

Cote 20

Chapter 20 Nagumo Miyabi, Who Rules the Second Years

Akane Tachibana kept a blank face. What did he mean by hoping he guessed wrong?

That tone was seriously arrogant!

Even though she'd seen his one million personal points and his analysis did kind of make sense, she could only barely give him a little more credit. But still, how could he say something so rude to the student council president?

"You really surprise me. You dare show up in front of me with just these few clues—aren't you afraid I'll just shoot you down?" Horikita Manabu stared intently at Kaoru Mitoma.

"Sorry, but I didn't see any intention of rejecting me in your eyes, senpai." Kaoru Mitoma replied calmly.

Even someone as composed as Manabu Horikita was left speechless for a moment. This freshman had an unusual confidence, even managing to overpower him in terms of presence. Judging from Kaoru Mitoma's earlier analysis of Nagumo Miyabi, he'd sharply picked up on Nagumo's psychological changes, figuring that someone like Nagumo, after reaching the top so early, would get bored and start looking for ways to amuse himself.

The key point was, Kaoru Mitoma had guessed right. He was the future student council president, a member of Class A, seemed to have the whole grade under his control, and had nearly ten million personal points.

Right now, you could say Nagumo Miyabi had speedrun Advanced Nurturing High. The next two years were probably going to be a long, boring stretch for him.

Of course, there was no way Kaoru Mitoma could know exactly what Nagumo Miyabi was thinking. He just tried to put himself in his shoes, and since there was someone similar in their class, he came to that conclusion.

As for why it was Manabu Horikita— Honestly, Kaoru Mitoma didn't really know. He just had a vague feeling that Nagumo Miyabi was particularly interested in Manabu Horikita. For example, Nagumo Miyabi manipulation of Ichinose Honami, in a sense, might actually be aimed at Manabu Horikita.

"Not bad, you did guess right, but there's something you need to add," Manabu Horikita said. "The reason Nagumo is targeting me isn't just because of his own boring ideas, but also because of me myself." Kaoru Mitoma eyes sparkled, but he didn't speak right away.

"Nagumo and I have different stances on some things. He wants to change the current school rules through the student council and enforce a strict meritocracy. If nothing unexpected happens, his ideas will force a lot of students to drop out, turning this into a true zero-sum game—either you win or you lose, no in-between."

At this point, Horikita Manabu paused for a moment.

"Do you know about the dropout situation in the second year?"

he asked Kaoru Mitoma. It's hard to get information about the upper grades, especially about your own class, since most people are on guard against their rivals. But if it's just the number of people, you can find out with a bit of effort, and it's not like Kaoru Mitoma had to go himself. Someone had already done the legwork for him.

"I heard more than ten people dropped out,"

Kaoru Mitoma replied. Horikita Manabu nodded slightly.

"Most of them were innocent, and a few were people who opposed Nagumo."

At that moment, Tachibana Akane spoke up too.

"The first dropout in the second year happened in the first semester last year. Three students dropped out then, all from Class C and Class D."

Kaoru Mitoma looked at Horikita Manabu. The student council president didn't say anything, clearly giving tacit approval to Tachibana Akane explanation. No, it wasn't just tacit approval—Tachibana Akane was his secretary, after all, basically handling the work of a personal assistant. These detailed explanations were usually her responsibility.

"The second round of expulsions happened after Nagumo led his class to surpass the original Class A. It was during a certain exam in the second semester... You can think of it as a very special kind of test. He targeted Class C and Class D, and got seven students expelled in one go." As she spoke, Tachibana Akane seemed to get angry, gripping her notebook tightly, her fingers turning pale from the pressure.

"After that expulsion, both classes basically did whatever he said. Plus, he promised to help anyone who obeyed him get promoted to Class A, so no one dared to go against him." Tachibana Akane clearly hated this approach.

"Originally, there were people in the old Class A and B who were unhappy with him, but he got them expelled in the following exams. That's why the entire second year is under his control now." First the stick, then the carrot—such a simple and brutal tactic. But it worked.

Kaoru Mitoma could easily imagine the panic that must have gripped those two classes at the time. Take out the weak ones with numbers first, then target anyone who's dissatisfied. No wonder Nagumo Miyabi has nearly ten million personal points—he probably snatched them from other students.

"Doesn't the school think there's something wrong with this kind of behavior?"

Kaoru Mitoma asked.

"Even if Nagumo made a lot of people drop out, it was all within the rules. The school knows about it, but it doesn't matter." Tachibana complained. This upperclassman seemed to have a lot of hostility toward Nagumo Miyabi. Was she standing up for the second-year students?

"That's not what I'm talking about. What I mean is, he got the whole year to work together and split up the class points. Doesn't the school have a problem with that?"

Kaoru Mitoma asked again. Tachibana was clearly stunned, and even Horikita Manabu looked a little surprised before breaking into a satisfied smile.

"That's impressive. You managed to pick up on so much from just a few clues. Mitoma, you're even sharper than Ichinose."

"I just thought it was strange. If a whole year works together, doesn't that defeat the school's purpose of making them compete with each other?"

"The current director of the school, Sakayanagi, is a pretty open-minded person. I can tell the school is often frustrated and troubled by this, but Director Sakayanagi doesn't interfere in student affairs without good reason."

"..."

So, the school just turns a blind eye?

As soon as Kaoru Mitoma had that thought, he pushed it aside. The school would never allow something like this to happen. The only reason they're tolerating Nagumo Miyabi right now is probably because he's managed to do things no one else could.

Not even Horikita Manabu could control the entire grade. Cases like Nagumo Miyabi are definitely rare—maybe this is the first time in the school history. That's why the school can accept Nagumo Miyabi. But they won't accept another person who tries to control the whole grade.

It's like the developers of a game—they're not going to let you keep dominating version after version. Even if they have to grit their teeth, the school will ramp up the difficulty and nerf you a few times.

"After I step down, Nagumo will immediately push for reforms. When that happens, a lot more students will probably get expelled because they can't adapt." Horikita Manabu looked seriously at Kaoru Mitoma.

"Even though this school believes in survival of the fittest, I think things are fine as they are. Besides competition, students need other things too."

He understood now—Nagumo Miyabi was the radical reformist, while Horikita Manabu was the conservative traditionalist. That's why the latter said their positions were different.

"Mitoma, even knowing all this, are you still going to stick to your idea from earlier?"

Horikita Manabu watched Kaoru Mitoma expression, but still didn't see the slightest change. It was as if he'd expected all of this—he didn't even blink. He clearly knew that Nagumo Miyabi was the king who controlled the entire second year, and even the students who'd tried to resist him had ended up expelled. Was he really not afraid at all?

Wait, this freshman wasn't fearless. If you listened carefully to what Kaoru Mitoma had just said, it wasn't hard to realize he'd already guessed all this, and he'd figured it out even before Horikita Manabu explained it.

Otherwise, Kaoru Mitoma wouldn't have started off with, "I'll help you deal with Nagumo Miyabi." It was because he'd figured it out that he'd come knocking on the student council's door.

So that's how it is.

This year freshmen really can't be underestimated, Horikita Manabu thought to himself. Still, even though he felt he understood what Kaoru Mitoma was thinking, he stayed silent.

"If Nagumo can control the whole grade, it just means the second-year senpai are too useless," Kaoru Mitoma said bluntly.

"Now he's coming after you across grades, and in the future, he'll definitely lead the third years against me. We need to deal with Nagumo as soon as possible, or at least shake his position." This time, Horikita Manabu was truly silent. Did this freshman even know what he was saying?"

"Hey, first year, do you think you're telling a lame joke?"

Tachibana Akane stared at Kaoru Mitoma with a hostile look.

"As a freshman, you really need to work on your attitude. Acting all cocky isn't going to do you any good, you know?"

"I want to settle this before the end of my first year, which means before you seniors graduate."

Kaoru Mitoma ignored her and kept talking to Horikita Manabu.

"Do you even get it at all? As much as I hate to admit it, Nagumo really is strong right now. Next semester, he's taking over the student council. How are you planning to deal with someone like that?"

Tachibana Akane looked at him like he was an idiot. At the same time, Horikita Manabu spoke up too.

"Maybe you haven't realized just how much power the student council has. They can make suggestions about the school's rules, change some of the rewards or punishments, even the exams you'll be taking in the future."

He stopped there, not saying any more. That was as much information as he was willing to give.

"That's why I plan to buy myself a spot on the student council,"

Kaoru Mitoma said, just as seriously. Horikita Manabu was a little surprised, then shook his head.

"I can let you join the student council, but don't get your hopes up. Tachibana Akane and I are both stepping down soon, and after that, there'll be all kinds of battles and competition."

"It's not just us. You freshmen will be facing it soon enough too,"

Tachibana Akane snorted.

"This school isn't a joke. Just dealing with your own class's problems will be more than enough for you!"

It was obvious that both Horikita Manabu and Tachibana Akane thought Kaoru Mitoma didn't have the energy or strength to take on Nagumo Miyabi at this stage. After all, the first-year competition hadn't even really started yet. Jumping into the upperclassmen's battles too early just wasn't worth it.

"Senpai, I still think you should take these personal points."

Kaoru Mitoma didn't care what they thought. Neither of them had many ambitions, so he didn't see any reason to pay them special attention. Yeah, compared to Horikita Manabu, his little sister was much more interesting.

"You should know you've already met my requirements. Why waste your personal points?"

"Because I need a spot in the student council. A spot that anyone, no matter who, can use to join."

Akane Tachibana was stunned for a moment, realizing she had no idea what he was talking about. Who did he want to get into the student council?

"Fine."

Horikita Manabu gave Kaoru Mitoma a long look.

"The deadline is the end of this month. The list of new student council members will be announced next month."

Kaoru Mitoma finally smiled a little. Now that the deal was done, it was time to work together.

"If I need to ask you for help with something that might cross into the school's restricted areas, would you help me, senpai?"

Horikita Manabu was silent for a moment.

"That's the real reason you came to me, isn't it?"

"It's just cooperation, that's all."

Kaoru Mitoma smiled slightly.

"I'll decide whether to help you or not depending on the situation."

"Thank you so much, senpai."

After exchanging contact info, Kaoru Mitoma didn't hesitate to transfer a million personal points to Horikita Manabu account.

"By the way, senpai, don't you have a little sister?"

Hearing that, Tachibana Akane eyes went wide.

"Eh, eh, eh, President, you have a little sister?"

Horikita Manabu paused for a moment, then looked Kaoru Mitoma up and down again.

"You've met Suzune?"

"I have, but I think it's kind of weird. She's your little sister, so why isn't she in Class A?"

Kaoru Mitoma didn't think he was lying—after all, he'd seen Horikita Suzune from afar at the club orientation.

"She's lacking certain qualifications. It's not strange that she's not in Class A."

Kaoru Mitoma eyes sparkled.

"Senpai, aren't you going to help your own little sister?"

Horikita Manabu frowned at that.

"Suzune isn't worth all this attention from you, is she?"

"I'm just curious about senpai thoughts."

"Even if I'm the student council president, I don't abuse my power for personal reasons. I won't do anything unnecessary."

"I see."

With things said to this point, Kaoru Mitoma was satisfied and about to leave, but he didn't expect Horikita Manabu to suddenly call out to him.

"Mitoma, I have one last question."

Horikita Manabu gaze was sharp.

"Why do you want to join the student council?"

They'd talked about a lot, but not a single word had been about Kaoru Mitoma himself. Even now, Horikita Manabu still couldn't see through what this freshman was thinking, or what his goal was. The more things were like this, the more serious Horikita manabu expression became. Kaoru Mitoma was just too outstanding, and that made him all the more worried. Kaoru Mitoma silently met Horikita Manabu eyes. Was he afraid that he would become the next Nagumo Miyabi?

It only took a moment for him to make up his mind.

"I need the student council."

After saying that, Kaoru Mitoma left the student council office. Tachibana Akane was a little pissed off. This first-year was way too rude!

"I need the student council," like he was picking up a handy hammer at a convenience store or something!

"President, I think we really need to teach this freshman a lesson. His attitude needs to be properly corrected!"

Tachibana huffed.

"Why are you so mad at him?"

Horikita asked.

"B-because he acts like he's all that!"

"Tachibana, is it possible that he needs to come on strong like that to keep us in check?"

"What do you mean?"

Horikita Manabu didn't answer Akane Tachibana's question. Instead, he let out a deep sigh. There was already Nagumo Miyabi in the second year, and now another formidable first-year had arrived. What else was going to happen in the future?

Just as he was about to get back to student council work, he suddenly heard someone knocking on the door. Looking up, he saw a student standing at the entrance. Not only was he bald, but he didn't even have eyebrows—an extremely rare sight.

"Sorry to bother you. I'm Katsuragi Kohei from Class 1-A. I'd like to apply to join the student council. Here's my application form." Horikita Manabu was momentarily stunned. Another student from Class A?

Was this year's Class A really that outstanding?

The thought flashed through his mind, but he quickly pushed down his emotions.

"Come in."

After a short while, Horikita Manabu found himself disappointed with Katsuragi Kohei. This student was excellent in his own right, but compared to Kaoru Mitoma, he seemed rather ordinary, lacking that same sense of brilliance. Let's keep him outside for now and observe for a while longer, Horikita Manabu thought to himself.