

Major League System

Chapter 81 - 81: Tryouts (1)

Naoki Hachimura walked down the steps towards the baseball fields of Osaka Toin High School with a notebook in his hands. He was dressed smart in business attire and wearing a brown overcoat to stave off the winter chill.

Despite being dressed well, the bags under his eyes and unkempt hair messed with his look. So rather than looking smart, he just seemed tired.

He let out a sigh, seeing his hot breath turn into white mist upon leaving his mouth. In the lead up to the new school year starting, his job was always crazy busy. Due to Toin's large budget, he had to travel to all parts of the country with the sole purpose of scouting talent.

Since it was the open tryouts, he was required to attend and watch the proceedings. However, Naoki only needed to participate in the final half of the tryouts when they would be playing friendly games.

The coaching staff was responsible for recording the physical information such as the 40-yard dash, standing long jump and running drills. Once this information was captured, the players would then be separated into their specific positions.

Naoki headed over to the main Coach and stood beside him, looking out at the field. The players were currently going through warm ups before the friendly teams were chosen.

"Are there any stand outs?" He asked casually.

"There's a couple, they should be highlighted on the sheet." The main coach said, handing him a clipboard with some data.

Naoki looked down the list briefly before coming across the highlighted names.

"Ryo Kata, Jun Tanaka and... Ken Takagi"

"Why does that name sound familiar?" Naoki murmured. However, seeing as the player was marked as a pitcher, he really could not put a face to the name.

He had a look at their scores and was rather impressed.

"It's not often you find such an athletic pitcher. How good is his arm?"

The main Coach grimaced a little, however he gave his honest opinion. "He has great control, but the pitches seem a little flat. It's almost as if he doesn't have enough strength to throw hard."

"Hmm. How about his batting and fielding?" Naoki inquired. If he was good at both, he could ask the player to give up on pitching and head to another position.

"We're just about to start the friendlies, did you want to see for yourself?"

Naoki nodded.

The main coach gave the signal to the others, who then promptly blew the whistle, getting everyone's attention.

Ken who was busy warming up his shoulder suddenly turned and headed over with the rest of the group. He believed that he had performed rather well in the physical tests, but what he was really looking forward to was showcasing his talents in a game.

"Okay, we're going to split you into groups. There will be 3 teams of 12 players and we'll compete in a round robin style match with only 5 innings. Since we have some people whose positions overlap, you may be forced to play in positions that you're not comfortable in. But I assure you we will take that into account when evaluating your performance."

The coach was a man in his mid thirties with a goatee who seemed rather fit. Despite it being only 10 degrees outside, he was currently only wearing a t-shirt and shorts.

"If I call your name, come grab a blue bib." One of the other coaches called out, holding a clipboard in his hands.

A few minutes later, everyone had been separated into one of three teams. Ken was on the team with red bibs.

When the coaches were calling out the names, Ken had heard someone familiar who had become a pro in his previous life. Ryo Kata, the second baseman and lead-off hitter for Hanshin Tigers.

He was surprised to see that the person in question actually looked rather timid, lacking the aura of a professional. Of course they were only in middle school right now, so he was still probably just a budding talent.

However, for his peace of mind Ken used the Identify skill on him.

NAME: Ryo Kata

AGE: 16

TALENT ASSESSMENT: B+

POTENTIAL: S

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: B+

>Pitching: C-

>Fielding: A

>Game Intelligence: B+

>Mental: C+

Ken felt a little better after viewing his stats. He had guessed that Ryo would be his biggest competition in this tryouts, so to see that he was above him in both Physical Fitness and potential gave him greater confidence.

Of course the coaching staff would have no way of seeing this information, so Ken needed to ensure that he would perform well during the games.

"Okay, Red team vs Blue team. Go to your assigned coach and see your batting lineup and positions."

Ken gripped his fist tight, it was finally time to showcase his skills and make an impression on the coaches.

After a few minutes, the team assembled into one of the dugouts. Ken was second in the batting lineup, behind a small teenager who had a long fringe. As they walked onto the field, he wondered how the boy would be able to see that ball coming with all of his hair in the way.

"Play ball!"

The Coach shouted, blowing the whistle. Almost as soon as he had called out, the atmosphere in the surroundings seemed to thicken. Ken felt as if he was in a quagmire, struggling to stay afloat.

He moved his gaze around the other players and could see how determined they were to win and secure a place in the famous Toin High.

'This pressure...'

Although he was a little caught off-guard, he soon adjusted. He wouldn't be intimidated by such an atmosphere, not when he needed to catch up to Daichi. His aspirations were much higher than just getting into Toin.

Toin was merely a step on his path towards becoming a professional baseball player.

He would not falter.

DONG

The sound of the bat striking the ball rang out, drawing his attention. The kid with the fringe had managed to hit the first pitch, sending it straight back to the pitcher who promptly threw him out at first base.

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

Chapter 82 - 82: Tryouts (2)

Dejected, the teen headed back to the dugout, not making eye contact with Ken on the way past. Or at least, Ken didn't think he was, it was hard to tell with that fringe.

Ken stepped up to the batters box, feeling a whole bunch of eyes on him. In the next moment he felt the sounds in his surroundings disappear, causing a smile to tug on the corner of his lips.

His skill Crunch Time had activated, bringing his whole body into a focused state.

'Lucky me.'

The ball left the pitchers hand and flew towards him, seemingly in slow motion. Ken's heightened senses made it feel as if he had a complete grasp of everything within a 2 meter radius of himself.

He could feel where the catchers glove was, could see the trajectory of the ball and could even count how many times it spun through the air. Information continued to pour into Ken's brain as he calculated the most optimal timing to swing his bat.

DONG!!

Ken didn't even need to look at the ball to know where it was going. He casually placed the bat on the ground and began jogging around the bases, relishing in the state he was just in.

This was the first time he had experienced the Crunch Time skill which increased all of his attributes by 2 grades. It truly felt like he was having an out of body experience.

Naoki stared at the boy who had just hit one of the biggest home runs he had ever seen, even by high school standards.

"What is that kid's name?" Naoki asked, feeling a little giddy.

"Ah, that's Ken Takagi. He's one of the ones we highlighted." The main coach stated, still tracking the ball which had yet to land on the ground, his face filled with awe.

Only now did something click in Naoki's brain. It had been over 6 months since he attended the Kanto Tournament in Yokohama and Ken looked a little different.

He couldn't be blamed for not remembering someone, especially since he had already decided not to pursue them. Naoki traveled the country most of the year and would scout hundreds if not thousands of players each year.

His memories came rushing back, yet the thing that stuck was the boy's defect. His poor throwing arm.

"Wait what!?" Naoki almost jumped in fright.

"Doesn't this guy play 1st base?" He asked the main coach.

"Huh? No, he signed up as a pitcher."

Naoki felt truly confused at the current situation, not even knowing if this was the same person. However, now that he looked closely, Ken resembled his father Chris, especially with his tall frame and chiseled jaw.

He shook his head in the next moment, he would be able to make his mind up after he saw Ken pitch. His original assessment was that Ken was a good player with his only deficit being his throwing arm, as long as this was fixed there was no issue with offering him a spot in the team.

Ken returned to home plate, however there was no one to congratulate him. This was to be expected as everyone here was competing against each other, even if they were on the same team.

He headed back over to the dugout and took a seat.

The next two batters were promptly dealt with by the opposing battery.

"3 outs, change!"

Ken stood up and began to rotate his shoulder before grabbing his glove and hat. He ascended the steps onto the field and smiled, placing the glove on his right hand and heading over to the mound.

As he began to throw the ball back and forth and warm up his shoulder, he didn't realize that there was someone within the crowd who was gawking at him.

"S-S-Southpaw!?"

Naoki felt incredulous as he saw Ken warm up by throwing pitches with his left arm. It was only after a few moments that he was able to piece together his broken thoughts and articulate a question to the main coach.

"Did you notice anything weird about that player?" He said, pointing at Ken.

The main coach was a little surprised but he shook his head, "No, nothing too out of the ordinary, why?"

Naoki massaged his temples, however he soon calmed down. It wasn't exactly obvious, especially since this was the first time these people had seen Ken play.

"He bats right handed, but he pitches left handed." He said patiently.

"Ah... Wow sorry I didn't even notice." The main coach felt a little embarrassed, but he was a bit confused. Although it was weird, why would it matter in this situation?

Ken finished his warm up pitches and set his eyes on the batter who had come up to face him. It was Ryo Kata, the lead-off hitter who would eventually rise up and become a professional.

He felt his fighting spirit ignite, knowing that he would get the chance to battle this youngster before his prime. After getting the lead from the catcher, Ken nodded his head and began his wind up.

After planting his right foot he threw out his left arm like a whip, projecting the ball right to where the glove was waiting, as if it was drawn by a magnet.

DONG

The ball was hit right in the center of the bat and flew straight into the left outfield, stopping just before it reached the fielder. Ryo who was quick on his feet, easily managed to reach 1st base.

Ken gritted his teeth in frustration, yet he continued on. After giving up a hit to Ryo, the next two batters were able to make contact however they were caught thanks to some good fielding.

He wasn't used to being hit so often which was starting to get to him a little.

'If only I could throw with my right arm...'

With Ryo left on first base, a stocky teen came to the batters box, staring at Ken with a grin.

'Let's see how you like my inside pitch.' Ken thought inwardly, putting his all into this next throw.

DONG!!

Ken felt a pit in his stomach as he watched the ball sail over to the left outfield and over the fence.

'Damn it!'

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

Chapter 83 - 83: Give up (1)

After giving up the home run, Ken was finally able to take out the next batter after composing himself. However, even after 6 months of practice, he still couldn't recreate the same power he had with his right arm.

Perhaps if this had happened at the start of his middle school career it wouldn't be that noticeable. Yet against other budding talents, his pitches were being picked apart because they lacked power and liveliness.

Feeling a little depressed, he headed back to the dugout and placed a towel over his head. If he had more time, or even if the pitching missions were unlocked in the image training realm he could have been able to improve in time.

"Ken?" One of the coaches for the blue team walked over to him and touched him on the shoulder, trying to get his attention.

"Ah, yes Coach?" He replied, removing the towel from his head.

"We're going to move you onto first base in the next innings." The coach stated before walking away without waiting for a reply.

Ken could only stare at his retreating back, feeling a touch of despair. His face twisted for a moment before he threw the towel at the ground in anger.

'Damn it!'

As if sensing his despair, his right shoulder throbbed with pain all of a sudden, causing him to clutch it instinctively. Yet when he held it, the pain disappeared as if it was an illusion.

It was only now that he realized that this feeling was familiar. He had felt the same thing every single day during his previous life as he poured over his regrets.

"Oi you, it's time to get on the field." One of his new teammates snapped him out of his reverie.

Ken contemplated not going onto the field for a moment, but Daichi's face flashed in his mind just as he was about to call it quits. He shook his head and a small smile formed on the corner of his lips.

'I won't be able to face him if I don't give it all I've got.' He thought, grabbing his glove and hat.

He walked onto the field and took a look at the new pitcher on the mound who flashed him a sly grin, clearly happy that he had been called up to replace Ken. He chose to ignore this, taking his spot on the 1st base.

Of course Ken hadn't been just training his pitching the past 6 months, he had been refining his fielding and baseball knowledge throughout. He would use every bit of time to his advantage in this life, all in order to live without regrets.

The pitcher got a few warm up pitches in until play recommenced. His pitches were sharp, but they weren't dynamic. Even from Ken's vantage point he was able to predict the course and speed only after a few balls.

'Kouichi is a lot better than this guy.' Ken thought inwardly.

Now that he thought about it, he hadn't asked Kouichi what High School he was going to.

"First!"

Ken whose thoughts were elsewhere suddenly heard the shout and instantly turned his attention back to the field of play. Although he had been late, he still managed to track the ball which was about to shoot past the right side of his body.

Out of instinct, Ken reached out with his glove and grabbed at the ball. The ball spun inside his outstretched glove, teetering on the edge as if it was going to fall out. However, it was almost as if Ken's glove was coated in glue, preventing it from escaping.

"Out!"

Ken breathed a sigh of relief before collecting the ball from his glove and firing it back towards the pitcher, shooting back a sly grin to the boy. He wasn't usually this petty, but it was quite refreshing to see the look of shock on the pitcher's face.

"I knew it!" Naoki's eyes shined after seeing the superb catch.

"Since he can now throw with his left hand, he's the perfect candidate for first base."

The main coach nodded, but he still seemed a little confused "Lefties are suited for first base because they wear the glove on the right hand which is closer to the other fielders. But what did you mean? Do you know this kid?" he asked inquisitively.

"This Ken fellow is actually one of the candidates I've scouted before. However he used to be a right handed player. The only reason I didn't offer him a scholarship was because he sucked at throwing with his right." Naoki answered, his eyes still trained on Ken.

"Oh, it must have been a long journey to train up to throw with his left arm. That means that he's dedicated too." The main coach seemed impressed.

Naoki shook his head, "No, it's only been 6 months since I last saw him."

"S-Six months!?" The Coach was flabbergasted. Usually such things would take many years to even come close to working up the dexterity required to throw a ball effectively. Not only this, the boy could even pitch half decently with his non-dominant arm.

Ken played the remaining game on first base, showcasing his skills and quick feet to stand out from the rest. If it was just this it wouldn't mean much, however he was a menace when it came time to bat.

During his remaining 2 at-bats he managed to hit a double and another home run, separating himself as one of the top candidates to make it into the team. The pitcher from earlier wouldn't even make eye contact with him from then on, feeling too embarrassed.

The next match was the Red team against the Yellow team, meaning Ken was able to take a break for a while. However, since he had been stationary most of the time he was left with an abundance of energy.

Uninterested in watching the game, Ken picked up a ball and walked over to the bull pen where pitchers would warm up. He grabbed a bucket of balls and began to throw pitches with his left arm.

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

Chapter 84 - 84: Give up (2)

He tried all sorts of things to improve his pitches over the last 6 months, even bringing his father in for some coaching. Despite this, it seemed he could only reach this level in the short amount of time.

Ken stared at his left hand for a little while before shaking his head. There was no way he could have caught up to the pitching capability of his right arm in such a short period of time, even with his Fine Motor Skills ability.

"You should give up on pitching." A voice came from behind him, causing Ken to almost jump in fright.

He turned around to see a man who was dressed well and wearing an overcoat. He had bags under his eyes and messy hair, however there was a sparkle in his eyes giving him a mysterious air.

Ken frowned, not sure who this person was. "And why do you say that?" He responded, his tone a little unfriendly.

However, the stranger did not seem to mind his tone, even letting out a chuckle in response. "As long as you agree to quit pitching and move to first base, we'll offer you a full scholarship. You'll be able to play on the starting line up along with your brother."

Ken's eyes flashed with surprise. "How do you know about my brother?"

He seemed to have ignored the first part of his words and instantly jumped to the latter part. Yet Naoki just smiled in response, choosing to patiently answer his question without pushing the teen.

"I saw you two play at the Kanto Tournament finals. But it looks like you've changed a lot in the past 6 months." He said, gesturing at Ken's left arm.

Ken suddenly recalled the figure who was talking to his parents at the game against Seigakuin, finally making sense of it all.

"Tell me, was it because of my right arm that you didn't offer me a scholarship last time?" Ken asked, gazing into the stranger's eyes.

"Yes. But now that you've switched to southpaw, you've made up for your shortfalls." Naoki responded, holding Ken's firm gaze.

The two were silent for a while, before Naoki spoke up once again, extending his offer.

"As I said, as long as you quit pitching and move to first base. We'll offer you a full scholarship."

This time it was Ken who broke eye contact, his emotions in turmoil. In front of him was the opportunity of a lifetime, everything that he had been working towards for this past year alongside Daichi.

He should be happy, ecstatic even. So why did he feel so... miserable?

Seeing as how Ken did not answer right away, Naoki knew when to relent. He placed his hand inside his overcoat and extended both of his hands, holding out a business card.

"Have a think about it and give me a call when you make your decision. As long as you give me an answer before the end of next week then my offer will still stand."

Ken received the card, still in a daze. He looked at the card and saw the man's name, Naoki Hachimura.

"I've seen enough of your talents so you're free to head home. I'm looking forward to your call." Naoki said, before heading back to where the friendly game was taking place.

All Ken could do was stand in place for a while, watching the retreating back of Naoki.

The next few hours felt like a blur as Ken made his way back home. He felt as if he was just a spectator as his body did all the work, seemingly on autopilot.

It wasn't until he was out front of his house that he felt a rush of emotion.

"DAMN IT!"

Ken threw his bag onto the ground and screamed out loud, feeling the rush of negative emotions hit him all at once. All of the despair he thought that he'd left behind in his previous life came rushing out at once.

He fell to the ground and couldn't hold back the tears of frustration that poured out.

Yuki rushed to the front door after hearing the commotion, only to see her son on his hands and knees on the street. Her motherly instincts took over as she rushed out and held him.

'He must not have made the team.' She thought inwardly, feeling her heart ache.

"I am honored to say, we are proud of your many achievements over the years, your various accomplishments in and outside of the classroom. On behalf of the entire Seiko Middle School faculty, we wish you all the best in High School."

There were a few tears from the students near Ken who were caught up in the solemn atmosphere of the graduation ceremony. He couldn't help but smile, at least until he turned around and saw the snot covered face of his brother.

"Uwaaahhh, I feel so sad." Daichi wailed, pulling Ken into a bear hug.

"A-Ah, get off me. You're wiping snot all over me." Ken tried to prise the big baby off of him, however Daichi seemed to be holding on for dear life.

However, part of him still felt a little guilty, so he eventually hugged back.

"Let's go take some photos before it's time to go." Ken said, consoling his brother.

Only now did Daichi release his hold, nodding vigorously.

The two walked around to some of the other teammates that were also graduating, taking some photos which would serve as memorabilia in the future.

"Um, Ken would you mind taking a photo with me?" A cute girl with long black hair and beautiful blue eyes tugged at his sleeve in order to get his attention.

"Ai? U-Um okay sure." Ken was a little taken aback, but he couldn't decline such an innocent request.

Ai's face flushed red, however inwardly she was over the moon.

'He knows my name!'

After getting the photo, she held the phone to her chest and smiled beautifully.

Seeing how Ai had been able to get a photo with Ken, another flock of girls came running over with the same intention.

"Ah crap! Quick let's go." Ken sensed the danger and quickly grabbed Daichi by the arm and ran out of the school gates.

Once they arrived, Ken let out a sigh of relief. The two made their way back home where Yuki and Chris were waiting with proud smiles on their faces.

"Your stuff is in the car, we'll drop you off at the train station when you're ready." Chris said, feeling a little bittersweet.

Daichi nodded before turning to Ken. "It really sucks that you didn't make the team, It would have been great if we could still play together." He said, sulking a little.

Even though it had been almost a month since he found out the news, Daichi was still reluctant to leave Ken's side.

Ken felt a wave of guilt from these words, but he managed to keep a straight face.

"Don't worry, I'll prove that guy wrong with my pitching and meet Toin at Koshien." Ken replied, patting his right arm. He had phrased it in such a way that didn't entirely latch onto the misunderstanding.

Daichi nodded, feeling his eyes beginning to sting once again. "I'll miss you guys."

He hugged both Chris and Yuki before standing in front of Ken and holding out his fist. Despite the tears falling down his face, he had a brilliant smile. "Let's meet at Nationals."

Ken smiled, bumping fists with his brother.

"It's a promise."

-End Volume 1

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

Chapter 85 - 85: High School (1)

The sound of birdsong drifted in through the windows, riding upon the breeze which still held a cool touch of winter. Were it not for the pink landscape from the cherry blossoms outside, one might mistake the season.

A man sat alone at the table, helping himself to some bacon and eggs on toast that had been expertly prepared.

"Mmph this is delicious." He stated, inelegantly jamming the breakfast into his mouth.

A resigned sigh was heard from the kitchen area in response. Yuki stopped what she was doing and sent a glare back at her husband, however seeing the blissful look on his face as he ate her food she couldn't help but let out a little chuckle.

"Is my food so good that you need to stuff your face like that?" She asked, shaking her head in amusement.

"Of coursh" Chris mumbled in between mouthfuls.

RING RING RING

The sound of a cell phone ringing caused Chris to jump, almost choking on the food that he was currently chewing with gusto.

After a moment of panic, he was able to swallow down the mouthful with the assistance of a glass of water.

"H-Hello?" Chris answered, still recovering his breath.

"Good morning Chris, this is Naoki Hachimura from Toin Academy." The voice sounded chipper, seemingly in a good mood.

"Ah, good morning." He replied, his tone a little confused.

"I apologize for the early call, this is just a courtesy call to give you an update on your son Daichi."

"Oh?" Chris raised his eyebrow and instinctively turned to his wife. Since the discussion involved their son, he decided to place it on loud speaker so that Yuki could also hear the conversation.

"Ahem. Daichi has been brilliant over the winter break, even outclassing a lot of the senior players. We have decided to add him to our starting line up at second base. Once he gets some more experience we'll likely move him to our catcher position."

Yuki's eyes lit up, feeling an immense pride rise within her. She placed her hand on Chris's shoulder and smiled warmly before retreating back into the kitchen, leaving her husband to his call.

"Excellent news." Chris said simply, switching the loudspeaker off and placing the phone back onto his ear.

"Yes, we are very impressed with your son's abilities. To produce not just 1, but 2 outstanding baseball players is a major accomplishment, congratulations."

"Are you talking about Ken?" Chris was puzzled. Why was Naoki praising Ken? Didn't they cut him during the tryouts?

Naoki's tone turned sour as he responded. "Yes, it's a shame that he didn't accept my scholarship offer. I thought for sure that he would have wanted to play with his brother."

Chris inhaled sharply and his face contorted in confusion before becoming stone-like.

"Thank you for your call Naoki. I've got some business to attend so I must be going."

Without waiting for an answer, Chris hung up, leaving Naoki confused on the other end of the call. He took a look at his phone, confirming that the call had ended.

"What was that about?"

Naoki was sitting in his office, neatly dressed as usual and no longer sporting bags under his eyes. The arrival of spring meant that he could now take it easy, no longer having to fly all over the country and scout the middle school players.

After a few moments he shrugged, placing his phone back on his desk.

"What a shame, we could have used him at first base." Naoki lamented once more.

"Achoo!"

Ken sneezed loudly, feeling a rush of cool breeze assault him as he walked towards the school gates along with a swathe of students.

"Is someone thinking about me?" Ken mumbled, rubbing the back of his head awkwardly.

In the next moment he felt an ominous feeling wash over him, causing him to shudder in response.

'W-What the hell?'

'Am I nervous because it's my first day?' he commented inwardly.

However, Ken quickly brushed it off. High school was the first step towards his professional baseball career, something he had been looking forward to for many years.

As long as he had the , he was guaranteed a place amongst the pro's. It was only a matter of time.

Clenching his fist in anticipation, he walked towards the familiar school gates, feeling a wave of nostalgia rise up from within. This was the place where he had once lost his most precious baseball.

Yet here he was, given another chance.

"I won't make the same mistakes again..." He murmured.

"Oh? Ken is that you?" A pubescent voice rang out from behind him, causing him to turn in question.

Ken turned around, only to see nothing in front of him.

"Huh?" Confused, he turned around once more looking for the source of the voice.

"Ahem... down here." The voice called out again, a hint of anger in the tone.

"Ah, sorry." Ken said in response, only now seeing the short and stocky fellow after lowering his gaze.

Thanks to his fathers genetics, Ken was tall for his age, around 175cm. The average height for a Japanese man was only 170cm, yet he was not done growing yet.

Ken sized up the student in front of him for a moment, sensing a hint of familiarity.

"Do I know you?" He asked.

The short and stocky kid looked visibly angry as his face began to grow red, however he calmed himself down after a moment.

"Shiro. Masuda. We played each other last year in the Kanto Tournament."

"Ah right! You're the catcher for Fujimi." Ken exclaimed, yet his face suddenly turned confused a moment later.

Why was Shiro wearing the Yokohama High uniform? In his previous life, Shiro never attended his school, so why was it different this time?

Seeing the confused look on his face, Shiro felt a bout of satisfaction for some reason.

"Hehe, I bet you're wondering why I'm here." He said, before his words were caught in his throat.

"W-Wait, what are YOU doing at Yokohama?? Shouldn't you be at some prestigious baseball school or something?"

Shiro was perplexed. The way Ken had played throughout the tournament, even winning in the finals was a testament to the boy's skills. Just remembering how fierce Ken was in the batters box made him shudder.

"Ah, about that." Ken's face twitched in response, for him Osaka Toin had been the goal ever since he regressed back into his middle school body.

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

Chapter 86 - 86: High School (2)

However, the team scout who had offered him a scholarship had done so only on the condition that he gave up pitching. Ken had considered this option for a while, but just the thought of no longer pitching sent him into despair.

He would be no different than what he was in his last life.

'How can I give up pitching when I'm only just getting started.' He thought inwardly, a smile creeping onto his face.

#MISSION: Shoulder Injury Recovery

*Task: Do not pitch a ball for the entire year (365 days)

[TIME REMAINING: 20 Hours 15 Minutes]

REWARDS:

>Complete healing of shoulder injury

>A-grade physicality enhancing elixir

>Skill: Disciplinarian (+20% increase in all training benefits)

"Hehe."

Shiro looked at Ken who was smiling dumbly and chuckling, causing him to back away a few steps subconsciously.

"Ahem. Where is your brother? The catcher from Seiko Junior High?" He asked, looking left and right.

Shiro's words snapped Ken out of his reverie.

"He's at Osaka Toin, he received a scholarship." Ken answered simply.

"Whoa!" Shiro exclaimed, however he quickly realized his mistake. Just how crappy would he feel if his own brother went to a prestigious baseball school while he was forced to go to a regular one.

Shiro placed a hand in the center of Ken's back and patted it gently, consoling him.

"There there, who needs a scholarship? With you and I on the team, we'll get to nationals and kick their butts!"

Since Shiro was so short, it looked quite comical to see him reaching up to pat Ken on the back. This paired with the confused look on Ken's face painted an odd picture.

Shrugging off Shiro's hand, Ken pushed him along towards the school gates.

"Let's get moving, or we'll miss the opening ceremony." He said with a smile. He could feel the good will from the other party, as well as the change in his demeanor.

Ken could already guess why Shiro had attended Yokohama. Since they had defied their coach, there was no way that the Fujimi baseball team wouldn't have received a restructure, meaning both Shiro and Kenji the pitcher would have to find elsewhere to attend.

As his mind traveled back to that moment, he remembered one of the rewards for his mission during that game was the unlocking of potential for both Kenji and Shiro.

Ken quickly accessed the Identify function of the system, bringing up Shiro's status.

NAME: Shiro Masuda

AGE: 15

TALENT ASSESSMENT: B

POTENTIAL: S+

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: C+

>Pitching: D

>Fielding: B+

>Game Intelligence: B-

>Mental: B

'It looks like Yokohama High just got another star.' He commented inwardly, his face once more turning up into a grin.

The duo located their names on the notice board, thankfully Ken was in the same class as last time giving him a sense of relief.

"Awesome! We're both in the same class Ken." Shiro exclaimed, fist pumping the air as if he had just scored a home run.

Ken raised his eyebrow in response.

'Everyone else in the class is the same, with the exception of Shiro and Daichi. Was this fate, or just a coincidence?' he thought inwardly.

"Hey, are you two freshman? You're going to be late to the opening ceremony." A deep voice called out, causing Shiro to almost jump in fright.

"Ah, sorry Coach." Ken responded, before corralling Shiro and heading towards the hall.

Seiji Hanada who was also late on the very first day blinked his eyes a few times and stared at the two retreating figures in puzzlement.

"Aren't they freshman? How did they know I was a coach?" He questioned softly.

He ran his fingers through his unkempt hair and narrowed his intelligent eyes. However, just as his mind was trying to put the pieces together, he suddenly felt his phone vibrate in his pocket.

"Ah, sorry I'm on my way now." He said apologetically.

"Crap, I'm going to be late."

With that, he followed after the two students and ran towards the hall for the opening ceremony.

As Ken and Shiro made their way into the now packed hall, Ken saw some familiar faces. Without waiting to be ushered, he made his way over to where his homeroom was, sending an apologetic look towards his teacher, Miss Aoba.

Making his way to the empty seats on the outskirts of the hall, Ken's mind was currently elsewhere. Memories of his previous life at the school overlapped with his vision, bringing with it a faint feeling of nostalgia.

After finally arriving at an empty chair he sat down, feeling his elbow brush against the person next to him.

"Sorry." He muttered without looking.

"I-It's fine."

The voice was soft and breathy, yet Ken couldn't help but be drawn to it. The hairs on his arm raised in response, causing him to slowly raise his eyes and see who it was.

Long black hair that cascaded down her shoulders, brilliant blue eyes and flushed cheeks?

"It looks like we're in the same class Ken."

"Ai Koyama..."

Ken couldn't help but stare at the pretty woman who had been the object of his affection in his previous life. Up until he had injured himself in the second year of High School, he had often asked her out, only to be met with rejection every time.

Throughout his pursuit, he had never seen her look at him like she was now. He could detect a hint of embarrassment, yet she seemed to be doing her best to hold his eye contact.

"Ahem. Thank you all for arriving on time for the opening ceremony for the new school year. Firstly I'd like to welcome the first year students who have joined us, we look forward to developing your talents in the coming year."

A mild voice was heard from the podium on the stage, allowing Ken the mental fortitude to finally break his eye contact. He felt his face flush, a result of his past emotions and current ones being mixed together.

'Damn, I was caught off guard. I completely forgot Ai was in my class. I'll have to be careful in the future.' He thought inwardly.

Since his mental age was 24 years old, he felt awkward and weird when interacting with girls that was his body's age.

Ken shook his head, girls would only be a distraction right now. His current goal was to improve as much as possible, getting his team to the nationals and facing off against Daichi.

Ai let out a small sigh, looking at Ken whose mind seemed preoccupied.

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

Chapter 87 - 87: Homeroom (1)

Ken found himself back in his old homeroom, sitting by the window where he used to stare out the window and day dream about playing baseball professionally. How many times had he been reprimanded in class for not paying attention?

Just remembering his old self brought a wry smile to his face.

While the view was the same, things very much felt different. He was no longer a naive teenager who only thought about playing baseball, he felt more aware of his surroundings, almost as if a veil had been lifted from his eyes.

'Is it because I'm more mature? Or is it because I don't care what others think about me?' Ken mused inwardly, resting his face upon his hand.

Since he was not worried about such frivolous things, it allowed him to focus on important things. Perhaps the system also played a part in his social development and behavior?

Would he be as self confident if he did not have the system?

Probably not.

Ken let out a sigh. He decided to stop thinking about the what-if's and just accept things for how they were. If he got caught up asking such questions, he would lose the massive advantage he had gained from his regression.

A look of determination flashed on his features before he turned to the front of the classroom.

"Ah."

In the next row, a pair of beautiful blue eyes were staring at him for a brief moment. Long black hair suddenly filled his vision as the culprit turned back around at break-neck speed.

Ai Koyama felt her cheeks turning bright red as she stared at her desk in embarrassment.

'Oh no he saw me staring...!' She despaired inwardly, covering her cheeks with her hands.

Ken was puzzled for a moment before letting out a wry smile. He thought it was ironic that in this life where he chose not to pursue this woman that she would show such an interest.

'Ahhh I'll never understand women.' Ken sighed.

"Wow, looks like you're pretty popular."

A voice knocked him out of his internal thoughts, coming from his right.

"Shiro, why are you looking at me like that." Ken said in a monotonous tone.

Shiro who looked like the personification of Avarice, unclenched his fists and let out a sigh, resigning himself to the continuation of his virgin status.

"It must be nice to be fawned over by girls..." He whined.

"Is it because you're tall?" He continued, looking Ken up and down.

Feeling such judgmental eyes upon him, Ken shuddered in response. While he didn't care what others thought about him, he sure didn't like being looked at in such a way by other men.

"Stop that. It's better if you're short anyway, it makes your life easier as a catcher." He responded.

Shiro seemed a little offended and was about to retort, however when he thought about it, it kind of made sense. Having to squat for hours each day would certainly be harder if he was any taller, or heavier for that matter.

Before they could continue their conversation, the sound of the door sliding open directed everyone's attention to the front of the class.

"Rise."

"Bow."

Despite it being the first day of high school, everyone complied out of habit, showing respect to the woman who had just walked into the classroom.

"Good morning everyone, please take your seats." The female teacher stated, her voice was pleasant to the ears, bringing with it a calming feeling.

"My name is Miss Aoba and I'll be the homeroom teacher for class 1-C" As she introduced herself, Miss Aoba began to write her name on the board with beautiful handwriting.

"Uwahh, she's so pretty."

A few whispers around the classroom complimented her looks and demeanor, however Ken was not fooled. While it was true that their homeroom teacher was a beauty, she had another side to her that had yet to be revealed.

Ken looked around the room, noticing that Shiro was staring at her with love hearts in his eyes.

"Mmph hehe" Ken couldn't help but let out a laugh before covering his mouth.

Shiro raised his eyebrow at Ken, but decided not to ask. His heart was beating fast just looking at the beautiful teacher that was in front of him.

"Now that I've introduced myself, we'll take attendance. When I call your name, please stand up and introduce yourself." Miss Aoba said with a smile.

"Kazuhiko."

An average looking boy with glasses and a bowl cut stood up from one of the desks at the front. If awkward was a person, then this was what it would look like.

"U-um. I'm Kazuhiko Amada. Nice to meet you all."

He said the words quickly, not even waiting for a response before sitting back down in a rush, causing a few giggles to break out in the class.

Ken too couldn't help but chuckle. Despite his awkwardness, Kazuhiko was very studious, consistently achieving the highest test scores in the class.

Thankfully the next few names that were called weren't nearly as nervous as the first, breaking the ice.

"Hi everyone, my name is Ai Koyama. I like western fashion and I will be applying to become a manager of the baseball club this year. I'll be in your care." Ai stood up and

said her piece, her gaze floating over to Ken at the last moment before sitting down once more.

'Huh!? She's joining the baseball team as a manager?' Ken's eyes widened and his brain was struggling to process what he had just heard.

'W-What's happening? Wasn't Ai part of the Fashion club in his past life?' His mind raced for a while, not understanding what was going on.

First it was Shiro replacing Daichi in his class, and now even Ai's decisions had changed. Just what kind of impact did his decisions and actions have upon the timeline?

Ken was deep in thought as the next few names were called.

"Shiro Masuda."

Shiro, who was still staring at Miss Aoba dreamily, didn't seem to hear his name called.

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

Chapter 88 - 88: Homeroom (2)

"Hmm, I could have sworn that we had marked his attendance in the entrance ceremony." Miss Aoba commented.

"A-Ah, sorry I'm here!" Shiro quickly stood up, feeling embarrassed.

However he quickly composed himself.

"I'm Shiro Masuda. I like baseball and have played since little league as a catcher. Oh and my best squat is 120kg!" A big smile crawled onto his face and he gave a thumbs up, causing the class to fall silent.

The silence was broken moments later by muffled laughter throughout the room.

"Okay okay, very interesting Shiro." Miss Aoba tried her best to hold her amusement, choosing to continue down her list.

"Ken Takagi."

Ken who suddenly heard his name stood up, showcasing his impressive height and causing a few whispers around the class.

"He looks foreign."

"Wow he's so tall."

"I'm Ken Takagi. My goal is to become a professional baseball player and join the Major's one day. My position is a pitcher."

Ken's words were confident and concise, displaying his determination to everyone. While the rest of the class had already moved on, there was one person with a shocked expression on his face.

'Pitcher!?' Shiro was dumbstruck. When he had played against Ken he had been on first base and was one of the dangerous batters in the line up.

'If he was stuck on first base, did that mean he wasn't as good as the Ace pitcher at Seiko?' Shiro thought, scratching his chin in contemplation.

Ken paid attention to the rest of his classmates introductions, wanting to know if anything else had changed since his regression. Thankfully, Ai was the only one who had any significant change this time around.

He wasn't sure how he felt about it just yet, but it's not like he could talk to her and convince her to join the fashion club instead.

"Excellent, now that we've got that out of the way... It's time for a pop quiz." Miss Aoba said, a smile forming on her face.

The entire class let out a colloquial groan in response, not expecting such a thing on the very first day of high school. The teachers expression darkened, clearly not happy with such a reaction.

"Oho, unsatisfied are we?"

The students were perplexed by the sudden change of tone. The once pleasant and calming nature of Miss Aoba's voice was now gone, replaced by an icy one.

Ken massaged his glabella, feeling a headache starting to appear. This was the other side of his homeroom teacher, hidden by her usually calm and pleasant demeanor.

"Well I'm also unsatisfied with only 1 quiz. Let's also throw in an English spelling test while we're at it." She said, a small smile crawling onto her face.

This time, no one made a sound. They were too busy rubbing their eyes or pinching themselves to confirm that this situation was real.

'She's a devil...'

No one dared to voice these words out loud, however everyone seemed to come to the same conclusion.

"No complaints? Very good." She reached into her draws and pulled out a pile of paper, packed with questions before handing them out one by one.

The only person in the room who didn't look crestfallen was Ken. Since he had already experienced this situation previously, he was able to mentally prepare for the scenario in advance.

An hour later, both the quiz and the spelling test were completed and handed to the front of the class. Everyone who had thought they would be having a relaxing first day of High School were thoroughly proved wrong.

Thankfully, none of their other teachers were as sadistic as Miss Aoba who would dare spring a quiz on the very first day. By the time the lunch bell rung, Ken's stomach was already growling in protest.

Not even waiting for the teacher to leave the room, Ken pulled out his lunch box and began to help himself to mouthfuls of rice. After graduation, he had upped his training regime, and in turn he had to increase his caloric intake to compensate.

Since Daichi was living at the dorms in Osaka on a full scholarship, Ken didn't feel so bad asking his parents to increase his meal sizes.

Shiro looked at the deep bento box filled with all sorts of foods and felt his stomach stiffen.

"So much food!" he exclaimed.

"I need it for energy." Ken responded nonchalantly.

'How much energy does he need...?' Shiro thought inwardly, pulling out his own lunch box with some rice and egg rolls. He wasn't much of a big eater, possibly because his frame was considerably smaller than Ken's.

"Are you heading to the baseball club after school?" Shiro asked, helping himself to his own food.

"Yeah, our Senpai won't be there until later this week. It's the perfect time to make an impression." Ken said simply.

Speaking about baseball, Shiro suddenly remembered Ken's introduction and almost choked on his food.

"Hey what's this about you being a pitcher? Weren't you playing first base against Fujimi?" He asked curiously.

A grin formed on Ken's face as he heard this question. "I've been a pitcher since Elementary School, I just took the year off."

"Huh?" Shiro was confused. Firstly, who just takes a year off of pitching? Wouldn't he get worse if he didn't do any pitching for a whole year?

'Wait. If he's been a pitcher for his whole school career, then how is he so good at batting?'

Seeing the weird look on Shiro's face, Ken decided to come clean since they would likely become a battery in the future. He already knew that Shiro had the potential to become a professional, so it was worth building up some trust between them.

"I actually injured my right shoulder at the start of last year. I took a year off pitching in order for it to heal properly. It should be fine for me to start practicing again tomorrow." Ken said with a smile.

"Oh. That must have been tough. I guess it makes sense why you played at 1st base then." Shiro nodded, feeling as if he understood Ken a bit more.

"But wait, why tomorrow? Won't the Coaches be asking for you to pitch today?"

Ken shook his head. "I'll be pitching with my left arm for a while until I'm fully ready to unleash my right."

"HUH!?"

Shiro stood up quickly, almost knocking his lunch box over, his jaw slack in disbelief.

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

Chapter 89 - 89: Baseball Club (1)

The rest of the day seemed to drag on for Ken who found himself staring out the window just like old times. Yet instead of looking at the scenery, he now had the status window of his system hovering in front of him.

SYSTEM LEVEL: 3 (3120/10000 Major points to level up)

NAME: Ken Takagi

AGE: 16

TALENT ASSESSMENT: A-

POTENTIAL: C (S+)

MAJOR POINTS: 3120

USER MENU:

-STATS

-MISSIONS

-SYSTEM SHOP

-LOTTERY (Locked)

-IMAGE TRAINING

-IDENTIFY

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: A

>Pitching: C+ (B)

>Fielding: B-

>Game Intelligence: B+

>Mental: A+

>Skills: 11

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. A)

Balance and Coordination: S

Agility: A-

Strength: A-

Stamina: A-

In the month that he had since graduation, Ken had been working hard on not just his physical training, but also brushing up on his game intelligence. In reality, he had no other choice since even after 4 weeks he had yet to receive any increases in his fitness, at least according to the system.

Which was why only his Game Intelligence had improved by two grades.

Ken was hopeful that the A-grade physicality enhancing elixir would be able to push his stats closer to the S rank. Although he realized that his stats were harder to increase the higher they became.

This also begged the question, were there grades higher than S? Ken had seen Daichi's potential was at the SSS+ grade which was the highest he had ever seen, even costing him some Major points to be able to view his stats.

Ken had a feeling that there were ranks above the SSS rating, mainly because even with his S rated Balance and Coordination, he still struggled to consistently hit the pitches in his Image Training.

Since he was only batting against the amateur difficulty, it was the logical conclusion.

DING DONG

Ken was startled from his deep thoughts by the sound of the bell, signifying the end of class. Before he could even make a move to pack his things away, Shiro was already bouncing around in anticipation.

"Let's go Ken!"

Holding back a laugh, Ken calmly placed his things into his bag and headed out the classroom.

Not long later, the two found themselves at the baseball field located on the edge of the school grounds. Seeing the familiar pitch where he had played alongside Daichi in his previous life seemed surreal.

However, this field had also been a source of his pain for many years. After injuring his shoulder what was once his safe haven had turned into a reminder of what he had lost.

"Ken? Are you coming?" Shiro turned around and spoke to Ken who had stopped in place with a vacant expression on his face.

"Yeah, coming." Thankful for the interruption, Ken continued forward, gripping his bag tightly with his right hand.

After arriving onto the field, Ken saw a figure dressed in uniform holding a clipboard. Ken instantly recognized the man who he had looked up to, who had tamed his selfish and arrogant attitude in his previous life.

"Seiji Hanada..." Ken whispered, his tone filled with respect.

"Good afternoon Coach!" Once close enough, Ken placed his bag on the ground and bowed deeply in front of the man.

"Ah... G-Good afternoon Coach." Shiro was startled, having not met this person before he quickly followed Ken's lead.

"You..." Coach Hanada looked up from his clipboard, recognizing the two students who had caused him to be late to the opening ceremony this morning.

He placed his free hand on his stubbly chin and began to rub it gently in thought. His eyes were sharp and intelligent, contrasted with some obvious bags under his eyes from lack of sleep.

"Names." He replied, turning his attention back to the clipboard.

"Ken Takagi."

"Shiro Masuda."

The two responded one after the other.

"Takagi?" Coach Hanada's expression seemed thoughtful for a moment, as if he was doing his best to remember such a name.

"Coach, you know my father Chris Takagi." Ken said simply, attempting to reboot his memory.

"AH! Yes Chris, of course you're his son, I can see the resemblance. It's good to see that his son had inherited his mothers manners and not his fathers." He responded.

Although his words may not have sounded too pleasant to the ear, a smile and reminiscent look painted his features.

The man in front of them was Seiji Hanada, someone who had worked with professional players alongside his father. Chris would send potential prospects to Coach Hanada in order to get an evaluation.

Coach Hanada was one of the main reasons he had decided to go to Yokohama High School after declining the Osaka Tooin scholarship.

A moment later, another bunch of students arrived onto the field, causing the coach to move his gaze and size them up.

Ken also turned his attention to the new arrivals, his eyes focusing on one person in particular.

'Yusuke...'

Memories flashed in front of his eyes as if they had just happened yesterday. Out of all of his teammates in his previous life, Yusuke was the one he hated the most, yet ironically they shared similar fates.

While Ken had gotten injured in high school, Yusuke suffered a career ending injury just days before he was set to make his professional debut in the NPB. Like Daichi, he was drafted out of high school, yet he fell just short.

'I don't know what's worse, losing baseball in high school or just before turning professional...' Ken mused internally.

"Looks like you're all here. Say your names and then we'll go warm up with the rest of the team." He said.

After introductions, Coach Hanada took them to the changing rooms and gifted them a set of uniforms.

"Get changed and meet me back on the pitch. I'll be testing you all on some fundamentals as well as your general fitness." He said simply, walking out in the next moment.

After the coach had left, the 10 or so 1st year students did as they were told and began to get dressed. This was the case for all except Ken who made his way over to the freshman who was in the corner.

'Ah, what's he doing?' Shiro looked on in puzzlement, was there a fight about to start already?

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

Chapter 90 - 90: Baseball Club (2)

"Hey, you must be Yusuke. My name is Ken, nice to meet you." Ken stretched out his hand in greeting.

Yusuke looked at the extended hand and moved his gaze to Ken, looking him up and down. Originally his eyes were dull, almost as if looking down on him.

However, the once dull and listless eyes lit up a moment later.

"Likewise." Yusuke grasped Ken's hand in a tight grip, showing tremendous strength despite his unassuming physique.

Ken couldn't help but smile as he felt the pressure of the handshake which seemed to be a test. Thanks to his A- rated strength he was able to withstand the pressure quite easily.

A hint of respect flashed within Yusuke's eyes before he eventually eased up and took back his hand. Ken didn't say anything else, grabbing his uniform and heading off to get changed.

But inwardly he was pleased. Already their interaction was wildly different from his previous life. Despite being a sought after pitcher, Yusuke had scoffed at him, not taking him seriously at all.

In his youthful mindset he took great offense to this, starting off their relationship on a bad note. However, Ken was now mature enough to move past such things. What use was a petty grudge when he wanted to win at nationals?

It was quite odd though when he thought about it. Why was Yusuke's reaction so different this time around? Could he sense that Ken was different?

Did he have some sort of instinctual ability to tell how talented someone was? Kind of like Ken had his identify function.

'Ah, I almost forgot.' As his mind moved to these thoughts, he quickly activated his Identify ability in order to record Yusuke's stats.

TO USE IDENTIFY ON THIS TARGET WILL COST 50 MAJOR POINTS DUE TO THE DISPARITY IN ABILITIES. WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE?

[YES/NO]

Ken's eyebrow raised in response to the text that appeared in front of him. This had only happened when he tried to use Identify on Daichi. Did that mean Yusuke was a monster like his brother too?

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained.' Ken mused inwardly before accepting.

NAME: Yusuke Ozawa

AGE: 15

TALENT ASSESSMENT: B (A)

POTENTIAL: SS+

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: C+ (A+)

>Pitching: C+

>Fielding: A

>Game Intelligence: A

>Mental: A+

Note: Grades in brackets are before status modifiers.

Additional information: Currently has a tumor in his left knee leading to inflammation and soreness. The tumor is in a dormant state, but continued stress could cause it to expand.

YUSUKE OZAWA'S DATA HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE COMPENDIUM.

Ken sucked in a cold breath of air, his face turning pale as he read on. Out of habit, he clutched his right shoulder, rubbing it gently as he often did when he was anxious.

What the hell was this?

Was this the reason why Yusuke never stepped onto the field as a professional?

Usually teams would do a full medical examination before signing players and allowing them to play. Could it be that the doctors located the tumor and decided not to sign him?

More importantly, why did the system know this information?

"Ken what's wrong? Is your shoulder hurting?" Shiro asked with a whisper.

From his vantage point, he saw Ken suddenly turn pale and cradle his shoulder so he immediately thought about his injury.

"I-It's nothing." Ken said, feeling his mind race in response to the new information.

What was he to do with such information? It's not like he could just walk up to him and say it directly, there's no way he would be taken seriously.

Ken suddenly felt the immense pressure of someones life hanging over his head. If the tumor was malignant there was a large possibility that it could endanger Yusuke's life, not just his career.

"Hurry up you lot! We're burning daylight."

Coach Hanada's voice sang out from the field, snapping Ken out of his reverie. He quickly got changed and headed out onto the field, now joined by another bunch of players in addition to the first years.

"Alright, first years these are the 2nd string players who are the closest to be called up to the starting team. Today we'll be running some drills so I can get a good assessment of you all." His eyes moved across all of the players in front of him, evaluating.

"Now, run lets run laps around the field in a line at a steady pace. When I blow my whistle once, you'll need to increase your pace. If I blow two times I want the person at the back to sprint to the front of the pack."

The first year students in front of him didn't have much of a reaction upon hearing the exercise, however the second years had a wry smile on their faces. They knew just how punishing the run was going to be and looked forward to the first years failing.

Ken on the other hand had managed to switch gears fast. Perhaps it was because of his mental ability increasing lately, but when it came time to perform he was able to push any worries aside.

"Let's go!" Coach Hanada blew the whistle prompting the students to begin the drill.

The second year students waved Ken and the other first year students to the front of the pack, lining up behind them as they started their runs. Ken of course knew that by running at the front he would be the last to sprint, however he was confident enough in his abilities to do so.

Both Shiro and Yusuke took positions right behind him as they began to jog around the field at a leisurely pace, followed by the 20 or so others.

FWHEEE

Ken heard the whistle and began to pick up the pace.

FWHEE FWHEE

Just like that, one of the second year students who was at the back of the pack ran leisurely on the outside and took up position in front of Ken, now becoming the front runner.

Another whistle sounded, resulting them in picking up the pace once again. While the others may be finding the exercise easy right now, Ken knew that they would start dropping like flies soon enough.

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

Chapter 91 - 91: Evaluation (1)

FWHEE FWHEE

The two whistles rang out, prompting the second year runner at the back to sprint towards the front. This was the last second year remaining, leaving around 8 or so first years including Ken, Shiro and Yusuke.

"Good luck."

The sharp faced second year spat out these sarcastic words as he ran past Ken, a sadistic grin forming on his face.

Ken didn't recognize the player, which probably meant that he had not made the first team, at least before he was injured. This caused him to scoff in response.

FWHEE

At the sound of the whistle, the pace increased once again.

The second year who had just sprinted to the front smiled widely after hearing this. Instead of increasing the pace a little like everyone had been doing previously, he turned up the dial.

As if expecting this all of the second years in front of Ken began to pull away, creating some distance in front of him. Having been through this before, he wasn't surprised at all.

"Whatever you do, just hang in there." Ken said aloud, turning his head briefly to check on Shiro and Yusuke.

After receiving a nod, Ken increased his pace, easily catching up to the second years. This pace was still comfortable enough for him, especially since he was already in a rhythm.

FWHEE FWHEE

Two whistles sounded and the first year at the end ran out to the side and was about to sprint, however now that he had lifted his head he could see that their group had been detached from the others and they were almost half a lap behind.

"Huff huff. I won't make it."

He began to sprint, however no matter how he tried the others didn't seem to be getting any closer. After almost 20 seconds of fully sprinting, he tripped and fell onto the ground sucking in deep breaths of air.

Coach Hanada could only watch on and shake his head, this was something that happened every year. Since the second years had experienced this humiliation when they first joined, it was understandable why they'd do the same to the next batch.

There wasn't much he could do however, seeing as how the first years had already fallen so far behind. He was about to call an end to the exercise, but he suddenly noticed that there were 3 first years at the end of the other pack.

"Oho. Looks like we've got some lively first years." He commented, rubbing his stubbled chin in thought.

The other group of first years had slowed to a crawl, their endurance clearly exceeded.

"You guys, get off the track." He said, shooing them with his hands.

Meanwhile, Shiro was sucking in large gulps of air as he tried his best to keep up with everyone. Ken had told him to hang in there, so he was going to do his best.

FWHEE FWHEE

Despite the whistle sounding, there was no movement at the back of the pack.

"Shiro! Start sprinting!" Coach Hanada yelled.

"Huh??" Hearing his name, Shiro almost jumped in fright. He turned to the coach only to see him motioning for him to sprint to the front.

"A-Ah okay."

Since their speed was already so fast, even when Shiro sprinted he didn't make much ground. However, he held on for as long as possible, eventually making it to the middle of the pack.

Unfortunately, he couldn't keep the pace and eventually began to lose speed. It wasn't long before he slowed down completely and collapsed onto the ground, trying to catch his breath.

Coach Hanada smiled, making a mark on the clipboard before turning his attention back to the runners.

"Let's see how you two go."

FWHEE FWHEE

Ken suddenly felt a wind beside him as Yusuke accelerated at top speed, quickly reaching the middle of the pack. Ken's eyes widened, admiring the dormant power that was hidden in those legs.

However as he approached the lead runner, his left leg seemed to falter briefly, reducing his speed and sending him back to Ken's position once again.

Seeing this, Ken's eyes narrowed briefly but there was nothing he could do but watch on.

Yusuke tried once again to reach his previous speed, however he soon was left with no choice but to pull out. Unlike Shiro, he stayed on his feet and held his hands on his head as he caught his breath.

Throughout the whole process, he did not even look at his knee let alone touch it, as if he knew that the coach was watching.

'He's definitely feeling pain in his knee...!' Ken commented inwardly after seeing the obvious inaction.

Usually when someone had a random pain, they would address it by either rubbing it or testing it out afterwards. Yusuke made a point of completely ignoring it, meaning that he was very aware of his knee.

However, Ken did not have time to think further on this matter as he saw himself lagging behind a little after turning his head. He quickly caught up to the runner at the back and settled back into rhythm.

Coach Hanada did not blow his whistle right away, his gaze lagging on Yusuke for a little while and tapping his clipboard with the pen.

After almost a minute, the coach placed the whistle in his mouth and blew twice. It was time for Ken to try accomplish what the other first years could not.

FWHEE FWHEE

Ken quickly burst into action, heading past the middle of the pack in only a few moments. He could feel the stares of his "teammates" as they labored to try and leave him in the dust.

However Ken ignored them, solely focused on making it to the front of the line. The runner in the top spot turned his head, noticing that he was gaining on him.

Without a word, he increased his pace and began to run away from the group.

"Hey is that allowed?" Shiro complained outwardly, not happy with what was happening.

"Coach never said they couldn't go faster without the whistle." Yusuke stated indifferently.

Despite not being able to make it to the front of the pack, he didn't seem bummed at all. Not only that, he had already caught his breath unlike Shiro and the others who looked like fish out of water.

Coach Hanada couldn't help but let out a chuckle and shake his head.

"These kids are too proud."

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

Chapter 92 - 92: Evaluation (2)

Ken didn't panic, slowly increasing his pace and continuing to crawl forward. He was currently close to 80% of his full pace, which was usually what he completed his morning runs at.

His lungs which were accustomed to long runs were efficiently pumping oxygen into his body like a machine.

'Okay, time to stop playing.' He thought inwardly, feeling a smile form onto his face.

WHOOSH

The second years running alongside Ken suddenly felt something brush past them.

"W-What!?"

5, 6, 7.

Ken began to pass the runners one by one, his eyes set on the runner at the front. It wasn't long until he was alongside him.

"Haaah haaah how are you so fast" He managed to get out between sucking in deep breaths from his mouth.

"Training." Ken said simply before pulling in front of him.

Now that he was secured at the front of the pack, he didn't slow down. He knew that he could only hold this pace for around a minute, but he wanted to try pull away from the rest and return the favor.

Perhaps it was because of his previous life that he felt the need to beat them at their own game, or maybe it was something else entirely. Either way, the gap between Ken and the rest of the students only continued to widen.

Shiro, Yusuke and the other first years watched on in awe as Ken increased his lead, increasing it to nearly half the length of the field. Now that he was so far, the exhausted second years began to slow down having lost their goal.

Coach Hanada couldn't help but grin widely, making some marks on the clipboard. It wasn't until Ken had overlapped the runners that he called an end to the exercise.

As Ken slowed down and began to catch his breath, a notification appeared in front of him causing a smile to blossom onto his face.

YOUR STAMINA HAS INCREASED BY 1 GRADE

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. A)

Balance and Coordination: S

Agility: A-

Strength: A-

Stamina: A

Ken felt a soothing sensation spread throughout his body after the notification, easing his tight muscles considerably.

'Awesome!' He exclaimed inwardly.

Such an unexpected outcome caused him to be in a great mood. Despite not running even half the distance of his usual morning workouts, he had sprinted hard for a long period of time in order to pass the runners once more.

'Will my stats be more likely to increase if I try to reach and exceed my limits?' He thought, making his way over to the others who had arrived in front of the coach.

The Coach had managed to hide his grin by the time everyone assembled, donning a poker face before anyone could notice. The second year students seemed to be in low spirits thanks to Ken's domineering performance.

"Well done everyone. It's great to see that we have some first years who are already in tremendous shape at the start of the year." Coach Hanada didn't specifically name anyone, but everyone knew who he was talking about.

Shiro, Yusuke and last of all Ken. Both the second year students and the first years were looking at the three. But while the first years had a look of awe and respect, the second years looked on with bitterness.

Both Ken and Yusuke didn't seem bothered by the stares, but Shiro gulped nervously. He didn't like to be singled out, so all of the eyes upon him seemed like a weight that he was not used to bearing.

"However..." Coach continued.

"While athleticism is important, you win baseball with your skills." He tapped the clipboard with his pen, as if to underline the importance of this point.

"No matter if you're a pitcher, fielder or catcher, you'll need to be able to catch and throw. Even if you can do these, it is useless if you can not hit a ball."

Ken nodded. Unlike other leagues around the world, Japan did not adopt the designated hitter rule which meant that pitchers would have to bat as well.

This changed once one went to the NPB, however the rules were a bit confusing for Ken. Since it didn't apply to him just yet, he disregarded it.

'It's a good thing that I've been focusing on batting this past year.' He thought with a smile.

"As I said earlier, I'll be evaluating your skills regardless of your preferred position. Let's start off by playing some catch and we'll move on to some ground ball drills and batting practice." Coach Hanada explained.

"Find a partner, grab a glove and ball and begin."

A couple hours later, Ken found himself a seat on the train and got comfortable. He began to recount his performance, comparing it to how he did in his previous life.

Coach Hanada could barely contain his smile after seeing the skills of himself, Yusuke and Shiro. This was a far cry from the first time he had gone through this evaluation, mainly because he was a lazy teen back then.

There was also the fact that Daichi had not even started baseball when he began at Yokohama High, which meant he had a poor performance.

Just remembering Daichi looking like a newborn calf during the evaluation in his previous life almost caused Ken to laugh out loud.

Despite him thwarting the second years plan to leave him in the dust, they actually responded quite well to his presence, surprising Ken greatly.

"First Yusuke and now the second years..." Ken mumbled.

"Ah!"

He almost jumped up as an idea came into his mind. Could it be his Charismatic Air ability that had changed the other players perception of him?

'That could explain why they weren't hostile to me after beating them in the running exercise.'

"Hahhh, this feels surreal."

Ken sighed, laying back in his chair and placing his hands behind his head. The description of the ability was so vague that he had dismissed it for a while, but it looked like it would come in handy in the future.

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

Chapter 93 - 93: Time to face the music (1)

"I'm home."

Ken stated after opening the door. As he was taking off his shoes, he saw a large pair causing his face to light up.

'Dad's here!'

In his excitement, he didn't realize that there was no response welcoming him home. After entering the house, his eyes were drawn to both his father and mother sitting at the table.

"Dad! Welcome home." He said with a smile, however after seeing the expression on his fathers face, it was quickly wiped off.

"Sit down Kenny." Chris said, pointing towards the chair on the opposite side.

Ken's mind raced, wondering what could have possibly happened while he was gone. Seeing the grave look on his fathers face, it couldn't be good.

His heart instantly felt tight as he thought of the worst.

"What is it? Is Daichi okay!?" Before he could even process what was going on, Ken jumped to conclusions, clutching his chest.

Chris and Yuki looked at each other and blinked a few times. Their faces softening a little after seeing how much concern Ken had for his brother.

"Daichi is fine. It's you who is in trouble." Chris responded, gesturing for him to take a seat once more.

'I'm in trouble?' Ken's face faltered for a moment, but he also let out a sigh of relief. Since he was an adult mentally, he would take responsibility for whatever he had done wrong.

Ken sat down at the table and looked at his parents, waiting for them to speak first.

His father tapped on the table a few times, something that used to bring him fear in his previous life. However, Ken could now understand that he was likely choosing the right words to say first.

After a few moments, Chris began to speak.

"I received an update on Daichi. He's doing well and will start at second base this season until he learns enough to switch to the catcher position."

"Wow that's great!" Ken exclaimed, pumping his fist.

Yuki who was next to her husband couldn't help but let out a muffled laugh, failing to keep the serious mask on her face. She of course was also happy for Daichi's success, but Ken's reaction even after being told he was in trouble was just too comical.

"Ahem." Chris cleared his throat, a warning to both his wife and Ken to remain on topic.

"Ah, sorry." Ken replied, straightening his back and keeping eye contact with his father.

"As I was saying. Naoki called me and told me some interesting information after telling me about Daichi... Is there anything you want to tell us Ken?" Chris asked, his face a perfect poker face.

Ken frowned for a moment. 'Naoki... Why does that name sound familiar?'

'Crap! That scout that offered me the scholarship.'

Ken felt his face heat up after being caught. He had forgotten that the scout knew his father personally and they would likely talk about Daichi.

There was no point in withholding anything now, so he decided to explain everything.

"I was offered a scholarship at Osaka Toin." He said simply. Since his parents already knew, they didn't have much reaction.

"So why did you lie?" Yuki asked, her previous stern expression reforming on her face.

'Technically I didn't lie. You just assumed that I had failed.' Ken thought inwardly, however by not correcting her it was just as bad as lying.

Before he could answer, Chris spoke up.

"I saw you when you came back home after tryouts, there was no way you were faking your disappointment. I've never seen you that crushed before." He said, his expression softening slightly.

A sullen expression formed on Ken's face, he was in a much worse state in his previous life after getting injured. However, it was because he knew what losing his ability to pitch felt like that he reacted in such a way.

"I was offered a scholarship on the condition that I give up on pitching."

"What!?" Chris stood up in shock.

Yuki too looked shocked. Ever since her son had started playing baseball in elementary school he had been obsessed with pitching.

Suddenly everything seemed to make sense.

"I tried to think about it on the train ride home, but the thought of giving up pitching was just too much. When you assumed that I had failed the tryouts, it just seemed easier to not correct you." Ken admitted, looking regretful.

"I was worried that if I told you all, you might try to convince me to take the scholarship anyway."

Chris looked at his son who had his head lowered and couldn't help but let out a sigh. He had thought of many possible reasons as to why Ken lied, but this was not what he was expecting.

After a few moments he sat back down and leaned forward, getting Ken's attention.

"I don't think you're wrong for declining the scholarship."

Ken's face morphed from surprise into happiness. Since he was distant from his father in his previous life, he was a little shocked at how supportive he was being. Of course it was only after he experienced being an adult that he could now relate to how his father acted.

"But... Even if you did not tell a lie, you purposefully hid the circumstances which is just as bad. Did you think that we would not support your decision?" Chris gazed at his son, their eyes making contact.

"Ken. You are a child, you're allowed to make mistakes. You're allowed to ask for help and rely on us as a family." As he said these words, he felt his throat tighten a little.

As a father he felt as if he had failed his son. He wanted to provide a safe space where both his kids were free to strive towards their dreams, where they can act like kids. A place to lick their wounds when they were hurt, and a place to celebrate their achievements.

"Perhaps I've been a little too preoccupied at work." Chris stated, a painful smile appearing on his face.

Yuki felt the pain in her husband's words and placed her hand upon his shoulder. She knew how hard he worked to ensure that they all could flourish.

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

Chapter 94 - 94: Time to face the music (2)

Ken blinked a few times, seeing the unfamiliar reactions of his father. He struggled to understand it at first, however his mental aptitude worked in the background to bring him to the right conclusion.

'Dad blames himself for this?'

Seeing the pain in his face, Ken resisted the urge to slap himself hard. He had been keeping a lot of stuff to himself in order to not worry his parents since he thought that was the right thing to do.

However, it seemed to be having the opposite effect. Not only did they worry more, his father also believed it was a result of his own failure.

"No..." Ken clenched his fists, a wave of guilt washing over him.

"I'm sorry, I've been hiding a lot of things from you because I didn't want you to worry."

Chris and Yuki both looked puzzled, but a smile soon appeared on their faces.

"I... I want to pitch this year and make it to nationals to compete against Daichi. I'll become the Ace of Yokohama and prove Naoki wrong with my pitching." Ken said resolutely.

A few hours later, Ken was laying in his bed and staring at the ceiling. Since everything was now out in the open, he felt relieved, like a pressure had been taken off his chest.

He could tell how much his parents cared for him just by their reactions. Another byproduct of his resolution was that his father no longer seemed to blame himself for Ken's keeping of secrets, chalking it up to his teenage hormones.

He had also earned himself a trip to the doctor after school tomorrow so they could check on his shoulder injury. This timing was brilliant as his mission would be cleared by then, meaning the doctor would find nothing.

Ken breathed out a sigh of relief.

'I need to stop keeping these things to myself. It seems to do more harm than good in the long run.' He thought inwardly.

He didn't really feel like entering the image training tonight, especially since it had been a long enough day. With his first evaluation from Coach Hanada in the books and his mission finishing tomorrow, it was a good time to let his body and mind rest.

He felt a little light headed and his muscles ached, probably from the exercise he did at practice today. With that, Ken closed his eyes and drifted into the dream land.

Despite being in a good mood before bed, his dreams were filled with pain and despair. It was as if he was reliving the torture of his shoulder in agony, stabbing directly into his sanity.

He saw his parents drifting away after being turned away repeatedly. Daichi whose face seemed to lack the warmth that Ken was used to in this life appeared in front of him like a stranger.

"Why didn't you talk to me instead of taking your own life? I thought we were friends."

Wearing a Hanshin Tigers uniform, an older looking Daichi questioned him with a vacant expression. Ken wanted to answer, but every time he opened his mouth a blazing pain assaulted his shoulder, bringing with it a bone-deep itching sensation.

"Why!? Why would you commit suicide? You should have told us you were unhappy!"

His mother's shrill voice and sobs entered his ears, causing him to spin around in fright. There he saw her throw herself onto the ground in grief, clutching a worn baseball glove.

Ken then locked eyes with his father who seemed to have aged 20 years overnight, the sorrow evident on his face.

'W-What is happening?' Ken was confused, but also in pain. Hot tears ran down his face as his mind tried to make sense of what was transpiring.

DING

Ken suddenly sat up from the bed, his body covered in sweat and his lungs sucking in air like he had just run a marathon. His first thought was to look around the room to try and see where he was.

'My room...'

After seeing the familiar furniture in his room Ken finally managed to calm down. The nightmare he had experienced felt far too real, causing him to believe that he had been transported back to his previous life.

Just as he was about to check his system, his mother opened the door to his room.

"Kenny!? What's wrong?"

Seeing his pale and sweaty visage, Yuki rushed over to check on him, concern etched onto her features. She placed the back of her hand on his forehead and almost recoiled in shock.

"You're burning up honey." Her face turned worried and she told him to wait in bed while she got him some medicine.

Ken let out a sigh. It was true that he wasn't feeling well, however he didn't like the idea of missing out on school and baseball club training.

Just as he was about to get out of bed he heard a deep voice.

"And where do you think you're going?"

Chris was leaning against the door with his arms crossed, tapping his fingers while staring at him.

"Ah, I just needed the toilet." He replied weakly.

Thankfully he had been quick enough to answer that his father did not call him out, however it looked like he would have to stay home today. He squeezed past and finished his business before returning back to bed on his mothers orders.

Yuki returned not long later with some medicine and a thermometer to check his temperature.

Chris took one look at the results and shook his head.

"You'll be staying home today and I don't want to hear any excuses. Since we're going to the doctors today anyway, we can get him to look at your fever." He said before leaving the room.

Both Yuki and Ken watched as Chris left the room. Once she was sure that he had left, Yuki turned around and gave him a sympathetic look.

"Did you need anything honey? How about some lemon tea?"

Ken forced down a laugh before shaking his head, thanking god that he had been given such good parents.

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

Chapter 95 - 95: Fever (1)

After his mother left, Ken laid back down and let out a sigh.

'Why did I have to get sick?' He complained inwardly.

His mind moved to the terrible nightmare he had gone through last night and couldn't help but shudder. He really had made a mess of things after getting injured.

"If I never went back in time and received the system..." He muttered.

'Ah!'

He suddenly remembered that today was the day his year long mission would end, the one that would heal his shoulder for good. Without wasting another moment, he hastily brought up the system window.

MISSION: Shoulder Injury Recovery (completed)

*Task: Do not pitch a ball for the entire year (365 days)

[Congratulations, you have completed the mission: Shoulder Injury Recovery]

#Rewards received

>Complete healing of shoulder injury

>A-grade physicality enhancing elixir

>Skill: Disciplinarian (+20% increase in all training benefits)

Ken felt a huge wave of relief overcome his body, followed by immense excitement. Finally after a full year of not pitching with his right arm, he would no longer be held down by the thing that had ruined his past life.

He wasn't sure if it was the sweat on his forehead or pent up emotions, but he couldn't help but wipe his eyes with his blanket. If he didn't have a fever right now, Ken would be jumping for joy.

"I wonder what my pitching will be like now?" He mumbled to himself.

While he had learned to pitch with his left arm, the pitches lacked strength and a sense of danger that he was used to. This was a cause of immense frustration for him who had thrown his way to Nationals before.

Being hit so easily by run-of-the-mill players like the ones trying out for Osaka Toin had hurt his pride. Naoki could also tell that his pitching was not up to par and probably thought that it was a waste of his talent to focus on.

Of course he couldn't blame Naoki for coming to this conclusion.

"Ahhh, I want to pitch..."

Ken couldn't help but fidget underneath the blanket, itching to get out on the field and throw some balls. At the same time, he didn't want to make himself worse by trying to play through a fever.

'Maybe I can take the A-grade physicality enhancing elixir?' He thought.

Since the elixirs usually made him go through pain or drowsiness, he usually waited until just before bed to take them. But since he was home and in bed now, he didn't have to wait.

[Are you sure you wish to consume: A-grade physicality enhancing elixir?]

[Yes/No]

"It should be fine right?" Ken thought aloud, hesitating for a few moments before eventually accepting.

Since it was an A-grade elixir, the pain would likely be intense so he grit his teeth, waiting for the discomfort.

However, after almost a minute nothing seemed to be happening.

"Huh? Did it not work?" Ken scratched his head in thought, bringing up the system.

He did not receive any notifications that something had failed, so it was rather weird that it didn't seem to come into effect.

"A-ARGH"

Just as Ken was about to complain, he felt a wave of pain assault his muscles, causing a pit of despair to form in his stomach. He quickly turned onto his stomach and screamed into the pillow to try relieve the torture.

Starting from his toes, the pain worked its way up to his calf muscles, stretching and wringing them like the worlds worst cramps. He had no time to worry if his mother had heard the initial outburst and did his utmost to focus on other things.

After what seemed like an eternity, his calf muscles began to vibrate, bringing with it a warm and relaxing sensation. Ken couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief, at least until it moved onto his quads and hamstring muscles.

Once again he had to endure the pain of his muscles being twisted and wrung like last night's washing. Despite the torture, Ken did his best to keep his mind occupied.

He imagined himself on the mound in the 9th inning, wearing a Hanshin Tigers jersey. He stared down the plate to where his brother and best friend Daichi wore a warm smile.

Daichi threw the ball to him, yet spoke no words. There was no need to speak at all, everything was relayed through their eyes.

The amount of trust and belief they had in each other required nothing else. With his arm and Daichi's leading, there was no hurdle that they could not overcome.

A grin formed on Ken's face as he handled the ball and positioned himself on the mound.

He wound up his arm and released the ball, causing a frightening noise to ring out across the empty field.

PAH

Ken woke up several hours later feeling groggy. He felt sticky yet dehydrated, almost as if he had melted into the bed.

'I need to shower...' Were the first words that went through his head.

He got up out of bed and went straight for the shower. As he made his way down the stairs he couldn't help but notice he felt a lot better than this morning.

'Huh, my body feels light.'

After jumping into the shower he was finally in the right frame of mind to open up the system and check his progress.

[You have consumed: A-grade Physicality enhancing elixir.]

[Agility grade has been increased by 2!]

[Strength grade has been increased by 1!]

[Stamina grade has been increased by 4!]

[Congratulations, user has reached S grade Stamina and will be rewarded with the skill: Fatigue Management]

[Fatigue Management: Reduces fatigue and boosts recovery for extremities]

Ken's eyes widened in disbelief as he read through the rewards of taking the elixir. Not only had his grades increased by a total of 7, he also managed to reach S grade stamina and was given a new skill.

"Reduces fatigue and boosts recovery for extremities... That's perfect!"

This truly was one of the best days of his life since returning. His right arm was now fully healed and he was gifted the perfect skill to avoid getting injured again. Not only would he be able to pitch longer, he also wouldn't have to worry about getting hurt again.

Since extremities referred to his head, legs and arms, this was a great boon for someone who wished to play any professional sports.

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

Chapter 96 - 96: Fever (2)

Without waiting any longer, he brought up his new stats and stared at them with glee.

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: A+

>Pitching: B

>Fielding: B-

>Game Intelligence: B-

>Mental: A+

>Skills: 13

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. A+)

Balance and Coordination: S

Agility: A+

Strength: A

Stamina: S

'It looks like my pitching has returned to the B grade.' Ken commented inwardly.

Since he had not properly pitched in the past year, this was actually one of the areas that had fallen behind. However, he was not disheartened at all.

With his disciplinarian skill and the Image training provided by the system, it would only be a matter of time before his pitching was upgraded a few times.

"Kenny! It's almost time for the doctors." His mothers voice snapped him out of his train of thought.

"Coming!"

As Ken stepped out of the bathroom, Yuki performed a double-take.

"Kenny?" She asked curiously, almost not even recognizing her own son.

Ken's jaw seemed sharper and his eyes more determined. The frame which used to be long and wiry now seemed better proportioned, boasting a calculated strength within.

Yuki could only look at him dumbfounded for a few moments, trying to match up the man in front of her with the boy she had been raising all of these years.

"Sorry mom, I'll be ready in 5 minutes." Ken said apologetically, hurrying up the stairs to get changed.

Ken's mother just stood and watched him go upstairs in a daze, still not understanding what was happening.

"Honey what's wrong?" Chris saw his wife staring off into the distance and approached her with concern.

Instead of answering, she asked a question softly.

"When did our son grow up so much?"

Chris didn't respond for a while. Since he had yet to see Ken since this morning, he had yet to see the subtle transformation.

"I don't know." He answered simply, shaking his head.

Ever since this time last year, he had noticed a tremendous change in the way Ken acted. It was as if the argumentative and complacent teenager had been replaced overnight.

Since he had been enjoying being close to his son once again, Chris had overlooked the situation and just living in the moment. However, now that his wife had mentioned something, his mind began to pour over their interactions in the past year.

Ken was no longer rash, his maturity levels having increased by leaps and bounds. He was disciplined, never missing training for even a single day apart from today when he was sick.

Chris had even noticed that it felt like talking to another adult whenever they interacted.

Yet he shook his head in the next moment before responding. "He's just turned 16 not long ago, adolescence is a mysterious thing. One moment they're still kids and the next moment they're adults like us."

He placed his hand on Yuki's shoulder, comforting her. It seemed as if these words had done the trick as she felt herself calm down considerably.

"Yeah you're right." She replied, turning around and embracing her husband.

A smile formed on Chris's face, showing just how happy he was.

Still embracing his wife, he saw a man walk out of Ken's room and make his way down the stairs towards him, startling him greatly.

With one swift movement, he moved Yuki behind him and took a defensive stance.

"Who are you!?" His voice was deep and menacing, unknowingly speaking out in English.

"Huh!?" Ken looked at his father who was now in front of him, looking as if he wanted to incite violence.

"Dad, what are you doing?" Ken's voice came out deeper than usual, causing him to stop for a moment.

"Kenny?" Chris paused, moving closer a little to inspect the person.

Now that he was out of the light, he could finally see his sons features up close, causing him to let out a sigh of relief. Yet even though the anxiety had disappeared, he was inwardly shocked at just how different his son looked.

"What happened to you? Why do you look so... grown up?" Chris said after a while, inspecting his son from top to bottom.

"See, this is what I was talking about!" Yuki finally felt vindicated after seeing her husbands reaction. She too had a hard time believing the changes in Ken.

"W-What?" Ken started to feel nervous for some reason.

'Could it be that my 24 year old body has appeared now for some reason?' His mind raced and he quickly ran to the bathroom in order to use the mirror.

Since he had just showered, the mirror was all fogged up. So only after a few moments was he able to see the reflection staring back at him.

His eyes widened, seeing the visage staring back at him from the mirror. While he still held some youthful charm, his eyes and jawline made him look like a young adult.

His body which had not changed too much over the past year of intensive training suddenly looked to have filled out. He was no longer scrawny, showing clear and powerful muscles that would make most teenagers jealous.

While it would not be too noticeable to others, his parents who saw him everyday would easily be able to notice the difference.

'Is this because I reached S grade in stamina?' Ken thought for a moment, thinking it was the most likely scenario.

He never knew that reaching S grade would cause such dramatic circumstances.

Ken walked out of the bathroom and was at a loss for words. He stared at his parents, wearing a confused expression.

"Ah, there's my son." She said, seeing the silly look on his face and letting out a giggle.

"HAHAHA, I see it now." Chris joined in on the laughter and smacked Ken's back with joy.

Ken stood awkwardly for a few moments, not exactly enjoying the poking and prodding he was receiving from his parents. However, there was a smile on his face.

Thankfully they didn't ask too many questions since he did not have a good explanation for the changes to his body.

After a while, Chris said that it was time to go.

"Which clinic are we going to?" Ken asked, hopping into the family car.

Chris shook his head.

"We're going to the Yokohama Warriors facility. They have one of the best sports physicians in Japan, he'll be able to give us a straight answer about your injury."

Ken's eyes widened, feeling his heart beat in excitement.

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

Chapter 97 - 97: Yokohama Stadium (1)

Chris arrived at the car park at Yokohama stadium and was waved in by one of the security guards who exchanged pleasantries with him. It was clear to Ken that the two must be familiar with each other since his father worked here.

Even though he had been to Yokohama stadium to watch baseball games and even play during the Kanto Tournament, Ken couldn't help but feel excited.

Would he be able to see real professional players train while he visited?

'Soon enough I'll be one of those players...' He told himself.

"Alright let's head in." Chris said, jumping out of the car with ease.

Yuki had decided to stay home, not wanting to get in the way of the father son duo. If Ken really was still injured, she did not want to be present for the resulting actions.

As they made their way in through the staff entrance, Ken couldn't help but move his eyes around, taking in his surroundings. They walked past a few doors as they went down the corridor.

"Weight rooms, training facilities, massage room." Ken muttered, his curiosity mounting.

His father didn't say a word, silently walking towards the end of the corridor. Ken couldn't help but smile wryly, knowing what he was probably thinking.

The reason they were there was to check out Ken's injury, not to play around.

"Ah, Chris you're here." A middle aged man with wide shoulders and a toned body called out from one of the rooms, getting their attention.

"Kichi, thanks for seeing me on short notice." Chris walked forward and shook the man's hand.

Ken observed the middle aged man. If it wasn't for the muscles shown off by his tight shirt, he could have been mistaken for a regular balding man one would see often in Japan.

"This is my son Ken. Ken this is Yukichi, he's a sports physiotherapist, one of the best in Japan." His father said, sending a stern look towards him.

Ken bowed, interpreting the stern look to mean he had to be polite and show respect.

"Huh? Son?" Yukichi looked Ken up and down and was utterly confused.

"He looked like your younger handsome brother more than your son." Yukichi commented, letting out a few chuckles.

"Ahem." Chris coughed lightly, wanting to move the conversation along. "Shall we step into your office?"

"My my, where are my manners. Ken, please join me in my office." Despite saying so, Yukichi still had a grin on his face.

Ken did as he was told, heading into the spacious office which held some miscellaneous items like medicine balls and even a massage table.

Chris took a seat without being offered and told Yukichi about Ken's injury and circumstances. He spared no detail, even shocking Ken with how much his father knew.

He spoke of Ken's fitness regime, dietary intake, amount of games played and even took into account the tryouts he had at Osaka Toin. Ken's eyes fell on his father and felt his already high opinion increase even further.

"Oho, you're certainly taking your health seriously young man." Yukichi nodded with respect. "It's quite rare for someone your age. Are you aspiring to be an athlete in the future?"

As he spoke, Yukichi was placing his hands upon Ken and pressing each of his muscles to look for any tightness or weaknesses.

"Yes, I want to be a baseball player." Ken responded, not budging in the least.

"Hmm yes. A pitcher I assume?" Yukichi responded after feeling both of his shoulders.

"How does it look?" Chris asked after seeing Yukichi had now taken a step back.

"I can't see anything wrong in my preliminary examination. But damn Chris, why didn't you tell us that your son was a pitcher? And a southpaw to boot." He shook his head in exasperation.

"Southpaw?" Chris replied with confusion.

"Am I wrong? But I could have sworn I felt more muscle mass in your left shoulder and arm." Yukichi responded, feeling his confidence waver.

"Ah. Because I injured my right shoulder I've been throwing with my left for most of last year." Ken clarified, feeling the two both staring at him.

"Oh, you just threw with your left instead... EH!?"

"W-What!? You can do that?"

Both Yukichi and Chris gawked at the young man who made such a statement so matter-of-factly. Sure it wasn't unheard of for people to use their non-dominant arms after being injured, but seldom in sports.

"N-Never mind that..." Chris said after a while, regaining his composure. "Can you do further tests on his right shoulder? The one that was injured."

"Ahhh sure." Yukichi responded, snapping out of his daze.

He took Ken through a series of mobility tests and stretches, telling him to say something if he felt any pain. Since Ken was now fully healed, he had full range of motion in his shoulder and passed with flying colors.

"Are you sure he was injured?" the middle aged man asked, rubbing his chin in thought.

Ken answered, "I had a sharp pain in my shoulder when I used to pitch, right here." He pointed to a spot on his shoulder to which Yukichi came forward and inspected.

He pressed down on a few spots, sometimes using a bit more force, however Ken did not feel any pain.

After stepping back once again, Yukichi confidently stated that there were no present issues.

"What you described was a common problem with pitchers who often receive rotator cuff injuries through repetitive stress. Usually professional athletes wouldn't let it get to such a point, but you are still young."

He continued. "It's also uncommon to be able to fully recover from such an injury. Perhaps it is because you're still young that your body was able to heal in the span of a year."

Yukichi smiled, "You did the right thing by letting your body recover. If you were a player on our team I would clear you to go back to action."

Despite knowing he was fully healed, it filled Ken with relief hearing these words. Not only did he now have a second opinion, his father would now believe him that he was ready to pitch once more.

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

Chapter 98 - 98: Yokohama Stadium (2)

He looked over at Chris who had been silent for a while, listening to their professional opinion of one of the best sports physiologists in Japan.

"I won't be convinced until I see you pitch." Chris stated firmly.

"Eh? I guess it wouldn't hurt to check him out. I think there should be a few players in the bullpen right now who can help out." Yukichi responded.

'Huh? I'm going to get to pitch? Right now? To a professional catcher?' Ken blinked a few times, almost not believing his ears.

"Let's go!" He quickly stood up, filled with excitement.

Both Yukichi and Chris looked at each other, feeling amusement at the kid's reaction.

The three left the office and made their way through the tunnels, heading towards the bullpen. This was the place where the pitchers warmed up before they headed onto the field of play.

There were three batters boxes and three mounds, lined up parallel to each other.

PAH

PAH

PAH

The crisp sound of the baseball rocketing into the leather of the catchers glove rang out within the bullpen, sending a shiver down Ken's back.

As the doors opened, Ken's world seemed to fade away as he saw the figure on the mound wind up and let his pitch loose. Every action was fluid yet filled with power and intent, playing out in front of him like a piece of art.

Everything up to the point of release took place seemingly in slow motion.

PAH

The sound of the ball entering the catchers glove snapped Ken out of his stupor.

"Oh, it's Yukichi and Chris. What brings you guys here?"

The pitcher was the first to notice the three of them even though he had been so absorbed in his warm ups. He looked like a man in his mid to late thirties, who had passed his prime.

He sported a goatee and had a mysterious charm, a result of his western descent.

"Yo Jason. I don't mean to bother you but we'd like to borrow Yamamoto for a few minutes." Chris replied in English.

Yamamoto who had heard his name but only spoke Japanese looked back and forth between Jason and Chris with confusion.

"Oh okay, it's fine I'm warmed up already." Jason said, leaving the mound.

Ken gulped. He had finally recognized the pitcher who was in front of him, making him feel a little star struck. However, he quickly shook his head and stepped forward, placing his hand out in front of him.

"Hi Mr. Matthews, my name is Ken. Chris is my father." He spoke in perfect English.

Jason Matthews was a professional who used to play in the Major League over in America for many years. He left and signed with the Yokohama Warriors after receiving less and less playing time due to his age.

However, Ken could already see that despite being older, the man in front of him was still a deadly closing pitcher. He led the NPB in saves with a total of 39 last season, proving he still had the skills needed to play.

Jason seemed rather impressed that a kid was able to speak fluent English. Taking into account that he was also Chris's son, he accepted the handshake and smiled.

"Nice to meet you Ken. Will you be doing some pitching today?" He asked, instantly recognizing the reason for needing to borrow his catcher.

"Yes sir. My father wants to make sure that my injury has healed." Ken confirmed, nodding like a chicken.

However, his face turned a bit weird in the next moment, almost as if he was disappointed.

"Ah, well good luck." Jason responded, confused at the reaction of the kid.

Ken on the other hand was looking at the text in front of him and lamenting.

[USER IS UNABLE TO USE IDENTIFY FUNCTION DUE TO SKILL GAP BETWEEN TARGET]

He let out a sigh. It would have been a good time get a gauge of what a professional players stats were but life wasn't so easy, even with the system.

"Yamamoto, please catch a few balls from my son." Chris said, this time in Japanese.

"Okay, let's warm up your arm first." Yamamoto responded, throwing the ball to Ken who seemed a little out of it.

Ken caught the ball without paying too much attention and threw it back, landing directly into the open glove of the catcher.

"Southpaw?" Jason said aloud, feeling slightly intrigued.

"K-Ken! What are you doing?" Chris stammered. They had come to check out if his right shoulder was still injured, why was he warming up his left arm?

"Ah crap." Ken had been sulking about the identify function not working and had thrown the ball with his left out of habit.

"S-Sorry dad, I was distracted." Ken apologized, before receiving the ball back from Yamamoto.

He took a deep breath and steadied himself. It had been a year since he was able to throw properly with his right arm. Every throw would rocket slowly into the air, painting a rainbow.

Now that it was fully healed, would everything go back to normal? Would he suffer from the yips and not be able to throw with his right arm anyway?

There were too many unknowns. Not only that, there was also the added pressure of being watched by Jason Matthews, a professional pitcher that he looked up to.

However, Ken had been in many pressure filled situations. He also activated the focus skill, drowning out anything but the catchers glove that was set 60 feet away from him.

'Here goes nothing.' He thought, making a throwing action and praying inwardly.

Ken felt no discomfort as his shoulder rotated properly, sending his arm forwards and releasing the ball in front of him. He watched on as the ball took a straight path towards the glove, landing square in the middle of the webbing.

Seeing that his ball had gone exactly where he was aiming, Ken let out a sigh of relief. The absence of any pain was also a great boon to his confidence, making him feel on top of the world.

"I'm back..." he muttered, a smile creeping onto his face.

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

Chapter 99 - 99: Conviction (1)

Ken made his way to the car, his face a deep shade of red. His father wore an amused expression and his steps were light. Clearly he was happy.

"Ahh come on Kenny, don't be embarrassed. You haven't pitched in a year, you can't expect to be at the same level you were before." Chris said, seeing that his son had his head lowered.

"Y-Yeah... I'm sorry dad, will that come out of your pay?" He asked tentatively.

Ken could still hear the crunch sound of the land line telephone he had hit with one of his wild pitches, causing another wave of embarrassment to assault him.

"HAHAHA don't worry about it." Chris laughed, slapping his son on the back in good spirit.

"I'm just happy there's no lingering injury left." He said after a while. "Next time something like this happens, I want you to tell me right away. You don't want to ruin your future over hiding an injury."

Chris's words rang in Ken's mind. He understood completely what his father was saying. If only he had listened to him in his previous life, he could have saved himself a lot of pain and suffering.

Of course he was happy that he was able to come back and have a second chance. But how often was one given something like this? Even he didn't know how he was able to go back in time and try again.

However, now that he was here he would do the best he could to live without regrets.

Ken clenched his fist, a smile returning to his face.

"I've got a lot of work to do." He stated.

"Yes yes. You've got the power but your control is all over the place." Chris said, nodding happily. He was content since he knew that Ken was serious about his training.

"I'll be leaving for America again in two days for 3 months this time. I'm looking forward to how much you improve in that time." He stated, ruffling his sons hair.

Despite saying so, his father sounded pained.

Later that night, Ken was laying in his bed and staring at the ceiling. He had been waiting for his parents to go to sleep so he could enter the Image Training and finally begin to work on his pitching.

DOES THE USER WISH TO ENTER IMAGE TRAINING?

[YES/NO]

Ken clicked yes and was met with the familiar feeling of being surrounded by darkness. The feeling was similar to how he imagined full-dive VR technology would feel like if it ever existed.

Soon enough the familiar Koshien stadium appeared in front of him, along with a menu.

PLEASE CHOOSE A SKILL TO PRACTICE.

#IMAGE TRAINING MENU:

>PITCHING

>BATTING

>FIELDING

"Thank goodness..." Seeing that the pitching was no longer locked, he let out a sigh of relief.

PLEASE CHOOSE DIFFICULTY LEVEL:

>MAJOR LEAGUE

>PROFESSIONAL

>AMATEUR

>HIGH SCHOOL (Recommended)

>MIDDLE SCHOOL (Stats will not be recorded towards missions in this difficulty)

>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Stats will not be recorded towards missions in this difficulty)

Without hesitation Ken chose the High School difficulty. He of course was already in High School now and would be going up against others of the same age. Not to mention that there was no point going against middle schoolers.

#PITCHING MISSIONS:

> Pitch 500 strikes - 100 Major points

> Pitch 500 breaking balls - 100 Major points

> Pitch 125km/h 500 times - 100 Major points

> Pitch 130km/h 500 times - 100 Major points + Silver Lottery ticket

> Throw pick-offs 100 times - 100 Major points

> Strike-out AI - Middle school (upgradeable) - 500 Major points + Silver Lottery ticket

The first thing that struck out at him was the pitching speed required. If he remembered correctly, his fastest pitch during the second year of high school was around 140km/h. However, thanks to his painful shoulder he wasn't able to stay at those speeds consistently.

However he was confident that he could exceed this speed and with a lot more control thanks to the system and his now healed shoulder.

"Strike-out AI?" Ken mumbled.

As he said these words, he was transported to the mound and facing the batters box. A figure appeared on the plate, causing him to gawk for a few moments.

"D-Daichi??"

It was Daichi, or at least an inexpressive Daichi who wore a blank face. The way he was holding the bat was weird, almost as if it was before his father had taught him the correct stance.

"This is what it must have meant when it said Middle school." Ken commented

Ken couldn't help but chuckle seeing the awkward figure in the batters box. He missed his friend and little brother, but this would at least be a good warm up for when they met at nationals.

"Let's do this." He said confidently.

There was no need to warm up his arm in here, so he began right away. Using his usual stance, he wound up and stepped forward with his left foot before whipping the ball towards the outstretched catchers glove.

DING

"H-Huh!?"

His control was good and everything seemed to have gone smoothly, however the awkward figure on the mound was able to make contact with the ball, sending it to first base.

FAILED

2 ATTEMPTS REMAINING TODAY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE?

[YES/NO]

Ken saw the text box appear in front of him and shook his head. He needed to get his pitching under control first before taking on the AI. Of course image training wouldn't magically get him into form, but it would certainly make it easier.

"No."

Once Ken clicked no, Daichi disappeared, replaced by a transparent blue box which floated above home plate. It looked like one of those mobile baseball games that he used to play in his past life.

"That's more like it." Ken grinned.

WHOOSH

Ken threw a ball right down the middle. He threw it about 80% prioritizing control over power this time.

[115km/h]

[Base hit]

"Hmm, this is good."

Not only did it show how fast his pitch was, it also calculated if the ball would be hit or not and what the result would be. This was something that could greatly improve his pitching.

"Let's go all out!"

Ken sent another pitch, this time with all his strength. However, this time the ball went a few feet higher than the strike zone.

[130km/h]

[Ball]

"Ah damn it. I need to learn how to walk again before I run."

"Again!"

WHOOSH

"Again."

WHOOSH

"Again..."

For the next few hours, Ken continued to throw pitch after pitch. He had lost count of how many he'd thrown, but he was starting to ingrain the pitching action into his mind once more.

The 1 year break might not seem that long in the grand scheme of things, but if he included the time spent without pitching in his previous life, it totaled almost 8 years.

Even if someone had pitched for many years, taking almost a decade break was bound to regress their skills considerably.

As Ken was about to fire off another pitch, he suddenly collapsed on the mound. Everything around him disappeared, fading to black.

This was the longest that Ken had been inside the Image Training arena at any given time. It seemed that with his current mental capacity, this was his limit.

Ken's snores rang out in his room a moment later after being removed from the arena.

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

Chapter 100 - 100: Conviction (2)

The next day, Ken woke up to the sound of his alarm blaring in his ear. Out of reflex he whipped his hand over and gently pressed the button to stop it. While feeling a little groggy, he managed to sit up and swing his legs off the bed.

"What happened? I don't remember leaving the arena last night..." He murmured, rubbing his tired eyes.

USER HAS REACHED LIMIT OF CURRENT MENTAL CAPACITY

LEAVING IMAGE TRAINING

Ken checked his notifications, quickly learning the reason. He saw that the time stamp said he received the message at 1 am which meant he lasted around 4 hours.

"4 hours huh?"

Even though he had lasted for so long, he had yet to finish any of the pitching missions. Thankfully, no matter how much he pitched in the Image Training he wouldn't be affected physically.

While this did not help for things like muscle memory, it allowed him to pitch all he wanted without worrying about fatigue on his shoulder. The last thing he wanted to do was get injured once again.

Of course with his new skill "Fatigue Management" it would mitigate some risks, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

"Time to get some training in before school."

With that, Ken jumped out of bed and got ready for his morning run.

An hour or so later he returned feeling refreshed. Since he had missed out on his run yesterday because of the fever, today's felt that much more beneficial.

"Morning Mom." Ken mused on his way past the kitchen.

"Morning Kenny. Breakfast will be on the table soon. Hurry up and get ready, your father has a meeting soon." Yuki said, shooing him along.

"Yep!"

Ken smiled. His mother had been making a point to eat as a family whenever his dad was home. Probably because she knew that he would have to be away for long stretches of time.

He quickly got dressed and headed down, being met with a wide array of food which tickled his appetite.

"Wow, what's the occasion?" Ken exclaimed.

Yuki flashed a look at him, a tinge of sadness in her eyes. "Your father is off to America for 3 months early tomorrow morning so this will be the last breakfast we have together for a while."

She let out a sigh, "I wish Daichi was here as well"

Ken looked at his mom and felt a little guilty. He internally vowed to try and help her out more often while his dad wasn't here.

"What's with this sad atmosphere?" Chris asked, tightening up his tie after walking out from his bedroom.

"Uwahhhh look at all this food. What's the occasion?" He added on before receiving any replies.

This time, both Ken and Yuki turned to him with serious expressions, forcing him to feel a little uncomfortable.

"Ahem... Let's eat then."

Ken made his way to the other side of the table and began to tuck into the delicious food. There was scrambled eggs, bacon and toast with some avocado on the side and even a heap of fluffy pancakes with maple syrup.

He raised his head every so often to see his mother slowly eating with a sad face. It was clear that she was a little depressed that her husband would be leaving for such a long time.

Just seeing her expression caused Ken's heart to ache.

"Dad..."

"Hmm?" Chris raised his head, attempting to swallow the large mouthful of food he had just shoveled in.

Ken debated for a while on whether or not to broach the subject. He had never once butted into his parents work dynamic, since it wasn't really his business. However, since regressing he was a lot more mature and had a wider viewpoint.

After a few moments he worked up the courage.

"Do you really need to keep working as the foreign adviser?" He asked, locking eyes with his father.

Chris seemed surprised by this question, but not as surprised as Yuki whose eyes had gone wide with shock.

"K-Kenny, what are you talking about?" Yuki stammered, however Ken could see that she was watching for Chris's expression from the corner of her eyes.

"It's fine honey." Chris said, wiping his face with a napkin before setting it down.

He let out a small sigh and responded. "I know it's tough on you both when I'm away, but we need the income. We'd be fine while you and Daichi are in High School, but when you go to University, who will pay for both of your tuitions?"

Ken frowned. He had expected this sort of response from his father, especially now that they had Daichi in the family.

He knew that Daichi would be able to turn professional and enter the NPB after high school. This was especially true since he had started a whole year earlier in this life, but he couldn't convince his father this early.

Which meant that he had to do the same. Get drafted into the NPB right out of high school, something that seldom few are able to achieve.

Ken's eyes flashed with determination. "I won't be going to college, I'll get drafted right into the NPB. So please, take back your old job." He pleaded.

Chris heard the conviction within his sons voice and did not laugh, no matter how outlandish the claim was, he would not crush his sons dreams. However, that didn't mean he thought Ken could pull it off.

"Do you know how tough it is to become a professional baseball player? Let alone right out of High School?" Chris asked, his eyes laser focused on Ken's face.

Ken shook his head, "No, but I'm willing to stake my whole future on it."

His goal was to become a professional baseball player by hook or crook.

This time Chris shook his head, "It's too uncertain. Even if people try their best, it doesn't mean that they'll succeed Ken. While I'll acknowledge your conviction, I cannot risk our family's wellbeing on such things."

What his father said made a lot of sense, after all he was the head of the family, the one who needed to ensure their survival and success. However, it still hurt a little knowing that his father did not trust him completely.

'What can I do to convince him...?' Ken thought furiously. Since he had the , he had complete confidence that he would be able to improve over the next few years and turn the heads of scouts all over Japan.

Yet by the time he had shown his potential, his Mother and Father would have already suffered for too long. He had to think of something now.

"What if I win the national title?" He murmured, clenching his fists under the table.

Chris's eyes widened at these words. As someone who had competed in high school baseball before, he was well aware how tough it was to make it to Koshien, let alone win the entire competition.

One would essentially have to be better than over 4000 high school teams, going through many rounds of single eliminations in order to make it to the top. All it took was having one off game for a teams dreams to be shattered.

He let out a sigh, placing his chopsticks down.

"Alright, I hear your conviction Ken. If you take your team to nationals and win, I'll take back my old job."

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