session to which he had been shocked.

Of course Daichi would be thrilled to move in with Ken and his family, however he was afraid of getting his hopes up. If Ken's parents decided that it was too burdensome to take him in, then he would be crushed when he had to return home.

This was the reason why he had tried to keep his expectations low, to avoid being hurt as he always had.

Chris waited until the two were seated before opening his mouth. "I won't beat around the bush Daichi. What your mother has done to you is unacceptable to do to a child." He stated sternly.

"However, we can not forcefully take you in without your mother's consent. If she presses the issue and we refuse to send you back home, it's possible that we could be met with kidnapping charges."

Both Daichi and Ken's face paled at these words, they had never expected that things would take such a turn. Of course Daichi was the most affected, if it was between him living in that place and Ken's parents facing charges, he would without a doubt choose to suffer in silence.

Ken looked like he was about to speak up, however his mother made a shushing gesture which kept the words locked in his throat.

Daichi had already lowered his head and had not seen what had transpired. He was about to apologize for causing them trouble, however he was interrupted.

"But... If we were to adopt you into our family, then she would have no more say as to what happened to you." Chris continued, his tone warm and gentle.

Daichi felt his heart jump up to his throat as he lifted his head and gazed into the eyes of the man who had just said these words. These words that took little effort to say, yet held the weight of his whole life within them.

He felt hot tears pouring down his face as he struggled to keep his composure.

Ken too felt himself tearing up, seeing his most precious friends reaction. He had already been thinking of ways to get Daichi out of that place, even if it meant running away from school and home. However, his father had other plans.

"W-Why would you do that for me?" Daichi's voice was high pitched, clearly showing how difficult it was for him to speak with all of his emotions in turmoil.

Yuki couldn't stand seeing the poor boy on the verge of breaking down and started crying herself. She was about to get up to go and give him a proper hug, but Chris placed his hand up to stop her.

"We've gotten to know you well over the past month or so. If I'm honest, you already feel like part of the family. You and Kenny are also inseparable. Do we need any more reasons?" Chris smiled warmly.

Daichi was speechless. He saw the exact same smile on Ken's face when he had saved him from those bullies nearly a month ago before he declared him as his best friend out of nowhere.

Now here was his father, also trying to save him from his abusive mother, wearing the same smile. His gaze moved to Ken's mother whose tears were falling in droves as she sobbed.

Were these his guardian angels sent from heaven to save him? What had he done to deserve such wonderful people in his lives.

Before he could respond, Chris's face turned serious and his words got everyone's attention.

"Daichi. I need a definite answer from you before we can make any arrangements. Will you allow us to adopt you into our family?"

Daichi could feel everyone's gaze turn to him with expectation. But he didn't have to think for long.

"Y-Yes... please"

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

Chapter 35 - 35: Moment of Truth (1)

Ken's dad moved fast. He talked to some of his contacts from university in order to get the process started as soon as possible. Seeing those wounds and bruises upon Daichi's face had caused something to snap inside of him.

There was no way that he would allow the poor child to return to his home and cop more abuse. Who knows what Daichi had suffered through before this incident, especially from a young age when he couldn't defend himself.

He marched over to Daichi's address after gathering all the required paperwork, his heart beating inside his chest wildly. There was a part of him that wanted to give her what she deserved, yet that would do more harm than good.

So as he approached the door, he took a few seconds to calm himself and knocked on the door. Moments later, he could hear the sounds of beer cans rattling onto the ground, along with a few grunts and groans.

Soon enough, a woman with frazzled hair and bags under her eyes opened the door. Judging by her drowsy expression, he had probably woken her up despite it being almost 2pm during the day.

Due to her being only 5 feet tall, she had to crane her neck to look up at Chris whom was around 6'3 in height. There was an instant look of fear as she looked upon his intimidating frame standing in front of her door.

It probably didn't help that his face did not look the most friendly at this moment in time.

Without waiting for her to speak, Chris opened his mouth.

"I am here on behalf of Daichi, your son. Can I come inside?" He asked, his tone flat without any hint of politeness.

The woman stared at him for a while before quickly trying to shut the door in his face, only to fail at the last moment thanks to Chris stopping it with his foot. She struggled for a little while before shouting out threats.

"W-What are you doing? I'll call the cops!" Her voice sounded frantic as she tried with all her might to close the door.

"Let me in so we can talk like civilized adults. You do know how to be a civilized adult don't you?" Chris's words were dripping with venom as he stared at the woman's face plainly.

Daichi's mother struggled for a little while longer before it seemed as if she had finally given up. She opened the door and stood to the side, letting Chris inside.

He calmly entered the threshold and the first thing he noticed was the mess. Empty beer cans and bottles laid around the lounge room, as well as trash scattered wantonly in the surroundings.

Chris said nothing, yet he felt another sense of reassurance that he was making the correct decision. It was clear that this woman was in no state to take care of a child, even if that child was 15 years old.

"Is there somewhere we can talk?"

"Dining table." She muttered, clearing away some of the bottles and leading the way to the kitchen area.

Chris followed and was surprised that the dining table was only cluttered with mail instead of trash and beer cans like the lounge room.

Without care, she grabbed the pile of mail and placed it on one of the spare chairs before sitting down. The woman seemed to not care that her house was not in a presentable state for a guest, a far cry from how his own wife operated.

Chris took a seat and placed his brown bag on the table before turning his gaze on her.

"Let me get to the point here. What you did to Daichi was unacceptable." He paused, trying to gauge her reaction. However there was nothing, almost as if he was looking at someone who was not capable of feeling remorse.

"I am here for you to sign some forms and remove your rights as his parent and legal guardian." Chris continued, pulling out some prefilled forms and handing them to her across the table.

Daichi's mother finally seemed to have a reaction as she took the papers out of his hands. Chris finally thought that she may have felt remorse over her actions, but he was quickly proven wrong.

"What's in it for me?" She asked in a husky tone, her gaze now fixed on him.

Chris felt a rising anger threaten to take over his self control. Instead of recognizing her mistakes and trying to amend them, she merely looked for ways in which she could benefit from the ordeal.

Just before he was about to speak his mind, she finally spoke more than a few words.

"Look. I know that unless I sign these forms that Daichi will be forced to come and live here again. You could even take me to court over it, but he'll just go into foster care because we have no other family."

"So how about you make it worth my while and I'll sign these papers for you." A small smile played on the corner of her lips, as if she had just played a finishing move in a chess game.

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

Chapter 36 - 36: Moment of Truth (2)

Chris shuddered involuntarily after hearing those words, yet in the next moment he was filled with revulsion. How could this woman say such things involving her son? What did he do to deserve such treatment from her?

His eyes narrowed before he reached into his bag and pulled out a wad of 10,000 yen bills. He had hoped to use compassion and remorse in order to convince Daichi's mother to sign the papers, however he had secured some money just in case.

With a stern expression, he placed the money on the table and said coldly. "2 million yen. No more, no less."

Her face lit up upon seeing the money, the most emotion that she had shown since he had arrived. She reached forward and began to eagerly count the money, not caring how she looked from the outside.

"Ahem." Chris cleared his throat, doing his best to keep his composure. He just needed to get the damn forms signed and he would never have to deal with this woman in the future, this was the only thing keeping him sane at this moment.

After being interrupted while she happily counted her money, Daichi's mother scowled at him in annoyance.

"Give me a damn pen." She said rudely.

Chris quickly retrieved one from his briefcase and handed it to her before advising her to only sign the parts that were marked.

She didn't bother to respond, nor read the contents of the 10 page document, choosing instead to hastily flip through the pages and sign where he had placed labels.

With a flourish of her hand, she handed the pen and the document back to him before picking up the money once more and counting it greedily.

Chris took the papers and placed them carefully in his bag before standing up from his chair. He took one last look at the woman who had so callously treated her son for the past 15 years, even selling him for a mere 2 million yen to a stranger.

"I hope that one day you will come to understand what you have done to your only son. Ironically, your callousness today was probably the best thing that you've ever done for him throughout his whole life."

His words fell upon deaf ears as the woman either chose not to listen to his words, or was too caught up in her new wads of cash to acknowledge him. He let out a small sigh before turning around and letting himself out.

Once he entered the street he felt a warm breeze hit his face, breathing life into his weary soul. His tensed body relaxed, causing his legs to feel like jelly, almost making him stumble a little.

He knew that this interaction would not be pleasant, however he persevered and was successful in the end. Chris had also wanted to gather Daichi's things after getting the document signed, however the atmosphere in the house was suffocating.

Having been so tense and on edge whilst controlling his anger had really taken its toll on him. They would just have to come by when Daichi's mother had gone to work, after all they weren't that far away.

Chris began his small walk back home, enjoying the early afternoon spring breeze which filled him with vitality. That was until he remembered that his beautiful wife was probably anxiously pacing around the kitchen while she waited for him.

"Ah crap, I shouldn't dilly dally." He exclaimed before breaking into a brisk walk.

Yuki was on her umpteenth lap around the kitchen, anxiously biting her nails as she waited for her husband to return with the news. She had been worried about sending her husband into such a place, however he always had a knack for soothing her.

'If Daichi can last 15 years with that woman, then as his soon-to-be father, I can last 15 minutes.'

His confident words echoed in her head as she tried to battle the worry and anxiousness that battered her fragile heart. She tried to disregard the what-if's and keep faith in her husband.

"I'm home."

The sound of the door opening and a deep voice startled her out of her swirling emotions, almost causing her to jump a few feet in the air.

"Honey! Are you okay? What happened? Did she sign the form?" Yuki ran over, firing rapid questions at him with her face showing a multitude of emotions.

"Calm down first, let's have a seat and talk about it. We need to be wary of our blood pressure at our age." Chris said with a smile, even letting out a chuckle after his bad joke.

Normally, Yuki was fantastic at reading peoples emotions, especially her husband and sons. However, perhaps it was because of her current anxious state, she couldn't already guess the answer from how he acted.

She quickly took a seat, yet she couldn't help but tap her foot as she waited for the news. What Chris said next would have a huge effect on not only Daichi's life, but also her family.

Chris sat down and took out his briefcase, calmly collecting the forms from inside and placing them in front of his wife. In the next moment his face turned up into a big smile as he announced.

"Look's like it's going to be a bit more rowdy in this house with another teenage son."

Yuki could only cover her mouth, feeling a surge of joy and happiness as her eyes teared up instantly. A sense of relief washed over her, which soon turned into sobs and tears of joy which streamed down her pretty face like a waterfall.

"Come here." Chris said, standing up and pulling her into a deep embrace. The two stood like this for a long time, enjoying each others warmth and happiness as they entered a new chapter in their lives.

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

Chapter 37 - 37: First Game (1)

It was a long few days wait as Chris and Yuki waited for the adoption paperwork to be processed by the legal systems. They had decided to refrain from telling the boys the good news until everything was finalized, in case there were any issues.

However, Ken was no longer a naive teenager. He caught glimpses of his mother humming and dancing happily as she cooked dinner, or his father's glimmering eyes when he looked at Daichi from time to time.

Although he had an idea, he decided to keep his guesses to himself so as not to spoil the good news for everyone. Daichi and Ken both continued to go to school and baseball practice as usual, not forgetting to keep up with their daily exercises despite no new quests being issued by the system.

Ken had taken the remaining Strength and Agility Elixirs in that week. Unfortunately, his suspicions about the C-grade Elixirs were true. While he had gained 3 grades in strength, his Agility had not improved at all.

Which meant that C-grade Elixirs were not able to improve his attributes once they reached the B- grade. Thus he would have to either break through his limits in training, or wait till the next lot of quests were issued.

Ken woke up on Saturday morning, glancing at his alarm which was set to go off in a few minutes time. His body clock had now been adjusted to his early morning routine now, meaning he could probably turn off the alarm for good. However, he refrained.

He was feeling a little bittersweet today. This was because today was their friendly against the Kanagawa Senior baseball team. While Daichi had made the starting line up as a second baseman thanks to his stellar performances in fielding and batting during practice, Ken had been left behind.

Ken had made some improvements in his batting over the past week, but they were not enough to make up for his lack of throwing capabilities, nor were they great compared to others on the team.

If he were to enter the lineup, he would be relegated to the last in the batting lineup. The most frustrating this was that he had not had a chance to showcase the skills he received from the system with the training they were given.

He couldn't show off his bunting, or base running abilities. Perhaps he would have been able to do so in the friendly match today, but the Coach had already listed him as a bench player.

Another thing that annoyed him a little was that his parents would both be attending the game today. Even during his previous life, his father was rarely able to attend his games due to his work.

Lamenting his current situation, he got out of bed and got ready for his morning run. The game was at 10am so they had plenty of time to work up a sweat and eat breakfast before needing to gather for warm ups.

He met Daichi downstairs and instantly felt better. His friend was clearly nervous about his first game, even if it was just a friendly. Ken thought that it was hilarious, however he didn't make fun of him.

The two completed their run and stretching which seemed to calm Daichi down quite a bit. They returned home and showered before sitting down for breakfast at the dining table as usual.

"Where is dad?" Ken asked curiously, not seeing him at the table.

"Oh, he had to run a few errands this morning but he'll be here to drive us to the game." Yuki answered, unable to hide the bright smile on her face.

Even Daichi felt as if something was weird, however he didn't feel like it was a bad thing, quickly turning his attention to the bacon and eggs on his plate. He had already integrated into the family seamlessly, not once thinking about his mother for this whole week.

Soon enough Ken's dad walked in the door with a similar smile on his face. He locked eyes with his wife and sent a wink her way, eliciting a giggle in response.

Before Ken could comment on the two lovebirds actions, his father swept up a piece of bacon and took a few bites with vigor.

"Who is ready to play some baseball?"

Daichi's face lit up and he answered like the true kid he was. "Me!"

"Alright well hurry up and finish your breakfast. You won't be able to hit any home runs on an empty stomach right?" He flashed a grin and nudged Daichi's large shoulders.

"Yes sir!"

Soon enough everyone left the house along with their bags and equipment. Daichi felt a little awkward considering he didn't have his own baseball gear, but thankfully the boys had similar sized feet so Ken was able to lend him a spare pair.

They soon arrived at the Kanagawa baseball field which was around 20 minutes drive away from their home.

"It looks like there's a few people here already warming up. You two go and get ready, we'll be in the spectators seats." Chris said, shooing the two away.

"Thanks Dad."

"Thanks Mr. Takagi."

Ken and Daichi made their way over to their Coach while Chris and Yuki watched them with a smile.

"Why didn't you want to tell him yet?" Yuki asked, wrapping her arm around her husbands waist and leaning against him.

Chris pulled her in close and responded softly. "It's his first ever baseball game, even if it's only a friendly. If Daichi wins then it will be a cherry on the cake, if he loses then it will cheer him up. Let's let him focus on playing first."

Yuki let out a chuckle.

"Daichi, Ken. You two came here together?" Keisuke made his way over, shielding his eyes from the morning sun.

"Yeah, he lives close by." Ken said, not wanting to expand.

"What's the Coach's mood like today?" he continued, changing the subject.

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

Chapter 38 - 38: First Game (2)

Keisuke thought it was a little odd, but he changed gears quickly enough. "He's been a little weird this morning. I swear I even saw him smiling not long ago." He leaned in and whispered, afraid to be overheard.

It was then that the Coach finally noticed the two new arrivals and his face lit up, a smile forming on his lips. "Ah! Daichi you made it."

The smile faded once his gaze fell to Ken and Keisuke, "Alright let's go and warm up." He said, turning around and heading towards the field.

"Man what's with this preferential treatment..." Keisuke whined, turning his attention to Daichi.

Ken thought it was funny, despite him also being ignored. He nudged Keisuke in the ribs with his elbow and joked, "Maybe when you can also hit a home run off our Ace you'll also get some attention."

Keisuke laughed a little but he fired back, "Says you who can't even hit the ball half of the time."

"Hahaha." Ken laughed aloud. Perhaps that comment would have offended him earlier in the week, but he was currently in a good mood even though he was a little depressed in the morning.

Maybe it was because his mind was actually 24 years old and he could handle criticism a lot better than most teenagers. There was also the fact that he knew the system would fully heal his arm in just under a years time.

Soon enough, the whole team arrived and the Coach started to go over some tactics for the game. Their main focus was on the Ace pitcher whom Kanagawa had acquired late last year.

They didn't have too much data about him, but his tall height and flexible limbs gave the coach a bad feeling.

Once the tactics were done, the teams lined up and faced each other, bowing and wishing each other to have a good game. This was a common practice in Japanese baseball in all age groups, including professional play.

This was a way to show respect to your opponents and the game.

Kenta Shouichi, the Seiko captain was also a third year student who happened to play as a third baseman. He won the toss and chose to field first, something the coach had requested should they get a chance.

Ken could see that Daichi was nervous, so he placed his hand on his shoulder, feeling the boys body quiver in response.

"Hey man, don't think about it too much. Remember what we practiced and go have some fun." Ken said with a smile.

He could also remember his first game in elementary school where his father had done the same thing for him. As his thoughts moved to his father, he turned his attention over to the stands only to see them both waving.

"Look, we've got our own personal fans in the crowd."

Daichi turned his attention and couldn't help but smile at the two. He felt their support even though they were so far away, filling him with strength and confidence.

"Thanks Ken, I'll do my best." He replied before jogging onto the pitch and taking up his position on the second base.

"Show them what you've got." Ken muttered before finding going and taking a seat on the dugout bench.

"Huh? Why isn't Ken the starting pitcher?" Chris exclaimed, seeing his son sitting on the bench.

"That's odd. Maybe they want to rest for a while because it's a friendly?" Yuki said, tilting her head in confusion.

"But wouldn't Ken have been complaining to us all week if that was the case?"

"Yeah, that's true. Hopefully he'll get some playing time."

"Me too. I haven't seen him pitch since the start of middle school, I wonder how fast he can throw now." Chris stated, feeling his anticipation rise.

"Play ball!" The umpire shouted once everyone was in position.

Kouichi let out a pent up breath upon the mound as he looked up at the first batter in the opposing lineup. He was short yet looked light on his feet, he was probably a fast runner.

He saw the sign for a fastball on the outside and nodded his head. He began his wind up and sent the ball flying towards the catchers glove, however he instantly knew that it was off target.

Instead of flying towards the outside of the strike zone, it floated straight down the middle. Even if it was still fast, there was no way that any batter at their level would leave an easy pitch like that one unpunished.

DONG!

The sound of the bat hitting the ball with force reverberated through the field. Kouichi felt the ball whoosh past the right side of his face towards short stop and second base. He quickly turned around, hoping that it wouldn't get past the two defenders.

Keisuke was frozen in place as he finally caught sight of the ball rocketing towards his left side, but it was too fast. He instantly knew that he wouldn't have the time to adjust his body and reach out with his glove to stop it.

PAH

The sound of the ball hitting leather entered his ears, confounding him. He turned his head only to see Daichi with his outstretched arm, now laying down on the ground, covered in dirt.

He could only watch on in bewilderment as Daichi got to his feet and showed the umpired the ball that was wedged inside of his glove.

"Whoa! What a catch!" Kouichi was the first to come and congratulate Daichi's amazing reflexes as he rubbed the top of his head with vigor.

"Out!"

Kanagawa's first batter managed to reach first before being told he was out by the umpire on first base. He was about to argue when he finally noticed the commotion around the second base.

"He caught that!?" The boys face contorted in shock until he was shoed off the base.

"Damn, that kid has got some good reflexes... I wonder if I could use him as a catcher?" The Coach muttered, within earshot of Ken.

Ken's face turned up into a smile, 'Oh if only you knew Coach...' he said inwardly.

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

Chapter 39 - 39: Injury (1)

"Nice catch!" Chris yelled out from the crowd, feeling his blood boil with excitement.

Yuki too was jumping up and down with happiness as she saw the quick reflexes of Daichi. She had heard from Chris that Daichi was talented, however she had never been present while they were training.

The game continued shortly after with the morale on the team visibly increasing.

Kouichi breathed a sigh of relief thanks to Daichi cleaning up his mess. The next batter came up to the batters box and gripped his bat tightly, focusing his attention on the pitcher.

The next pitch came flying towards the strike zone, making a crisp pah sound as it landed in the catchers glove.

"Strike one."

It was only when the umpire called the pitch when the batter registered what had happened. He originally thought the pitch was too high, only for it to drop at the last moment.

"Forkball!?"

The batter looked towards his Coach in the dugout with a confused expression. They had not expected a different pitcher to start in this game, meaning this had caught them completely off guard.

Being in the same prefecture as Seiko, they had crossed paths many times in the fight to win the Kanto Tournament. However, that had always been with their Ace pitcher Ken Takagi.

The Coach kept his poker face as he made a few hand signals, telling the batter to continue to watch the ball, even if he gets out. The batter nodded, receiving the info and turning back towards the pitcher.

"Strike"

"Strike! Out!"

The umpire called as the batter walked back towards the dugout with a mystified expression. The next two pitches were fastballs on the outside which he probably could have hit if he really tried.

The Kanagawa Coach said a few words to the next batter who then made his way up to the batters box. Kouichi had a feeling that he would be swinging right from the first pitch.

Hikaru made the signal for a fastball on the outside, to which Kouichi shook his head. It was only when he motioned for a fork that he nodded.

At this point in time, Hikaru was not experienced enough to properly lead the pitcher. This is why Coach Yoshida had given Kouichi the 3rd year a lot of freedom to pitch how he wanted.

This was a far cry from his experience as a relief pitcher in the past two years.

Kouichi made his pitch, sending the ball directly to the center of the strike zone.

'Meatball right down the middle!'

The batters eyes lit up as the ball flew towards. He swung hard, wanting to send the ball out of the park and get the first run on the board.

DING

However, the ball felt weird coming off the bat and causing him to pause. Dirt was kicked up as the ball grounded towards the pitcher.

"Damn!" he cursed before dropping the bat and running towards first base as quickly as he could.

Kouichi reacted fast, stepping off the mound and bending down to collect the ball. In his haste, the ball slipped out of his hand before he could throw it towards first base, bouncing a few feet in front of him.

"Argh!" He grunted in annoyance and once again collected the ball, throwing it to first base, hoping that it would make it in time.

Jin Hatake, the first baseman held his foot on the first base and stretched his glove out in anticipation for the ball. He could hear the batter bounding his large body towards the base, making his heart beat fast in his chest.

It seemed as if the ball was going to be just out of his reach though. But instead of taking his foot off the base, he stretched his entire body out and somehow managed to capture the poor throw.

A moment later, the large batter stepped on the first base which was followed by a shout of pain. Jin dropped to the ground holding his ankle and writhing around on the dirt, clearly in agony.

"Damn! What happened?" Kouichi was the first person to run over, feeling a huge weight of guilt come over him for his poor throw.

The first base umpire paled and he quickly waved to the medics on the sideline to come over before comforting the teenager on the ground.

Coach Yoshida also seemed worried as he ran onto the field as play was stopped.

Ken's face contorted. How had they received an injury in the very first innings, and in a friendly match of all things? It was then that his attention was snatched away by the sound of a notification.

DING

SYSTEM HAS DETECTED THAT USER WILL BE PLAYING IN THE SEIKO VS KANAGAWA SENIOR FRIENDLY BASEBALL MATCH - NEW MISSION AVAILABLE.

'What is this?' Ken balked, not believing his eyes and ears. He quickly opened up the system after checking that no one had their eyes on him.

MISSIONS:

#NEW MISSION: Get into Starting Lineup

*Task 1: Drop no catches throughout the game

*Task 2: Get on base or advance the runner 3 times

*Task 3: Impress Coach Yoshida

*Task 4: Win the game

REWARDS:

>B-grade random elixir

>Silver tier Lottery ticket

>5 Major points

PUNISHMENT: (In case of failure)

>Relegated to the bench

THIS MISSION IS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT TO THE CAREER OF THE USER AND WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY ACCEPTED. GOOD LUCK.

Ken's eyes widened as he viewed the new mission which had appeared out of nowhere, yet his mind was filled with questions. Firstly, how did it know that he was going to be playing this match? Was it because Jin got injured?

But what was to say that the Coach would put him in as a replacement? He had never played 1st base before, so there was no way he would be the first to be subbed, right?

Yet as he was thinking this, the coach returned with a grave look on his face.

"Ken. Grab your hat and glove and head to first base." He said gruffly, as if he would not take no for an answer.

"Y-Yes Coach." Ken answered, feeling a mixture of emotions. He saw Jin being taken off on a stretcher, his face contorted in pain.

As he walked onto the field, he saw that everyone was in a somber mood, especially Kouichi who obviously blamed himself for the incident. Ken with all of his wisdom instantly knew that their performance was going to get worse.

If Kouichi let this affect him then they would start conceding runs and he had no confidence in being able to outscore the Kanagawa Senior team.

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

Chapter 40 - 40: Injury (2)

"Everyone gather up!" Ken shouted, bringing everybody in to the center of the diamond. The outfielders even came over, packing the center of the pitch.

"First of all, it is no ones fault that Jin got injured." He clarified, focusing his gaze on Kouichi who still looked to be shaken.

"This is the final friendly before we start the spring tournament. We need to give Coach some reassurance that we are the right players for the squad, otherwise most of us will be riding the bench for the entire season. This is our chance to set the pace and go into the tournament with momentum."

Slowly, the team started to lift their heads, resonating with his words. Ken decided to strike while the iron was hot.

"We've beat Kanagawa 9 times in the past 2 years of friendlies and tournaments. Let's all work together and get our 10th win today!" Ken finished, putting his glove into the center of the circle.

Daichi was the next to put his glove on top, sending a smile towards Ken. The others quickly followed suit and Ken turned to Kouichi with a smile.

"Send us off Ace."

Kouichi seemed startled for a moment as he turned his gaze to Ken. He suddenly felt a wave of determination, especially with the expectant looks from his other teammates. This was the first time he felt the pressure of being the Ace, yet instead of weighing him down with their expectations, his teammates were supporting him.

"SEIKO! FIGHT!"

"FIGHT!"

The team raised their hands with the chant before heading back to their positions. Coach Yoshida raised his eyebrow, inwardly shocked. He had not told Ken to call the meeting, nor had he given any instructions to the team.

"Interesting..." He said, cupping his chin with his hand in thought.

Even when Ken had been the Ace, he had never taken it upon himself to do such things, merely letting his pitching do the talking.

Either way, this was a good thing for their team so the Coach let it be. The look in Kouichi's face showed that he was no longer caught up in his guilt and was ready to continue the game.

His next 3 pitches were dynamite as they easily fooled the Kanagawa 3rd batter.

"3 outs, change!" The umpire yelled.

Ken didn't even have time to get used to the first base and was already sent to the dugout thanks to Kouichi's beautiful pitching. He walked over to the new Ace and put his arms around his shoulder.

"Hey man, remember you can let them hit a few times, we also want to play." He sounded like he was joking, but inside he wasn't sure if he could complete the mission if he didn't at least get the ball thrown to him.

"Haha, we'll see we'll see." Kouichi said, laughing it off as a joke.

"Ha ha..." Ken laughed along, but inwardly he was anxious.

'Did I fire him up too much?' he thought, feeling a tinge of regret.

The Coach came over to the players and opened his mouth, "The batting line up will be the same, with Ken replacing Jin as the second batter. Any complaints?"

"No Coach." The group answered.

"Ken. You told me that you could bunt? If Keisuke manages to get on base I want you to do a sacrifice bunt okay?"

"Yes Coach!" Ken replied while putting his helmet and gloves on.

"Great. Let's go."

Keisuke approached the batters box and hit the bat on the tip of each shoe before lining up towards the pitcher. He was tall and very skinny, looking as if he would be toppled over by a mild wind.

However, his gaze was confident as he stared down the plate at him.

'This guy looks like a daddy-long-legs spider...' Keisuke inwardly commented.

The tall student performed his wind-up and sent the ball rocketing towards the strike zone. Keisuke's face couldn't help but turn up into a smile as he could easily identify the course.

DONG

He smacked the ball which flew directly between first and second base and had plenty of time to make it to first base before the right outfield player picked it up. Keisuke grinned widely, sending a thumbs up to Ken who was on his way to the batters box.

"Just try and hit the ball okay?" He shouted, receiving a look of annoyance back from Ken.

'What do you mean hit the ball!? All I'm doing is bunting...!' Ken quipped inwardly.

The pitcher received the ball back from the outfielder, not looking too impressed that his first pitch was easily hit. However, his face changed when he saw it was Ken in the batters box.

Kanagawa Senior were very familiar with Ken considering how often they had played each other. They also knew that he was an awful batter with terrible statistics during his middle school career.

Therefore the pitcher Yoshinao Oyama felt a surge of confidence.

"I'm going to strike you out boy." He murmured.

Ken gripped his bat tightly, waiting for the pitch to come his way. As long as it was anywhere within the strike zone, he should be able to get bat on ball.

Yoshinao's long arm sent the ball shuttling towards him at a respectable speed of 85km/h with its course heading towards the outside edge.

Ken's eyes lit up, this was it! He leaned over the batters box and moved his right hand on the barrel of the bat, getting into his bunting form.

TONK

The ball bounced off the bat and landed at the perfect distance between himself and the pitcher, filling him with shock. However it didn't last long as he quickly dropped the bat and ran with his all towards first base.

Ken felt his body fill with strength as he ran the fastest he had ever run towards first base. The added bonus from his Quick First Step and First Pitch Hitter skills gave him an increase of 2 grades in Agility, bringing it to a B+.

"SAFE!"

By the time Yoshinao had reacted and collected the ball and thrown it to first, Ken had just landed his foot on the first base, beating the ball by just under a second.

"Whoa!"

The whole dugout stood up in wonder as Ken not only performed the bunt exceptionally, he also managed to make it to first base safely.

There were 2 people in attendance that were the most shocked and that was Coach Yoshida, as well as Chris. They both stared at the boy as if they were looking at an alien.

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