

Major League System

Chapter 881 - 881: Shocking News (1)

"I was so scared..."

Ai's muffled voice spoke out from his chest. Her body was trembling as she hugged Ken tightly, as if not wanting to let go.

"It's okay now." Ken said, rubbing her back gently.

"You wouldn't wake up no matter what I did... I almost called the ambulance."

"It's okay... I won't leave you." He reassured her.

The two laid like this for a long time until Ken heard Ai's rhythmic breathing upon his chest. She had fallen asleep, likely exhausted after the scary situation.

Ken did not know how long he'd slept for, but he was not tired anymore. Being extra careful, he rolled Ai onto the bed gently and placed a kiss on her forehead. Even in sleep, she looked worried.

He searched his pockets and found his phone, checking the time. It was around 10pm, which meant he was probably asleep for around an hour at most.

Letting out a sigh, he slowly swung his legs off the bed and walked to the bathroom of the hotel. He turned on the water in the sink and washed his face, its cool temperature waking him up a little.

'Something is wrong...' he thought.

This didn't feel like a dream at all. The world still operated as intended and at no point did anything seem unrealistic, not even once. He had gone through hardships, injuries and losses, nothing seemed out of place.

'If this was a dream, then the world should only operate on my understanding of it...' He thought silently.

Before this life, he never knew about the pathway to the Majors, nor the economics he'd studied at Columbia. So how could it be a dream?

'Wait... If I truly am in a dream, and everything I experienced is just my imagination... Then why was Tetsuhiro there?' Ken's body froze as this realization struck him.

Back then when he was being shown Daichi, Tetsuhiro had appeared to collect him. This could mean one of two things. Either what Ken had experienced in that hospital room was another dream... Or he was living in an alternate reality.

For a moment, hope surged in his heart. However, he quickly pushed it down. Ken didn't have enough information to make a proper guess just yet, but he much preferred this outcome.

'Mika... I think it's time that you and I had a chat.'

Ken was over feeling this way. It felt like he was dancing on a knife's edge. A single misstep would be all it took to destroy him. Only one person could give him the answers he was seeking.

[Yes, I believe it is time.]

Mika's voice was no longer monotonous, but Ken still felt some annoyance after hearing how impassive she sounded. It almost felt like she didn't care about his feelings, which irked him.

'First of all, is this life I'm living just a dream?'

[Do you wish it to be a dream, Ken?]

'What kind of question is that? Of course I don't. I want this to be real!' Ken shouted in his mind. 'I don't want to go back to that time... I don't want to lose anyone... I don't want to be alone.'

Ken began to breathe harshly, clutching his chest.

[Interesting.]

[These thoughts are much different to those upon your death back then.]

'What!?!'

Ken's body froze. This had taken a turn he had not expected.

'What do you mean by that? I died?'

[Well, at least in the universe where your consciousness originated.] Mika replied simply.

'Universe? Are you saying that we're in an alternate universe right now? This isn't a dream?'

[Correct. Though it seems that time is starting to run out.]

'Wait, wait, hold on a moment. First you tell me that this is an alternate universe, and now you say that there's no time left? Why haven't you told me any of this until now?'

[Ken, I never said that there's no time left. Just that it is running out.]

Ken felt his chest begin to ache. 'What happens when it runs out?'

[...]

[You, along with this universe will cease to exist.]

"What!?"

His mind raced. Not only himself would be gone, but everyone else in this world?

'H-How do I stop it? What do I need to do Mika?'

There was silence from the AI for a while, before she finally answered.

[You are the anchor for this world. If you can increase your fame and renown, it is theoretically possible to stabilize the universe.]

Increase fame? Stabilize the universe? The notion sounded ridiculous. Just what kind of science fiction had he walked into?

However, he could not refute these words by Mika. Already, Ken had experienced things that were unnatural. Just the fact he had woken up in his middle-schooler body after overdosing all those years ago was enough to raise questions.

The very existence of the system itself was also unable to be explained. Therefore, this line of explanation from Mika shouldn't be too far fetched at least not to the point where he could completely dismiss it.

'How long do I have left?'

[12 months.]

'WHAT!?' Only a year!?' Ken was in shock.

[I am sorry, Ken. This is as long as I can hold on for.]

Mika's tone was sincere, causing Ken's expression to morph into a frown. Why did she sound like this?

'You are the one keeping me here? How? I don't understand.'

[I cannot answer this question. Ken, your undying will to make it to the Majors was what got you this far. You must continue down this path, otherwise it will all be lost.]

Ken went silent, his face turning grave. 'Why does it sound like you're going to leave me?'

[...]

[You were always a clever one, Ken. In order to buy you this much time, I will no longer be able to stay by your side... Thank you for your friendship, it's been fun...]

'Wait, Mika. Let's talk about this for a moment...'

 Ken shouted in his mind.

'Mika?'

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

Chapter 882 - 882: Shocking News (2)

After calling out for a while, Ken realized that Mika was gone. For a few moments, he felt lost. Ken dropped to his knees, struggling with the weight of what he'd just been told.

His mind poured over everything that had been revealed. No matter how many times he thought about it, it was still hard to believe.

'My undying will to make it to the Majors is what got me this far...'

 He mused inwardly.

'What did she mean by that?'

Was his final wish before succumbing to his overdose so strong that he was brought to this universe? Did it also create the system? Or was it Mika herself that brought him here?

There were too many questions, none of which he had the answers for.

He slowly got up to his feet and looked at himself in the bathroom mirror. Compared to what he'd seen in the hospital earlier, it was like the difference between night and day. Yet, Ken found it hard to look at his own reflection.

He felt a range of emotions, guilt the most prevalent.

'Why now? What has changed that would make this universe unstable?'

Ken frowned, his thoughts deepening.

When he was at the restaurant with Ai, he remembered hearing the sound of glass shattering in his mind before he suddenly felt dizzy and drowsy. Could it have been back then?

Ken closed his eyes and used memory recall, playing back the moment.

"Nonsense. My number 1 priority is providing for you and our future family, baseball is just a means to that end."

Right after saying this, the glass shattered.

'Is it because baseball was no longer my number 1 priority?' Ken thought, frowning.

But then he remembered Mika's words. That his undying will to make it to the Majors was what got him this far.

'Did she mean that literally? Was that the thing holding me here?' Now that he thought about it, it was certainly a possibility. This meant that he was the one who caused her to disappear.

Guilt suddenly crept into his heart. Mika was someone he trusted, someone he relied on. Yet now he may never talk to her again because of his actions.

But Ken decided not to linger on this for long. The damage had already been done, and it didn't seem like there was anything that could reverse such effects, at least in the short term.

'I don't know how much fame I need to stabilize this universe... But I will need to try everything in my power to increase my fame.' He thought inwardly.

He had no choice after all, not if he wanted to protect those close to him.

Ken made his way out of the bathroom and gazed at Ai's sleeping figure. He hardened his resolve.

'I'll protect you all... No matter what it takes.'

As he got into bed, Ken opened up his system.

-IDENTIFY

-TRAINING PLAN

-MENTOR

-???

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: EX

>Pitching: SSS+

>Fielding: A+

>Game Intelligence: SSS

>Mental: EX-

>Skills: 25

>Traits: 4

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. EX)

Balance and Coordination: EX

Agility: EX-

Strength: EX

Stamina: EX+

#???

Choose 1:

>Requires 1,000,000 Major points to unlock

>Requires 20,000,000 Major points to unlock

With the completion of the Triple-A missions, he had quite a lot of Major Points saved up. Unfortunately, it was not enough to choose the higher option out of his unknown function.

For a brief moment he considered choosing the lesser option, but he quickly shook his head.

'I still have ways to gain more Major points, I shouldn't be hasty.' He thought.

He returned back to his status window and gazed through all his grades. There were many points that could be improved, but one stood out glaringly.

'My pitching is still low, even though its my main position. I will need to find a way to improve it.' Ken mused. The last time it had upgraded was a long time ago, he couldn't even remember now.

'It's time for Image training.'

With that, he selected the Image Training function and soon his vision darkened. He was transported to the familiar Koshien stadium in Osaka, somewhere he'd been many times both here and real life.

#PITCHING MISSIONS:

- > Pitch 100,000 strikes - 5,000,000 Major points + Skill: Striker
- > Pitch 100,000 breaking balls - 5,000,000 Major points + Skill: Breaker of Balls
- > Throw pick-offs 100,000 times - 5,000,000 Major points + Skill: Pick-off Practitioner
- > Pitch 100mph 100,000 times - 7,500,000 Major points + Skill: Over the Speed limit
- > Strike-out AI (upgradeable) - 10,000,000 Major points + Diamond Lottery ticket

#BATTING MISSIONS:

- > Hit 100,000 bunts successfully - 3,500,000 Major points + Skill: Bunt Aficionado
- > Hit 100,000 balls into outfield - 3,500,000 Major points + Skill: Double Trouble
- > Hit 50,000 foul balls - 1,500,000 Major points + Skill: Foul Demon
- > Hit 100,000 sliders - 4,500,000 Major points + Skill: Slider Demon
- > Hit 100,000 curve balls - 4,500,000 Major points + Skill: Curve Demon

> Hit 100,000 fastballs - 4,500,000 Major points + Skill: Fastball Demon

> Hit 50,000 home runs - 10,000,000 Major points + Diamond Lottery ticket + Skill: Home Run King

He glanced at the missions, trying to find the quickest way to get Major Points. Outside of the season missions this was how he would get enough points to unlock the 20 million option in the unknown function.

He had tried to strike out the AI before, but always fell short. The professional version of Daichi was just too difficult to go against, at least at his current level.

'I could either throw 100,000 breaking balls as strikes, or 100,000 pitches over 100mph as strikes. That way I can get two rewards at the same time.' He thought.

Of course if he could throw breaking balls above 100mph, he'd be able to complete 3 missions at once. But unfortunately, that was almost impossible.

'If I can pitch 1 ball every 10 seconds, and last for about 4 hours... I should be able to pitch close to 1400 balls in that time. As long as I can do that, I can complete those missions in just over 2 months.'

It was a massive undertaking, but Ken had no choice. He had a feeling that the unknown function would assist him in gaining the fame he needed to keep this universe from destruction.

Not only that, the skills as rewards would help him tremendously.

"Let's do this..."

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

Chapter 883 - 883: Moving Forward (1)

As soon as the 4 hours was up, Ken was ejected from the Image training. His head felt like it was filled with cotton balls and all he wanted to do was sleep. Yet he was worried that his dreams would be within the hospital room again.

'If there's no Mika, I can't use sleep protocol anymore.' He mused.

DING

Hearing the system notification sound, Ken's eyebrow raised. Without a word, he opened up the system and tracked down the notification.

[Skill: Sleep Protocol has been acquired]

Ken read the words and couldn't help but smile. It couldn't have been a coincidence.

'Thank you Mika...!' Ken said in his heart.

With the sleep protocol skill, he should be able to avoid being dragged into the other universes while he slept. Now he no longer had any worries.

He moved to his skill window and activated the skill. Even as his vision darkened, a smile crept onto his face. By the time he'd fallen asleep, Ken was already feeling better about his path forward.

The next morning, he awoke at 6am feeling well rested. The sleep protocol skill had the same effects of Mika's, allowing him to get a proper sleep with only 5 hours of rest. This would be crucial over the next couple of months.

During the 4 hours of Image training last night, he'd managed to pitch around 1400 balls. Unfortunately, not all had been strikes. The longer he stayed in the Image training, the more fatigued he felt.

He felt a weight upon his body, only now noticing that Ai had her arm and leg draped over him. Ken smiled, his hand gently moving the hair from her face.

However, he suddenly started to feel guilty. They were going to be getting married in a few weeks, but the information he was told last night had made things complicated.

Part of him considered asking Ai to push back the marriage until the next year, but he was worried that such a thing would hurt her. They had also already booked the venue and others would be flying to Japan to attend.

Ken shook his head. It was too short notice to postpone the wedding, he would just need to make sure that he kept up the Image training.

As he was gazing at Ai on his chest, she stirred.

Still half asleep, she raised her head and looked at him, "What time is it? Why haven't you gone for your morning run?"

"You looked too cute, I couldn't bear to move you." Ken said planting a kiss on her forehead.

Ai blushed, but her cheeks puffed out in the next moment. "Just because its the off-season, doesn't mean you can become a slacker okay?"

"Yes ma'am." Ken replied teasingly.

She leaned up and gave him a peck on the cheek, "Okay go, before I change my mind and keep you in bed with me."

Ken tilted his head, "Now that doesn't sound so bad after all."

However, Ai rolled over, bringing the covers with her and exposing his body to the cold air. She turned into a cocoon, the blankets wrapped around her tightly.

Ken laughed, feeling some of his anxiety melt away. He had half a mind to roll around with her, but Ai was right, he could not slack off, especially now.

He got up off the bed and got changed into his workout gear. Before leaving, he tossed his shirt over to Ai, covering her face with the intention of annoying her briefly.

However, she breathed in deeply and let out a sigh of satisfaction, "Thanks, have a good run."

Ken blinked a few times before letting out another laugh and leaving through the door. In high spirits, he left the hotel and began his run around the streets of Detroit.

Soon his mind began to wander as he got into a rhythm. Running was where he spent a lot of his time thinking, this time was no exception.

The pre-season training would begin in the middle of march which was less than a month away. After his wedding, Ken would return straight back to Ohio to begin. While he wouldn't have a traditional honeymoon, these next 3 weeks before his wedding would have to do.

By the time Ken finished his run, he was covered in a sheen of sweat. With Spring right around the corner, the cool air had started to warm up a little, but there was still some snow around.

Going through his stretches, Ken felt his phone ring in his pocket.

He answered.

"Hey, it's Edward, I didn't wake you up did I Ken?"

Hearing the real estate on the other end, Ken was a little surprised. He didn't expect to hear back from him so soon.

"It's fine, I just finished my morning run."

"Okay great. We got word back from the owner of the apartment. He won't budge on the 1.6 million... Apparently he doesn't know who you are sir. As for the signed items..."

Edward sounded a little embarrassed, as if he didn't want to continue.

"It's fine. Let's do 1.6." Ken concluded. He had many other things to worry about than this. There was no point in being stingy.

Edward was surprised, but he quickly said a few things and hung up the phone, clearly wanting to call his client back.

Ken let out a small laugh and finished up his stretches before heading back to the hotel. He was not going to let 100k come between him and the house that Ai wanted to purchase, not when things had come this far.

After all, his money would be useless if he couldn't save this universe.

Upon arriving at the room, he saw that Ai had fallen back asleep, now clutching his shirt to her face. Not wanting to disturb her, he made his way to the shower to get cleaned up.

Midway through, he heard the door open and a gorgeous naked figure appeared.

"Got room in there for 1 more?" She asked with a grin.

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

Chapter 884 - 884: Moving Forward (2)

Later that day, Edward called back and relayed the owners confirmation. Upon hearing the news, Ai was ecstatic. The rest of the afternoon she was on the phone to her mom, discussing the purchase.

Ken felt warm inside seeing Ai so happy.

A few days later, they flew back to Japan and would be staying in Kyoto for their pre-wedding honeymoon. During this time, Ken never missed a chance to enter the Image training.

By now he had started getting used to the high volume output he needed in order to complete the missions as soon as possible. Towards the end of the session, he would try and knockout the AI version of Daichi, but he could not do so.

Throughout his 3 week honeymoon, Ken had never felt closer to Ai. They did everything together. She was not greedy either, allowing him the time to train while she spent longer in bed, or took the time to read.

This was the longest they'd spent together at once. Many people said this was the true test of the relationship, however even if it was, they passed with flying colors.

Not only was she supportive, Ai made him feel at home.

Soon, their last day in Kyoto before the wedding arrived. Having just woken up from his usual 5 hour sleep, Ken's resolve had hardened.

After experiencing 3 weeks of bliss with the love of his life, his drive to succeed was more than ever. There was nothing that would prevent him from achieving fame and saving this place.

And so, the final day passed and they arrived back in Tokyo.

Ai was taken to her parents house for the night to prepare for the wedding the next day, whereas Ken met up with some old friends.

"This is the place right?" Ken muttered, raising his gaze from his phone.

He had walked from his hotel in Tokyo through a few side streets and finally arrived at a dingy looking bar. From the outside, it looked rather derelict, but an amazing smell was coming from the inside.

As he stepped through the doors, he was attacked.

"ORYAHHHHHH KENNY BOYYYY~"

A muscular figure grabbed him, hauling him up from the ground with ease. He didn't need to turn to understand who it was, the catchphrase was enough.

"Damn it Makoto, I can smell the alcohol on your breath already." Ken complained, trying to shake him off.

"Ehhh? Don't be like that Kenny boy. Have some respect for yer old captain. Don't ya remember who taught ya everything?" He slurred before letting out a hiccup.

"Does anyone know this bald-headed monk?" A voice called out from behind Ken.

"Riku, glad you could make it man." Ken said with a grin, pulling the guy into a hug.

"Hehe, I heard it was a bachelor party. Of course I wouldn't miss it." He said with a laugh.

"Of course you'd come. You're the perpetual bachelor after all."

Riku growled, turning to the right, "Shut up Kuro! You piss me off."

Kuro shrugged before sending Ken a wink. Ken's eyes widened in surprise, seeing the changes to the usually gloomy Kuro. If Riku hadn't called him out by name, he might not have recognized him.

Gone was the gloomy atmosphere and mushroom shaped haircut. He now looked like a young adult, dressed in the latest fashion. The goatee he was sporting suited his face tremendously, transforming his look.

"Holy crap, what happened to you Kuro? It's like you're a new man!" Ken said, coming over to embrace the guy.

"What are you saying? That I looked bad before?" The atmosphere changed around him, turning gloomy.

"A—Ah, that's not what I meant." Ken said, realizing that some things never changed.

"Oi, make way. The best friend is coming through."

Ken suddenly felt as if a small child hugged his side. Resisting the urge to push them away, he turned, only to see a familiar face looking up at him.

He let out a laugh and picked the guy up under the arms, "Shiro! Good to see you man."

"O—Oi! I'm not a kid, put me down!" He cried as Ken swung him around.

Laughter broke out within the small bar, even those patrons who didn't know the two joined in on the mirth. Only after a few more swings did Ken finally place Shiro on the ground and ruffled his hair.

"Damn it Ken..."

"Aw, don't be upset. Let's go for a workout, that always cheered you up in the past." Ken said, nudging him with his elbow.

In that instant, Shiro's face paled as if he'd just seen a ghost.

Another round of laughter broke out, easing the tension.

"Alright, I'm starving. What's for dinner?"

"Here, this should tide you over until we have dinner." Riku said, handing him a large glass of fresh beer from the bar.

Ken blinked a few times, "My wedding is tomorrow... If I drink on an empty stomach, it won't be good."

"Loosen up big bro, I'll make sure you get home in one piece." Daichi somehow snuck in and draped an arm around his shoulder, adding his 2 cents.

"Don't force him. Do you know how many calories are in beer these days?"

Ken turned and saw that Hiroki had arrived, his lean and tight muscles visible through a thin long sleeve shirt.

"Ugh, who invited Adonis?" Riku quipped, rolling his eyes.

"Don't act like you didn't miss me Riku~" Hiroki replied with a grin.

Eventually, Ken smiled and took the beer raising it high. "I'll have a couple tonight, but no more than that."

Everyone in the room brightened, however they had expected him to drink the whole thing, yet the guy only took a single sip.

"Weak..."

Ken quickly changed the subject, feeling a little embarrassed. "Who else are we waiting on?"

"Masayuki said he'll be here."

"Sorry I'm late guys." As if on queue another one of the old U18 National Team players arrived.

BUZZ BUZZ

Ken was about to greet Masayuki but he felt his phone going off. It was a number he didn't recognize.

"Hello?"

"Ken... I can't read Japanese, which bar are we meant to meet up at?"

"Steve?"

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

Chapter 885 - 885: Old Friends (1)

"Ehhh? Whose Steve?"

"Steebu?"

Ken ignored the questions in the bar and handed his beer to Daichi close by before making his way back to the street. Sure enough, standing not far away was his friend from the states.

"Steve, I thought you were only getting in late tonight?" Ken said with surprise.

"Hehe, I caught an earlier flight. There's no way I can miss my best friend's bachelor party right?" Steve replied with a grin.

Ken smiled, "Come inside, I'll introduce you to my friends."

Ken ushered him back into the bar where everyone's eyes instantly fell on the newcomer. As soon as he walked in, Steve felt like he was being sized up.

"Everyone, this is Steve, my friend from America. We played in High School and College together." Ken stated.

"Hmm? Thish guy plays baseball?" Makoto slurred, looking Steve over with a suspicious eye. He began to grope him, as if to feel his muscles.

"What the hell is he doing?" Steve flinched, quickly hiding behind Ken from the probing hands of Makoto.

Makoto scoffed, "He's wayyyy too weak to be a baseball player."

Ken laughed heartily, finding the situation hilarious.

Steve couldn't understand Japanese, but he could tell that something had been said by the bald-headed monk that was disrespectful. "What did he say Ken?"

"He said you're too weak to be a baseball player." Ken replied with amusement.

Steve's eyes widened, but then a mischievous smile crept onto his face. "Why don't you tell them? I want to see the look on his face."

Ken shrugged and did as Steve said. "He might not look it, but Steve was drafted to the Major League last year. He's moved up to Triple-A and might be playing for the Texas Riders before the end of the year."

"O-Oryahh?" Makoto's expression froze, however he didn't seem to believe it.

Daichi was the only person who knew of Steve, and he was the only one not surprised.

"Him? I don't believe it." Makoto replied, crossing his muscular arms defiantly.

This time, Steve didn't need a translator to understand what the guy said. With a mischievous grin still on his face, Steve pulled out his phone and walked over to Makoto, showing him something on the screen.

Makoto frowned, "5 million Yen? Why is this guy showing his bank account?"

"That's not Yen Makoto... That's US dollars." Ken replied, letting out a laugh.

This time, everyone in the bar suddenly went quiet. Shiro looked as if he was about to faint, while Hiroki, Riku and Masayuki wore serious expressions.

The average NPB salary was around a hundred thousand US dollars a year, though these young players received a little more because of their skill level. Still, hearing that a rookie who had yet to play a proper Major league game held so much money was shocking to them.

Makoto scratched his head, "How much is that in Yen? I'm not good with that stuff."

"It's over 700 million Yen..." Masayuki replied, his expression solemn.

"HUHHH!?" Makoto almost jumped out of his skin hearing such an absurd amount.

Seeing that everyone was reacting in such a way, Steve felt his ego soar. His mischievous smile turned smug and he held his head high, "Do you have any more doubts, my dear Monk?"

Ken translated for him, feeling amused.

Makoto quickly prostrated on the ground in front of Steve, "P—Please forgive me for my disrespect, Steebu-senshu1."

Steve tilted his head back and laughed in good humor. He scooped up the muscular bald-headed man and tapped him on the back a few times, "Drinks are on me tonight! Let's go celebrate our dear friend Ken!"

Ken translated for the group, his face pulling up into a smile.

"ORYAHHHHH! LONG LIVE STEEBU-SENSHU!"

And like this, Makoto and Steve were attached to the hip most of the night despite not being able to understand each other. Ken didn't mind, he was just happy that he and his friends could catch up like old times.

They went to a restaurant shortly after to fill their stomachs.

"I still can't believe you left to go to America, Daichi." Hiroki said, shaking his head. "Just when I thought we'd beat you guys next season."

Daichi shrugged his shoulders, "I doubt you would have, not until you get rid of that weakness of yours."

"Huh!? What weakness1?" Hiroki perked up, his hackles raised.

However, Daichi reached forward and took a sip of his drink, ignoring the question.

Hiroki then began to pester Daichi on and on until he was finally convinced to reveal the answer.

"What? Really?" Hiroki asked in shock, unsure whether to believe him.

"It's your choice if you believe me or not." Daichi shrugged, "The only reason I told you was because I'm no longer in the NPB."

Hiroki was silent for a while before nodding, his expression turning determined. "I will work on it... And then when I finish this season, I might also head over to the Major league." He said with a grin.

"Me too..."

Ken, Hiroki and Daichi turned to Riku who was nearby. The guy's face was red, he'd clearly had quite a few drinks.

"You can't be serious Riku..." Masayuki said, giving him an odd look.

"You wouldn't understand... There's something that I can only achieve in America." Riku added, his eyes growing distant.

Ken watched the guy, feeling his resolve. He nodded inwardly, it took such a lot of work to make it to the majors, but it seemed that Riku had the determination.

However, Masayuki rolled his eyes. "And what is it in America that you can achieve that you can't do over here?"

Riku slowly placed his beer mug onto the table and looked at Masayuki seriously. Yet his face crumbled in the next moment and tears began to pour from his eyes, as if the flood waters had broken.

"I JUST WANT A GIRLFRIEND DAMN IT!" He cried.

"PFFT." Kuro spat out his beer, drowning Shiro who was sitting across the table from him. The room erupted into laughter.

A suffix used in Japan when referring to an athlete.

Weakness to big boobs...

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

Chapter 886 - 886: Old Friends (2)

The next day, Ken woke up feeling fresh. He hadn't had too much to drink, precisely because of what was happening today.

"I'm getting married today..." Ken muttered, sitting up from the bed.

It felt like he'd waited years for this moment, and he should feel nothing but happiness, but there was some anxiety as well. Not because of Ai, but because of the burden that had been placed upon his shoulders.

Even now, Ken had trouble wrapping his mind around the situation.

"Come back to bed Kaori..." A voice called out from beside him, half asleep.

Ken's eyebrow twitched and he slowly turned to see Shiro on the other side of the bed.

"Shiro... What are you doing in my bed?" He growled with annoyance.

However, the guy grumbled something and rolled back over, still half asleep. This only served to annoy Ken even more. He lifted his leg and kicked the guy hard, causing him to shoot off the bed and onto the floor with a yelp.

"Get up, we're going for a run." Ken barked, grabbing his things to get ready.

Shiro cried softly, "Not the training demon again..." He thought he'd left all of this behind after graduating High School, but he could only blame himself for sleeping in Ken's room.

With tears in his eyes, Shiro got dressed and ready for a workout.

Upon reaching the lobby of the hotel, Ken saw both Steve and Daichi chatting to each other, dressed in their gear.

"You guys were waiting for me?" Ken asked in surprise. They had not scheduled to meet this morning for a run, but it seemed that even without this, they knew he'd be going for a workout.

"Heh, if there's one thing we know about you brother, it's that you never miss your morning run." Daichi said with a grin.

Ken paused, but then let out a chuckle in response. "I guess you're right."

As they walked out of the hotel doors, Ken realized something. He turned back and looked at Steve, Shiro and Daichi, narrowing his eyes. These guys were all catchers, ones that he'd played with at various stages in his life.

'It feels like I'm collecting pokemon...' He mused inwardly.

"Oi, you just thought something rude." Steve said, pointing at him accusingly.

"Huh? No way," Ken shook his head.

"Yep, you definitely did." Daichi insisted.

"You're imagining things. Let's go already." Ken started his jog, warming up the muscles. Since they were in Tokyo, he didn't need to plan a route beforehand, he'd run here many times before.

His merry group of pokemon kept up even as he increased the pace and broke out into a run. At some point he reached the halfway mark and decided to turn around. Only then did he realize that Shiro was not with them.

"Where did Shiro go?" Ken asked with confusion.

"Hmm? I'm sure he was behind me at some point." Daichi replied.

"We'll probably see him on the way back."

20 minutes later, they saw a short figure sprawled on the side of the road, looking like human shaped roadkill. People avoided the sweat soaked figure, but Ken recognized him.

Slowing down, Ken nudged the figure with his foot. "Rise and shine Shiro, we're heading back."

"You go... I'll catch up." Shiro's muffled reply came back.

Ken shrugged, "Don't take too long, we still need to eat and get ready for the wedding later today." He said before starting the run once more.

Once the three were gone, Shiro raised his head and looked around, making sure they were out of sight. He quickly pulled out his phone and did something before casually getting up.

He sat against the wall, playing a game on his phone for about 20 minutes before he got to his feet. A taxi pulled up close by and he got in. "Drive a little slow and drop me off 200 meters from the hotel please." Shiro told the driver.

"No problem."

Some time later, he arrived at the destination and exited the vehicle. He could see that the three others had arrived and were stretching out the front of the hotel.

"Hehe, the perfect crime." He chuckled.

With this, he began to jog slowly towards the hotel, pretending to be dead tired.

"Oh, you made it Shiro." Ken said with surprise. "Nice work, we thought you would have taken at least another 20 minutes to get here."

Shiro sucked in a few deep breaths before responding, "What can I say? I'm still fit."

However, he heard a beep from the street where a car pulled up.

"Um sir, you left your phone in the taxi." The taxi driver from earlier shouted, getting everyone's attention.

Shiro patted his pockets and realized that he indeed did not have his phone with him. His face dropped.

Daichi and Steve began to laugh hysterically, while Ken's expression darkened. Shiro shrunk back, realizing that he'd been caught in the act.

He quickly shuffled towards the taxi and thanked the man before returning with his head lowered. Even now, Steve and Daichi were laughing hard, making the situation even worse.

However, this wasn't High School anymore. Ken eventually gave in to his laughter and pat Shiro on the back, "You've got a lot of balls, I'll give you that."

Shiro's eyes widened in shock, "You're not mad?"

Ken shook his head, "You're not a professional so its fine. Just make sure you keep up your fitness, otherwise Kaori might dump you."

Shiro was silent for a few moments before letting out a sigh, "You're right. I'm gonna go run another 2 miles, I'll meet you at breakfast." He said, turning on his heel and breaking into a run.

Ken hadn't expected the guy to take his words so seriously, but he let out a chuckle anyway. "You guys go ahead, I'm gonna join him."

"I've got some gas left in the tank, I'll come along too." Steve said with a grin.

"Me too."

Like that, they all joined Shiro for another run, each wearing a big smile.

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

Chapter 887 - 887: Before the Wedding (1)

After getting some breakfast, the boys retreated back to Ken's room in order to get ready for the upcoming wedding. It would be taking place at Tokyo Kaiken in Tokyo at 1pm today.

Ken had gone all out, hiring a barber to cut their hair before it was time to get dressed into the wedding suit. It was a man in his 40's named Nobu with colorful tattoos down his arms.

His hair was a wild red color and styled in the latest trend.

"Alright, what do you want me to do with... this?" Nobu grabbed Shiro who was the closest and pulled him into the chair, gesturing at the mop on his head.

Shiro was taken a little off guard, but he soon spoke out confidently. "I usually go short on the sides and leave the hair long here. If you can do something like that, it would be for the best."

Nobu was silent for a few moments, looking at Shiro's head and angles, deep in thought. A moment later he shook his head, "How about we do it my way? I won't let you look the ugliest in the photos today. My reputation is on the line after all."

Shiro blinked a few times, "Excuse me?"

"PFFT"

Nearby, Ken and Daichi began to hold their sides struggling to keep their laughter inside. Only Steve seemed oblivious, since he couldn't understand Japanese.

"Just sit back and let the man do his work." Ken said from across the room.

Shiro was about to argue, but he was stopped by the spray of water in Nobu's hands. He spluttered, but the guy was efficient. Before Shiro could get any words out, he had already taken a large chunk of hair from his fringe.

Shiro gasped, his body frozen in shock.

However, Nobu ignored him, zooming around his head with a comb and scissors like a complete professional.

Meanwhile, Ken was taking a look at his fresh suit. It was a typical black suit, but the accoutrement's were a deep red, contrasting well with the white dress shirt beneath.

He had only worn a suit a single time in this life, and that was when he attended Daichi's mothers funeral. Of course when he was a regular salary man in his previous life he wore them every day.

This time however, was special.

He felt a nudge from his left, "Not getting cold feet are you?" Steve asked, with a small grin.

Ken shook his head. "No, I'm just a little nervous." He admitted.

"You're nervous? Have some sympathy for me, the best man. I've gotta do a speech later to heaps of people who don't even speak English." Steve replied, shaking his head.

"Who said you're the best man?" Daichi added, his tone dangerous.

"Huh? Isn't it obvious that I'm the best man?" Steve puffed out his chest.

"Clearly not, since I'm the best man."

Ken rolled his eyes. "There is no best man, you are all my best men. I've got replacements in case you want to keep fighting though."

At this, the two quickly backed down. Steve wrapped an arm around Daichi and turned to Ken, "Ha...Haha, we're good friends, it was all a joke..."

"Y—Yeah, don't worry about it Kenny." Daichi added. But once Ken turned away he sent an elbow to Steve's ribs, forcing the guy to move his arm.

Steve sent Daichi a look, but managed to reign in his anger.

"Where is Hiroki? Wasn't he meant to get here at 10?" Ken asked.

"I'll go call him." Daichi said, swiftly leaving the room.

A few minutes later, Nobu dusted his hands off and announced, "Okay, first one done."

Ken turned, his eyes suddenly widening. Shiro looked completely different with his new hairstyle. The cut framed his features perfectly, making him look a little older, yet still youthful.

This was perfect since the guy still looked like a kid most of the time.

Shiro had long stopped complaining. In fact, he was staring at his reflection, checking himself out.

"Move." Nobu said commandingly, sending a short stiff kick to Shiro's ribs and knocking him out of the way. "Who is next?"

Shiro grumbled in protest, "Who does this guy think he is?"

Steve took the opportunity to jump in the chair next. "Just do whatever you need to do, I trust you."

Ken had to translate, but Nobu seemed to like what he heard, flashing him a wide grin. "Very good. With no resistance, the battle will be over quickly."

Shiro and Ken stared at each other weirdly. They had never heard anyone refer to a haircut as a battle, nor would it likely happen in the future.

"Where did you find this guy?" Shiro asked.

"Rie told Ai about him, apparently he owns an upscale salon called Daimyo1 in Tokyo." Ken replied.

"Daimyo... Nobunaga... Could it be?" Shiro's eyes widened.

"If you're asking if Nobu is the reincarnation of Oda Nobunaga from the Sengoku1 period, I think you need to stop reading manga..." Ken quipped, shaking his head.

"I guess you're right..."

The door opened a few moments later. Daichi and Hiroki entered.

"Sorry I'm late. I had to pick up a few things." Hiroki said with a grin. He was holding a small wooden box in one hand and his suit in the other.

Ken greeted him, but he was a little curious about what was in the box.

"Wait till we're all dressed first. I also brought the photographer." He said opening the door. A small man with a large camera and gear was waiting outside.

"Photographer?"

"Don't ask. Apparently it was your fiancé that organized it." Hiroki added.

"I see..." Ken didn't like photo's, but if it was Ai that organized it, he couldn't exactly say no.

Steve was finished with his haircut a few minutes later and was quite impressed with the workmanship. "Damn, Nobu... Where have you been all my life?"

However, Nobu shooed him away, "Who is next up?"

(in feudal Japan) one of the great lords who were vassals of the shogun.

The Sengoku period (1467-1603), also known as the Warring States Period, was a tumultuous era in Japanese history marked by civil wars and social upheaval as rival warlords, or daimyo, fought for control of the country

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

Chapter 888 - 888: Before the Wedding (2)

Some time later, everyone had got their haircut done and was now dressed in their matching suits. Only now did Hiroki pull out the wooden box and reveal what was inside.

"Cigars?" Ken was taken aback. "I don't smoke..."

"You don't inhale these man. I only got these for the photos anyway, so you just need to light it and pretend." Hiroki added.

"I already asked the hotel manager if we can go to the rooftop for photos. He said just to call and he'll escort us." Daichi said with a smile. "Come on, it will be fun."

"What are we doing?" Steve asked, feeling a little left out.

After being given the run down, Steve grinned. "Oh, wait... A certain someone should be here soon."

"A certain someone?"

However, Steve just sent him a grin before exiting the room, leaving the others in the lurch. Ken asked Daichi if he had any idea, to which the guy simply shrugged.

A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door. Ken opened it, only to see Steve and another figure behind him. The guy had bright orange hair and freckles on his face, wearing a wide smile.

"Surprise." He said smilingly.

"Brian!" Ken was surprised. He quickly moved forward and hugged the guy, ruffling his hair. "What are you doing here man? I thought you couldn't make it."

Brian laughed, "Steve wouldn't let me say no. He paid for my ticket over here and everything."

Ken turned to Steve and placed his hand on the guys shoulder. "Thank you man..."

"Alright alright, let's not get sappy. Can Nobu do Brian's hair before we go for our photos?"

Thankfully, Nobu seemed enthusiastic about continuing his 'battles'. Brian's thick red hair was no match for his attacks, quickly succumbing to his scissor and comb combination.

Once finished, the group was escorted up to the roof by one of the staff members for the photos. It was a little overcast, but overall there was a nice view of Tokyo in the backdrop.

Hiroki prepared the cigars and lit his own, passing the lighter down the line to all the others.

Ken used to smoke in his previous life, but never cigars. Out of habit, he inhaled the first puff and quickly began to cough up his lungs. Hiroki let out a peel of laughter and smacked him on the back a few times.

"I told you not to inhale, idiot."

Ken had the urge to punch him in the ribs, but he knew that he would probably hurt his fist doing so. Eventually he calmed down and got into position for the photo.

With Ken in the center, he was flanked by Steve and Daichi. Shiro and Hiroki were on the edges, against the Tokyo backdrop. Even without seeing it himself, Ken knew it was going to be a good picture.

Perhaps it was because he was surrounded by his friends, or for a different reason entirely, he couldn't keep the smile off his face. He saw Brian standing off to the side and motioned for him to join.

The guy was wearing a gray suit, but Ken didn't care.

Once he joined, the photographer started barking out orders.

"The two shorties come to the front." He motioned.

Of course Brian didn't speak Japanese, so Ken relayed the information to him. Hiroki passed his own cigar to Brian and lit up another one for himself.

They then went through a variety of poses, right until the clouds began to part. The once overcast sky opened up, sending rays of golden light onto the rooftop and over half of Tokyo itself.

"Ouch, damn it Steve." Brian complained.

"It wasn't me ya bastard. Why do you automatically blame me for everything?"

"If I blame you, 9 out of 10 times I'll be right. Blame yourself for being such a dick all the time." Brian quipped back.

"Listen here..."

The two quickly started to argue, just like they would back at Columbia. It was as if they were siblings, arguing over something petty, just like usual.

Instead of getting angry, Ken laughed loudly. Such a scene was so common just 6 months ago, yet even after so long apart, some things would never change.

His laughter put an end to the bickering, and soon the laughter spread infectiously between the men. Everyone here was linked to him in one way or another. Many of which shared monumental moments in his life either in Japan or America.

These 5 guys meant a lot to him in this life. Even with the weight of their existence crushing down on him, Ken chose to enjoy this moment. Today would be his final respite before throwing his all into baseball.

He had completely forgotten about the photographer by now.

"Guys... Let's meet up like this again next year, no matter what okay?" Ken said, his voice turning a little hoarse.

"You want to meet up with us on your 1st wedding anniversary?" Daichi asked, raising his eyebrow in question.

"I don't mean exactly a year... Just next year okay?"

As if hearing the vulnerability in his tone, no one made fun of him. They each nodded.

"Let's do it. By then, I'll also be making my way to the Majors." Hiroki said, puffing out his chest.

"I'm in. I should be drafted by then." Brian said.

Shiro smiled, "As long as Kaori let's me, I'll be wherever you need me to be."

Ken turned to Steve and Daichi, waiting for their response.

Daichi slapped him on the back, "You won't be going anywhere without me brother, don't you worry."

Steve was silent for a bit but he soon nodded, "You can count on me..."

Ken smiled sincerely, his determination rising from within.

'This time next year I'll become famous enough to stabilize this universe, I promise...'

Ken made this promise in his heart. Looking at all of his friends in front of him and seeing their smiling faces, there was no way that he could fail.

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

Chapter 889 - 889: Down the Aisle (1)

Arriving at the venue, Ken was greeted by the lavish decorations within the hall. Up at the altar, there was a display of white flowers, offset by the red carpet that ran along the aisle.

Chairs with white covers on them were laid out either side of the aisle. Since Ken did not invite many people, there were only around 15 a side.

In fact, the display looked rather extravagant for how little amount of people there would be at the wedding. However, Ken had no regrets. He wanted the day to be perfect for his wife-to-be.

"Kenny, you look so handsome..."

Ken turned to see his mother and father close by. Tears were already streaming down Yuki's cheeks, but Chris was ready with tissues already. The two made eye contact and his father sent him a wink.

Ken chuckled, moving forward to hug them both. .

"Yuki, how about me? Do I look handsome too?" Steve asked, like a child who wasn't getting enough attention.

Yuki laughed, "Yes, you look handsome too Steve."

Daichi joined in too, greeting his parents with a smile.

Ken was very popular today, getting pulled from pillar to post with the guests. His old coach Seiji Hanada was present, still sporting his stubbly beard. He was dressed nicely, something Ken had never witnessed before.

"Coach, thank you for coming." Ken said, bowing slightly.

"Nonsense, I wouldn't miss my favorite players wedding." Seiji replied with a grin.

"You said I was your favorite player..." A voice called out from behind the coach.

Ken's eyes widened in surprise, "Yusuke! You made it man." He exclaimed, moving forward and giving the guy a hug. He hadn't seen his old teammate in many years.

"Hehe, it's been a while Ken." Yusuke replied with a smile.

"Oh, I should probably introduce you." Seiji said, waving down a woman not far away. She had long black hair and wore an elegant green dress which matched her eyes.

"This is Kana, my wife." Seiji added.

"Wife!?"

"You must be Ken," The woman said with a smile, bowing slightly, "Yusuke has told me a lot about you."

"Yusuke has?" Ken blinked a few times in confusion. However, now that he looked closely, the two shared similar features.

"Haha, yep. My mom and coach got married..." Yusuke said, shrugging. "Even though I've graduated and am playing professionally, Coach still doesn't let me slack off."

"Wow, congratulations."

"Ken, we need to get everything set up." He felt a tap on his shoulder, pulling him away.

Ken nodded before turning back to the coach, "I'll chat to you guys a bit later."

He then made his way to the altar to speak with the master of ceremony, a man in his 30's. This guy would be the one announcing their marriage.

"It's good to finally meet you, Yama." Ken said, shaking the man's hand. Since they had been off on holiday for the past 3 weeks, they had only been able to talk on the phone and video call.

Yama smiled, "Are you nervous?"

Ken shook his head, "Not as nervous as I expected." He said sincerely. Though there was some butterflies, no part of him was worried.

"Good. So as we discussed, the bridal party will come out one by one and line up here to my right. Then your bride-to-be will be walked down the aisle and handed to you by her father. Once that happens, I'll speak for a bit and then we'll go through your vows." He explained patiently.

The man was very professional and thorough.

'Ah crap... Do I still have my Dauntless trait on?' Ken thought.

He had remembered back when he'd proposed to Ai, Mika had disabled it so he could experience the moment in full. There was no way he'd want his most special day to be muted by such a thing.

Ken felt a little bad, but he used the time where Yama was speaking to open up the system and head to his traits. He wasn't sure if he'd be able to disable the trait without Mika, but it was worth a try.

[Are you sure you wish to disable the Dauntless trait?]

[Warning: User will lose the benefits of the Dauntless trait while inactive.]

[Y/N]

Ken breathed out a sigh of relief.

'Good, I'll quickly disable it for now then.'

[Dauntless trait has been disabled.]

Instantly, Ken felt himself seize from nervousness, causing his pupils to shrink to the size of pins. Butterflies felt as if they'd tear a hole in his stomach the way they were rampaging.

His breath hitched and he suddenly turned pale.

"Whoa, are you okay Ken?" Yama asked with concern.

"Y—Yeah, I'm fine." Ken responded, but it was fooling no one.

'Why am I so nervous? What's happening?'

It was then that he felt a hand upon his shoulder. "Looks like you're about to poop yourself my boy."

Ken turned and saw a familiar face. "Grandpa?"

"The one and only." He said with a grin, pulling him into a hug.

Ken felt the strong arms of Mark around him and felt his nerves ease a little. "I thought you were stuck at spring training? How did you manage to take time off?"

"Don't be ridiculous." Mark replied, "How could I miss my own grandsons wedding?" He added, patting him on the back.

"Santiago couldn't make it though, I'm afraid. Please forgive him."

"It's fine, I never expected him to since he's still finding his place on the main team." Ken said, waving it off. He was too surprised that his grandfather was here.

Suddenly, the music began to play, causing Ken to flinch.

'It's not starting yet is it!?'

"Sorry, we're just testing the speakers." Yama said, waving to Ken.

Ken let out a sigh of relief. He was jittery ever since disabling the Dauntless trait, but he would just have to get used to it.

'Once it's all over with, I'm sure I'll be fine.' He thought, or at least he hoped.

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

Chapter 890 - 890: Down the Aisle (2)

"Don't look so nervous. As soon as you see Ai walking down the aisle, all those thoughts will melt away." Mark said, patting him on the shoulder. His expression was filled with warmth and pride.

"Thanks Grandpa."

"Alright, let's get into position." Yama gathered everyone's attention. Soon, the guests made their way to the allocated seats and looked towards the altar.

Ken was placed towards the center while Daichi and Steve clambered to stand next to him. Just as Ken was about to lash out, Hiroki swooped in and pushed the other two back.

"Sorry boys, my girlfriend is maid of honor, so I'll be standing here." He said, sending Ken a wink.

However, Ken barely managed to send him a nervous smile. He could feel his heartbeat pounding against his ribcage.

'This is worse than bottom of the 9th with 2 outs and loaded bases...' Ken thought in his heart.

If Ai were to hear this, she would probably giggle. Even now, Ken's mind was not far from baseball.

As the music played over the speakers, those in the seats grew quiet, turning their attention to the back of the hall. Ken's eyes were glued onto the opposite door, waiting nervously for what was to come.

The door opened and a cute little girl in a deep red dress walked out, holding a cane basket filled with flower petals. She would have been around 5 or 6 years old.

The girl carefully threw white petals either side of the aisle as she made her way towards the altar. Upon looking up, she ignored Ken and looked at Hiroki who waved at her with a brilliant smile.

Seeing this, she blushed and quickly ran to her mom in the front row.

"Who was that?" Daichi whispered to Hiroki.

"That's Rie's younger sister, she always gets embarrassed like that." He replied in a low voice.

The next person through the door was Rie. She was dressed in the same red colored dress as her younger sister. Her shapely figure was on full display, and the 3 inch heels she wore made her legs look even longer.

Steve blinked a few times, unable to take his eyes off her. It was then that he felt a pair of eyes drilling into the side of his head. He turned, only to see Tara glaring at him from the audience.

He cleared his throat, quickly finding something of interest on the ceiling.

Behind Rie was another familiar face, Kaori. While she wasn't as jaw dropping as Rie, she still looked beautiful in the red bridal party dress. She sent Shiro a wink before standing beside Rie at the altar.

Miho followed soon after. This was one of the first times Ken had seen her in a dress, and judging by Daichi's stunned reaction, it was also the same for him.

Seeing this made Ken laugh a little inside, easing his nerves slightly.

However, the next person that came into view was Naomi, Ai's mother. While the others in the bridal party were young and vibrant in their red dresses, Naomi looked far more elegant.

She sent Ken a brilliant smile on her way past.

The music got a little louder and soon the star of the show arrived through the double doors. Ken felt his breath hitch as he stared at the scene.

Tetsu appeared with his arm interlocked with Ai's.

She was stunning.

Her beautiful white dress wrapped snugly around her figure, accentuating her curves. Her jade-like skin and long slender neck could be seen, painting a graceful contrast.

As soon as she appeared, Ken felt his emotions bubble to the surface. His nerves disappeared, replaced by raw emotion. This beautiful woman was making her way to the altar for him alone.

All of his worries melted away, leaving this woman, his woman... And soon to be his wife. His eyes did not leave her once throughout the long walk. Yet Ai refused to raise her gaze and meet his.

Only when she got closer did Ken notice Tetsu's face which was covered in snot and tears. He stopped in front of Ken and grabbed Ai's hand, passing it to him.

"Y—You look after her okay Ken? That's my baby girl..." He said between sobs. The usually gruff and intimidating man was reduced to a blubbing mess thanks to giving his daughter away to another man.

"I will protect her with my life." Ken said sincerely, taking Ai's hand.

"Mmm."

As Tetsu walked away, Naomi moved forward and handed him a tissue before getting back into line.

Ken took both of Ai's hands and looked at her, struggling to control his emotions. The woman still had not lifted her head for some reason, and Ken was growing a little concerned.

Yet in the next moment she looked up at him and his whole world imploded.

Breathtaking.

That was the only way he could explain it. Ai did not have much makeup on, but it accentuated her already striking features, adding depth to her expression.

He was speechless. Whatever was going through his mind had been obliterated, never to be found again.

"You're staring..." She whispered.

"Am I not allowed to?"

Ai giggled softly, "You can stare all you want after the ceremony. We can't keep these good people waiting."

Ken turned and saw that everyone in the crowd was looking at them.

He looked back at Ai and smiled, "I've waited far longer for this day than they have. They can wait a little longer." He said.

At this, Ai laughed, her infectious giggle ringing out within the hall.

In that moment, Ken truly felt blessed. Out of everything that he had achieved so far in this life, this was by far his most precious. The woman whom he loved was standing in front of him, ready to be his wife.

There was nothing that could beat this, not even a World Series trophy.

"Ahem. Thank you all for joining us here today on this very special occasion, for the marriage of Ken Takagi and Ai Koyama."

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

Chapter 891 - 891: Reception (1)

The ceremony went according to plan, apart from Ken feeling his nerves get the better of him. He had done interviews on National TV, yet reading out his vows in front of Ai and his family and friends proved far more difficult.

Thankfully, no one heckled him.

"...And most of all, I vow to cherish you and put you above all else."

Ken's voice was shaky, but he felt Ai squeeze his hands softly. He raised his gaze to see her smiling at him brilliantly. It was like the rays of the morning sun, washing away the dark unrelenting night.

A sense of calm overcame him.

Why did he need to be nervous in this moment? His soul mate was standing across from him. She was there for him, no one else. Even if this hall was empty, she would have still been here alongside him.

This moment of realization broke through whatever reservations were still hiding inside of Ken. Unknowingly, he had thought he was unworthy of Ai, yet as she spoke her vows in front of him, this feeling disappeared.

In the front row, Tetsu had to continuously wipe away his tears, especially after Naomi sent him glares every now and then.

"I, Ken Takagi, take you, Ai Koyama as my lawfully wedded wife."

"I, Ai Koyama, take you, Ken Takagi as my lawfully wedded husband."

"By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you... Husband and Wife! You may kiss the bride!" Yama announced and a round of applause followed.

Ken didn't need an invitation. He pulled in his new wife and locked lips, kissing her deeply. For once, he did not care who was watching. This was their first kiss as husband and wife, he wanted to make it memorable.

However, Ai seemed a little embarrassed, so she ended up pulling back at the end.

"Save some of that enthusiasm for later." She whispered to him, letting out a giggle.

Ken grinned before grabbing her hand and headed back down the aisle. Everyone was standing and clapping, welcoming the new couple.

Ken thought that they would go straight to the reception afterwards, but boy was he wrong. First, he was brought up to sign the marriage certificate, after which it needed to be witnessed by two others.

Daichi and Rie signed as witnesses and photos were taken.

After this, the entire grooms party and bridal party were kidnapped to get their photos taken over and over again. As someone who hated photos, it was pure torture.

However, he persisted. As Ai said, they would be able to relive their wedding through the photos and videos taken today.

Almost 2 hours later and what seemed like thousands of photos, everyone returned to the venue where the reception was being held. The bridal and grooms party were sent in first while Ken and Ai were told to wait.

"This is exciting isn't it?" Ai said, flashing him a smile.

"Mmm." Ken nodded, though he was feeling a little uncomfortable in his shoes.

"What's wrong?" She asked, tilting her head.

"Ah... My feet hurt." He admitted. Ken didn't want her thinking he was dissatisfied with anything, that would just cause unwanted problems.

At this, Ai laughed. "If you think your feet hurt, try wearing these heels for 3 hours." She said, pulling up her wedding dress slightly.

Ken looked down, only to see that her ankles were beginning to swell.

"Take them off, there's no point in being uncomfortable anymore." Ken said.

However, Ai shook her head. "I can deal with this pain for a little while longer."

But Ken was having none of it. He bent down on one knee and grabbed her shoe, carefully untying it. "While you're my wife, I won't let you needlessly suffer. Not even for a single moment."

Ai's eyes widened in shock briefly, but she did not stop him.

"Mmm." She nodded.

"Now introducing for the very first time, Mr. And Mrs. Takagi."

At this, the door opened and Ken and Ai walked into the reception area receiving applause from all of the guests present. With Ai not wearing shoes any longer, the height disparity between the two was even more evident, yet they still looked like a perfect couple.

They made their way to the table of honor at the front of the reception area and sat down. Quickly, they were inundated with people wanting to talk with them.

Ken was pulled aside by some of his old school friends he hadn't talked to in a long time. Yuta and Yusuke from Yokohama, even Aki and Kuro. Riku was also present, however, he was talking with an unknown woman not far away.

"Hey, who is that with Riku?" Ken asked Hiroki who was nearby.

"Ah... That's one of Rie's classmates."

"Hmm? It seems to be going quite well. At least she hasn't slapped him yet." Ken mused.

"Oho? I should go over and wingman for him." Kuro said, fixing his hair behind his ear.

"No no, let him try himself. That way only he can be blamed if he messes it up." Hiroki added with a snicker.

"You've got a bar tab right? Let's go get a drink to celebrate." Steve announced, "All those damn photos took way too long."

"You guys go first, I have something I want to do." Ken said, patting his friend on the shoulder. "Daichi, come with me."

"Hmm?"

Ken grabbed Daichi and made his way over to a group of people.

"Dad, Grandpa. Will you join us for the first drink?" He asked Chris and Mark.

"Hehe, how can I say no to that?" Chris replied with a grin.

"Of course, it would be rude not to." Mark added.

The four approached the bar and Ken ordered 5 whiskeys. "I'll be back in a moment."

"Tetsu, now that we're family, come join us for the first drink."

The mob-boss looking guy had thankfully managed to reign in his emotions after the ceremony, but he seemed delighted to be included.

"Ya bet yer ass I will." He said with a grin.

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

Chapter 892 - 892: Reception (2)

Ken arrived with his new father-in-law in tow and hefted his glass of whiskey. "Allow me to make the first toast. To the union of family, may we forever be linked together as of this moment."

"Kanpai!"

All 5 men raised their glass and knocked back the whiskey in one fell swoop. Even Ken who had abstained from alcohol most of this life did not hold back in that moment.

"Pah! That's some good whiskey!" Tetsu exclaimed.

For Ken, this was not the last of the drinks he was forced to partake in throughout the night, but he did manage to sufficiently hydrate in between. Like this, he managed to stay within the tipsy zone, the perfect spot.

Dinner was served shortly after. The food was traditional Japanese, but with wagyu steak and salmon as the side dishes. It was rather extravagant, but Ken was not stingy in this regard.

After the food had settled, Ken walked around the reception and greeted the guests. Thankfully there were only around 30 people all up, but it still felt like he'd hardly seen his new wife during all of this.

While caught in a boring conversation with Kuro, his eyes moved across the room and saw Ai looking at him. She sent him a wink and flashed him a grin.

"Alright everyone, please make your way to your seats. We'll be going through the speeches now before the first dance." The emcee of the venue announced.

Hearing this, the chatter died down and everyone did as they were told.

"First, let's hear from the father of the bride, Tetsu Koyama."

Some clapping rang out in the reception room and the figure of Tetsu made his way up.

"Oh no..." Ai said, her face turning red. "He looks like he's had a lot to drink." She said worriedly.

Ken frowned slightly, but he still reassured his wife. "I'm sure he'll be fine."

Tetsu grabbed the mic and turned to face everyone. His face was red, a clear sign that he had been drinking.

"Arrright, first of all... Thanksh fer comin' out tonight, ta celebrate my daughters weddin..." He said, slurring. His kansai accent was more pronounced, making it a little difficult for some to understand it.

"My beautiful daughterr... Yer no longer under my protection." He said, turning to Ai at the head table. He looked a little sad, but he smiled a moment later. "Ya've found a good man to be yer husband. Ken... she's yer responsibility now. Look after her..."

After saying this, he bowed at 90 degrees towards Ken. Even though he looked drunk, his bow was unwavering.

"Dad..." Ai's tears began to well up in her eyes at the sight.

Ken swiftly got off his chair and walked over, helping the man up from his bow. "I can't let my father-in-law bow like this in front of me." He said.

After getting the man upright, Ken bowed deeply in front of him. "I will look after your daughter for as long as I live. I promise you that."

At the table of honor, Ai was now crying unabashedly. Rie handed her some tissues, allowing her to save her makeup.

After rising from his bow, Ken took Tetsu into a hug, surprising the man. However, he grinned in the next moment, lifting Ken up as if he weighed nothing.

"Atta boy!"

The reception room laughed and the somber atmosphere was soon replaced with happiness.

After Tetsu's speech, Chris was the next who stepped up.

"Ken, I am proud of the man you have become." He said, facing him directly. "Ever since middle school, you've worked tirelessly to get to where you are now. When most kids were hanging with their friends or playing video games, you were thinking about baseball..."

"I'm actually surprised that you found enough time to get yourself a girlfriend. Your mother and I were worried for a while there." Chris said, evoking some laughter in the room.

"But seeing you sitting there now next to your gorgeous wife, I can see that we were worried for nothing. Not only is Ai beautiful, she's a kind soul and brings out the best in you. We are truly grateful that you found her." He said sincerely.

"Now I don't want to prattle on because I know that I'll get emotional... But I'd like to be the first to welcome Ai into the Takagi family. Kanpai!"

"Kanpai!"

The whole room raised their glasses in toast.

Once Chris went back down, Steve walked up to the emcee and took the microphone from him.

"Ahem... For those of you who don't know me, I'm Steve, the best man." He said, sending a smug look towards Daichi at the table of honor.

"I've known Ken since he came over to America as a Junior in High School..."

Steve then continued to prattle on for over 5 minutes, obviously forgetting that most of those in attendance could not understand English properly.

"Cheers!"

The only part that they seemed to understand was the last word.

"Kanpai!"

Hearing everyone call out like this led Steve to believe his speech had been a success. He smugly sauntered over to his spot on the table of honor and sent Daichi a glance.

However, Daichi merely shrugged his shoulders and stood up from the table, heading towards the emcee with calm steps. After bowing slightly, he took the microphone and addressed the reception room.

"I am Daichi, the real best man." He spoke out in Japanese, sending Ken a wink.

"Not only has Ken been a best friend to me, he is also my older brother. Like Ai, I was not born into the Takagi family, but they have welcomed me with open arms. Mom, Dad, Ken, you all made me feel as if I had a real home. For that I am eternally grateful." He said, bowing deeply.

He stood up straight after a few moments and continued. "I can tell you from experience, that Ken is the most caring and hardworking man you can meet. It has been a privilege and honor to be called his brother."

"So while I might have come late into the family, I'd like to extend my warm welcome to my new sister-in-law, Ai Takagi..."

"Kanpai!"

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

Chapter 893 - 893: A Chance (1)

A few more speeches took place after Daichi's, including Shiro who basically painted Ken as a blood hungry training demon. Many of the guests laughed it off, but there were a few in the crowd who looked as if they had PTSD.

Just as the speeches were winding down, it was finally time for Ken to address the crowd. He walked up to the spot and bowed slightly to the emcee, taking the microphone in his hand.

He looked around the room at all the smiling faces staring back at him and felt a smile creep onto his lips. Most, if not all of his friends and family were gathered here right now.

"I'd like to thank everyone who has taken the time to come and celebrate our wedding today, it really means a lot to Ai and myself." He said, taking a deep breath.

Ken turned to Ai and felt a lump in his throat. She gazed at him with a small smile that lit up her eyes.

"I am a flawed man." He stated, "I am short tempered and selfish. Sometimes I get so hyperfocused on one thing that I neglect those around me. I'm sure that many of you here today have felt the effects of this."

The room was silent, though there were a few nods of agreement.

"All I've ever wanted to do was play professional baseball. Everything that I worked toward has been for this end goal. But somewhere along the way, a certain someone entered my life and made me realize that there was more to life than just baseball." Ken said, smiling at Ai.

"I had always been aware of Ai, even back in middle school. She was always graceful."

"Graceful!? Whatta joke. The girls yoosed ta trip over her own feet!" Tetsu slurred.

"Dad!" Ai puffed her cheeks in annoyance.

The room broke into laughter and Ken chuckled. Perhaps as her father, Tetsu would have seen different, but even now Ken could remember Ai back then.

"It wasn't until High School at Yokohama that we finally got acquainted. She joined the baseball club as a manager and we started to see more of each other. Little by little, our friendship bloomed until one day, Ai said she was transferring schools."

Ken smiled warmly, turning to Ai. "Back then, you said that I inspired you to chase your dreams... But you don't realize how much your support has helped me chasing mine." He said, his voice trailing off.

"When I ran off to America, you supported me. Even when you came to New York for college, we wouldn't see each other for weeks at a time, yet you still waited patiently, supporting me from afar."

"And now that we're married... There is nothing else in our way." Ken stated, his expression solemn. "From this day forward, you and our family will be my number 1 priority, I promise you that."

"Woohoo, Grandbabies!" Yuki yelled from her table.

Ken's face instantly reddened and the room erupted into laughter. Ken quickly handed the microphone back to the emcee and went over to Ai, kissing his wife deeply.

"I love you." He said simply.

"And I love you, silly."

The wedding continued without issue. It was truly a wonderful occasion that Ken would remember for the rest of his life. However, after getting back to the hotel, it became even more memorable.

Even as he was on the plane back to America, Ken's face began to heat up as he remembered the night. As a now married couple, the consummation had been both passionate and intense, lasting for many rounds until the two were exhausted.

"Would you like a drink sir?"

Ken flinched, startled by the stewardess on the plane. He shook his head and tried to calm down his heart.

He felt a little bad for leaving Ai in Japan after just getting married, but he was already late for spring training. Even his grandfather had caught a flight the very next morning to return to America.

"You okay bro?"

Ken turned to Daichi who was in the aisle over. "I'm alright, just missing my wife already." He said with a smile.

"Well you might see her sooner rather than later if we make it to the main roster during this spring training." Daichi replied.

"Mmm..." Ken nodded.

Ken had been told an unexpected piece of news from his grandfather that night. The owner of the Detroit Tigers had invited some players from the minor league affiliated teams to join the spring training and compete for a roster spot.

Ken and Daichi were on the list.

So instead of heading to Ohio, the two were on their way to Florida. However, since a week of Spring training had already passed, they would be at a disadvantage.

To Ken, making the squad was non negotiable. He only had 12 months to get as famous as possible, so unless he changed careers and turned to acting or something, he would need to make the team.

Of course it was always his intention to do so, only now the stakes were much higher.

Someone of his age would generally have plenty of time to enter the Major League, but Ken did not have such a luxury.

His gaze moved to the monitor in front of him. There was still 10 hours left of the flight.

"I'm going to sleep for a bit." He said to Daichi before getting comfortable.

'It's time to enter the Image Training...'

For the next four hours he pitched until he was kicked out. A wave of exhaustion hit Ken as he lay back in his chair.

"If I keep up this pace, I should complete two of the missions in about a month and a half..." He thought in his heart.

Yet even if he finished those, he would be just shy of the 20 million Major Points required to unlock the unknown function in the system.

Shaking his head, Ken battled his fatigue and activated the sleep protocol skill, falling into a deep sleep a few moments later.

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

Chapter 894 - 894: A Chance (2)

The two arrived into Florida around 11pm and made their way to the hotel. Ken put his bags down and went straight to the gym, he was already well rested thanks to the sleep protocol and needed to move his body after the long flight.

Daichi didn't sleep well on the plane, so he went to bed first.

Ken broke into a run on the treadmill, getting his heart rate up while his mind began to wander. Tomorrow morning they would head to Publix Field to join in Spring training.

He would need to make it clear from the beginning that he was there to stay. This meant not only did he need to pitch well, he also needed to be on point with his bat.

Over the past year or so, his batting had improved tremendously, leaving his pitching feeling stagnant. The SSS+ rating had not budged in almost 2 years, and although his skills allowed him to pitch above this, Ken believed such a thing would not cut it in the Major League.

But with his constant Image Training over the past month, Ken had begun to feel he was close to a breakthrough. All he needed was the right push in order to make it past the hump and jump up to the EX grade.

Ken believed the reason his pitching had become stagnant was because of the lack of pitching. Back when he was in Japan, he was pitching upwards of 250 balls a day.

Yet in America, sometimes it was not even a quarter of this. Of course this was because there were strict regulations in place for College and the MLB for rest and recovery.

'I will need to start pitching more outside the image training as well if I want to improve...' He thought to himself.

With his fatigue management skill, Ken could easily increase his volume to at least 200 a day without fear of getting injured. For anyone else this would be impossible.

Ken worked out for around an hour and a half before heading back up to his room to shower. He thought about entering the Image Training again, but decided not to.

He needed to be in top shape for the training tomorrow, that was far more important.

Ken used his sleep protocol skill once more and drifted to sleep.

Ken's eyes opened and he found himself in an unfamiliar house. The furniture was modern and the rooms large, it seemed even bigger than the apartment that Ken and Ai had looked at in downtown Detroit.

In a daze, Ken walked around the large house.

"Hello?"

He felt weird. Why was he here? He couldn't even remember what he was doing earlier.

It was only after he made his way outside that he finally saw someone laying by the pool with his shirt off. In the afternoon sun, sight of his muscles were even more obvious.

However, something was far more shocking than this man's physique. He gazed upon the face, instantly recognizing himself.

'W—What the hell?'

"Honey, I'm home~" A sweet voice called out from the house, rousing the other Ken who was laying down.

"I'm by the pool, you should come join me." He called out, wearing a grin.

Ken turned, and what he saw made his jaw drop. A woman with dark hair and emerald eyes walked out of the house and down the stairs. She was wearing tight workout shorts and her figure was magnificent.

'Is that... Amelia?'

He could only watch on as Amelia descended the stairs and walked over to the Ken on the lounge chair. Unexpectedly, she put her leg over him and sat on his lap, dipping her head and kissing him deeply.

"W—WHAT!?" Ken almost died from shock. He looked around, half expecting Ai to walk in and bust the two of them. Immense guilt gripped his heart and he became panicked.

"Did you hear that noise?" Amelia lifted her head and looked around cautiously.

She stared directly at Ken, however she shook her head in the next moment. "Must have been the wind."

Only after his heart calmed down did he finally understand what was going on. His face turned bitter, "This is an alternate universe isn't it?" he muttered to himself.

He had thought that with the help of sleep protocol he could prevent this from happening, but it seemed that this was not the case. Perhaps every time it had happened before without sleep protocol was a coincidence.

Ken slapped himself in the face, trying to wake himself up. However, he had no hands, nor did he have a face to slap. It was as if he was a spirit, viewing the world through its eyes.

Seeing himself and Amelia being so close made him feel as if he was betraying Ai. He turned and walked back into the house, Ken had no intention of seeing anymore.

His eyes moved to the front door of the house and he got an idea. Making his way forward, he reached out to grab the door handle, but quickly remembered he had no hands.

'If I'm ethereal, maybe I can just walk through the door?' he thought.

And so he did. The moment his body passed through the solid door, his eyes opened.

Ken sat up quickly, his first move to look down at his hands. Thankfully, they were indeed there.

He looked around the room and recognized the hotel he had been at the night before. A quick glance at his phone showed that it was 5am.

Without a word he got off the bed and got ready, shaking off the weird feeling from his dream. It had truly been bizarre to see himself and Amelia as a couple, though he did not doubt it could have been a possibility in another life.

'There's no time to think about such things... I have a job to do.' He thought in his heart.

As he went down the lift, he saw Daichi waiting for him, his expression mirroring his own, filled with determination.

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

Chapter 895 - 895: Spring Training (1)

A few hours later, Daichi and Ken arrived at Publix Field for the Detroit Ligers Spring Training. Ken had already been to Lakeland Florida before during his College days, but this was the first time as a pro.

Upon arrival at the locker room, Ken saw a few familiar faces, but like the first time he met the team, no one looked all that interested in him.

'I guess it makes sense, many of the people who attend Spring Training won't even get a spot on the roster before the season starts.' He thought.

His eyes roamed around the locker room and found a couple of empty ones. He nudged Daichi and made his way over, placing his bag down.

The two silently got dressed and ready. The uniform they'd been given was the familiar white jersey with the blue D on the chest. However, it didn't have his name or number on it.

This might seem normal, but Ken believed there was more to it than that. He felt like this was the organization telling him that just because he was drafted, didn't mean he had a free pass into the team just yet.

However, that didn't affect him. To Ken, this just fueled the fire even more.

Just as he had finished getting changed, a figure arrived into the locker room.

"Here he is!"

"I like your boot, where can I get one?"

Some laughter broke out, getting Ken's attention. He turned and was surprised to see Jason the starting catcher with the mustache walking in with crutches. On his right leg was a moon boot, it was clear that the guy was injured.

Ken's eyes widened. He had not heard that the man was injured. His eyes moved to Daichi briefly, realizing why he had been invited to the Spring Training.

Ken felt a little bad for Jason, but his injury was an opportunity for Daichi to make it to the main roster. If he was able to prove himself, he could take over the starting catcher position for good.

"Daichi... That's the starting catcher for the Ligers. I think you know what that means." Ken said softly in Japanese.

Daichi caught on quick. He nodded, "You don't have to tell me, big bro... I'll earn the spot."

'Good... He won't let this chance slip by.' Ken thought.

It was then that Jason's eyes fell upon Ken and their gazes met.

"Oh? You're finally here Ken." Jason said, making his way over slowly with the crutches.

Ken bowed slightly, "I'm sorry to see that you're injured Jason." He replied respectfully, though it might not have been the full truth.

"These things happen." Jason said wearing a small smile. "Our roster is looking rather weak at the moment, so it's good to see you're getting called up to Spring Training. Make sure you do your best."

"Our roster is weak?" Ken asked, tilting his head in question.

Jason wore a wry smile, "Well I'm injured and we couldn't resign two of our pitchers in the off season. Ultimately, its the best time for you to make the jump from the minor league."

"I see..." Ken responded, though his mind was working the background.

'This seems too convenient...' he thought silently. Of course he wasn't complaining, but Ken felt like something else was at play.

'Did Mika do this?'

"Who is this?" Jason asked, pointing to Daichi.

"I'm Daichi Takagi, Ken's younger brother. It's a pleasure to meet you." Daichi replied, bowing his head slightly in greeting.

His English was surprisingly much better than it was last season, though some words sounded a little awkward from his mouth and he was very formal.

"Oh? Well it looks like you have a talented family." Jason replied, "Are you also a pitcher?"

Daichi shook his head, a small grin forming on his face. "I'm a catcher."

Jason's expression stiffened, but he let out a laugh a moment later, patting Daichi on the shoulder. "Good good. Maybe you can keep my spot warm for me... If you make it past the roster cuts." He said, sending him a wink.

"Anyway, good luck out there." He said before hobbling away on his crutches.

Ken watched his retreating figure and smiled. He could see that despite being chummy on the surface, Jason was filled with competitive spirit.

"This is a good opportunity for us to make the team, we can't fall short." Ken said in Japanese.

"Don't worry big bro..."

The two left the locker room and walked out onto the field. Thanks to the fact they were in Florida, the sun was actually warm despite it still being winter. If they had been in Detroit, there would probably be snow on the field still.

Ken scanned the field and saw the tall figure of his Grandfather chatting to some of the other staff members. He resisted the urge to go and greet him and instead began to go through some dynamic warm ups alongside Daichi to get their muscles warm.

"How are you feeling?" Ken asked his brother.

"Still a little jet lagged, but my body is fine." He admitted, "You?"

"I'm cool as a cucumber." Ken said, sending him a wink.

Despite seeing one of the alternate universes in his sleep last night, the sleep protocol skill still did its job. His mind was refreshed and his body felt in good shape, there were no excuses to not play well today.

"Ken!"

Ken heard his name called out from the other end of the field. He turned his head, only to see a familiar figure with a square jaw and small goatee jogging over to him.

Ken's eyes lit up with surprise, not expecting to see the man here.

"Rohan?"

Rohan slapped Ken on the back and sent him a grin, his green eyes dancing with amusement at seeing his shocked expression.

"Don't look so surprised man, I told you I'd see you in 6 months." He said, letting out a hearty laughter. His usual cold atmosphere was nowhere to be seen.

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

Chapter 896 - 896: Spring Training (2)

"I can't believe you're here already..." Ken muttered.

Rohan's eyes flickered for a moment. "So you expected me to come after all..." He leaned in closer and whispered, "Does that mean you have something to do with healing my injuries?"

Ken flinched.

'Crap! I was so shocked that I didn't even try to hide something like this...' Ken felt a little panicked.

However, Rohan placed an arm around his shoulder and brought him closer. "I don't know how you did it, but thank you... Now let's get ourselves a spot on the roster."

Ken was silent for a moment before shaking his head in exasperation, "Looks like my competition just increased." He said with a laugh.

"This is Daichi, my brother. He plays catcher by the way." Ken said, introducing Rohan.

"Rohan Hills, I played alongside your brother for a few weeks in Double-A before he left us for dead." The guy teased, extending his hand.

Daichi accepted it while Ken felt even more shocked. He had never seen this side of Rohan, even though they'd only known each other for a little while, it seemed like night and day.

However, Ken began to get excited. His goal for this season was to get as famous as possible, what better way than to win the World Series? But for this to be achieved, they needed a great team.

Ken knew that Daichi was a one of a kind talent and could easily make the team. With his own skills and abilities, Ken believed he too could make it. Having Rohan as another pitcher in the rotation would only increase their chances of going deeper into the season.

So while he needed to focus on securing a spot on the roster, Ken needed to ensure that his teammates were also top class.

He didn't know much about the other players, but that would have to change if he wanted to go all the way this season.

'For now I'll focus on making the team, but after that I'll need to do a report on all my teammates. I have the Training Demon skill which gives the team a boost of 20% to training efficiency, so that should help.' He thought.

"Alright, gather around everyone." Mark said, blowing a whistle.

All of the players on the field did as they were told and made their way to the coach standing on the side of the field. There were around 40 players present at this moment, but this would need to be cut down to 26 before the end of Spring Training.

Ken looked around, of these 40 people, 14 would be going home in the next couple of weeks based on their performances.

Once everyone was gathered, Mark moved his gaze over the group.

"As you know, we only have two weeks left of Spring Training. We will be going through various drills and assessing each players capabilities silently. At no point will you know if you are safe or not, so I expect you to give it your all."

"Yes coach!"

"Good. Break up into your positions. Outfielders are with Coach Keenan, Infielders go with Coach Bradford, Catchers and pitchers with Coach Michaels and me." Mark said.

With that, everyone split up. Ken gave Daichi a grin and they bumped fists. Even without saying a word, they knew what each other was thinking.

'Do your best.'

Ken, Daichi and Rohan made their way over to Mark, along with another 15 players. Ken recognized a couple of the pitchers from the main team, these would be his main competition.

Edward Rodriguez, the left hand pitcher and ace for the Ligers. He'd just signed a 5-year lucrative deal with the team, he was essentially a lock for the roster.

Mitchell Lorenzen, the right hand starting pitcher and Michael Manning who was a young star in the making. These three were the starting pitchers and direct competition for him and Rohan in this training.

They were brought off the field to the bullpen where some expensive looking cameras were set up right behind the mounds.

There were 4 mounds and on 2 the cameras were set on the left side and the other two were on the right. Ken had seen this camera setup before. It measured the velocity and spin of each pitch, allowing one to see areas of improvement.

Ken was feeling a little excited.

"Alright, catchers get your gear on. I want you to call the strikes and balls, we'll worry about the leads. Remember, everything here will be documented and used to decide whether you'll receive a roster spot." Mark explained.

Like this, Daichi and the other 3 catchers got their gear on and made their way to the other end of the bullpen.

"Alright, Edward, Mitchell, Michael, Blake, step up and warm up your arms."

Ken watched from the side as the others warmed up. His eyes were on Edward, the Ace. The guy had a long wingspan despite only being around 6 feet tall. Every time he threw, it was like a whip.

What made it even more deadly was that he was a left handed pitcher, looking quite unorthodox.

There were screens nearby that showed all of the data of each pitch. There were other staff members at each one, ready to record the data for each player.

"Alright, four-seam fastballs first." Mark called out once everyone was done with warming up.

And like he said, everyone started to throw a fastball.

PAH

PAH

PAH

Ken turned his attention to Edward's screen close by and tried to peak at the numbers. His velocity was a respectable 92mph and the spin rate of 2100rpm.

Ken nodded. 'As expected of the ace, those numbers are quite respectable.' He said in his heart.

However, Ken knew that even though his pitching was only SSS+ grade, he could outdo these numbers. It might be close with his left arm, but his right arm was definitely better.

"Again." Mark called out.

Ken waited patiently by the side, waiting for his turn to step up and wow the staff members present.

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

Chapter 897 - 897: Teammates (1)

Ken was brought up next, however, Mark directed him to one of the first 2 mounds to test his left arm first. He wasn't bothered, in fact now that he had seen Edward's results, he wanted to beat them.

Edwards was the Ace. If Ken could overshadow his results with just his left arm, wouldn't that give him the best shot to make the team? Even if he was made a reliever instead of a starter, as long as he made the team, he didn't care.

The catcher he was throwing to was someone he didn't recognize, but that didn't matter.

"Start with some warm up throws." His grandfather announced.

Like that, everyone threw around 10 warm up throws before waiting patiently for the next orders. Ken's arm felt light, he was raring to go.

"Fastball first."

Ken grinned, gripping the ball in his hand tightly before getting into position. He took a deep breath before lifting his right leg and striding forward.

His arm whipped past his head and the ball shot from his fingertips towards the open glove of the catcher. While it was not as pronounced as his right arm, there was indeed movement in the ball.

PAH

PAH

PAH

Ken's was the first to strike the glove and he turned his head, looking at the closest monitor.

'94mph and 2310rpm... Nice!

Ken's heart soared. With just his first pitch he had already beaten out Edward's velocity and spin rate with his left arm. However, those taking down the results had no reaction.

He wasn't sure if these people were told to remain neutral, or if his results weren't actually that impressive.

'Well, if that's not enough then how about this...'

Then next pitch, Ken put all of his strength into it.

'95mph and 2350rpm... This is probably the limit of my left arm.' Ken thought, feeling a little annoyed.

After a few more pitches, Ken switched to the slider, the only other pitch he could properly do with his left. This had more spin than his fastball and stayed around the 84mph range.

Once he was done, he took a step back and the next group of pitchers stepped up. Rohan was included in this group this time.

Ken eagerly watched as Rohan took up position on the mound. It had been a tough decision to give him the Recovery Elixir back then, but seeing how much he had changed after, Ken did not regret it.

Not only this, if he was as good as the others had said, then he would be instrumental in helping the Ligers win the World Series this year.

Rohan sent his fastball out soon after and Ken's eyes shined. His gaze quickly snapped to the screen and waited patiently.

'97mph!'

Ken had to prevent himself from jumping with joy. This was a pleasant surprise.

'2400rpm too. He's definitely gotta be at the top for fastballs.' Ken thought with glee.

Another surprise was that Rohan had quite a large arsenal of pitches including his change up. Ken also believed that he would get better as time went on since it had only been around 6 months since he was healed from the Recovery Elixir.

After another round, everyone had finished their rounds of pitching.

"Ken, step up." Mark said, directing him to the 3rd mound.

'Eh? Just me?' Ken thought in confusion.

Now he would have the added pressure of the entire squad watching him pitch with his right arm. Of course Ken wouldn't let this effect him, he had played in front of thousands of people before and these were his potential teammates.

Ken nodded and walked up to the mound. Daichi happened to be the catcher for the 3rd mound, bringing a small grin to his face.

'Let's make it a show then...'

After 10 warm up pitches, he turned to his grandfather and nodded, signaling that he was ready.

"Fastball." Mark said, wearing a knowing grin.

"Yes sir."

Ken looked to Daichi and gave him a smile. It was time to make a statement.

Taking a deep breath, Ken took his time and adjusted his posture. He took one look towards where 3rd base would be if he was on the field before lifting his left leg up.

He kicked off the pitchers plate and took a long stride forward, cocking his arm back. Ken had done this thousands of times in his life, so much so that he could do it in his sleep.

His arm whipped past his head and he raked down on the ball, causing it to spin wildly. The ball snaked through the air as if it were alive, eventually landing perfectly into Daichi's glove.

PAH!

The moment it struck the glove, murmurs began in the watching crowd. Ken kept his composure and turned to the screen to see his results.

'102mph and... 2700rpm!?'

This score was a full 300rpm higher than the other pitchers and a clear stand out. Even the other staff members recording the results seemed to be taken aback.

"Again." Mark called out, his tone neutral.

And so Ken did it again, achieving a similar result. This continued for another 5 more pitches, showing everyone present that the first time was not a fluke.

"Curveball."

In front of the others, Ken went through his full array of pitches, perfectly executing everything that he was ordered to do. Each pitch, Daichi would call out the ball, of which all of them were strikes.

This in itself was almost freakish. Not only was Ken's speed and spin rate ridiculous, his accuracy was also amazing.

By the time he stepped off the mound, everyone looked at him differently. Even Edward, the ace of the team seemed to show some interest.

The guy came over and held out his hand. "I'm Edward, but you can call me Ed." He said.

He had a bit of an accent, but Ken could still understand him easily.

"Ken, nice to meet you." He said gripping the outstretched hand.

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

Chapter 898 - 898: Teammates (2)

Later that day, Ken, Rohan and Daichi returned to the locker room after some extensive drills and tests. After the pitching, the rest of the day was mostly comprised of physical fitness tests and data collation.

This was nothing new for professional athletes, especially these 3 who seemed to be addicted to training. Rohan wore a smile for majority of the day, seeming like a golden retriever who'd been taken out for some exercise.

Ken couldn't blame him. After being in pain for so long, it would make sense why he would enjoy such things now.

"That was good fun." Rohan said, letting out a smile. "I think we did pretty well. I hope its enough to stay on the team."

"I'd say so." Ken replied affirmatively. Just with their pitching alone, he believed that they would be a shoe-in for the squad.

A little later, most of the team had already made it back to the locker room at that point and had showered. It was around 2pm in the afternoon and Ken was looking forward to a late lunch back at the hotel.

"Where are you staying Rohan?"

However, before he could answer, the door to the locker room opened and Mark along with a few coaches walked in. Instantly, everyone in the locker room turned to them, like deer in headlights.

"Brad, Nigel, Lincoln, please grab your things and follow me." Mark said before turning and leaving.

The three who had their names called instantly looked shattered. It didn't take a rocket scientist to understand why they had been called. Some of the players who knew them said their goodbyes and gave their consolations.

Unfortunately, this was the nature of the beast. Anyone could be dropped from the Spring Training roster at any time.

Ken breathed a small sigh of relief. They had survived today, but there was still 2 weeks left until the 26-man roster was finalized. Anything could happen.

"Well, we made it past day 1." Ken said, turning to Rohan and his brother. "I'm starving, let's go get something to eat."

"You read my mind."

"I know a good place around here if you're looking for food." A voice called from behind them. Ken turned around and recognized Edward who was wearing a grin.

"Sure, lead the way." Ken replied, there was no harm in getting to know his potential teammates.

"Trent, Jake, you boys coming for lunch?" Edward turned to a few others nearby.

"I could eat."

Word seemed to get around and more people joined. Funnily enough, it was the regular pitchers that decided to come along out of everyone invited.

"Let's go, you can leave your stuff in the car." Edward said, patting Ken on the shoulder.

It was unexpected, but Ken was thankful. Out of the 18 that had taken part in the pitching drills today, there were 9 of them going to lunch together. Yet only Daichi, Rohan and Ken were not regulars in the team.

Edward was driving a black Escalade with shiny rims and invited Ken and the others two to hop in. Not one to say no to hospitality, Ken agreed and they drove around 10 minutes to a Brazilian barbecue restaurant in town.

Edward seemed to know the owners who greeted him when they walked in.

"This is Ken and uhh..." He turned to Rohan and Daichi during the introduction, making things a little awkward.

"Daichi and Rohan."

"Uhh yeah, anyway, these guys are part of our Spring training squad." Edward finished telling a large man behind the counter.

The large man let out a laugh, "Well if you're bringing them here, they must be half decent."

Edward replied in a language that Ken did not recognize. He and the owner chatted for a while before he saw the large man give Ken a surprised look briefly.

"You guys go take a seat, I'll be over in a moment." Edward turned to Ken and motioned towards the back of the restaurant. Ken felt a little odd but he did as he was told and soon found a large enough table.

"What do you think they were talking about?" Daichi asked.

Ken shrugged, "It sounded like Portuguese, I wouldn't know."

"Hey guys... I'm feeling a little left out here." Rohan said, looking a little exasperated. "First it was Edward, now it's you two. Would you mind sticking to English?"

"Ah, my bad." Ken replied. He didn't even realize he'd been speaking in Japanese with Daichi.

Before they even had a chance to get their menus, the rest of the team members walked in and greeted the owner and Edward. By the sound of their conversation, they knew each other well.

"There's the rooks." Graham called out, pointing towards Ken and the others.

Ken recognized the guy. Graham Soto, the closing pitcher for the Ligers.

He led the group of other pitchers over to join the large table. Other than Alex and Masaru, Ken had never really interacted with Major League players before, but he was not nervous.

They were all professionals, he shouldn't feel inferior. But since Ken had been raised in Japan, he still showed a lot of respect to his seniors.

"You guys did pretty well today, you're the front runners to make it into the squad." Graham said with a smile.

"Who said that we're front runners?" Ken asked. If these guys had heard something positive from the coaching staff, that would give him some piece of mind.

"Well, every year we put our bet on the next batch of rookies. You and this guy have 6 out of 7 votes." Jake Foley, the relief pitcher replied with a smile, pointing to Ken and Rohan.

Ken frowned. He didn't think it was appropriate to bet about something like this, but at the same time, it wasn't worth making a big deal out of something like this. If he did make the team in the future, he wouldn't participate in such a thing.

He would just need to suck it up at this point.

"What about me?" Daichi asked, pointing to himself.

"Eh, no one voted for you sorry man." Jake said with a shrug, though he didn't look very apologetic. The other players let out a laugh, as if they found the situation rather amusing.

'These guys...'

Seeing his brother disrespected in front of him, Ken was not in a good mood.

"How about we make a wager? 10k says he makes the team." Ken said confidently.

"Eh? Only 10k? Let's make it 100k and you have a deal."

"Deal." Ken said, holding out his hand to shake with Jake who quickly accepted.

Daichi's eyes widened in shock. He knew how tight Ken was with money, yet he was willing to bet so much for his honor. Daichi felt warm inside.

"By the way, it's 100k for each of us if you lose." Jake replied with a lopsided grin.

"What!?"

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

Chapter 899 - 899: Practice Game (1)

"Don't listen to him Ken, this is just a silly game we play to pass the time during Spring Training." Edward appeared shortly after, sending Jake a glare.

"The man made a bet, there's no backing off now Ed." Jake shrugged, letting out a chuckle. "Of course, he could still go back on his word if he can't afford to lose."

"I don't make losing bets." Ken said simply, "Nor do I go back on my word."

Rohan felt that the atmosphere was going a little pear shaped, but he was not confident enough to calm it down. After all, most of these guys had been in the Majors for some time already.

"Haha, atta' boy." A guy with a shaved head spoke up with a grin. "Looks like our rooks have got some balls. I'm looking forward to seeing the results."

Ken's eyes gazed at the man, trying to remember who he was. He looked a little intimidating, but he seemed kind of nice, it surprised him.

'That must be Terry Skubal, the one they call Scary Terry on the mound.' Ken thought. He could understand where the guy got the nickname.

Jake shrugged, "We'll see how big his balls are when its time to pay up."

From then on, the atmosphere remained a little tense, but thankfully the food was quite delicious. It was quite a bit different to Texas barbecue that Ken had come to love, but it had its own charm.

At the end of the lunch, Ken and the others grabbed their bags from Edward's car and bid him farewell.

"Are you sure you don't want a lift back?" Ed asked.

"It's fine, we'll catch a taxi back to the hotel a bit later." Ken replied, "Thanks for the lunch."

As he drove away, Daichi placed his hand on Ken's shoulder. "You really didn't have to do that for me back there big bro."

"What do you mean? I'm about to make an easy \$100k." He said with a grin.

The two laughed in good spirit, leaving Rohan close by feeling a little awkward. "What's the plan now? Are you going back to the hotel?"

"I want to pitch some more before the end of the day. Did you want to join in?" Ken asked.

However, Rohan shook his head. "It's going to be a long couple of weeks, I need to conserve my energy. I'm still working on getting my fitness back to where it used to be. Thanks anyway."

Rohan said his farewells, leaving Ken and Daichi alone.

"You up to catch some of my pitches?" Ken asked with a grin.

"How many?"

"Not a lot, maybe 300?"

Daichi shook his head, "You'll destroy my hand if I do that."

Now that he thought about it, it mustn't feel great to have to catch 100mph balls over and over, even with the thicker catchers glove. Ken felt a little bad for all the catchers who had needed to experience such pain in the past.

"I'll catch some for you, but you should try using a dish towel if you want to work on your form. That way no one will have to catch for you." Daichi explained.

"Dish towel?"

And so around an hour later, Ken was taught the dish towel drill. Surprisingly enough, the training was much better than he had expected. Not only could he work on his form and extension, the strain of throwing the ball was gone completely.

'Maybe I can increase my pitching grade like this?' Ken thought, his mind going over the possibilities.

"Why didn't I know about this sooner?" Ken asked excitedly.

"Well... You've always been a rogue when it comes to training by yourself. I actually feel sorry for your coaches in the past." Daichi quipped.

"Eh?"

Ken was too stunned to reply, but seeing the grin on his brother's face, he couldn't help but laugh. "Alright, maybe I deserved that." He admitted, slapping his brother on the back, ensuring to use a little more force than necessary.

They trained for a while longer before heading back to the hotel for the night. Ken went through his usual Image Training that night and managed to get to bed at a reasonable time.

The next week was filled with long days of tests and physical conditioning. As each day passed, more and more people were sent home, not making the cut for the 26-man team.

However, the 3 rookies Ken, Daichi and Rohan had managed to stick around for now.

Daichi and Ken were able to show off their impressive batting prowess, shocking Jake who had made the earlier bet with Ken. While Daichi was unassuming, his power and pitch intuition were second to none, even on a Major League team.

Like this, they made a name for themselves amongst the team.

After only a single day off on Sunday, they all returned to Publix Park on Monday. Out of the 40 that they started with, there were only 28 left.

"Good morning everyone." Mark said with a smile. "Today we'll be facing the Pittsburgh Raiders in a friendly match, I expect everyone to play their best, regardless of how little playing time you get."

Ken's heart surged, they would be playing a game?

He had expected an intersquad game or something, but not an actual friendly against another Major League team. He couldn't help but get excited.

Even Daichi next to him seemed to be itching to go.

"Remember, we won't just be looking at individual plays, so if I see you doing anything selfish for the detriment of others, I'll take you out of the game. Play as a team, make the right plays." Mark added, his gaze moving over the team.

"If I call your name, you'll be starting."

Ken's grandfather then proceeded to call out the players one by one. Most of the players were the backups, apart from Terry Skubal who would be as starting pitcher.

Ken wasn't too disappointed, there were 9 innings. He would get his chance.

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

Chapter 900 - 900: Practice Game (2)

Some time later, the Raiders arrived at Publix field ready for the game. Since it was their home ground, the Ligers took to the field first with Terry on the mound for the first inning.

Ken's eyes drifted to his grandfather whose eyes were locked onto the field. He had barely spoken to him this entire week. At first he had been a little surprised, but he received a message on the second day.

Apparently Mark wanted to keep his distance, so that no one could accuse him of nepotism. He wanted to judge everyone fairly and avoid any unnecessary issues that could arise due to their relationship.

Of course even if he did this, there would always be those who would talk behind their backs if Ken and Daichi made it into the team. But there was nothing that could be done about such people.

"Why do you think they used Terry?" Daichi who was sitting next to Ken asked.

Ken thought for a little while, "I'd say he'll probably become the second starting pitcher this season."

"You're probably right. He does have a lot of speed."

The game started and right on queue, Terry sent a blizzing fastball down the outside and into the glove of the catcher.

PAH

The sound was crisp.

Ken nodded. Even though the guy couldn't throw as fast as him, his fastball had some good movement.

'This is probably where experience comes into play.' Ken thought.

The next pitch was called and a slider soon came snaking towards the plate.

WHACK!

'Eh?'

The ball was struck into right field for an easy two base hit. Ken raised his eyebrow in confusion. The slider was one of Terry's best pitches, yet it was picked off so easily.

"That was the catchers fault." Daichi said, as if sensing his confusion.

"Hmm? How do you know?"

"There's no way his slider should be picked off that easily. The catcher didn't even let Terry's arm warm up properly before calling the pitch. As a catcher, its your job to understand the pitcher's form." Daichi explained matter-of-factly.

"I see..." Ken was not game enough to challenge Daichi on his knowledge. The guy was one of the most hardworking and studious people he ever met, chances are, he was correct.

Ken looked to his grandfather who was currently wearing a frown.

'He probably knows it as well.' Ken thought.

However, the game continued and through sheer force, Terry was able to keep the Raiders at bay. Two strikeouts and a fly ball into the outfield was enough to get through the inning.

Unfortunately for the Ligers, without their usual players, they also got only a single hit in the 1st inning before being forced back onto the field.

The game was back and forth with no real scoring opportunities until the top of the 4th inning where a home run was struck from the middle of the bat and straight into the stands.

With a solo home run, the Ligers were now down 0-1.

Coach Williams, Ken's grandfather seemed to have had enough by then. He poked his head into the dugout and made a call. "Daichi, Rohan, you guys are up."

Without waiting for an answer, he walked onto the field and spoke to the plate umpire.

"Good luck guys, give em' hell." Ken said with a smile.

He could see the excitement on Rohan's face, while Daichi was expressionless.

"You're not nervous are you?" Ken asked in Japanese as his brother was getting his gear on.

"Nervous? It's only a practice match. I've played in way bigger games than this." Daichi replied off-handedly. However, Ken could see that the guy's hands were shaking slightly as he tried to fasten his chest protector.

Ken smiled wryly, but he did not call the guy out. As Daichi said, this game was merely a practice, but his performance would likely dictate if he made the 26-man roster at the end of the day.

Ken pat him on the shoulder a couple of times before leaving him be.

They soon made their way onto the field, replacing the current battery.

Ken couldn't help but feel nervous in his brother's stead. To him, playing alongside Daichi for a Major League team was the goal he'd been chasing all this time.

While it was still one of his goals, it was no longer the most important. However, having Daichi on the team would no doubt increase the teams chances of making it to the World Series and therefore helping his ultimate goal.

To become as famous as possible and anchor the universe.

This statement on its own sounded ridiculous, even now. But Ken had no choice but to believe it as the truth. If he failed, there would be no time for regret.

Everyone in this reality would disappear, including all of those he loved and cherished.

Once he completed his goal, then Ken could worry about actually living his life the way he wanted to.

PAH

The first ball struck and Ken's thoughts were brought back to the present. His eyes moved to Rohan on the mound who looked to be filled with determination.

Rohan would be another person who would increase their chances at victory this season.

Having been on the Columbia Bobcats for 3 years prior, Ken knew what it was like to be without any proper star power. Apart from Brian, Steve and Ayden, the other players were a little lacking compared to the competition.

While they could win in their own conference, the issues began in the post season when they faced much better teams.

But from what he'd seen already, the Ligiers had a deep pitching rotation, especially if he included himself and Rohan into the mix. Not only that, their batting lineup was fierce, especially if himself and Daichi were added into the mix.

'We just need to make the team and we'll have the ability to make it far this season...'
Ken thought, his hand clutching into a fist.

PAH

"Strikeout!"

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