

Cote 251

Chapter 251: Reserving the First Time

Considering the time, Kaoru Mitoma didn't do anything further to Karuizawa Kei just then.

He had only been testing her reaction.

"Responsibility... you mean that kind?" Karuizawa stammered, unconsciously tightening her grip on the soda can, her whole body radiating nervous tension.

"It's probably what you're thinking. I have to pay the corresponding price too. As for what that price entails, that's entirely up to you. You could also interpret it as compensation from a pervert to his victim." Kaoru withdrew his arm from her embrace, then took the can from her hand and took a sip of juice.

The sickly sweet taste spread in his mouth—perhaps mixed with a trace of her own flavor.

Karuizawa looked up at him and suddenly asked, "No matter what it is? You'll really take responsibility? For everything, absolutely everything—are you really okay with that?"

"As Hirata-kun's girlfriend, you're here sneaking around with another man," Kaoru said.

"In a situation like this, it's bound to have negative consequences for you. I can't just stand by and watch, can I?"

"Once the sports festival is over, I'll break up with him," Karuizawa murmured, lowering her head.

In truth, she had only used that status as a cover to get closer to Kaoru that why she was keeping Hirata as her boyfriend—she didn't considered the implications.

As he had said, if anyone found out, things would become extremely troublesome.

"I'm not blaming you. After all, I didn't reject you."

With that, Kaoru glanced toward the gymnasium.

The noise inside had gradually quieted—it was probably almost over.

"Let's head back. Staying here too long will draw attention."

Just as Kaoru was about to leave, Karuizawa suddenly grabbed his sleeve.

"You'll really take responsibility? You're not joking, right? If you're lying, I won't forgive you. Do you understand?"

Even without looking directly at her, Kaoru could hear the unease saturating her voice.

That overwhelming insecurity even dulled the sweetness lingering on his tongue.

"Really. Even if I touch your breasts, I'll take responsibility."

"But... what about your true love?" Karuizawa whispered. "You'll take responsibility for her too, won't you?"

"The same, I'll take responsibility for all of you."

Although fully aware these words made him no different from scum, it was indeed Kaoru's genuine thought—there was no reason to abandon them.

"Can't you just choose one?" Karuizawa desperately tried to stay calm.

"The law doesn't allow polygamy, and this is just too unfair."

Setting aside practical concerns, love itself was about monopolizing one person—how could anyone willingly share their boyfriend?

Karuizawa didn't believe such people existed.

"I can't bear to choose" Kaoru answered bluntly. "Kei is adorable. If I let you go, I'd regret it for the rest of my life."

Karuizawa froze—was this a confession?

"But if I had to say, what I feel now probably isn't love yet. At most, it's just the desire to possess you."

Hearing this, Karuizawa actually felt slightly relieved.

"I don't understand. I've been trying hard to make myself like you—staring at your photo at night, wondering what you're doing during the day, sometimes even thinking about what kind of girl could be your girlfriend."

The girl stood motionless, her eyes tinged with sorrow.

"But girls can be selfish too. I want to eliminate your true love, to crush those bugs. I know it would upset you, but I just can't help it."

"What Kei is feeling now is exactly how I feel. I don't want to see you with someone else in the future."

"And I don't want to be abandoned by you."

"I won't abandon you."

"I want to be your one and only."

"You can be."

"You're lying. You already have a girlfriend."

"Kei is my girlfriend now too."

"No, there can only be one. I'm angry."

"Even so, sooner or later, I'd steal Kei away from Hirata-kun."

"Be serious!"

Karuizawa puffed up her cheeks, her eyes flashing with embarrassment and frustration, unsure whether she should be angry or upset.

"I am being serious." Kaoru stretched out his hands, flexing them in the air.

"My body remembers Kei's touch. These hands can't live without you now."

This pervert—even now, he was bringing that up.

Karuizawa's face burned red, but remembering her own words earlier, she could only suppress her anger and mutter.

"How far have you gone with her?"

Kaoru thought for a moment. "Are you asking about our progress?"

Karuizawa nodded, staring at him intently.

"Holding hands, kissing, and what I just did with you," Kaoru answered.

"Not... that?" Karuizawa was surprised.

Wasn't this guy supposed to be a pervert?

He actually held back?

No, it seemed like he had held back just now as well.

In an instant, Karuizawa's expression turned complicated.

"So... are you still a virgin?" Karuizawa couldn't help but ask.

"Probably," Kaoru answered uncertainly.

In his previous world, he definitely wasn't, but now he couldn't say for sure.

"What do you mean, 'probably'? You should know for sure whether you've done it or not!" Karuizawa was clearly dissatisfied.

Then, slowly turning her face away, she muttered, "Your first time has to be with me. You can't give it to any other woman—not even your so-called 'true love.'"

Kaoru blinked. "So, Kei's changed her mind?"

"Not at all! Any normal person would reject the idea of their boyfriend wanting a harem. I'm just... just making it clear in advance. Until I'm ready, your first time absolutely cannot be with anyone else."

As she spoke, her voice trailed off into a grumble.

"After all, you're so lustful—who knows how soon you'll lose it?"

Since his first date, first hand-holding and first kiss were already gone, was it really too much to ask for his first time?

Just as Kaoru had said, this thought wasn't born out of love but rather selfish possessiveness—the desire to monopolize him entirely.

At the same time, it stemmed from a deep-seated fear, the fear that he might abandon her, which only made her want to bind him to her even more tightly.

Moreover, after hearing Kaoru's words earlier, Karuizawa could sense his sincerity, and she couldn't help but feel a growing trust toward him.

Even if she lost her own first time, he would undoubtedly take responsibility.

And Karuizawa wanted exactly that—for him to take responsibility, preferably for the rest of his life.

[So.... who do you think's gonna be the one to take our boy first time?]

Chapter 252: There Will Be Opportunities Later

"You took way too long buying drinks!"

Back at the venue, Kamuro shot Kaoru an exasperated look.

It should've taken just a minute to grab two drinks, yet he'd been gone for over ten.

"The first vending machine was broken. I had to search for another one," Kaoru replied as he sat down beside her, casually handing her a drink.

"How's the situation?"

"It's already over. Class D's total score was only slightly behind ours, so we agreed to split the points evenly. But for the upcoming competitions, it'll be every team for themselves." Kamuro took the can, frowning slightly when she realized it wasn't as cold as she'd expected, though she didn't dwell on it.

Kaoru glanced at the field, where everyone was packing up, likely preparing to leave.

Meanwhile, Totsuka Yahiko and Ike Kanji were still locked in a heated argument, neither willing to back down, both vowing to settle the score in the official match.

"Let's head back." Kaoru took another sip of his juice, his gaze lingering on Karuizawa as she rejoined her friends, then shifting to Katsuragi who gave him a slight nod—clearly intending to discuss things later.

"Aren't you planning to do anything else?" Kamuro eyed him suspiciously.

"Is that Sakayanagi's question, or yours?" Kaoru stood up just in time to see Sudou Ken pestering Horikita Suzune, the latter looking thoroughly annoyed.

"Hey, what's that supposed to mean? I'm not tied to her at all!" Kamuro bristled with anger.

"If you don't want to answer, fine. I don't even want to talk to you!"

No girl likes being compared to another woman, especially when her feelings are disregarded.

Kaoru immediately apologized for this.

"Don't be mad. Honestly, if Sakayanagi wanted to know, I wouldn't tell her. But if it's you, I'd answer truthfully."

This response made Kamuro feel slightly better.

After all, she wasn't Sakayanagi's puppet.

"Such a smooth talker. Whatever, it's not like I cared that much anyway." Kamuro stood up and stretched, inadvertently revealing her graceful figure.

The hem of her clothes lifted slightly, flashing a glimpse of fair skin, her toned stomach showing not an ounce of excess fat, while her perky chest drew the eyes of onlookers.

"Want to head back together?" Kaoru asked nonchalantly, watching for a moment.

"No." Kamuro refused outright. "Your gaze is disgusting. I might accidentally throw up on the way."

Though she called it disgusting, she made no move to avoid him.

Still, was Kamuro actually a tsundere?

Kaoru thought about it—no, she wasn't being tsundere.

She was just outright insulting him.

Since the allocation plan had been settled, students from both classes had already started leaving.

Kamuro heading back now wouldn't seem out of place.

"If you want to call me by my first name, it's simple. See this guy here?" Horikita Suzune's voice suddenly sounded nearby.

"If you can beat him, I'll allow you to call me Suzune."

"Whoa, seriously?!" Sudou's excited voice followed.

Kaoru silently watched as the two approached.

Horikita stood with her arms crossed, expression indifferent, though a flicker of irritation flashed in her eyes at Sudou's enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, Sudou was sizing Kaoru up.

Seeing that Kaoru wasn't particularly muscular, Sudou brimmed with confidence and immediately thumped his chest, declaring to Horikita.

"Just wait, Horikita! Some pretty boy like him? I'll take him down in no time!"

Kaoru frowned. "What are you two talking about?"

"Tch, none of your business. Just know I'll beat you soon enough." Sudou scoffed slightly.

He'd never like good-looking guys, especially one who had humiliated his buddy and stolen everyone's beloved angel.

Without giving Kaoru a chance to respond, Sudou eagerly ran off to practice for the competition.

Left behind, Kaoru turned to Horikita.

"He kept pestering me to call me by my first name. No matter how many times I warned him, he wouldn't stop. So I figured I'd borrow your name—should make things easier for me." Horikita remained utterly composed, not a hint of guilt in her tone.

"I get it. But you could've at least picked a stronger opponent for him. After seeing him just now, I'm not confident I can win." Kaoru lifted his arm. "The muscles here are clearly much smaller than Sudou's."

Horikita replied coldly, "I never said you had to fight him. And if you're already convinced you'll lose, I can just tell him now that he can call me whatever he wants from now on."

"Of course, you're free to do as you wish." Kaoru looked puzzled.

"To be honest, this would be a good opportunity to build relationships with your classmates. Besides, Sudou's abilities are undeniable—he could definitely help you reach Class A."

Horikita Suzune remained silent for a moment.

"Am I to take that as sarcasm?"

"Probably not."

"If that's the case, then I have no obligation to answer you."

As she spoke, Horikita seemed to suddenly remember something and lowered her voice.

"What do you want me to do this week?"

According to their initial agreement, Horikita Suzune had to repay a portion of her debt each month while fulfilling one arbitrary request from Kaoru every week as interest until the debt was fully settled.

Now, in the second semester, after violating the agreement in the first month, Horikita found herself burdened with a two-million-yen penalty.

She needed to find a way to resolve this issue—otherwise, forget about advancing to Class A.

If she wasn't careful, she might end up as a slave.

"Come to my room this weekend." Kaoru didn't immediately specify his request.

"What's your relationship with Kushida?" Horikita turned her delicate face toward him, likely recalling something from summer break.

"Definitely not what you're thinking. I'd say we're good friends." Kaoru didn't consider it a lie—playing puppy games together certainly qualified as friendship.

Horikita gave him a cold glare before silently walking toward the gymnasium entrance.

Kaoru watched her retreating figure.

Like Kamuro, she was wearing long pants, so he couldn't see the girl's plump little bottom or her fair, smooth thighs.

But there would surely be opportunities in the future.

Kaoru also stepped out of the indoor gymnasium, greeted by the twilight sky.

The setting sun cast its glow on the buildings in the distance, scattering fragmented remnants of light across the ground.

The faint dusk hues gave rise to clusters of shadows, while the slightly warm air rose from the pavement.

Groups of students chatted about everyday topics along the way, and occasionally, he could hear details about the recent match.

It seemed Sudou had made Class A wary of Class D.

As he walked back, he silently listened to the students' discussions.

After a while, Kaoru suddenly saw numerous wishes flicker before his eyes.

Chapter 253: So Embarrassing, Ugh

Under the fading twilight, the remnants of dusk slowly receded as the streetlights suddenly flickered on.

Airi Sakura, who had been on her way back to the dormitory, paused in her steps.

The drifting dusk spilled from the clouds above, while the rooftop of a nearby building faintly shimmered with the last traces of the sunset.

At the same time, the streetlights stretched across the road, casting long shadows that fell right in front of her.

Airi Sakura looked at the students ahead.

Even though there were people around, even though she knew nothing unexpected would happen on the road, an overwhelming unease gripped her heart, making it beat uncomfortably fast.

From her perspective, she could see several figures following her, and she could occasionally hear their voices.

"Seriously, the girls in our class have such huge oppai! Even someone like Horikita is a hidden gem!"

"Hasebe is definitely number one—I really wanna squeeze them!"

"Kushida-chan is the best, but damn, it's so unfair that she ended up with those guy from Class A!"

"Look at you guys, so pathetic. Me? I've actually touched oppai before!"

"Whoa, seriously!?"

"Don't lie, Haruki. You can fool your bros, but don't fool yourself!"

Faced with the boys' pressing questions, Haruki Yamauchi pretended to clear his throat before gesturing towards Airi Sakura ahead and whispering.

"See Sakura? Remember when she confessed to me? She even tried to keep me with her oppai! I played around a bit before turning her down."

"R-really!?" Ike Kanji stared at his friend in shock, never expecting him to have nearly ascended to the ranks of adulthood.

However, none of them noticed Airi bowing her head lower and lower, her steps quickening.

"Of course it's true! Sakura's oppai are big and white—absolutely amazing. But you guys gotta keep it a secret. I don't want people knowing some country girl confessed to me."

As he spoke, Yamauchi raised his voice a few notches, basking in the envious gazes around him.

Airi wanted to stop, walk up to him and slap him hard across the face.

When had she ever confessed to him?

Even if she were to confess, how could she ever do something so vulgar?

But this thought remained trapped in her mind.

In reality, she couldn't muster the courage to actually slap him. Not only did she not dare to confront them, but she also had to pretend not to hear, because these boys weren't the type to shy away from openly discussing girls' bodies.

For instance, they had once openly bet on the sizes of girls' breasts right in the classroom, even going so far as to create a mock odds table as if it were some grand event.

In short, Airi found it utterly disgusting and genuinely despised these people.

Especially this Haruki Yamauchi—his appearance was far from handsome, and his mouth was always full of talk about breasts and butts.

How could anyone ever confess to someone like him?

Airi didn't want to listen anymore.

Her footsteps quickened, and she could feel their gazes prickling her back like needles, sending an involuntary shiver down her spine.

"But, now that I think about it, Sakura is actually kinda cute," Haruki Yamauchi continued from behind, making no effort to hide his words, as if deliberately ensuring she heard them.

"I'm so jealous, Haruki! You're about to escape single life, huh?"

"Ah, I used to really like Kikyo-chan, but now I think Sakura's pretty nice. Sure, she's a bit plain, but she's cute, and her chest is huge."

"She's right there, Haruki. Why don't you go tell her?"

"There's too many of you guys—you'll just scare her..."

Before Haruki could finish, a voice suddenly cut in from behind.

"Hey, Sakura-san!"

A figure swiftly walked past them, effortlessly catching up to Airi Sakura ahead.

Startled, Airi instinctively turned her head and was met with Kaoru's warm smile.

Her heart skipped a beat, and she immediately froze, flustered and unsure of what to do.

"Perfect timing running into you like this. Come with me—there's something I need your help with."

With that, Kaoru suddenly grabbed her wrist and pulled her along as he broke into a run.

"W-Wait—?!" Airi was completely bewildered, letting herself be dragged along by Kaoru.

Kaoru glanced back at Haruki Yamauchi, whose face had turned pale with anger, yet he didn't dare raise his voice.

But he made no move to follow them.

After a while, Kaoru gradually slowed to a stop and turned to the girl beside him and began advising her.

"Next time something like that happens, either slap them or run faster."

Having been abruptly pulled into a sprint, Airi—who was never good at sports—felt dizzy, her face flushed red as she gasped for breath, her schoolbag nearly slipping from her grip.

She had already changed into her uniform, so her gym clothes must have been stuffed inside her bag.

"I-I understand... I'm sorry..." Airi panted, pressing a hand to her chest as if trying to calm her racing heart.

"I'm the one who should apologize. I still haven't found the person harassing you," Kaoru said, not looking away.

There were too many desires clinging to her.

"N-No, Mitoma-kun isn't at fault at all! I was the one who accidentally provoked him, and you've helped me before, always comforting me... and now you've helped me again..." Airi fumbled over her words, her face growing redder with each sentence until her voice trailed off into a whisper.

The girl's blush made the atmosphere awkward, and Kaoru seemed to deliberately shift the topic as he asked.

"Do you usually spend time alone?"

"Yes, but I'm used to it," Airi replied timidly, lifting her gaze to meet his.

"Is that... weird?"

"I'm just worried about your safety. There might be stalking incidents in the future—some people can get terrifying when they're obsessed." Kaoru said impassively.

Perhaps unused to being cared for, Airi Sakura blushed slightly and murmured,.

"I'll be careful. Besides, I rarely go out, and when I do, it's usually just for photography."

Kaoru recalled her camera—aside from selfies, she also took pictures of the school scenery.

"Aren't photos of the school supposed to be kept confidential?"

"Eh, is that so?"

"According to regulations, no information about this school is allowed to be leaked. Didn't the staff mention that when you bought the camera?"

"O-oh, I think they did. But they said it was fine as long as I didn't post them on social media."

Airi Sakura glanced at him nervously.

After all, this man was a student council vice president—he might just report her for disciplinary action.

"Don't worry, I'm just letting you know." Kaoru smiled. "I've seen your tweets—they're mostly selfies with no school details, so it's fine in principle."

Airi let out a relieved sigh, then flushed again.

She knew her selfies were completely different from her usual appearance, and the thought of someone discovering this secret made her feel exposed.

How embarrassing.

Even though she knew she wasn't showing anything inappropriate, it still felt unbearably embarrassing.

Chapter 254: The Deceptive Photo

"I-I'm sorry..."

"Why apologize?"

"Because... I look nothing like my photos now. It feels like I'm deceiving people."

Though hesitant, Airi carefully voiced her thoughts.

Kaoru suddenly studied her delicate face—oversized glasses with thick lenses perched on her petite nose, two braids draped over her shoulders.

She kept her head bowed slightly, hunching as if trying to hide the ample curves of her chest to avoid drawing attention.

Her outfit was frumpy, but glimpses of her skin revealed a soft, porcelain glow.

Behind those glasses were strikingly beautiful eyes.

If she just swept aside her bangs and undid those braids, the idol in her photos would step right into reality.

Most people feared being exposed for looking worse than their filtered photos—stripped of digital enhancements, left with only flaws.

But Airi Sakura was afraid someone might discover she actually looked like her photos—hence her deliberate efforts to appear plain.

"Talking like this would invite sarcasm from others. You clearly have the potential to skyrocket to fame."

Even from a professional standpoint, Kaoru couldn't find a single flaw in her.

These days, idol competition was fierce, with voice actors even crossing over to snatch opportunities.

To outshine rivals, idols who once only needed to act cute now had to master multiple skills—singing and dancing were basics, sometimes even acting and variety talent were required.

But—

An idol's most crucial asset remained their looks.

Fortunately, Airi Sakura's beauty was in no way inferior to the top idols of the previous era.

"F-fame is way beyond me." Airi quickly dismissed Kaoru's words, her expression turned awkward.

"Sakura-san, I know these things must feel unfamiliar to you. When you were shooting for the photo book, you must have met some seniors, right?"

During her middle school years, Airi Sakura had debuted as a gravure idol, appearing in magazines, which was how she had gained a small fanbase.

"I met a few seniors, but I wasn't good at interacting with others, and I was really scared of men's gazes..." Airi Sakura murmured. "So back then, the female seniors helped me with makeup, outfits, and photoshoots."

The 'female seniors' she mentioned were likely makeup artists, photographers, and managers.

After a pause, Airi added one more thing.

"...One senior even taught me how to pose to look cuter."

"That sounds really kind."

"B-But in the end, I still couldn't keep going. I was too timid."

Given her personality, the photoshoots back then must have been exhausting, both mentally and physically.

Kaoru suddenly asked, "Why did you choose this path?"

Airi blinked in surprise.

She had answered this question many times before—no matter who asked, or even now, the answer should have been the same.

"I... I wanted to try being a different version of myself."

Yet, under his slightly gentle gaze, her answer felt different somehow.

"A different version of yourself?" Kaoru seemed to understand and couldn't help but smile.

"If that's the case, Sakura-san now is completely different from the girl in those photos."

Airi lowered her head.

Though she knew Kaoru wasn't mocking her, her chest felt strangely tight, an indescribable emotion swelling inside.

"The biggest difference is that the girl in the photos smiled—and she looked really cute doing it." Kaoru remarked casually.

Airi's face flushed bright red.

This guy... He's teasing me with a straight face!

"T-That was fake! The senior said it would make me look extra cute!"

"Which means Sakura-san is cute."

"Guh... P-Please stop saying that! The real me isn't like that, uuu..."

"You mean the you right now?" Kaoru looked at her beet-red face. "Actually, when you're not smiling, it's a different kind of cute."

"P-Please stop messing with me, Mitoma-kun." Airi puffed her cheeks in frustration.

This guy is awful! He keep teasing me!

"I'm not joking. Some idols can glare at their fans, and the fans still go crazy for them." Kaoru had personally witnessed obsessive fans getting scolded, only to cheer even louder in excitement.

Back then, he had concluded that those otaku were beyond saving.

Airi thought he was lying and pouted.

"Don't think I don't know that idols get backlash if they glare at fans."

"That's why you need to build a good persona. Think about it—if your normally sweet, well-behaved girlfriend suddenly blushes and calls you a pervert, wouldn't that feel refreshing? Wouldn't that make you happy?"

The moment he finished speaking, Airi instinctively took a step back from Kaoru.

Realizing this might be too rude, she quickly changed the subject.

"U-Um, what was it you wanted to ask me for earlier?"

"Sorry, that was just an excuse." Kaoru ignored the tiny sting of her retreat.

"...Oh." Airi didn't know how to respond.

She was never good at keeping conversations going, so she simply lowered her head and quietly followed behind him.

However, she would occasionally steal glances at Kaoru Mitoma's back.

He was currently the only classmate she could really talk to, and they even shared common interests.

When it came to topics like idols, he seemed even more knowledgeable than her.

During their previous conversations, Kaoru had shared many insights about the entertainment industry with her, even correctly guessing her former agency and magazine affiliations.

He could even discuss photography techniques with her, showing some understanding of posing, lighting, and makeup.

It was truly incredible!

More importantly, Airi Sakura had never imagined she would meet someone who matched her wavelength so perfectly.

Despite being male, he never tried to sneak glances at her like the other boys in class.

"By the way, Sakura-san," Kaoru Mitoma suddenly said, "I might need to trouble you for more help from now on."

"Eh, why?" Airi Sakura was startled.

Could this be the prelude to a confession?

"Because Class A and Class D are collaborating, so we'll probably see each other often before the official competition, right?" Kaoru looked at her in confusion.

Oh, that's what he meant!

That's all he was talking about!

Airi's face burned with embarrassment.

She wanted to escape his gaze immediately.

What had she been thinking?

It must have been because she'd just heard Haruki Yamauchi talking about confessions, which had influenced her thoughts.

"Your face is really red. Did I say something wrong?"

"N-no, it's just too hot today!" Airi replied a bit too loudly, fanning her cheeks to cool them down.

"I-I should go now. I have things to do later..."

"You're not still thinking about updating your tweets, are you?" Kaoru asked with concern.

Updating her tweets meant he would see her photos again.

Airi's face turned even redder—it was practically scorching.

"N-no... not at all... that's not it... I won't update anymore... it's over..."

Kaoru watched her flustered state, feeling puzzled.

Had he accidentally stepped on a landmine?

"Mitoma-kun... do you really want to see it?" Airi suddenly spoke in a small voice.

"Do you want to see that different side of me? Is that it?"

"Do you want the truth or a lie?" Kaoru couldn't help his reflexive response.

"P-please don't lie," Airi protested softly.

"The truth is, I think Shizuku-chan online is really cute and the Sakura-san in front of me is also adorable. I like seeing both." Kaoru paused.

"As for the lie... the first time I saw that different side of Sakura-san, I thought she was amazing. The step she took was something many people wouldn't even dare to consider."

Before she could even process her embarrassment, Airi stared at him blankly, his last words echoing in her mind.

Chapter 255: Too Arrogant

The next afternoon, Kaoru wore the student council armband and stood before the sports storage room.

"Here's the inventory list for the storage room—it records all the equipment. And this is the malfunction log. If you find anything damaged, please note down the item number and specifics immediately."

The teacher in charge of the storage handed the keys to Tachibana Akane and added.

"If you have time, I'd appreciate it if you could do a full inspection. I'm swamped by myself."

Akane's lips twitched slightly.

Originally, they only needed to prepare equipment for the sports festival, but now they had to conduct a full inventory check—effectively doubling their workload.

Still, the teacher was the authority, and as a student—especially a student council officer—she couldn't bring herself to refuse.

"Don't worry, Onodera-sensei! Leave it to us!"

"Don't stay too late. The latest you can lock up is 7 PM." The teacher suddenly remembered something else.

"Oh, and students have been borrowing things frequently lately. Could you help log those as well?"

"Ahaha, no problem!" Akane forced a smile, though she quickly realized she couldn't even fake it properly.

Once the teacher left, she turned to face Kaoru and the others.

"Let's start with the equipment needed for the sports festival. I have the school's requirements here. Following the usual practice from previous years, each person will be responsible for one area."

It must be said that Tachibana Akane was extremely professional when it came to serious work—efficient and decisive.

Considering the difference in physical strength between boys and girls, she assigned Kaoru and Katsuragi to handle the heavy equipment and track and field supplies, while she and Ichinose Honami checked the other items.

Kaoru had expected her to cause trouble, but to his surprise, she didn't even glance at him as she led Ichinose to another area.

"Today is our first joint training session with Class D, right?"

"I've already put Matoba-kun in charge of directing it." Katsuragi had originally intended to assign Totsuka Yahiko as the leader.

Despite the latter's constant loudmouthing, he was actually quite popular in their class and his character was beyond reproach.

The only problem was that Totsuka Yahiko was just too much of a handful.

"While I know you have a plan in mind, given the current situation, it doesn't seem like we have any chance of losing," Katsuragi muttered quietly as he worked.

"No, we can lose," Kaoru replied calmly. "Not only can we lose, but I can also get Class C to cooperate with us."

"You're planning to sell us out to Ryuen?" Katsuragi looked slightly surprised.

"Not me selling us out—someone else will." Kaoru took out his phone and showed him yesterday's chat logs.

After reading for a while, Katsuragi gave him a strange look.

"So you really do have someone in the second year? When did you two start colluding?"

"Summer break," Kaoru answered briefly.

The messages he had shown Katsuragi were Kiriya Ikuyo's reports.

For some reason, Nagumo Miyabi hadn't demanded their participation forms.

Instead, he had openly declared that everyone should enjoy the sports festival to the fullest.

"Your previous actions against him had some negative repercussions. He wants to stabilize his position now," Katsuragi analyzed.

"The best way is to once again use Class A's strength to dominate the entire grade. The more straightforward he is, the more effective it'll be."

"This sports festival is an opportunity. Even if we can't shatter his crown, we can at least make him look bad." Kaoru's idea was simple—the second-years had lost their fighting spirit against Nagumo Miyabi because they couldn't win alone.

But what if they saw that they could ally with other grades?

If a few classes couldn't win, was it really too much to bring in two more grades?

With that in mind, Kaoru explained his deal with Kiriya to Katsuragi.

"Isn't this ratio a bit too low?" Katsuragi's first reaction was that they were getting the short end of the stick.

"We need to leave some room for adjustments. Later, we can let Nagumo chase him down, and he'll come to us himself to raise the ratio." Kaoru patted his shoulder.

"Besides, there'll be new students next year too."

Katsuragi fell silent.

They hadn't even enrolled yet, and you're already scheming against them?

"The key is to take control of the student council. After that, we can start making small changes to this school." Kaoru had already planned everything out, deliberately leaving one reward untouched.

Katsuragi hesitated before lowering his voice.

"What you just said... don't tell me you have someone in Class C too?"

Kaoru looked at him in surprise but still didn't mention Shiho Manabe.

Instead, he said, "The current issue is Ichinose. I think Nagumo might make a move against her."

"Because Class B's points are closest to ours?" Katsuragi seemed puzzled.

"That's part of it," Kaoru replied vaguely.

In truth, Ichinose Honami had a weakness that Nagumo Miyabi held over her.

Even if Nagumo kept it to himself for now, this problem would have to be addressed sooner or later.

...

After about an hour of work, they finally finished inventorying the equipment needed for the sports festival.

"Alright, only two railings are broken, one tug-of-war rope is missing, and everything else is fine," Tachibana Akane checked off items on the record sheet before glancing at the other areas with despair in her eyes.

"Damn it, I have to help that lazy guy check again!"

"Is only Onodera-sensei in charge here?" Ichinose Honami asked.

"Yeah, he's the homeroom teacher for Class 3-B," Tachibana Akane gritted her teeth.

"Same as last year—just dumping all the work on students. What a lousy adult!"

Kaoru wanted to remind her to maintain her senpai's image, especially since Ichinose and Katsuragi were already looking quite awkward.

At this point, Tachibana Akane pretended to clear her throat.

"Ahem, whatever. Ichinose, Katsuragi, take the right side. I'll go left with Mitoma. Splitting up will make things faster."

Ichinose Honami didn't question her and immediately got to work.

Kaoru, however, silently watched her, his gaze quickly drawing her displeasure.

"You—come here!"

Without waiting for a response, Tachibana Akane dragged him to a slightly more secluded spot before pointing without even looking.

"This, that, and here—you're in charge of counting these!"

Kaoru glanced at where she was pointing—basically all the heaviest tasks.

"Senpai."

"What? Complaints don't work on me."

"Nothing, just wanted to remind you to be careful while working."

With that, Kaoru obediently followed her orders and quietly got to work.

Tachibana Akane was pleased.

No matter how capable he usually was, now he had to meekly obey her commands!

Honestly, it felt pretty satisfying.

"Senpai, aren't you working?"

"I am working—supervising to make sure you don't slack off."

"Supervising is fine, but could you not stand behind me?"

"If I don't stand behind you, how can I supervise?"

"Because accidents can happen easily."

"I'm the senpai here. If I say there won't be an accident, there won't be one. As a junior, you should learn to shut up and pick up that basketball for me."

Since they were organizing the ball racks, it was inevitable that a few balls might accidentally fall.

Every time she saw one, she couldn't resist ordering Kaoru around.

Just as Kaoru bent down to pick up the basketball and turned to toss it back into the rack, his elbow suddenly bumped into something soft.....

Immediately after, a certain arrogant senpai let out a pained cry beside him.

Chapter 256: Let Me See!

Watching Tachibana Akane crouch on the ground, clutching her chest in agony, Kaoru instantly realized what he had just hit.

Though she was a third-year senpai, she was at most two years older than Ichinose Honami—barely an adult.

Clearly, she was still a growing girl.

"Where did I hit you?" Kaoru quickly crouched down, hoping there wouldn't be any bruising.

"It hurts so much, hiks... S-sneak attacking like that is way too mean, hiks..." Tachibana Akane looked on the verge of tears, her eyes brimming with them.

At this point, that's what you're worried about—the sneak attack?

"Don't panic, let me check. If there's a bruise, it'll be trouble." Kaoru held her shoulders firmly, his expression was serious—this was no time for jokes.

Hearing his unusually grave tone, Akane instinctively loosened her grip, flustered as she considered letting him check.

But then she suddenly realized something, and her face instantly flushed bright red.

"Pervert! Silent lecher! If you dare look, I'll poke your eyes out!" Akane was furious.

Did she look like some naive, gullible idiot to him?

"If you hadn't been standing right next to me, who'd even want to look at your flat chest?" Kaoru retorted irritably.

"You're the flat one! I have super, super huge boobs!" Rather than admitting fault, Akane turned the accusation around.

"You just wanted revenge, then took the chance to peek and grope me—disgusting underclassman, lusting after your senpai!"

"Well, you're the disgusting senpai who likes bullying underclassmen," Kaoru shot back without hesitation.

"How dare a mere underclassman be this arrogant! If there's even the tiniest problem with my boobs, you won't get away with it!" Akane puffed her cheeks angrily.

Kaoru had no patience left for this back-and-forth.

"Do you want to go to the infirmary or not?" he asked bluntly.

Akane gingerly touched her chest, her brow furrowing with worry.

"D-did you just flatten my boobs?"

Kaoru glanced at her chest.

Though she was covering it, the slight swell was still visible—probably around a B-cup.

Not exactly small, but far from "super huge."

"Can't tell at all."

"Is that your way of refusing responsibility?"

"Does it still hurt?"

"Of course it does! How about I elbow you and see how it feels?"

It actually didn't hurt much anymore, but hearing Kaoru ask like that, even if it didn't, it had to hurt.

Akane pouted resentfully.

"I'll take you to the infirmary now." Kaoru reached out to her, his tone firm.

For some reason, Akane stared blankly at his hand before suddenly snapping out of it.

She averted her gaze in a fluster while muttering.

"No... I don't want to go."

"What if I did flatten them?" Kaoru pressed.

A flicker of embarrassment crossed Akane's eyes.

Even though she had brought it up, hearing it from him felt unbearably mortifying.

Her chest seemed to grow inexplicably warm.

"It's too embarrassing... I can't possibly say I got my chest bumped there."

Kaoru was momentarily speechless.

Watching her lowered head, he finally said, "Fine, no infirmary. Check yourself a few times for bruises or swelling. Apply a warm compress when you get back."

What? She couldn't feel happy about this at all—an underclassman daring to tell her what to do.

Yet as Akane think over it, her heartbeat grew faster and faster, as if a hot-water bottle had been tucked into her chest, spreading warmth.

Then suddenly, she panicked—could something really be wrong with her body?

"W-Wait, I feel all hot!" Tachibana Akane grabbed Kaoru just as he was about to stand up.

"It's definitely because you bumped into me!"

"Hot?" Kaoru was puzzled.

Shouldn't she be feeling pain instead?

Akane couldn't quite explain her own sensations.

Right now, whenever Kaoru looked at her, her heart would race uncontrollably, her face would burn, her whole body would heat up, and her chest felt strangely tight and swollen.

"You're not allowed to leave! You have to take responsibility!"

Unaware of it herself, a hint of soft pleading had slipped into her voice.

"Fine, I'll take responsibility. But could you check yourself first?" Kaoru remained calm. "Or I can take you to the infirmary."

Akane hesitated for a moment before making up her mind and ordering him.

"I'll check myself, but you're not allowed to peek!"

Obediently, Kaoru turned around in silence.

Seeing this scene, Akane stealthily unbuttoned the top buttons of her shirt, pausing occasionally to cast wary glances at Kaoru's back, fearing this guy might try to ambush her again.

Kaoru Mitoma remained motionless.

Though he could hear the faint rustling behind him and vividly imagine what the girl was doing right now.

"Are you done yet?"

"Mmm... Haa..."

Hearing her slightly hurried breathing, Kaoru forcefully suppressed the urge to turn around.

Just what was this senpai up to?

"Mitoma, you said you'd take responsibility, right?"

"I will take responsibility. So is there actually anything wrong?"

"It seems you gave me internal injuries from that collision."

"..."

"E-even this part stood up... uu... It's swollen and feels so uncomfortable..."

"What are you doing?"

"O-of course I'm examining... Then as I kept touching it felt so strange... mmm..."

"Are you really examining?"

"..."

When Kaoru Mitoma finally turned around, Tachibana Akane's face was completely flushed.

Her shirt looked somewhat disheveled, and out of guilt, she couldn't meet his gaze.

"So, the examination results show internal injuries?"

"W-what, are you doubting me?"

"Does senpai usually... never mind, if you say it's internal injuries then it's internal injuries."

Seeing her like this, Kaoru gave up pressing further.

She was probably extremely inexperienced and completely clueless about certain matters.

"What's that supposed to mean? Of course it's internal injuries!" Tachibana Akane pouted indignantly.

As if she would lie to Kaoru Mitoma.

After all, while she was touching herself earlier, her chest started feeling so strange.

Especially seeing Kaoru Mitoma's back turned to her, her heart raced uncontrollably, nearly stopping.

"Tachibana-senpai, someone came to return items!" Ichinose Honami's voice suddenly called over.

Tachibana Akane first glared at Kaoru, then hurriedly jogged toward the registration desk.

Kaoru didn't follow, continuing to pack up.

As he was taking inventory of the sports equipment, someone suddenly covered his eyes from behind.

"Ne~ guess who I am? If Mitoma-kun guesses right, there's a reward~?"

The person pressed closer, whispering softly by Kaoru Mitoma's ear while emitting a faint, pleasant fragrance—a thoroughly provocative scent in every sense.

Chapter 257: The Opponent Might Not Just Be First-Years

This intimate gesture, the vaguely familiar yet unfamiliar voice and scent—Kaoru didn't hesitate before answering.

"So Asahina-senpai enjoys playing jokes like this?"

His response seemed unexpected.

Asahina Nazuna froze momentarily before sincerely asking, "Amazing. How did you know it was me?"

As Asahina Nazuna withdrew her hands, Kaoru regained his vision from the brief darkness and saw her standing behind him—her hair flowing gracefully with a small hairpin, eyes brimming with amusement.

"My nose has memorized Asahina-senpai's scent." Kaoru stated shamelessly, though in truth he'd just gotten lucky.

With only Ichinose Honami and Tachibana Akane around, had it been either of them trying to tease him, he would've recognized their voices instantly

.Afterwards, Kaoru ruled out Horikita Suzune, Kushida Kikyo, Amikura Mako, Airi Sakura, Shiina Hiyori, Masumi Kamuro, Sakayanagi Arisu, Morishita Ai, and Miki Yamamura.

Since it wasn't a first-year student, perhaps it was a senior girl—either Kiryuin Fuka or Asahina Nazuna.

There was no helping it—these were the only people he knew.

"You're lying. You definitely heard my voice, didn't you?" Asahina Nazuna's delicate face flushed inexplicably.

When Kaoru mentioned her scent, she recalled their first meeting.

Even Miyabi Nagumo, her childhood friend, had never touched her in that place—yet Kaoru had held it in his hands and toyed with it for quite some time.

However, Asahina wasn't thinking about that.

She simply felt embarrassed.

At the time, she had already taken off her shoes—maybe Kaoru really had smelled something.

"Asahina-senpai, what brings you here?" Kaoru changed the subject, curious about her sudden appearance.

"I borrowed some equipment earlier, so I'm returning it now." Asahina unconsciously smoothed her hair.

She was currently wearing a classic gym uniform—a thin short-sleeved top that slightly accentuated her figure.

When she lifted her arms even slightly, the curve beneath her arms swelled into an incredibly full shape, and the cuffs faintly revealed a glimpse of pristine, fair skin.

Below, she wore red athletic shorts that tightly hugged her slender waist, long and straight legs, and a perfectly rounded ass—the snug fit making her curves all the more tempting, evoking thoughts of their springy texture.

Though she wasn't deliberately trying to seduce Kaoru, her defenseless posture was becoming increasingly provocative.

"No wonder Asahina-senpai is here. You startled me—we haven't seen each other in months."

For some reason, Kaoru felt a brief flicker of nervousness.

"Oh? So you do remember it's been months?" Asahina was about to tease him but quickly reconsidered, realizing it might be unbecoming of her senior status.

She smoothly shifted the topic.

"Still, I'm surprised to see you here. Are you helping Onodera-sensei?"

"It's a student council task—preparations for the sports festival." Kaoru gestured to the area in front of them.

"We need to finish a full inventory of this place by seven tonight."

Asahina blinked in surprise. "That's a lot. Am I getting in your way?"

"So, Asahina-senpai, have you thought about how you'll compensate me?" Kaoru asked nonchalantly.

"Didn't you mention a reward earlier?"

Asahina was torn between laughter and exasperation, but as a dignified upperclassman, she merely winked at him.

"How about I treat you to a sundae?"

Kaoru was momentarily speechless.

Treating a guy to a sundae?

She might as well hand him a little pink plushie while she was at it.

"A sundae? Who's having a sundae?" Tachibana Akane jogged over, slowing her pace instinctively upon seeing Asahina ahead and regaining the composure befitting an upperclassman.

"What are you two talking about?"

"Tachibana-senpai, do you want a sundae too?" Asahina asked.

"It's work hours," Akane said sternly.

"After work, I'll treat you both." Asahina was generous.

"I can't let a junior pay for me." Akane's resolve visibly wavered.

"It's fine, I've been quite bored lately." Asahina Nazuna smiled, "I originally wanted to hang out with Yoshi, but he seems busy with the sports festival preparations."

"Alright, I'll reluctantly keep you company." Tachibana Akane subtly glanced at Kaoru, relieved to find no trace of mockery in his expression.

Of course, he wouldn't laugh at her—this guy must be scared of her senpai hmmph!

"Hey, Asahina! We've returned everything, time to go!" Someone shouted from ahead, likely Asahina's companions.

Asahina Nazuna looked at Kaoru before calling back, "You guys go ahead first! I want to stay and help here!"

"Eh? Should we stay and help too?"

"No need to trouble yourselves! This is my own decision—just head back!"

Thus, Kaoru saw several figures exit the storage shed, their features indistinguishable in the dim light.

"Even if you're staying to help, I won't be treating you."

Tachibana eyed Kaoru and Asahina suspiciously, particularly the latter who had immediately rushed over upon learning Kaoru was here after greeting Ichinose Honami.

"Eh? I thought Tachibana-senpai would at least buy us coffee."

"The student council doesn't have that kind of budget."

Kaoru narrowed his eyes—wasn't this girl regularly dining out and expensing it through the student council?

Come to think of it, the student council treasurer was from their Class A.

Covering such expenses wouldn't be surprising.

After the joking, Asahina adopted an eager expression.

"It's rare to encounter two adorable kouhai and senpai here. As your senpai and kouhai, I can't just ignore this—let me help too."

"Much appreciated." Tachibana replied politely, displaying none of the arrogance she typically showed Kaoru.

Yet Kaoru had assumed she'd at least behave better in front of others.

Instead, she continued bossing him around with the same haughty attitude, clearly enjoying herself.

By the time inventory was complete, darkness had fallen outside.

"Whew~ Didn't expect it to be this exhausting when the place isn't even that big."

The previously enthusiastic Asahina was now exhausted, sweat beading on her forehead.

"That's because the lazybones teacher looks forward to the sports festival every year—it means his inventory work gets done." Tachibana showed no mercy in her assessment.

"Asahina-senpai, thank you for your hard work." Ichinose offered her own handkerchief, "Please wipe your sweat—it's clean."

"Thanks." Asahina, wearing only her gym clothes, obviously hadn't brought a handkerchief, "I'll wash and return it."

Ichinose nodded, then secretly glanced at Kaoru.

She had another handkerchief—this might be her chance to give it to him.

With Asahina as cover, surely giving it to Kaoru wouldn't raise suspicions?

"Hey, wipe yourself off quickly! Your sweat smell is reaching me!"

Under Ichinose stunned gaze, Tachibana Akane suddenly shoved her own handkerchief into Kaoru's hands with visible disgust.

Chapter 258: The Kouhai Who Covets His Senpai

"She seems angry."

After leaving the sports shed, Asahina Nazuna observed Ichinose Honami walking ahead—the girl's face clearly showed puffed cheeks of irritation, her eyes flickering with thoughtful light.

Meanwhile, the instigator of this whole situation seemed oblivious to the changing mood, happily leading the way at the front while humming a tune.

"Asahina-senpai, are you and Ichinose close?" Kaoru tucked the handkerchief into his pocket, feeling slightly regretful that there hadn't been any wishes related to handkerchiefs.

"Well, we met once on the road when she helped me find this charm." Asahina waved her wrist, where a fox-shaped amulet adorned her fair skin.

"My luck was really terrible that day, but fortunately this cute kouhai helped me out."

It was clear she wasn't just relieved about not losing the charm but also quite interested in Ichinose Honami.

"I think you were wearing this charm when we first met too. Is it a treasured item from some shrine?" Kaoru asked curiously.

"Not really. I bought it at school when the term started. It felt like fate—I picked it out at first glance." Asahina unconsciously touched the amulet, her face showing a hint of nostalgia.

Over a year had passed since then.

"Because of fate?" Kaoru pondered. "Senpai seems to share a fated connection with Nagumo-senpai too. I heard you're childhood friends."

Asahina gave him a teasing smile and whispered, "Is Mitoma-kun trying to gather intel about Miyabi from me?"

"I'm gathering intel about Asahina-senpai," Kaoru replied with a straight face.

Asahina poked him with her finger. "Don't think just because you're handsome you can flirt with your senpai so brazenly. Be careful or I'll hit you."

"So senpai can flirt with her kouhai as much as she wants?" Kaoru remained unfazed, already accustomed to such physical teasing.

Asahina giggled for a while before gradually stopping, her tone turning wistful.

"You know, your name is known by everyone in the entire second year."

Since different grades had their classes on separate floors, Kaoru had no real sense of his own fame, except for occasionally running into curious second-years in the cafeteria.

"If they want to take commemorative photos with me, please tell them it's five hundred Personal Points per shot, Asahina-senpai."

Asahina nearly lost her composure, her carefully built mood shattered instantly, leaving only exasperation.

"Are you really that obsessed with Personal Points?"

"Is Asahina-senpai planning to interrogate me now?"

"What a mischievous kouhai. I was the one asking questions, but now you're turning it around on me?"

"Well, my fame comes from Nagumo-senpai. Seeing you standing next to me, I can't help but feel a little guilty."

For some reason, Asahina found this amusing and suddenly burst into laughter, leaving Kaoru slightly bewildered.

However, she quickly composed herself and said quietly, "Actually, I kind of want Miyabi to lose for once. From elementary school till now, his life has never changed. If this continues, he might one day get trapped in it and never recover."

Kaoru understood—Asahina feared that Nagumo Miyabi's growing arrogance might lead to a devastating fall if he ever encountered an opponent he couldn't defeat.

"I remember Nagumo-senpai has always wanted to face the student council president. Do you think the president stands a chance against him, Asahina-senpai?"

"Under Miyabi's leadership, the second-years have strong cohesion. But in the end, strength can only be proven through fair competition." Asahina employed a bit of wordplay here, deftly avoiding giving Kaoru a direct answer—she kept her cards close to her chest.

"You're quite concerned about Nagumo-senpai, aren't you?" Kaoru murmured softly.

"Hey now, that's just the kind of concern reserved for childhood friends. Don't overthink it, Kouhai~" Asahina blinked playfully.

"Honestly, running into you here today was really lucky for me."

"Even if you say that, I'm still going to eat your parfait today, Asahina-senpai."

"Eh? I thought Mitoma-kun would pretend to go to the restroom and secretly pay for me instead."

"That would be a waste of your kindness."

"Mitoma-kun, acting like this won't make you popular with girls, you know?"

"But having Asahina-senpai treat us underclassmen makes us really happy."

"You really are a mischievous kid, aren't you?"

"..."

Though her words sounded like scolding, Asahina Nazuna's face was all smiles, not a trace of irritation in her expression.

Every now and then, she continued poking at Kaoru teasingly.

"Hey, Mitoma-kun, you never seem to smile, do you?"

Kaoru silently looked at Ichinose walking ahead of him.

How exactly was he supposed to smile in this situation?

"Asahina-senpai."

"Hmm? Is there something you want to ask me?"

"Do you want me or the student council president to defeat Nagumo-senpai?"

Asahina withdrew her finger, remained silent for a moment, then slowly revealed a smile.

"It seems Mitoma-kun is quite confident about surprising me?"

"I just want to know your thoughts. Your stance is very important to me." Kaoru paused briefly, "I don't want our confrontation with Nagumo-senpai to cause us to part ways."

Asahina was slightly taken aback, then found it somewhat amusing.

"We've barely met enough times to count on one hand. Why do you care about my opinion?"

"I want to become good friends with Asahina-senpai."

As he spoke, Kaoru couldn't help but turn to gaze at the girl beside him.

Her slightly upturned eyes, lips curved in a faint smile, flawless pale skin, delicate collarbones subtly visible beneath her slender neck—as if proudly displaying her figure.

Her big chest created dramatic curves that smoothly transitioned into gentle lines at her waist, cascading down to her perky, rounded ass that outlined an alluring silhouette.

Her milky-white thighs were particularly captivating.

Asahina froze, genuinely surprised this time.

She recognized the look in Kaoru's eyes—a hint of appreciation, similar to how her past admirers had looked at her.

However, Kaoru's gaze lacked the vulgarity that usually disgusted her.

An unusual silence settled between them.

"Miyabi's enemies aren't necessarily mine," Asahina suddenly said. "You're worried I might mind your battle, but you can rest assured about that. If anything, I'm more concerned whether you'd mind me helping Miyabi."

She and Miyabi Nagumo weren't just childhood friends—they were classmates, naturally standing on the same side.

The most Asahina could do was try not to interfere in the conflict between Kaoru, Manabu Horikita, and Miyabi Nagumo.

Though that said, if help was ever needed, she would prioritize assisting Miyabi.

"Of course I'd mind. I'd definitely mind if Asahina-senpai showed favoritism," Kaoru said shamelessly.

Asahina didn't know whether to laugh or cry, pretending to be angry.

"Your opinion doesn't matter. Kouhai's should stay out of Senpai's affairs."

"Is Asahina-senpai perhaps afraid that a mere junior might defeat her childhood friend?" Kaoru blinked.

"Trying to play that game with your senpai?" Asahina narrowed her eyes. "What exactly are you trying to say?"

"Ahem, if I defeat Nagumo-senpai—say, during this sports festival—could Asahina-senpai treat me to a meal?" Kaoru asked without batting an eye.

Asahina's face darkened.

Seriously?

You want to defeat my childhood friend and then have me treat you to dinner?

Chapter 259: Rumors of Miyabi Nagumo's

With a beautiful shot, the surrounding female spectators couldn't help but gasp in admiration.

A satisfied smile appeared on Miyabi Nagumo's face.

Although he'd long lost interest in women, the feeling of being admired still pleased him immensely.

"The score is 2-5. As expected of Nagumo-kun," someone remarked sincerely.

The match was nearly over, and Nagumo simply waved his hand dismissively.

"Good work, everyone. Take a break for now."

"Nagumo-senpai, you worked hard too!"

Among the participants in this soccer practice match were first-year students—new members of the soccer club.

Nagumo had once been part of the soccer club himself but withdrew after joining the student council.

Still, he occasionally dropped by to participate in club activities.

Today was no exception.

After P.E. class ended, Nagumo had come to the field and played with the club members for over an hour.

As he stepped off the field, Tonokawa immediately approached him, first handing him a towel, then offering a drink once he had wiped his face.

"Has Nazuna not returned yet?" Nagumo glanced around.

Though Asahina Nazuna rarely came to watch him, today was P.E. class—after returning her things, she should have stopped by to see him.

"The others who went with her said Asahina-san decided to stay behind and help in the storage room," Tonokawa Sosuke replied.

"Helping in the storage room?" Nagumo frowned as realization struck him.

Hadn't Horikita Manabu assigned Tachibana Akane to take the first-years to assist there?

Could it be today?

The moment he remembered that Kaoru Mitoma was among them, irritation surged within him.

Suppressing his agitation, he spoke coldly, "What was Ryuen's response?"

"He said the price needs to go up." Tonokawa held up five fingers.

"At least five million."

A vein pulsed on Nagumo's forehead.

Were these first-years really treating him like some bank?

Demanding seven figures right off the bat—did they think he was some naive rich kid?

"Tell him he gets one million, and that's it. The student council can also help cover his tracks, so he shouldn't push his luck." Nagumo took a deep breath.

"If he can bring down Class A, the money will be transferred immediately."

Tonokawa nodded in acknowledgment.

"What about the first-years? Any volunteers to act as spies?" Nagumo asked next.

"Classes C and D have shown interest, but Classes B and A are harder to approach—especially Class B."

Hearing this, Nagumo's brow furrowed.

Why was Class B so tightly guarded?

Just as he was puzzling over it, Tonokawa lowered his voice.

"Someone's waiting for you over there."

Nagumo turned his gaze and spotted a girl sitting on a bench not far away, her hands resting on a cane as she quietly observed the field.

"Well, well. The interesting one is back."

A faintly mocking smile curled on Nagumo's lips as he strode toward her.

"Long time no see, first-year girl. Did my skills catch your eye?"

"My, my. Starting with harassment right away—seems the rumors were mistaken." Sakayanagi Arisu smiled faintly.

In the past, she wouldn't have minded such teasing, but now was different.

Nagumo's expression darkened. "What rumors?"

"Ah, the ones about Nagumo-senpai losing interest in women... Did I speak out of turn?"

Seeing his increasingly stormy expression, Sakayanagi tactfully cut herself short, inwardly surprised.

"Could it actually be true?"

"Just some slander from petty individuals." Nagumo Miyabi's face showed no expression.

"Since your class doesn't welcome you, are you now wandering outside?"

"That's too harsh. I simply chose to come out on my own." Sakayanagi Arisu tilted her head upward.

"The twilight scenery, the youthful energy of the sports field—such a view compelled me to pause and admire it. And then I happened to run into you here."

"Precisely proving you have no place left in your class, hence the spare time to enjoy the view." Nagumo didn't let up, continuing his mockery.

Sakayanagi wasn't the least bit angry.

A strange glint flashed in her eyes—she knew the more agitated Nagumo became, the more it confirmed the rumors were true.

"It seems Nagumo-senpai knows our class inside out. Could it be Katsuragi-kun who told you all this?"

Her tone held no hesitation, her smile almost leisurely.

This signal also conveyed to Nagumo that she was equally well-informed about the student council and his own situation.

Nagumo caught the signal and replied indifferently, "Katsuragi has now pledged his loyalty to me."

Even if Katsuragi was Kaoru's bait, he would swallow it without hesitation—because the former had become the leader of Class 1-A and that banner was highly useful to him.

"That's his personal decision. Class 1-A currently has no intention of pledging loyalty to anyone." Sakayanagi's voice was soft.

"Does your opposition matter?" Nagumo studied her with amusement. "A loser who carelessly lost the match versus a winner who triumphed fair and square—does your opinion hold any weight?"

Sakayanagi shook her head, then smiled faintly.

"No. The person standing before you now is someone waiting for an opportunity to turn the tables. She brings a plan valuable to both sides, here to negotiate with someone lacking a partner on how to handle Class 1-A."

The girl straightened her posture slightly.

The fading twilight bathed her delicate face, making her glow as if draped in a holy veil, her silver-white short hair shimmering.

Nagumo narrowed his eyes, shadows of dusk flickering across his face.

The last rays of light slipped past his shoulders, slowly sinking below the horizon, while shouts from the track field echoed behind them.

"What's your plan?"

"Heh, no need to rush. The upcoming sports festival can be considered my gift to you." Sakayanagi paused.

"Once the student council elections begin next month, we can discuss it then."

"You're quite bold. Aren't you afraid I'll report this to your class?" Nagumo's smirk was ambiguous—colluding with an outsider against one's own class could easily be seen as betrayal.

"As long as it leads to checkmate, it doesn't matter how many pieces are sacrificed along the way." Sakayanagi's voice remained soft.

"Besides, your goal aligns with mine."

"Oh? I don't recall having any goals involving first-years." Nagumo feigned surprise.

"Wasn't it Mitoma-kun who had Katsuragi-kun join the student council? Wasn't it him who brought Katsuragi-kun to your side? Wasn't it him who made you lose respect?" Sakayanagi gazed at him calmly.

Nagumo fell silent.

A chill ran down his spine—just how much did this girl know?

"Likewise, I share the same feelings as you. He took what was mine and unceremoniously pushed me to the bottom, constantly bullying me all the while." Sakayanagi Arisu clutched her chest as if deeply hurt.

"Right now, I wish nothing more than to repay his actions tenfold."

Hmm, Kaoru had spanked her once—she would return the favor sooner or later, at least ten times over.

Chapter 260: How Dare You Cuck Me?

"With Class A acting as our inside help and Class C charging ahead, I think victory is all but assured."

On their way back, Tonokawa felt the plan carried minimal risk and was highly likely to succeed.

"Hmph, don't believe a word that girl says." Nagumo dismissed the idea. "At the start of the term, she used her innocent face to completely fool a bunch of upperclassmen. The board game club, in particular, was completely drained of their Personal Points."

Sakayanagi Arisu was exceptionally skilled at chess and the board game club stood no chance against her, allowing her to effortlessly win a considerable amount of Personal Points and information.

As the student council vice president and the backbone of the second-year students, Nagumo Miyabi caught wind of this and immediately confronted Sakayanagi Arisu.

Thinking he could corner her through gambling, he was instead met with her demand to decisively eliminate everyone at once, violently dismantling his offensive.

Nagumo's gaze darkened.

This year's freshmen were indeed not to be underestimated—exceptionally strong-willed, with abilities clearly surpassing some of the upperclassmen.

No, it wasn't just that.

He suspected the school had made adjustments among the freshmen in response to the issues within his own year.

"Are we not going to use her intel?" Tonokawa asked.

Nagumo shook his head. "The information she provided is likely true, but we need to be cautious. Against someone that cunning, this alone isn't enough."

Tonokawa looked puzzled.

With Sakayanagi as their inside help, Class A was practically doomed—he couldn't see any chance for them to turn things around.

Nagumo didn't answer his confusion, as only he and Kaoru knew Ichinose Honami's secret.

Though he hadn't planned to use this weapon so soon, leaving such leverage unused would be idiotic.

Besides, he wasn't asking Ichinose Honami to do anything extreme this time—just to help deal with Class 1-A.

Since her Class B was also targeting Class 1-A, they were natural allies.

At that moment, Nagumo Miyabi suddenly stopped in his tracks.

He saw Asahina Nazuna waving goodbye to a few people, standing motionless as he watched her smiling face.

Not only were the teaching floors separate, but the dormitories for different grades were also in different buildings.

Thus, he clearly saw the group heading toward the first-year dormitory.

"I'll head back first." Tonokawa tactfully stepped away from Nagumo Miyabi's side.

Nagumo Miyabi's expression darkened as he strode toward Asahina Nazuna—starting slow, then gradually speeding up, until he was practically storming forward.

Just as Asahina Nazuna was about to leave, he grabbed her shoulder, startling her.

"Wah! You scared me! What's with suddenly grabbing someone's shoulder?" Asahina Nazuna jumped in fright, only calming down when she saw it was Nagumo Miyabi.

Nagumo ignored her words and asked bluntly, "What were you doing just now?"

"Nothing much. I was just about to head back to the dorm," Asahina replied nonchalantly.

Nagumo glanced at her.

She had already changed out of her gym clothes and was now wearing her school uniform, likely having changed before leaving the school building.

"I should have told you before, right?" Nagumo suppressed his rising anger.

"I might not care about others, but you—you shouldn't get too close to Mitoma."

Asahina raised an eyebrow. "Are you suspecting me of having an improper relationship with some boy again?"

"I'm not suspecting anything. That guy is cunning and deceitful, and he definitely has an ulterior motive for getting close to you." Nagumo was in a terrible mood.

As a playboy himself, he knew all too well what Kaoru was thinking.

The questions Kaoru had raised in the office back then still left him deeply unsettled.

"Maybe. But today, it wasn't him approaching me. I saw him in the storage room and just helped them with a small favor," Asahina said with a grin.

Nagumo let out a cold laugh. "That's even worse. Why did you go near him in the first place?"

Her indifference only fueled his fury. "You didn't do anything in the storage room, did you?"

Asahina's expression darkened instantly.

"What are you implying?"

"Don't forget—didn't he touch your foot before?" The mere thought of it made Nagumo seethe.

"Something even I haven't touched, and you let some random guy lay a hand on it?"

"I don't want to argue about this again. Back then, Mitoma was just helping me to the infirmary. And if we're going there, the doctor also touched my foot—are you going to get mad about that too?" Asahina brushed off his hand from her shoulder and stared at him coolly.

"That's completely different! The doctor is a woman, and he's a man. You're my childhood friend—the woman I'm closest to!" Nagumo admitted he was jealous, and it was a deeply twisted kind of jealousy.

"Oh really?" Asahina smirked. "When you're fooling around with women all the time, have I ever said anything to you?"

"I was just playing around with them. I don't have any real feelings for them—I only like you!" Nagumo didn't think he had done anything wrong.

After all, Asahina Nazuna had refused to date him, so what was the harm in finding a few women to ease his loneliness?

But the moment he said those words, Asahina felt nothing but disgust.

"Enough. Stop saying things like that. Come back when you've actually changed."

With that, she turned to leave.

"Nazuna, what exactly do you want from me?" Nagumo refused to give up and chased after her.

"You were the one who rejected me in the first place. Are you blaming me now?"

He grabbed Asahina's wrist, yanking her to a stop.

"Haven't I shown you enough affection? For you, I can cut off all those other women. You've seen it yourself—I haven't been interested in them lately. Right now, you're the only one in my eyes!"

Though he knew he was lying, Nagumo couldn't help but feel a surge of frustration.

They had known each other for nearly ten years—why wouldn't she just say yes?

He had always assumed she was his, that even if she refused to date him, he could patiently wear her down over time.

But then, out of nowhere, a rival had appeared!

All these years, the most he had ever done was hold Nazuna's hand—yet Kaoru had already caressed her feet!

The difference was painfully clear.

Nagumo felt utterly humiliated, as if his favorite toy had been snatched away and played with right in front of him while he could only watch helplessly.

"I admit you've improved lately, but you're too emotional right now. Let's both cool off today." Asahina pushed his hand away.

"Mitoma-kun and I haven't done anything, and I don't plan to in the future. That's the truth."

They had only met two or three times.

Asahina truly didn't believe anything would happen between her and Kaoru Mitoma.

Nagumo's face darkened as he watched her walk away, his fists clenched so tightly his nails nearly pierced his skin.

After a moment, he slowly relaxed his grip and pulled out his phone, sending a message to Tonokawa: from now on, his men were to keep a close watch on Asahina Nazuna.

What was his would always bear his mark.