

Cote 231

Chapter 231: Mitoma-kun Belongs to Me

It was only in moments like these that Kaoru Mitoma remembered that ANHS was, after all, still a high school—where students would inevitably feel anxious about their grades.

"Sorry to disappoint, but my athletic ability isn't weak enough to land me in last place," Kamuro retorted, though she subtly crossed her legs.

She knew Kaoru couldn't see anything, but it still made her feel uneasy.

Seeing her reaction, Kaoru chuckled softly before murmuring, "The issue isn't your athletic ability or this sports festival. Think about it—why would the school offer grade rewards in the first place?"

Kamuro blinked, completely unaware of any underlying problem.

She replied dismissively, "Probably because the school considers students' circumstances. Those good at sports aren't necessarily academically strong. For them, points matter far less than grades."

Even in Class A, academic abilities varied.

Compared to Class B, they weren't overwhelmingly ahead—some students still struggled with studies.

So Kamuro's reasoning made sense.

"Kamuro-san, you're too kind," Kaoru Mitoma shook his head.

That kind of thinking was like blindly swallowing whatever nonsense a superior fed you.

More often than not, when a superior suddenly shows concern, it means they're about to dump an incredibly difficult task on you.

"How am I being kind?" Kamuro couldn't grasp his perspective, her brows slightly furrowing.

"The points can be used in the next written exam, meaning they'll apply to the midterms, right?"

"Literally speaking, that's correct, but the school wouldn't do anything unnecessary." Kaoru Mitoma showed a faint smile.

"Setting aside the exams, just looking at rewards and punishments—it's obvious those with better athletic abilities will gain rewards while those with poorer physical skills will face penalties."

"Is there a problem with that?" Kamuro tilted her head slightly, resting her elbow on the desk and propping her cheek with her hand, staring intently at him.

"What if we switch perspectives?" Kaoru continued. "In the next exam, those with better academic performance will have the advantage, while those who struggle will face penalties."

Kamuro frowned.

If she considered it from Kaoru's angle, the school might indeed operate that way.

If the sports festival favored athletically gifted students, then naturally, the written exams would favor those strong in academics.

Given this, the school awarding points wasn't hard to understand.

"So, will the next exam be difficult?" Kamuro asked bluntly.

"According to school rules, failing midterms or finals leads to expulsion—and here, expulsions are commonplace." Kaoru didn't think he was scaring her; it was simply the truth.

Kamuro fell silent.

After spending so much time together, Kaoru had already proven himself reliable—especially during the start of term.

This guy was exceptionally good at reading people, piecing together truths from fragmented information.

"Teach me."

"Same as last time?"

"No touching my thighs."

"So does that mean I can touch somewhere else?"

"Are you not listening?"

"Just joking."

Under her murderous glare, Kaoru quickly averted his eyes from her chest.

After a pause, Kamuro suddenly muttered, "How about going to your room?"

Mashima was still explaining the rules on stage and the surrounding students were too absorbed in thinking about the sports festival to notice them.

Kaoru cautiously glanced at her.

"You're not planning to do something to me, are you?"

For a moment, Kamuro wondered if she had misheard.

"Shouldn't that be my line?"

"No, men also care about their safety."

Sometimes, the hunter pretends to be the prey.

Kaoru had learned this the hard way.

"Don't compare me to you!" Kamuro snapped. "Honestly, the fact that I haven't exposed your perverted behavior to everyone is already generous. Otherwise, just see who they'd be more worried about."

Kaoru looked puzzled.

"If you know I'm a pervert, why would you want to go to my room?"

Kamuro silently turned her face away, saying nothing.

The atmosphere grew quiet and Mashima's voice drifted over from the front.

"There's something here called a participation form. The form details all the events, different from any other school out there. You'll need to decide the order in which to participate in each event, write it on this form, and finally submit it to me."

Kaoru Mitoma instinctively looked toward the podium, where Mashima was holding a form.

His voice was clear, thoroughly explaining the competition rules.

Details like the submission deadline being from one week before the sports festival until 5 PM the day before, no substitutions allowed for group events, substitutions permitted for assigned events, with each substitution costing 100,000 points, and so on.

"If there are no questions, your next class will move to the first gymnasium to meet with other classes from different grades."

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As Mashima left the classroom, Class A erupted into a series of complaints that gradually faded into scattered murmurs.

Almost everyone turned their attention to Katsuragi and Sakayanagi, especially the former.

"So, Katsuragi-san, what do we do now?" Totsuka Yahiko was the first to ask.

As if awaiting their leader's command, most students fixed their gaze on Katsuragi.

"Don't rush. There's still a month until the sports festival," Katsuragi said calmly.

"The immediate issue is assessing everyone's abilities before we can assign participants."

Regarding the events, while group competitions required everyone's participation, assigned events allowed flexibility since only a few students needed to compete.

Moreover, as Mashima had explained, they could decide their own participation order.

For example, Class A could strategically place their strongest runners in specific heats to compete against weaker opponents from other classes, securing first place and more points.

Of course, that was the ideal scenario.

Most students understood this logic, but in this moment, Katsuragi had already become their de facto leader.

"Wow, as expected of Katsuragi-san! Unlike someone who's just dragging us down, having you here is amazing!" Totsuka Yahiko sneered, glancing pointedly in a certain direction.

At his jab, Sakayanagi pressed her lips together, about to respond—when a familiar voice cut in.

"Totsuka-kun, what do you mean by 'dragging us down'?"

The class turned toward the back of the room, many students looking surprised.

"Hey, Mitoma, whose side are you on?" Totsuka Yahiko glared at Kaoru Mitoma.

"Isn't it obvious who's dragging us down?"

"Sorry, but I really don't understand," Kaoru Mitoma replied evenly. "If we can freely accuse a classmate of holding us back just because she has difficulty walking, then we might as well blame someone for their weaknesses in the next exam and suggest abandoning them too."

Though he didn't name anyone, everyone knew who he meant.

Sakayanagi lowered her eyes—but the corners of her lips curled up slightly.

"Ha! What weaknesses do I have?" Totsuka Yahiko was about to argue further when a hand rested on his shoulder.

"Stop arguing, Yahiko. Mitoma-kun isn't wrong," Katsuragi Kouhei said with firm eyes.

"No one in our class is dragging us down. Even if Sakayanagi-san can't participate in the competition due to her health, we can handle one student's absence."

Totsuka Yahiko can't believe this nonsense—wasn't this the perfect time to kick Sakayanagi Arisu while she was down?

At that moment, Katsuragi suddenly apologized to Sakayanagi Arisu.

"I'm sorry. Yahiko sometimes speaks without thinking."

"Fufufu, it's fine. If anything, I should be the one apologizing. This is indeed my fault, causing the class to bear an unnecessary loss." Sakayanagi Arisu smiled faintly, but her gaze lingered on Totsuka Yahiko for a moment.

Just like during the deserted island test, Sakayanagi Arisu couldn't participate in this sports festival either and had to be treated as absent.

Thus, Class A now had to face three full classes while being one member short, meaning they had to make up for the lost points.

Individual events were manageable, but team competitions like the cavalry battle and three-legged race would be difficult.

"Don't worry about it, Sakayanagi-san! It's not that big a deal."

"Yeah, even if we're a few points behind, we'll definitely win in the end."

"You can just cheer for us from the sidelines!"

After all, she was an incredibly cute girl, and her frail disposition made it hard for anyone to be harsh on her.

Moreover, Katsuragi had already set the tone.

Under these circumstances, offering a few words of comfort was the natural choice for most students.

Faced with this situation, Totsuka Yahiko realized something, but he didn't dare oppose the group.

Instead, he glared resentfully at Kaoru Mitoma.

"Dammit, I didn't expect you to still be loyal to your old master, Mitoma! And here I thought we were friends!"

"Old master?" Kaoru Mitoma was speechless. "When did I ever say I joined your side?"

"Could it really not be?" Totsuka Yahiko froze for a moment.

Of course not.

Not only had he not joined the Katsuragi faction, but he had never aligned with the Sakayanagi faction before either.

Kaoru Mitoma had just silently scoffed in his heart when he immediately heard Sakayanagi Arisu's voice.

"That's right. Mitoma-kun is mine. He has always been loyal to me."

As her words fell, her delicate face appropriately flushed with a hint of shyness, pure and innocent like a girl who had just fallen in love.

Chapter 232: Ambiguity is an Exclusive Mark

In an instant, the entire classroom fell into silence.

Under Sakayanagi Arisu's bashful expression, even the most ordinary words now sounded like a confession dripping with ambiguity.

Not only that, but Kaoru Mitoma could also sense the gazes of those around him—filled with gossip, jealousy, envy, and shock—all more piercing than the sun itself.

"Huh?" Totsuka Yahiko stood dumbfounded. "You've been lying all along?"

Katsuragi face showed a trace of helplessness.

How has this guy still not caught on?

"Could you stop joking around, Sakayanagi-san?" Kaoru Mitoma tried to clear up the misunderstanding.

"Our relationship is just friends, right?"

Sakayanagi brows trembled slightly and a faint smile flickered across her lips.

"How cruel. After doing all that thing to me, you're saying such things now."

Her right hand lightly pressed against her chest, as if she were nursing a heartache, while the slight, elastic curve of her figure inevitably led people's imagination astray.

At the same time, Sakayanagi Arisu subtly tightened her grip on her skirt—only to inadvertently hike it up slightly, revealing a generous expanse of smooth, milky-white thighs.

Especially when she noticed Kaoru Mitoma's gaze, her eyes unmistakably took on a bewitching glint.

Without a doubt, Sakayanagi Arisu was reminding him of one thing.

"Sakayanagi-san, please have some self-respect." Kaoru Mitoma desperately wanted to look away, but now that his particular tastes had been exposed, he had handed her leverage over him.

Sakayanagi Arisu was displeased.

What did he mean by telling her to have self-respect?

As if she were shamelessly seducing him?

However, the surrounding stares were growing increasingly peculiar.

"Fufufu, I'll be waiting for someone to reflect on his actions." Sakayanagi Arisu smiled faintly.

No matter what, in the eyes of Class A, her relationship with Kaoru Mitoma had now become far more complicated and ambiguous.

It was like stamping a label on her toy.

From now on, if Kaoru tried to greet other girls, they would inevitably consider Sakayanagi Arisu's feelings.

After all, no one would thoughtlessly snatch away something that belonged to another.

"Ahem."

"It's about time we head to the gymnasium," Katsuragi Kouhei interjected, breaking the strange atmosphere in the classroom.

At the same time, he shot Kaoru a discreet glance, his eyes brimming with unspoken questions.

Kaoru could only respond with his own gaze, signaling that his relationship with Sakayanagi hadn't yet crossed the line of friendship.

However, a cold voice cut in from the side.

"Lolicon pervert."

It seemed he had now been upgraded from a foot fetishist to a lolicon pervert.

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The afternoon heat remained oppressive, the sunlight casting a brilliant sheen over the gymnasium's white walls.

Since it was a gathering for the entire grade, over four hundred people including teachers had assembled here.

Kaoru had just entered the gymnasium when he was immediately met with the sight of a bustling crowd.

Aside from the opening ceremony, such a scene was rarely seen on normal days.

The air conditioning inside was running at full power, making the environment cool and comfortable even amidst the crowd.

The school had likely pre-divided the areas for the Red and White teams.

Kaoru followed the other students to the Red team's designated spot and sat down on the floor.

Soon after, Class D students also appeared in the gymnasium.

However, upon seeing the Red team students, they seemed hesitant and reluctant to approach.

Kaoru found it a little strange at first, but then he remembered Class D's current points—they were 17 times behind Class A.

Such a gap in strength would naturally make them nervous.

At that moment, a composed voice suddenly rang out from the front.

"I'm Fujimaki from the third year, serving as the Red team's commander for this event."

Kaoru turned his gaze toward the voice and saw a male student standing at the front—not Horikita Manabu, whom he was familiar with, leading the proceedings.

However, he recognized this self-introduced senior, Fujimaki.

He was also a member of the student council, holding the position of treasurer and was Horikita Manabu's classmate—Fujimaki Hiroki.

"Here, I'd like to offer some advice to the first-year students. Some of you might find this tedious, but the sports festival is an extremely important event. Please keep this in mind—the experience you gain here will undoubtedly be useful in other opportunities as well..."

Faced with Fujimaki Hiroki's reminder, many students exchanged glances.

Without having experienced certain things firsthand, no matter how reasonable his words were, they wouldn't take them seriously.

Fujimaki Hiroki likely understood this well, so he quickly wrapped up his speech and moved on.

"This sports festival involves events across all grades, with only the final 1,200-meter relay race being the exception. Everything else is internal to each grade, so you're free to discuss how you want to proceed."

With that, Fujimaki Hiroki returned to his spot in Class 3-A.

Not only that, but the White team on the other side also entered their discussion phase.

It seemed the seniors wouldn't be offering much assistance.

"Though we're fighting together in this form, I hope we can cooperate well and work as a team."

Not far away, Katsuragi had already greeted Hirata from Class D.

"I feel the same way. Let's do our best, Katsuragi-kun," Hirata Yosuke replied with a smile.

He understood what Katsuragi meant—right now, Class D's only goal was to avoid dragging Class A down.

Katsuragi, as expected, didn't bother with unnecessary pleasantries.

After all, Class A didn't need Class D's strength—they just needed them to avoid losing too badly and causing the Red team's defeat.

Even so, Katsuragi instinctively glanced back at Kaoru, only to find that the latter's gaze wasn't even directed his way.

Instead, Kaoru was staring intently at the second-year students ahead.

"So, you're not planning to discuss things with us?"

It wasn't until he heard Honami's voice that Kaoru finally tore his gaze away from Class 2-A.

Immediately after, he saw Ryuen—who had been standing with his hands in his pockets, about to leave—pause in his tracks.

"Tch. Ichinose, even if I said I wanted to cooperate with your Class B, would you really accept my proposal?"

"Maybe?"

"Hehe, don't waste your time, Ichinose."

With these words, Ryuen led the entire Class C out of the gymnasium with composed ease.

To be honest, witnessing this scene, Kaoru couldn't help but recall various yakuza films.

Despite several defeats, Ryuen's authority remained unchallenged within Class C.

Had it been Katsuragi in his position, Class A would have undoubtedly become Sakayanagi's Class A by now.

"Aren't you going to take command, Mitoma-kun?"

At some point, Sakayanagi Arisu had seated herself beside Kaoru—on a chair, no less.

Behind her stood Kamuro in silent attendance, clearly she still got blackmailed by her.

Chapter 233: My, What a Close Relationship You Have

With a serene smile that suggested she'd relinquished any claim to class leadership, Sakayanagi Arisu reminded him.

Kaoru surveyed the surrounding students—those formerly aligned with Sakayanagi's faction had already gravitated towards Katsuragi, leaving only a handful still with her.

"No need for me to take command. Katsuragi is perfectly capable of handling this. Besides, what follows will be a test of pure physical prowess."

Even the slightest weakness in athleticism would virtually guarantee a poor ranking.

Any fool could see this sports festival would favor the exceptionally gifted students.

Fortunately, routine PE classes revealed Class A's remarkably balanced athletic standards, with few notably weak performers.

Thus, for Class A, the strategy was simple: identify events where they could secure top placements while maintaining decent performances elsewhere.

"Hehehe, aiming for honorable competition, Mitoma-kun?" Sakayanagi seemed mildly surprised.

"I expected you'd keep suppressing other classes to crush my hopes before our second year."

While the competitions themselves would test physical limits, the real battle lay beyond the arena.

Scouting opponents' strengths, analyzing their event rotations, even forcing early withdrawals—the possibilities for manipulation were endless.

The school's restrictions on substitutions likely aimed to curb such underhanded tactics.

"Have you truly not given up yet?" Kaoru's gaze drifted to her calves.

"Not at all. Until the day you kneel in submission, I'll keep playing this game with you." Sakayanagi lowered her eyelids, privately amused by his undisguised ogling.

Sometimes, merely recalling his antics made her wonder how she'd endured him this long.

Yet paradoxically, she recognized his remarkable restraint—this boy who channeled his desires into controlled, context-specific outbursts.

Precisely because it fascinated her, Sakayanagi wanted to know what truly occupied his thoughts.

"What do you think of surrendering now, and I might indulge those desires of yours?"

Teasingly, the girl lifted one leg slightly, the tip of her shoe tracing a provocative arc before him.

From his angle, Kaoru could even glimpse the fluttering hemline that accompanied her movement—revealing a tantalizing thigh.

Kamuro expressionlessly averted her gaze.

Even though she had done far worse herself, she usually had the nerve to criticize Kaoru's little antics with him.

"Only an idiot would agree to that, right?" Kaoru was somewhat speechless.

"If you became my little maid, wouldn't I be able to order you to satisfy me anytime?"

Sakayanagi remained calm, even blinking her eyes.

"The agreement is for second year, which is still a long way off. If you agree to my terms, I can satisfy you right now. Isn't that good enough?"

Kaoru paused, as if this made some sense.

"Though I really don't want to interrupt your flirting, could you two at least pay attention to the surroundings?" Kamuro said while hugging her own arms as if disgusted, yet her eyes remained fixed on Kaoru Mitoma.

Though their conversation was quiet, Sakayanagi's striking appearance made it impossible to ignore.

With her petite, sickly frame, she was the only student using a cane and sitting in a chair while others stood or sat normally—it was hard not to notice her.

Many students from the nearest Class D had already turned their attention to Sakayanagi, with occasional murmurs of amazement.

"We seem to be drawing attention," Sakayanagi smiled, then greeted the Class D students.

"Nice to meet you all. I'm Sakayanagi. Due to my health, I'm afraid I won't be of any use in the competitions. My apologies for the inconvenience."

"N-no problem! It's the school's fault!" one student stammered.

Sakayanagi simply smiled, but then a pleasant voice chimed in.

"Ah, what a shame. I was hoping we could cheer each other on, Sakayanagi-san."

From among the Class D students, Kushida's face showed genuine disappointment, her angelic voice conveying sincere regret.

Sakayanagi narrowed her eyes slightly, noticing how the other girl's gaze lingered—intentionally or not—on the man beside her.

"I'm afraid I'll only be able to cheer from the spectator seats."

"No need to apologize! It's not your fault. Nobody wants this, right?"

"Thank you for your concern."

Seeing Sakayanagi's composed demeanor, Kushida slowly formed a smile and asked, seemingly offhand.

"By the way, is Mitoma-kun taking care of you?"

Anyone hearing such an ambiguous question would instinctively react.

If guilty, one might fluster and deny it awkwardly.

Kushida could then innocently claim she was only asking about the chair.

*Hehehe, though I've considered it, someone still refuses my proposal," Sakayanagi met Kushida's gaze unfazed.

What's wrong with this woman?

Kushida maintained her smile but felt a flicker of irritation inwardly.

This response practically confirmed an improper relationship with Kaoru.

Didn't she know he was actually a perverted foot fetishist?

How annoying—did she even realize what she was saying?

"Don't talk nonsense. Did Kamuro bring this chair for you from somewhere else?" Kaoru felt a bit of pressure as the surrounding gazes on him and Sakayanagi grew increasingly strange.

"I took it—right in front of the teacher!" Kamuro reacted strongly, perhaps because it touched on her secret.

"Why not take a few more?" Kaoru deliberately tried to steer the conversation off track.

"Are you also disable?" The moment she said this, Kamuro immediately realized her mistake.

As the two of them bickered, Sakayanagi merely smiled, seemingly not the least bit annoyed.

"What are you all talking about? Can I listen in too?"

At that moment, a girl from Class B who hadn't left yet suddenly approached.

Both Katsuragi and Hirata showed a hint of wariness at her appearance.

"Good afternoon, Ichinose-san," Kaoru greeted her.

In that instant, Sakayanagi, Kamuro, and Kushida all turned to look at him.

Ichinose Honami seemed delighted, her eyes curving into crescents as she smiled and said.

"Good afternoon, Mitoma-kun. Looks like we'll be opponents again."

"Hey hey, shouldn't Class B stay out of this? We're still discussing the sports festival!" Totsuka Yahiko complained impatiently.

Ichinose immediately clasped her hands together apologetically.

"Sorry, sorry! I just overheard you talking about Sakayanagi-san and thought your discussion had ended."

Kaoru looked puzzled.

Had Sakayanagi become that noticeable today?

"Me?" Sakayanagi also seemed slightly confused, though she vaguely sensed something peculiar in the air.

Because Ichinose Honami's gaze kept drifting towards Kaoru as well.

"Hmm, maybe I'm overthinking it?"

"Ahaha, we were just saying how Sakayanagi-san can't participate in the events due to her physical condition," Kushida suddenly explained on Ichinose's behalf.

Ichinose glanced at Sakayanagi's legs and cane.

"Hehehe, please don't mind it. I'm quite used to this," Sakayanagi continued with her usual smile.

Just as Totsuka Yahiko was about to interject, Katsuragi placed a hand on his shoulder and said solemnly.

"As you can see, Ichinose, Class A has unavoidably lost some strength. But if you want to join the conversation, feel free. We weren't planning to discuss tactics here anyway."

'Wait, don't say that'

Kaoru silently turned his head away.

"I see," Ichinose chuckled. "To be honest, I didn't expect to hear anything valuable here either. After all, we are opponents."

Hirata Yosuke shared the same sentiment.

"Katsuragi-kun, even though we're teammates for this event, competition is still competition. As for the team matches, should we talk about them later?"

"Sure, we'll discuss it later."

It seemed their conversation was coming to an end.

Kaoru sighed in relief, ready to leave.

But then, Sakayanagi inexplicably extended her small hand toward him.

"Help me up," the girl's voice was clear and melodious, her eyes fixed unblinkingly on him.

Ichinose Honami, who had been smiling moments ago, froze in surprise.

Kushida Kikyo's expression also turned blank.

"Can't you stand up yourself?" Kaoru glanced at her, then at Kamuro beside her, who pretended not to notice.

"At times like these, a gentleman like Mitoma-kun should be more considerate towards girls," Sakayanagi chided him lightly, completely oblivious to the stares around her—especially the ones coming from across the room.

Kamuro crossed her arms, utterly indifferent.

There was no point in arguing with her now.

Reluctantly, Kaoru took her small hand and helped her up from the chair.

"Fufufu, Mitoma-kun really is such a gentle man." Sakayanagi Arisu's peripheral vision caught the expressions on Ichinose Honami and Kushida Kikyo's faces, causing the corners of her lips to curl up slightly.

Kaoru remained silent, but his gaze inadvertently drifted to her perky little ass.

Noticing this, Sakayanagi immediately realized what was on his mind.

A faint blush finally appeared on her cheeks, her eyes flashing with both embarrassment and irritation.

After all, it had been her first time getting spanked.

Even the slightest recollection made the lingering sensation heat up faintly again—something utterly embarrassing to admit.

Chapter 234: Unflappable

Soon, Ichinose Honami's expression returned to normal first.

The corner of her mouth twitched slightly as she revealed a somewhat curious smile.

"Ahaha, you two seem really close."

Her tone betrayed nothing unusual as she stared intently at Kaoru Mitoma and Sakayanagi Arisu.

Even knowing the girl wasn't the type to get jealous, Kaoru still felt a hint of pressure.

Regardless, being intimate with another girl in front of his girlfriend wasn't ideal.

With that thought, he subtly put some distance between them.

"Don't go ordering people around so casually next time."

Though it sounded like a protest directed at Sakayanagi, it was actually an explanation to the others—that Sakayanagi had acted on her own and that their relationship hadn't crossed certain boundaries yet.

Sakayanagi chuckled softly, completely unfazed by Kaoru's protest.

Instead, she turned to Ichinose with a meaningful look.

"I'm a little curious—what kind of relationship do we seem like to you, Ichinose-san?"

Ichinose's expression stiffened again.

How dare she outright interrogate her, his girlfriend, like this?

Yet she knew she couldn't show even a hint of anger in this situation.

"Good friends, I suppose?" Ichinose forced out a laugh.

She shouldn't be angry—no, she had no reason to be angry—so why did her chest feel so tight?

For some reason, her jaw and facial muscles were tense, making her smile tremble slightly.

The discomfort was unbearable.

This feeling was even more unpleasant than during summer break.

No—perhaps it was because she remembered what had happened back then that her irritation grew worse.

"Fufu, that's right. Mitoma-kun is my good friend—for now, at least." Sakayanagi narrowed her eyes, a mischievous glint flashing in them, as if she'd discovered something amusing.

She deliberately lingered on the last syllable, as if emphasizing something, her expression radiating an almost excessive composure.

To an outsider, Sakayanagi's reply might have seemed odd, but to Ichinose, the provocation couldn't have been clearer.

Don't get angry.

Stay polite.

Don't arouse suspicion here...

But she was the girlfriend here!

What right did the other girl have to act so smug?

Just then, Kushida Kikyo's cheerful voice suddenly chimed in from the side.

"Eh, I want to be good friends with Sakayanagi-san too!" The girl sounded like she was mustering her courage.

"Since we're teammates for this sports festival, it'd be a shame to miss the chance. I'd feel a little regretful otherwise."

She then gave an awkward, embarrassed laugh.

Befriend Sakayanagi ?

Kaoru's expression turned strange.

Though Kushida hid it well, her trademark smile was far too fake.

"Not just Sakayanagi-san, but if possible, I'd love to hang out with Mitoma-kun too."

Kaoru subtly turned his face away.

You're showing your hand way too quickly.

And why are you jumping on the bandwagon too?

"Of course. Actually, I'd love to build good relationships with students from other classes," Sakayanagi Arisu replied with unusual cheerfulness, already aware of the situation unfolding before her.

This is quite amusing.

"That's great! What about you, Mitoma-kun?" Kushida Kikyo forced a radiant smile through gritted teeth.

"About what you promised me last time—can we do it these next few days?"

A question mark practically materialized above Kaoru's head.

What did I promise her?

"Can—we—do—it?" Kushida's face was all smiles, but if he refused now, she would lose it completely today.

"Well, I can, but I need to check if I have time—" Kaoru barely got the words out before she cut him off.

"Great! Then it's settled!" Kushida didn't give him a chance to finish.

Sakayanagi, leaning on her cane, locked eyes with Kushida.

Sparks seemed to fly between them in midair.

Katsuragi shot Kaoru a helpless look before silently leading Class A toward the gymnasium exit.

"Mitoma-kun, want to head to the student council together later?" Ichinose Honami suddenly suggested.

Kaoru thought for a moment—he did need to visit the student council today—and nodded in agreement.

Watching this unfold, Sakayanagi blinked and gave Kaoru a tender look.

"Come back soon, Mitoma-kun."

It might have been his imagination, but Kaoru definitely heard the sound of teeth grinding.

Amid the crowd, Horikita Suzune calmly observed Kaoru and Ichinose as they walked away.

Though she found the earlier events utterly baffling, one thing was certain:

Class A was no longer a match for Class D.

Regardless of what kind of person Kaoru Mitoma was, having him as an ally was far better than facing him as an enemy.

This sports festival should secure them a victory in the group battles.

After that, Class D just needed to focus on earning more points to avoid falling behind in the year's rankings—that way, they could avoid penalties.

Horikita took a deep breath.

She knew this line of thinking was shameful, almost like admitting she was inferior to Kaoru.

A part of her even felt relieved.

But facts were facts.

At their current level, Class D stood no chance against Class A.

Forget climbing to Class A—their immediate priority was protecting what little Class Points they had left.

Before summer break, they had 87 points.

After two special exams, they now had 112.

Class D couldn't afford another failed exam.

More importantly, no matter what, Horikita had to protect her own source of points.

"Hey, Horikita, what's your take on the sports festival?" Ayanokoji Kiyotaka inexplicably sidled up to her, drawing Sudou Ken and the others' attention.

"Give it our all and take first place," Horikita replied coldly, not even bothering to look at him.

She had thought Ayanokoji might be useful, but Class D had suffered a crushing defeat in the VIP exam—without even understanding how they lost.

"Should we ask Class A for help?" Ayanokoji Kiyotaka suggested. "I think Mitoma-kun would probably assist if it's for your sake."

Horikita Suzune abruptly raised her head, her sharp gaze turning icy.

"Why should I seek his help?"

"You two get along well, don't you? Weren't you having a pleasant conversation at the café last time?" Ayanokoji maintained an innocent expression.

"It seems you need to correct your vision."

With that, Horikita strode past him.

Though Ayanokoji was somewhat clever, he was far from being truly helpful.

She'd likely have to face Kaoru Mitoma and his Class A alone from now on.

Of course, before that, she needed to focus on the upcoming sports festival.

At this thought, Horikita paused momentarily—she probably wouldn't be able to pay this month's minimum debt.

Fine, she'd just let him have his way one more time.

The girl clenched her teeth.

Chapter 235: Who's the Real Girlfriend?

"I'm your girlfriend, right?"

On their way to the student council, Ichinose Honami walked ahead with her hands behind her back, playfully kicking her legs beneath her swaying skirt.

The late summer sunlight illuminated her clean profile as her long hair fluttered gently.

Though phrased as a question to Kaoru, her tone left no room for denial.

"Her personality can be quite troublesome sometimes—it gives me headaches too," Kaoru murmured, observing her from behind.

The distance between them suggested she was upset, though he wondered if she even realized it herself.

"But Kaoru, you're partly to blame too, aren't you?" Ichinose struggled to define her current emotions.

Just recalling recent events made her mouth taste sour.

"You knew we were dating, yet you made that bet with Sakayanagi-san. Do you prefer... smaller girls?"

By any measure, Sakayanagi was a petite girl—physically delicate and less endowed than herself.

And then there was the lingering matter of Amikura Mako.

For a girl experiencing her first relationship, navigating such complex emotions was overwhelming—far beyond her processing capacity.

"First, my wager with Sakayanagi was made at the start of term, before we began dating," Kaoru paused briefly.

"Second, I'm still figuring out my own preferences."

"Such an evasive answer," Ichinose pouted slightly.

"So I'm just supposed to wait until you decide who you like more?"

Any response now would inevitably disappoint her, so Kaoru opted for deflection.

"I notice you're embodying the textbook girlfriend now—anger, jealousy, interrogation. You're checking all the boxes."

As expected, Ichinose stopped walking abruptly.

"Honestly, I don't understand my own feelings either. Seeing Sakayanagi-san just... bothers me." After a moment, she added, "And what about Kushida-san? Did you make some promise to her too?"

Kaoru genuinely wished he knew the answer to that question, though upon reflection, even Kushida probably didn't understand her own words.

No—what intrigued him more was what Kushida actually intended.

She had no reason to suddenly intervene, did she?

"It's nothing. She just wanted to be friends with me since I rarely go out normally."

"I see."

Ichinose Honami accepted his explanation.

After all, Kushida's persona was that of a pure little angel—she was always eager to get along with everyone.

It was hard to imagine such an angel having any ulterior motives for approaching him.

Then again, Kaoru was an utterly shameless pervert.

Apart from her, there probably wasn't a second person in the entire school who could accept him, right?

Ichinose Honami slowly blushed.

She couldn't keep thinking like this.

Before long, the two finally arrived at the student council office.

Unlike usual, most of the student council members were gathered in the office.

Nagumo Miyabi had even commandeered the sofa, with second-year executives standing beside him, all staring at the two who had just entered.

"You came at the perfect time. We've already confirmed with the school specific tasks the student council will be responsible for," Tachibana Akane said, holding her notebook.

Spotting Kaoru and Ichinose at the door, she immediately waved them over.

Kaoru obediently walked towards the senpai, while his vision caught Katsuragi standing slightly closer to Nagumo Miyabi—yet not too close to the core position—subtly reflecting Katsuragi's current standing.

"Long time no see, Mitoma," Nagumo Miyabi said with a smile. "I heard you had a great victory during summer break, completely dominating your entire grade. Well done. This is how Class A student should be."

Only three first-years were present in the office and Ichinose happened to be from Class B.

Was this a deliberate attempt to drive a wedge between him and Ichinose, or was Nagumo simply displeased with her tagging along?

"Yes, I believe we should thoroughly eliminate all students outside Class A—drive out every single non-Class A student without exception."

Since Nagumo was being sarcastic, Kaoru decided to tear the roof off.

Nagumo Miyabi was momentarily speechless before coldly replying.

"Fine. Let's see how you plan to do that."

"Haven't you already been doing it, senpai?" Kaoru smiled faintly.

It was common knowledge that Nagumo had purged quite a few non-Class A students.

Nagumo Miyabi laughed in anger.

He hadn't expected this guy to dare sarcastically provoke him to his face, even turning the tables to stir discord between him and his subordinates.

"Enough. The focus now is the sports festival," Horikita Manabu interjected, preemptively stopping the brewing argument.

Seizing the moment, Tachibana Akane smoothly continued.

"According to the school's requirements, the student council will be responsible for logistical support and partial planning during the sports festival's preparation phase."

"Logistical support? Like volunteer work?" Ichinose recalled a common type of staff role.

"Yes, but not entirely," Tachibana Akane explained. "The school wants us to help inspect sports equipment and assist with setting up the venue the day before the event."

"Though the school is willing to delegate some tasks to the student council, there's hardly any heavy work involved. Everyone can rest assured," Horikita Manabu said calmly, as if this wasn't his first time handling such matters.

Not only were the third-year executives unfazed, but even the second-years wore indifferent expressions—clearly, they had experienced similar situations more than once or twice.

Come to think of it, the school hadn't explicitly stated that this sports festival was a special exam.

In Japan, sports festivals and cultural festivals were common events.

Advanced Nurturing High School had likely just given this one a twist.

"So, does that mean we only need to do a little work?" Ichinose Honami asked.

"Exactly, besides these, there's also planning." Tachibana Akane pondered, "For example, the school has allowed our student council to come up with the topics for the scavenger hunt competition."

The scavenger hunt was one of the assigned events in this year's sports festival.

The basic premise was to draw a topic from a lottery box and then retrieve the required item as quickly as possible.

The most classic topic would probably be 'someone you like'.

The school likely delegated the task of creating topics to the student council because students understand students best.

"This year, we'll follow the usual arrangement: third-years handle the venue, second-years prepare the topics and first-years assist with equipment preparation." Horikita Manabu assigned the simplest tasks to Kaoru and the others while turning to Tachibana Akane.

"Tachibana, if you have time, take them to the sports storage. I expect quite a few people will be borrowing equipment these next couple of days."

"Leave it to me!" Tachibana Akane patted her chest confidently, though her gaze lingered mischievously on Kaoru Mitoma.

And she wasn't the only one—Nagumo Miyabi was also staring coldly at Kaoru Mitoma.

Tch.

Chapter 236: An Unshakable Rival

Ever since exchanging a badge with Kaoru Mitoma, Nagumo Miyabi had been feeling increasingly powerless.

No—it wasn't just powerlessness.

He had lost all worldly desires.

Even the sight of a girl's skirt fluttering barely stirred anything in him.

At first, Nagumo thought it was just a temporary phase, that he'd recover after a while.

But as he waited and waited, time passed until he finally had to face the truth.

He was broken.

Nagumo tried to rekindle his old feelings with his childhood friend, believing that just being near her would restore his worldly desires and let him enjoy life again.

Yet, even Asahina Nazuna, his childhood sweetheart, failed to awaken his dormant desires.

All that remained was a pure, platonic affection for her.

Nagumo couldn't understand why.

Even if he had lost interest in women, shouldn't he at least still feel something for Asahina Nazuna?

Though she had never agreed to date him—their relationship had always stayed within the bounds of childhood friends, never progressing further—he had long considered her his personal possession.

Nagumo admitted that he often played around with other women, but it was just casual fun, a mutual exchange of needs.

Desire was desire, and his true love was his true love.

Nagumo believed he had always kept them separate.

Had Kaoru Mitoma not stopped him back then, he might have coerced Ichinose Honami into dating him—but it would have been nothing more than a fleeting amusement.

He would have treated her like a delicate vase, drained her of her value and then discarded her without a second thought.

A fine plan—but reality had shattered it.

Nagumo glared coldly at Kaoru Mitoma.

Even if he didn't understand how this had happened, it didn't stop him from resenting the other boy.

After all, if not for him, Nagumo wouldn't be in this state.

"Katsuragi, as your senpai, I'll give you a little advice," Nagumo suddenly said to Katsuragi.

"When you hold a sharp blade, don't underestimate yourself. Class A is yours now—lead them to victory. Don't lose."

Since Kaoru had delivered Katsuragi to him, Nagumo was confident he could completely consume Katsuragi.

He refused to believe that a spy who ascended to the throne would remain without ambition or continue obeying Kaoru unconditionally.

Thus, without hesitation, Nagumo openly reminded Katsuragi in front of Kaoru about everything he now possessed—even the power to help him seize control of the class.

Katsuragi froze for a moment before murmuring.

"I won't let you down."

Ichinose Honami tilted her head in confusion, completely lost about the context of their conversation.

Kaoru showed no reaction, silently relieved that he had retrieved another badge and renegotiated a contract with Class C of the third year.

Otherwise, the consequences now would have been disastrous.

Seeing his indifference, Nagumo Miyabi frowned slightly before letting out a cold laugh.

No matter.

He still had another plan.

...

"I feel like Nagumo is about to make a move against us."

On their way back to the dormitory, Katsuragi walked beside Kaoru.

Honami didn't join them, apologetically explaining that she needed to make a stop at Keyaki Mall.

"Don't just feel it—he won't let such a good opportunity slip by," Kaoru thought to himself, realizing that he shared the same intention.

With the sports festival involving inter-grade alliances this time, he wouldn't hesitate to exploit the situation.

However, Nagumo Miyabi's other scheme was just as overt—an open declaration that he would eventually turn Katsuragi against him.

Even if he failed to sway Katsuragi, the seeds of doubt would be sown between them.

Understanding this, Katsuragi had immediately stayed close to Kaoru after leaving the student council.

"Regarding the competition, I plan to assess everyone's abilities first before deciding who will take charge of the assigned events," Katsuragi said, intending to finalize the selections for the assigned competitions before strategizing for the group events.

Currently, there were thirteen events in total—nine group competitions and four assigned ones.

The group events included the 100-meter dash, hurdles, pole toppling (boys), ball throw (girls), gender-segregated tug-of-war, obstacle race, three-legged race, cavalry battle, and 200-meter dash.

The assigned competitions were the scavenger hunt, four-way tug-of-war, mixed-gender three-legged race, and the inter-grade 1200-meter relay.

According to school rules, all events would take place within a single day, leaving almost no time for rest.

"Aside from the scavenger hunt, which relies on luck, the other events are brutal," Kaoru mused.

"I recall our class has quite a few physically capable students—like Kito, Shimizu, Machida, Motodo..."

Katsuragi gave him a strange look.

He seemed to know the class's capabilities even better than he did.

"How do you plan to arrange things?"

"Me?" Kaoru stopped walking and gazed at the dormitory ahead.

"I'm considering whether we should lose one match."

Katsuragi was stunned.

"Right now, everyone believes you can lead Class A to continuous victories, which is why they follow you. But that also means the weight on your shoulders will only grow heavier."

In truth, it wasn't just about the burden of responsibility.

Although it was only a faint sign at this point, Kaoru Mitoma still noticed an air of arrogance and complacency beginning to permeate Class A.

Take Totsuka Yahiko, for example—he had clearly abandoned critical thinking, dumping all responsibility for leading Class A onto Katsuragi while cheering from the sidelines.

Not that this approach was inherently bad, but with Sakayanagi Arisu watching from within Class A and Nagumo Miyabi and Ryuen Kakeru lurking outside, a single misstep could be endlessly magnified, leading to a sudden reversal of fortunes.

Rather than waiting for them to launch a sneak attack, it would be better to strike their own ranks first—this way, the losses could be minimized.

Katsuragi fell silent for a moment.

"Only those who win have any real value, don't they?"

"No," Kaoru chuckled. "Those who lose but fight their way back to victory are even more impressive. We've been in the spotlight too much lately. Sometimes, taking a step back allows you to move two steps forward."

Katsuragi's eyes flickered with complex emotions.

He truly had to admire Kaoru's insight now.

"By the way, how's your sister doing?" Kaoru suddenly recalled the summer vacation incident.

"I asked a classmate who was leaving for a club competition to deliver the gift for me," Katsuragi replied tersely.

The school strictly limited students from leaving campus, and even student council members had no special privileges.

"With a gift from her brother, I'm sure she was happy." Kaoru smirked teasingly.

During summer break, he had been on his way to report exam results to Horikita Manabu when he unexpectedly ran into Katsuragi.

Contrary to his rough exterior, the guy had been preparing a birthday gift for his sister and even planned to ask Manabu for permission to leave campus or mail the gift—only to be refused.

At Kaoru's teasing, Katsuragi awkwardly rubbed his shaved head, unsure how to respond.

Still, he felt a strange warmth in his chest.

He hadn't expected Kaoru to remember such a trivial matter.

Chapter 237: Kiryuin Senpai

Losing on purpose was one thing, but how exactly to lose offered plenty of room for maneuvering.

"Just relying on the school's additional gym classes isn't enough. Why not invite Class D to join our training sessions after school every day?"

"Invite Class D?"

"The justification would be to ensure victory in the inter-grade matches. Helping Class D isn't something hard to accept."

"That's doable, but wouldn't it leak our class's capabilities?"

"Split into two groups—one in the indoor gym, the other on the outdoor track. Besides, Class D has no reason to leak intel. If they lose, they'll lose 100 points."

"That should work. Even if other classes scout us, they'll only get a rough idea. The real key is the participation list."

"Make sure to put in the effort," Kaoru mused. "The harder you try, the more crushing the defeat—especially when it's your own fault that the class loses. That way, they'll truly understand your ability."

Katsuragi stared at him in confusion.

Nothing in those words suggested any reason to lose—did it?"

Leaving aside the first-years, we need to study the second-years' strategies," Kaoru Mitoma continued.

"Losing in the grade-level competition deducts 100 points, and being last in the grade ranking also deducts 100 points. In the most ideal scenario, a single class could lose up to 200 points."

"Even if we lose in the grade-level competition, Nagumo's class might not necessarily lose," Katsuragi began to grasp his meaning.

"So, we need to find a way to make them lose. Losing just the grade-level competition can still be blamed on circumstances, but being at the bottom of the grade ranking would clearly be Nagumo Miyabi's own failure—proof of his incompetence." Kaoru already had a rough plan in mind.

He had plenty of rewards that could help, but the more unrealistic the methods, the harder they would be to explain.

In fact, such tactics might even allow Nagumo Miyabi to shift the blame onto mysterious phenomena.

"I don't have any objections, but we might also suffer heavy losses, which could unsettle everyone," Katsuragi hesitated.

Kaoru's strategy involved sacrificing some of their own gains to hurt the enemy.

"According to the point rankings, as long as we ensure that the White Group classes rank one or two places higher than the Red Group classes across the entire grade, we'll be fine. Our Class A can afford to take second place this time." Kaoru had already calculated everything.

This sports festival was entirely about winning through points, meaning the final outcome could be roughly predicted in advance.

Katsuragi Kouhei was momentarily stunned—this didn't seem entirely unacceptable.

But the question was: how would Kaoru manipulate the entire grade's points?

That, of course, was something Kaoru intended to keep secret.

First, he needed to assess the strength of the second-year rebels and whether they were capable of carrying out the upcoming mission.

...

Around 11 p.m.

Kaoru Mitoma silently observed the small group before him, especially after Kiriyaama Ikuyo introduced them as the rebels who dared to oppose Nagumo Miyabi.

His silence deepened.

"I know our numbers are a bit small, but everyone here genuinely resents Nagumo. If we can achieve something significant, others will quickly follow," Kiriyaama Ikuyo explained, though even he lacked confidence in his own words.

"Honestly, you've already exceeded my initial expectations," Kaoru admitted honestly.

Under Nagumo Miyabi's combination of force and persuasion, Kiriyaama Ikuyo had still managed to bring four or five people, including one from Class A.

That was already impressive.

Seeing that Kaoru wasn't mocking him, Kiriyaama Ikuyo sighed in relief but also felt a twinge of shame.

"Even though I'm the leader of my class, that doesn't mean everyone listens to me. I can only do my best to meet your requests—please don't take it the wrong way."

At this point, Kaoru naturally couldn't criticize him.

Anyone who could make Horikita Manabu wary was certainly no pushover.

If Kiriyaama Ikuyo still had full control over his class, Kaoru would have doubted how he had ever lost to Nagumo Miyabi in the first place.

"Hahaha, Kiriya, I never thought I'd see the day you'd act so meek! This is hilarious!"

Before the person even arrived, a clear and melodious laughter reached the ears of everyone present, prompting Kaoru Mitoma to turn towards the source of the sound.

A slender yet tall figure emerged from the darkness, the moonlight igniting her snow-white skin, casting a dazzling silver glow.

A haughty smile graced her delicate face as cold-toned light flowed through her slender eyes.

She locked her gaze unwaveringly with Kaoru Mitoma's, like a firefly floating in the night, its flickering glow exuding an almost bewitching allure.

Ignoring the surrounding stares, she walked past the crowd and stopped before Kaoru Mitoma and Kiriya Ikuyo.

"This is Kiryuin, a fellow student from Class B like me. Though I'm sure you already know her," Kiriya Ikuyo said with obvious distaste but forced herself to continue the introduction.

"Kiryuin, this is Mitoma. He's taken a liking to you."

The moment Kiryuin Fuka appeared, countless desires flashed through Kaoru Mitoma's mind.

[Senpai, senpai, hit me!]

[Put on a collar, wear a maid outfit, and lower that proud head to serve her master.]

[Needing senpai's hugs every morning just to get out of bed.]

[Being younger than senpai, so she'd dote on me like a child.]

[Kiryuin's powerful thighs—it's not just about licking, I need to grope them!]

[Wanting to have a sweet, romantic relationship with the adorable senpai.]

"I know. It's not our first meeting," Kiryuin Fuka said, sizing up Kaoru Mitoma with an amused smirk.

"Even if this is a blind date setup, your looks aren't bad. Kiriya, your taste is impressive."

It was clear—this was a carnivorous senpai.

But what did she mean by 'blind date'?

Had Kiriya even conveyed his words properly?

"Senpai, do you know what my request is?" Kaoru Mitoma asked.

Even from his perspective, Kiryuin Fuka was undeniably tall, standing over 170 cm with a pair of flawless long legs.

Beneath the slightly glossy black stockings, her thighs looked plump and full, while her calves carried an almost creamy smoothness.

Her stance was anything but ladylike—one hand on her hip, her rounded chin slightly raised as she met Kaoru Mitoma's gaze without hesitation.

It almost seemed like she was puffing out her chest, her well-developed body already exuding a mature allure that made one want to bury themselves in it.

"I do. A perverted yet interesting kohai—this is my first time meeting someone like you," Kiryuin Fū=uka replied, clearly intrigued.

"See, Kiriyaama? I really am adorable, effortlessly capturing a little kohai's heart."

Kaoru Mitoma had expected her to at least question his motives, but instead, she seemed utterly confident in her charm, even ignoring Kiriyaama Ikuyo's exasperated expression.

Chapter 238: Friend Tax

Kiriyaama Ikuyo appeared to despise Kiryuin Fuka and quickly excused himself from the conversation, leaving the two to talk privately.

At the same time, he made it clear to Kaoru Mitoma that even if Kiryuin Fuka refused, he would still cooperate with whatever plan Kaoru had next.

Watching him leave, Fuka curled her lips slightly and turned her gaze to Kaoru.

"Although Kiriyaama didn't explain the details to me, I don't think anyone would make such a request without reason."

As she spoke, she looked at Kaoru expectantly, as if urging him to continue.

"Senpai, have you ever had a boyfriend before?"

"Heh, I haven't met a man who's made my heart flutter yet," Fuka replied with a light laugh.

"Don't tell me you're about to confess to your senpai right now?"

Kaoru shook his head. "Even if I were to confess to you now, without any emotional foundation, you'd probably reject me right away."

"How do you know unless you try? With such an adorable kouhai like you, maybe I'd actually be moved for once." Fuka leaned slightly forward, closing the distance between them just enough that their breaths seemed to mingle in the air, light and teasing.

"No thanks. If I got rejected by such a cute senpai, I'd never recover from the emotional trauma." Kaoru remained unfazed.

Her eyes were fixed on him, her lips curled in a faint smirk—clearly, she was a strong opponent.

Kiryuin Fuka flashed a breathtaking smile before speaking leisurely, "I know your name. The one who swindled a good amount of Personal Points from Nagumo. I've heard you're quite active among the first-years too—Class A has pulled far ahead of the others."

"Actually, I was planning to get to know you, senpai. I'd like to be your friend," Kaoru said.

"Just like you mentioned earlier, I have plenty of Personal Points. Think of it as a 'friendship fee'—no problem at all."

A question mark practically materialized above Kiryuin Fuka's head as she chewed on his words.

"Friendship fee?"

"I'd send you a sum every month, dedicated to maintaining our friendship," Kaoru explained.

Kiryuin Fuka's expression turned odd.

Though she was usually carefree and spent money without hesitation—practically living paycheck to paycheck—his proposal sounded... bizarrely niche.

"Because Class A has dominated the entire grade, have you now set your sights on the second-years out of sheer boredom?"

"I don't think being friends with you is boring at all."

"Heh, when Kiriya first told me about you, I thought it was a joke." Fuka raised a finger and poked his chest lightly.

"A mere kouhai, trying to chase after his senpai?"

"If senpai would let me have a taste, I'd gladly camp outside your dorm every day, showering you with flowers." Kaoru's gaze dropped shamelessly to her thighs, his intentions were crystal clear.

Fuka froze mid-motion, falling silent for a moment.

Honestly, did this guy have no sense of shame?

"Are you some kind of masochist with a special fetish?" She shot him a sharp glare.

"I'm just a simple man of culture," Kaoru stated bluntly. "The moment a cute girl like you appears before me, my heart races uncontrollably. All sorts of desires flash through my mind—every single one of them something I'd love to experience with you."

"Impressive. You're the first pervert brave enough to say something like that to my face." Despite her words, Fuka didn't seem the least bit angry.

Though she might say one thing, her thoughts could very well be another.

[Kiryuin Fuka: Surprise, curiosity, suspicion...]

[Suggestion: Further stimulate the target's inquisitiveness to provoke emotional changes.]

It seems "Emotion Perception" is equally ineffective—or perhaps she simply doesn't have many thoughts to begin with, which is why further stimulation is necessary.

"Is that okay?"

"Why would you think I'd agree to a pervert's request?"

"If we're friends, this kind of request is pretty normal," Kaoru said.

"Because we're friends, fooling around like this is actually proof of a good relationship."

Fuka thought carefully—his words did seem to make some sense.

No! even as a joke between friends, things shouldn't go this far.

"Being friends is fine, but regarding your request, I have one condition."

Kaoru was slightly taken aback.

He hadn't expected it to be this easy.

He wasn't afraid of her having conditions—he was afraid she wouldn't negotiate at all.

"What condition?"

"Heh, it's simple," Fuka said with a grin. "As long as you can make me happy, I might indulge you a little."

Now it was Kaoru's turn to fall silent.

Of course.

It couldn't possibly be that simple.

"Don't make that face. For a pervert, making a girl happy should be easy, right?"

"I heard you're short on money, senpai."

"I'll get angry, you know."

"..."

The more flustered Kaoru became, the more pleased she seemed—as if she had finally regained her usual commanding presence.

"Fine, senpai, how about we talk about the sports festival instead?" Kaoru had more than one objective.

"I heard from Kiriama-senpai that he holds you in high regard."

Fuka clicked her tongue.

"You're not trying to get me to help you deal with Nagumo, are you?"

"Friends should help each other, right?" Kaoru began shamelessly bargaining.

"Look, I'll give you a monthly 'friendship fee' from now on. Can you really bear to watch me lose to Nagumo?"

Fuka found this amusing. "This 'friendship fee' of yours sounds more like protection money."

"Senpai, I have over four million Personal Points right now with nowhere to spend them," Kaoru said seriously.

Damn it.

She was actually kinda tempted.

After a brief pause, Kiryuin Fuka blinked.

"200,000 Personal Points a month. And if I place well in the sports festival, you'll give me another 500,000."

"Are you extorting me, senpai?"

"This is called a lesson—you shouldn't have revealed your hand so early."

"...This feels unfair."

Kaoru pretended to agonize for a moment before glancing up to see Fuka's face brimming with satisfaction, clearly pleased with her successful extortion.

"If you half-ass it, senpai, not only will I withhold the Personal Points, but I'll also punish you."

As he spoke, Kaoru's gaze drifted towards Kiryuin Fuka's perky ass.

Ever since spanking Sakayanagi, he'd developed a bit of a fondness for that sensation.

"Heh, don't worry. My goal has always been first place," Fuka said, completely unfazed by his stare.

Instead, she placed her hands on her hips, her big chest thrust forward, radiating confidence.

Chapter 239: Let's See Your Gym Uniform

Early the next morning.

As the phone rang, Kaoru Mitoma groggily opened his eyes.

"I need to pee, you pervert."

The moment the call connected, Kushida Kikyo's impatient voice reached his ears.

"You're up unusually early today?" Kaoru checked the time, somewhat exasperated.

"Stop yapping. One more word and I'm hanging up."

Rustling sounds came from the other end—likely her changing clothes.

After Kaoru gave his permission, faint sounds of running water soon followed, stoking a man's morning wood.

"Hey, are you imagining something?" Kushida suddenly asked.

"You just woke me up. How could I be in the mood for that?" Kaoru tried to rein in his imagination.

Based on the sounds, the girl might be sitting completely naked on the toilet right now.

"Hah, you creep." Kushida snorted coldly. "You dare order me to do this and think you can brush it off with that excuse? If I had to guess, it's not just me—you're probably eyeing our classmates too, aren't you?"

"Are you mad?" Kaoru blinked. The mention of "classmates" likely referred to Sakayanagi.

"Why would I waste anger on a pervert? I'm just annoyed thinking about all the nonsense in our class." Kushida gritted her teeth.

"Especially IKE and Yamauchi—those two mutts were yelling 'long live gym uniforms' yesterday. Even more disgusting than you!"

The sound of running water faded, replaced by the flush of a toilet.

"Honestly, I'd like to see you in a gym uniform too," Kaoru admitted earnestly.

Kushida wasn't surprised—if anything, she'd been waiting for this.

"Fine, I'll wear it for you. But you have to come to Class D this afternoon. We're gathering at the gym."

"What are you planning?"

"Just get here fast!" After a pause, she added in a sultry tone, "Well, Mr. Pervert... don't you want to feel what the gym uniform's like?"

This is bad.

'She's figured out how to push my buttons' Kaoru thought.

"I'll drop by later."

"Deal!"

With that, Kushida's voice brightened, humming a tune.

From initial reluctance to half-hearted compliance, now she showed no trace of displeasure.

If anything... she seemed addicted?

Ending the call, Kaoru got up to wash up.

Staring at his reflection in the bathroom mirror, he thought he looked decent.

Come to think of it, people often said he resembled some celebrity.

Which one, though?

He didn't dwell on it—there was still plenty to do today.

Kiryuin Fuka had agreed to Kaoru's request last night.

Her physical abilities seemed decent, with visible signs of training—likely very flexible too.

Additionally, Kaoru had discussed tactics with Kiriya Ikuyo while instructing him to report Nagumo Miyabi's movements at all times.

With Kiriya and Katsuragi keeping tabs on Nagumo, he could afford to divert some attention.

Finishing his morning routine, Kaoru headed out for class.

September marked the transition from summer to autumn, with lingering warmth still in the air.

Students mostly walked along the shaded paths beneath roadside trees.

Some plant must have been in bloom, as the gentle breeze carried waves of sweet fragrance.

Along the way, Kaoru Mitoma occasionally encountered familiar faces.

It wasn't until someone greeted him that he realized he had become somewhat of a minor celebrity.

Before long, Kaoru arrived at Class A's classroom.

Perhaps due to yesterday's events, he couldn't shake the feeling of being watched.

Even so, no one approached him.

Instead, more students gathered around Katsuragi.

By the time school ended in the afternoon, Katsuragi called for a brief class meeting.

"Before we begin official practice, I intend to select some capable students to participate in the assigned competitions. Those willing to take on multiple events may do so."

"Will this be voluntary, or will you appoint them yourself, Katsuragi-kun?" Hashimoto Masayoshi asked.

The former was fine, but if it were the latter, it would mean Class A had effectively become Katsuragi's personal domain.

"I'll try to consider everyone's feelings," Katsuragi replied vaguely, though his meaning was clear.

"You've all participated in PE classes before. I think it's obvious who stands out in terms of ability."

He then added, "Of course, if anyone doesn't want to participate, that's fine."

Hashimoto glanced at Sakayanagi before nodding with a smile.

"Then count me in."

He had performed exceptionally well in PE, even securing first place in the swimming class at the start of the term.

Kaoru thought his athletic reflexes were far above average.

"I'll join in too!" Someone raised their hand.

The assigned competition offered generous reward points, so it was natural for classmates to volunteer.

At that moment, someone poked Kaoru beside him.

"Why aren't you raising your hand?"

"Why should I?"

"Hurry up and raise it."

"Why?"

"Because Sakayanagi wants you to participate."

Kaoru glanced at Kamuro beside him and realized she wasn't joking—instead, she wore an impatient expression.

When he looked ahead at Sakayanagi, the girl had clearly noticed the commotion.

Meeting his gaze, she blinked as if urging him.

"My skills are terrible."

The moment he said this, Kamuro grew even more impatient.

She grabbed Kaoru's arm and forcibly raised it for him.

"Hey, Katsuragi! Two more here!"

Kaoru could practically feel the stunned gazes around him.

On the podium, Katsuragi seemed to hesitate before finally nodding.

Kamuro released his arm and turned away, staring out the window as if nothing had happened.

"What event do you want me to do with you?" Kaoru asked.

"Not me. It's her," Kamuro replied stiffly.

"She can't walk properly herself, so she's making me take her place in the three-legged race with you."

Kaoru was momentarily speechless, unable to comprehend the logic behind this.

"Next, we'll begin training according to our respective events. The participation forms can be submitted in the final few days," Katsuragi said, satisfied.

With Kamuro and Kaoru joining, twelve students from the class had now volunteered for the assigned competition.

Aside from a few exceptions, most were on the predetermined list, sparing him further persuasion.

Moreover, some were even members of Sakayanagi's faction.

He hadn't expected them to cooperate willingly—this was a surprise.

Unusual behavior always hinted at hidden motives.

Perhaps, as Kaoru had suggested, Sakayanagi was plotting something.

Chapter 240: Please Let Masumi Take My Place

When Katsuragi mentioned helping Class D train, the class finally erupted in murmurs.

"Ha, seriously? We're helping those losers?" Totsuka Yahiko looked dumbfounded.

"Katsuragi, don't forget we still have to prepare for the opening ceremony's entrance and exit," Shinji Matoba interjected, as if reminding him.

"If we waste too much time, we might fall behind."

Someone grumbled out of habit, "We can barely manage ourselves right now, can we?"

These complaints and objections weren't directed at Katsuragi himself—they simply didn't understand why they should lend Class D a hand.

"I understand, but please consider this carefully," Katsuragi said. "Do you really think it's fine to let Class D lose without intervention?"

"So what if they lose? It's not like it's our class," Totsuka replied indifferently.

"From what I know, the upperclassmen are already cooperating—Class B with Class C, and Class A with Class D," Katsuragi said truthfully, as this was indeed the arrangement in the second year.

At this point, Hashimoto Masayoshi seemed to grasp his meaning and asked.

"Katsuragi, are you worried we might lose in the inter-grade team battles?"

"Exactly. Even if we rank first in our grade, losing the team battle would still cost us 100 points."

It was obvious that Katsuragi response had raised concerns among many students.

To be honest, Class A currently held a rather poor impression of Class D.

At the beginning of the semester, Class D had set a historic record by scoring zero points.

Although they later earned 175 points in the uninhabited island exam, they immediately lost 150 points in the VIP exam.

After all their efforts over the summer break, they had only managed to gain a few dozen points in total—hardly a reassuring performance.

"That makes sense, but how exactly do we help them?" Shinji Matoba asked.

"Aside from utilizing the additional physical education classes the school has provided, we can also practice together after school," Katsuragi paused briefly.

"If we can combine the strengths of both classes, I believe there's no chance of losing in this sports festival."

Rather than combining strengths, it would be more accurate to say they could deliberately sacrifice weaker teammates to secure more points.

Originally, they would have had to face three classes, but now they only needed to deal with two.

Moreover, they could have Class D cooperate with them, exchanging points in certain events.

Not only that, but they could also have Class D exhaust the strongest competitors from Classes B and C in team competitions.

Once Katsuragi laid out these reasons to the class, everyone exchanged glances—it seemed there was no reason to oppose the plan?

In some crucial events, sacrificing Class D as scapegoats didn't seem like a bad idea at all.

"What if Class D leaks our information?" Shinji Matoba still prioritized the class's interests.

Katsuragi had already anticipated this and immediately replied.

"No, they won't know our specific arrangements. Besides, we can have the assigned competitors practice during PE class."

Since the class schedules didn't overlap, other classes wouldn't be able to see what Class A was doing during their own sessions.

Thus, Shinji Matoba fell silent.

"Does Sakayanagi-san have any opinions?" Katsuragi turned his gaze to the girl sitting below the podium, who had remained unusually quiet the entire time.

"None. Katsuragi-kun's arrangements are quite sound—I have no reason to oppose them," Sakayanagi smiled faintly.

"To be honest, I can't help but look forward to the final outcome."

Katsuragi glanced at Kaoru, but seeing that the latter had no intention of speaking up, he concluded the class meeting.

"We'll start practicing tomorrow. Before then, I'll contact Hirata-kun from Class D."

As soon as he finished speaking, murmurs broke out across the classroom again.

The class meeting didn't last long and soon disbanded.

Kaoru Mitoma was about to head to the gym when Sakayanagi Arisu suddenly caught up to him, followed closely by Kamuro Masumi.

"About what happened earlier, please don't blame Kamuro-san."

He had expected her to bring up the issue of class authority, but instead, she took the initiative to apologize to him.

"Because of my leg, I can't participate in the competitions with Mitoma-kun, so Kamuro-san is taking my place," Sakayanagi Arisu walked slowly, her slightly upturned eyes looking especially charming under the sunlight.

"Hey, weren't you the one forcing me into this?" Kamuro hurriedly explained, not wanting Kaoru to misunderstand her.

Sakayanagi merely smiled without exposing her true thoughts.

"Even so, at most, you'd just be watching from the sidelines, right?" Kaoru was somewhat puzzled but still matched Sakayanagi pace.

"Yes, I will guide you and Kamuro-san throughout the practice phase, and I'll also cheer for you during the actual competition." Sakayanagi Arisu smiled.

"During this period, you can treat Kamuro-san as if she were me—please don't hold back."

Kaoru Mitoma froze.

What kind of game was this?

"I know what you're thinking. You'd better not go too far," Kamuro warned.

Wait, shouldn't you be objecting to Sakayanagi's arrangement right now?

As if sensing Kaoru's thoughts, Sakayanagi Arisu said with an amused smile.

"As you can see, Kamuro-san is enjoying herself, so you don't need to worry about her feelings."

"What? How am I enjoying this?" Kamuro immediately retorted.

Kaoru fell silent for a moment. "Maybe we should just forget it. This seems too troublesome."

In an instant, Kamuro fixed him with a sharp glare, her voice turned cold.

"Are you saying I'm troublesome?"

"Wasn't it you who thought I was troublesome?" Kaoru replied.

"Look, I'm a pervert. I'll probably end up doing something really inappropriate to you during the process."

"At least you have some self-awareness," Kamuro said coldly.

She seemed to have already accepted something, skipping the warnings altogether.

"The mixed-gender three-legged race should be quite fun." Sakayanagi gave Kaoru a gentle smile.

"I look forward to working with you tomorrow, Mitoma-kun."

With that, Sakayanagi slightly quickened her pace, passing by Kaoru and leaving only her petite figure behind.

"You should know this isn't what I want, so don't make things difficult for me," Kamuro threw out as her final remark before catching up to Sakayanagi.

Watching the two of them walk away, Kaoru suddenly sighed.

From every angle, he had no reason to refuse.

Whatever.

Maybe I should go check out Kushida in her gym clothes instead.

With that thought, Kaoru continued toward the gymnasium.

When he arrived, he happened to see Class D practicing for their upcoming events.

It seemed they were conducting comprehensive tests to select students suited for different competitions.

Among them, Kaoru spotted Kushida running, radiating youthful energy and even having enough breath to smile at everyone.

Truly a little angel.