

Cote 271

Chapter 271: Mutual Speculation

Nagumo Miyabi received the news on the afternoon of the third day—someone had been discreetly gathering intel on Class A.

The approach had been subtle.

The person had exploited gaps in rest periods, targeting isolated students under the pretense of asking for training advice, then skillfully extracting information.

Perhaps due to prolonged peace, Class A had grown complacent.

Facing students from the same year, they let their guard down entirely, divulging everything.

Upon hearing this, Nagumo felt both shock and delight.

Shock, because his so-called "elites" had grown so negligent that they hadn't even reported this to him immediately.

Delight, because he quickly recognized this as a scheme aimed at him.

While there were disgruntled second-years, none would dare openly raise a banner of rebellion—at least not on the surface.

Especially when Kiriya Ikuyo's name came up.

Nagumo sneered.

That guy was a coward—he was, at best, a mouse whose spirit he'd already crushed.

For Kiriya to muster courage now, there was no doubt someone was backing him.

Nagumo immediately thought of Horikita Manabu.

He knew Kiriya had maintained a secret friendship with Horikita, who also held him in high regard.

But—no.

Impossible.

Horikita had spent the past year refusing his challenges.

He wouldn't suddenly strike now.

Besides, Horikita only had half a year left and was set to step down next month—a compromise born from their covert rivalry.

Nagumo refused to believe Horikita was behind this.

That left only one other candidate.

"What is Mitoma up to?" Nagumo suddenly asked.

Tonokawa Sosuke, standing nearby, promptly replied.

"Mitoaki's still keeping watch on the first-years. Classes A and D are training together, and Mitoma hasn't shown any unusual behavior."

Since the training was taking place in the gymnasium, the collaboration between the two classes naturally drew attention—an unavoidable outcome.

However, even if someone was spying, they could only observe which students were stronger or weaker without first figuring out the competition order.

"Hehehe, the moment I reached out to Ryuen, he immediately intervened in our second-year affairs through Kiriya. Seems we were both thinking the same thing."

Nagumo couldn't help but laugh in exasperation.

So now they were trying to raid each other's bases, was that it?

"Should we apply some pressure to Class B?" Tonokawa suggested.

"Kiriya currently has no ability to control his entire class. They wouldn't agree to follow his methods."

This was precisely Kiriya Ikuyo's awkward position.

Although he was the leader of Class 2-B, no one would follow him in launching another charge against Class A.

To put it nicely, Class 2-B's morale had hit rock bottom.

To put it bluntly, they had already accepted the reality of being ruled by Nagumo Miyabi, with some students even working for him.

If Kiriya Ikuyo wanted to charge against Class A again, he would need to strictly reorganize his entire class.

However, to restore morale, he would have to show his class some hope—something impossible for him to achieve alone.

"No need. I understand Kiriya well—he's a compromiser. Once he faces setbacks, he'll find excuses for himself and eventually retreat," Nagumo dismissed casually.

"I didn't arrange their competition roster earlier because I wanted to see if Kiriya had any real intentions."

As he spoke, he chuckled.

"Sure enough, he's harboring ill intentions, secretly connecting with Mitoma behind my back. But never mind—have them send us a copy of their roster too."

Hearing this, Tonokawa Sotaro hesitated.

"Wouldn't that make us seem untrustworthy?"

Initially, it was their Class A that proposed everyone act independently.

Now demanding Class B's roster would be like slapping their own face.

In response, Nagumo revealed an enigmatic smile.

"Heh, Tonokawa, I'm just asking them to show me their roster before the competition starts. In return, I'll also give them ours before the matches begin."

Tonokawa froze for a moment before quickly catching on with his sharp thinking.

"You mean we publicly announce everyone's roster on the surface, but actually use a time gap to adjust ours based on theirs, then create a new one?"

"The competition uses a point system. As long as we calculate the winning threshold and make slight adjustments, victory will naturally be ours."

"Understood."

Nagumo didn't even need to make major changes—just ensure Class 2-A could overpower the others.

Moreover, this method left no room for complaints, since nominally all rosters were made public.

Nagumo wasn't forcing anyone to modify their rosters or personally arranging the match order.

At the same time, Nagumo could subtly demonstrate his absolute control over the second year to Kaoru.

With every class obediently handing over their rosters, he wanted to see what tricks Kaoru could possibly pull now.

Thinking of Sakayanagi Arisu's "gift," Nagumo couldn't help but let his smile grow increasingly unrestrained.

Victory was assured.

By the time Kaoru learned of Nagumo's arrangements, a whole week had passed.

Though Nagumo had deliberately concealed the information, this delay alone showcased his iron grip over the entire second year—and the difficulties faced by rebels like Kiriya Ikuyo.

"So we're supposed to publicize everyone's rosters before the competition begins?"

"Yes, this is what Nagumo personally told the class representatives," Kiriya Ikuyo said helplessly.

"He asked us to submit the participation forms to him one day before the competition, only announcing the contents afterward. He claimed it was to prevent anyone from altering the forms."

Kaoru Mitoma fell silent.

He now felt Nagumo might have even thicker skin than himself—no wonder the top students couldn't defeat Nagumo.

"He probably wants to check our participation forms before the competition. If there are no issues, he'll let it slide. But if there are, he'll make targeted adjustments, then announce his own form last, exploiting the timing gap."

"Is there any way around this?" Kiriya asked unwillingly.

Having taken a risk by betting on Kaoru, he couldn't bear to lose again.

"If he wants the forms, we'll give them to him. It's just a participation form, after all," Kaoru chuckled.

"At worst, we'll make a new one."

Kiriya froze for a moment before asking in confusion, "Make a new one?"

Given the current situation, even if they continued spying on Class 2-A, it wouldn't help—they still wouldn't know the opponent's lineup.

Without knowing the order, how could they make a new one?

"To prevent Class A from targeting us?" Kiriya thought he had guessed the reason.

That might be the only explanation—avoiding a direct counterattack from Class 2-B.

"That won't work. We can't just keep defending. We need to strike decisively. Only then will others realize Nagumo is already on shaky ground." Kaoru understood one thing clearly: most people only follow the winner.

Whoever wins, they'll side with them.

The moment Nagumo shows even a hint of weakness, his undefeated image will crumble instantly.

Chapter 272: Who Do You Like?

"Is Iijima on our side?"

The "Iijima" Kaoru referred to was one of the defectors Kiriyama had brought over.

He happened to be a student from Class 2-A and had joined them simply because he disapproved of Nagumo's actions.

"Iijima is absolutely on our side. There's no way he'd tip Nagumo off." Kiriyama suddenly hesitated, unsure whether to continue.

"Iijima used to have a girl he liked, but she ended up in Nagumo's arms..."

He didn't finish, but Kaoru understood.

Clearly, this defector from Class A had even stronger reasons than the others to settle the score with Nagumo.

There was no need to doubt his loyalty.

"With Iijima and Kiryuin-senpai on our side, our chances aren't bad." Kaoru smiled faintly.

"In fact, I'd love it if Nagumo targeted us, using our participation form as a reference to draft a new one."

"I get your idea, but Iijima can't get close to Nagumo's inner circle. He won't be able to see Class A's participation form," Kiriya voiced his concern.

"No problem. Have him observe the class and report to me as much as possible." Kaoru asked Kiriya for Iijima's contact details.

"At this point, we can only do our best, but I don't think we'll lose."

By now, Kiriya had no choice but to trust him.

"Let me take charge of the new competition roster. We can just tell everyone that someone in your class wasn't feeling well, so we adjusted the positions slightly."

According to the rules, full-team competitions don't allow substitutes, only assigned competitions permit them, and even then it requires an additional 100,000 Personal Points.

Therefore, Kaoru could only rearrange positions.

"Won't this... seem like we're burning bridges?" Kiriya Ikuyo said, feeling somewhat awkward himself.

Without leaving some room for retreat, his heart immediately tightened, left hanging in midair.

"Just notify Nagumo at the last minute," Kaoru replied with a half-smile, though he wasn't actually angry.

It was only natural for someone to still have doubts before seeing results, even while claiming to trust him.

Still, this made Kaoru reconsider his choice of representative among the second-years.

"Ahem, I just wanted to ask if you had any specific arrangements in mind," Kiriya said, he was relieved.

"No problem, as long as you follow the roster I've prepared," Kaoru paused.

"Remember to send me your class's information, and I'll also find time to observe your practice sessions."

Kiriya naturally agreed.

At this point, there was no turning back.

Truth be told, it was all just an excuse.

Taking advantage of after-school hours, Kaoru brought the "Time-Space Camera" and avoided other students on his way to the track field, which was about to welcome dusk.

He stood alone in a corner of the spectator seats.

He wanted to preview future events in advance—like accessing a game's console commands.

Carefully adjusting the camera's time to the day of the sports festival's opening, he pressed the shutter.

Though he didn't know the exact timing, he at least knew the competition order.

The school didn't plan to run all events simultaneously but rather one after another.

This gave Kaoru a room to maneuver.

100-meter dash, hurdles, pole-toppling competition, tug-of-war, ball-throwing contest, obstacle race, three-legged race...

Click after click, the "Time-Space Camera," which had only about half its battery left, finally gave out.

In just half an hour, it shut down completely.

Kaoru examined the camera's charging port, unsure if it could be recharged.

Still, he had already stashed the photos he'd taken into his bag to avoid anyone discovering them.

After putting away the camera, he gazed at the track field for a while.

Only a few sports club members were practicing, with no upperclassmen in sight.

They probably already understood each other's capabilities well enough to skip extra practice or reconnaissance.

That said, Kaoru did spot Class B students training openly below, their confident demeanor drawing attention—especially Ichinose's lively figure.

So they gave the indoor gym to Classes A and D while practicing outside?

Kaoru didn't go down to greet them.

He needed to return for his own practice, or Sakayanagi would come looking for him with that knowing smile.

The two gyms weren't far apart.

Taking a shortcut, it would only take a few minutes to return to the first indoor gym.

However, Kaoru didn't go in immediately.

Instead, he made a detour to the restroom so he could pretend he had been there for a while.

After splashing some water on his face, Kaoru stepped out into the hallway.

Just as he passed the changing room entrance, a figure emerged from inside, nearly colliding with him.

"Whoa, that was close!"

Before Kaoru could speak, the other person bared their teeth and exclaimed.

"Sorry, I didn't notice you coming out."

"Huh? Mitoma-kun?"

Perhaps because his voice was distinctive, or maybe Hasebe Haruka had finally recognized him, she immediately clicked her tongue.

"How strange to run into you here. Kushida-san has been looking for you everywhere."

"I was in the restroom," Kaoru replied briefly, then took in the girl's current outfit.

"Are you done with practice already?"

She had changed out of her gym clothes and was now in her school uniform.

Her huge chest strained against the fabric of her shirt, making one worry about its durability.

What drew even more attention was her shiny forehead, somewhat reminiscent of Haruno Sakura.

"I asked Ishikura-san and the others. They don't plan to continue practicing the three-legged race or the cavalry battle today, so it doesn't matter if I leave early."

Hasebe clearly didn't care about skipping out early.

But more than that, she seemed preoccupied with something else.

"Hey, hey, hey, since we happened to meet, can I ask you something, Mitoma-kun?" Haruka suddenly asked with keen interest.

"I'll answer depending on what it is," Kaoru replied cautiously, not giving her an opening.

"That's such a slippery answer! Now I just sound pushy," Hasebe pouted in dissatisfaction, but then a mischievous smile crept onto her lips.

"So, who do you like, Mitoma-kun?"

Kaoru froze for a moment.

Thinking he hadn't heard her clearly, she repeated the question.

"Do you have someone you like right now?"

Chapter 273: Please, Look at My Legs

Not far away, the sun was setting and the last rays of twilight quietly seeped into the hallway.

The light diffused into the air, forming a hazy veil of dust, like a wisp of slanting smoke.

Time seemed to hang suspended—the window brimming with sunset, the quiet corridor, and the girl before him, who was taking this far too seriously, made Kaoru hold his breath for an instant.

Her voice echoed in his mind, and unbidden, a few faces flickered through his thoughts before he snapped back to reality.

"Why do you ask?" Kaoru was puzzled.

He didn't recall being close enough to Hasebe to discuss such topics.

"Your first reaction is to question me?" Hasebe scratched her head as the setting sun cast its glow over her.

"How should I put it? Seeing so many girls around you gives me a weird feeling."

"A weird feeling?" Kaoru was even more confused.

"Oh, do you remember our first meeting? During the summer break special exam, didn't I tell you that you looked just like a certain idol?" Hasebe Haruka recalled the scene with some excitement.

"What about it?"

"He also had lots of girls gathered around him, just like you."

"Could he be some romance movie regular?"

"He's not an actor, but he's often invited to variety shows to partner with idols."

Kaoru's expression turned strange.

So he was a comedian?

"So I think you're exactly like him now - very popular with women. Though he's already retired from the industry." As she spoke, Hasebe seemed both excited and embarrassed.

"Can you answer me now?"

"You won't tell anyone else?" Kaoru asked seriously.

"No, no! I'm very tight-lipped," Hasebe quickly raised her hand in oath.

She was just a girl who enjoyed gossip.

"I like each of them equally." Kaoru's eyes were serious, as if revealing some important secret, his voice dropping slightly.

"Huh?" Hasebe was stunned.

Did "equally" mean he want to make a harem?

After a long pause, her eyes finally widened as she stared at Kaoru with an extremely odd expression, her gaze unconsciously carrying a hint of disdain, as if looking at trash.

"This might be rude, but can I say that's disgusting?" Hasebe clearly had no interest in this harem mentality, even finding it repulsive.

"Sure, but I stand by my view."

Hearing this, Hasebe suddenly let out a long sigh.

"I should've never satisfied my curiosity."

Perhaps feeling there was nothing left to discuss, Hasebe picked up her bag and walked straight past Kaoru, though not forgetting to say goodbye to him.

Kaoru didn't stop her.

He could tell that while she had a strong-willed personality, she was completely different from either Horikita Suzune or Airi Sakura.

The conversation was normal, and she even initiated chats without any trace of introversion.

There was no arrogant attitude either—her topics slightly crossed the usual boundaries of distance but didn't delve too deep.

Her interest in the entertainment industry showed she was a perfectly ordinary girl.

According to Kushida Kikyo's intel, the other party was an average student, though her social circle was small, and she often spent time alone.

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Kaoru arrived at the corridor entrance just in time to see Class A and Class D engaged in a mock battle—a practice match proposed by Katsuragi to help everyone adapt faster to the competitive environment.

However, quite a few had already left early, and Hasebe Haruka wasn't the only one.

After nearly half a month of practice, some had never shown up at all—like Kouenji Rosuke from Class D, among others.

"Mitoma-kun, so you are here. I thought you'd gone back already."

At the sound of Karuizawa Kei's delighted voice, Kaoru turned and saw her sitting on a nearby bench, seemingly resting.

Her previously bored eyes now sparkled with energy.

"How's practice going?" Kaoru greeted her.

"We just finished a cavalry battle, and now everyone's exhausted, so we're taking a break." Karuizawa patted the empty spot beside her, signaling for him to sit.

"I was planning to keep running, but I accidentally bumped my foot."

"You hurt yourself?" Kaoru, who hadn't intended to sit next to her, instinctively moved closer.

"Is it bleeding? Does it hurt?"

The girl sat further back on the bench, her fair, slender legs slightly pressed together.

Her delicate skin showed no obvious wounds.

Kaoru was about to crouch down to check when he suddenly realized how inappropriate that would be.

Instead, he sat beside her, but just as he was about to speak, he caught the faint upward curve of her lips from the corner of his eye.

"Did you check my location?"

"Ugh, you're making me sound like a spy. Someone here is way worse than me."

"That's not what I meant."

Karuizawa puffed her cheeks in dissatisfaction.

Of course she had checked his location—how else was she supposed to know where he was?

And when she saw he was heading back, was it so wrong to wait for him here a little early?

Considering their relationship, she had even told a little white lie to give him a reason to sit beside her.

He should be thanking her.

Honestly, Karuizawa felt she had every right to be upset.

Here was someone who kept saying he'd take responsibility for her, yet he went around being affectionate with others without a care in the world.

"I don't care—I am your girlfriend now, right?" Karuizawa muttered.

"Obviously?" Kaoru glanced at her legs. "It's because of that relationship that I came to check on you right away."

Karuizawa felt a flicker of happiness, but it was quickly overshadowed by an odd, indescribable discomfort.

"Are you really not hurt?" Kaoru asked again.

"I'm not lying. I kicked a chair earlier, and it really hurt." Karuizawa pointed at her toes.

"I think it's a little swollen. What should I do?"

Since she was wearing sneakers, Karuizawa worried Kaoru wouldn't be able to see the details clearly.

She immediately bent down, untied her shoelaces, and hooked her fingers around the shoes.

Her petite feet gradually slipped free from the confines of the sneakers, with thin ankle socks clinging to her skin, tightly enveloping her feet as well.

Her five toes appeared particularly plump and soft, the delicate skin encased in the stockings.

Occasionally, she would awkwardly curl her toes—the tips were so translucent they revealed a tender pink hue.

It was unclear whether this was the natural glow of her skin or the stockings playing tricks, but they looked utterly delectable, like a tempting little dessert.

Perhaps unaware of his nickname 'perverted foot fetishist', Karuizawa pouted slightly and looked at Kaoru with a pitiful expression.

"See if it's swollen or not? I'm definitely not lying to you."

Chapter 274: Underestimating the Situation

Beneath the girl's shorts, a generous length of smooth thigh was exposed.

The lightweight sneakers lay discarded to the side as she balanced on her tiptoes, her calves maintaining a slender, straight line.

The white ankle socks resembled sweet, creamy soft-serve ice cream or a bottle of delicious milk.

Still bent over, she used both hands to peel off her stockings.

Her chest pressed against her knees and from the side, Kaoru caught glimpses of her breast and a flash of sky-blue bras inside her sleeves.

At the same time, Kaoru noticed Karuizawa's high ponytail, a few stray strands brushing against her porcelain neck like fine sand, further accentuating her flawless complexion.

Outside, the setting sun streamed gently through the window, spilling across the creaky wooden floor.

In the distance, the sports field buzzed with students—the rhythmic thuds of runners, the urgent shouts of mock cavalry battles, the rallying cries of tug-of-war.

All these sounds danced in Kaoru's ears before gradually slowing his perception of the girl before him.

She complained about the chair, then shifted to talking about the competition—her teammates' lack of coordination, troublesome classmates, and how someone had been ignoring her all along.

In just a short while, the thin stockings slid off her feet.

Now barefoot on her right foot, Karuizawa Kei's restless toes wriggled like mangosteens, clearly unaccustomed to being barefoot in public—especially in front of a man.

"Can you see it?" Karuizawa touched her toes, frowned slightly, then timidly withdrew her fingers.

"You're kidding... it actually hurt a little?"

Kaoru instinctively held his breath.

He didn't know if Karuizawa was truly in pain or simply acting spoiled.

Many girls habitually exaggerated minor injuries to those close to them, making even the smallest scratch seem severe.

"Did you stub your toe?"

"Yeah, otherwise I would've run out to find you sooner."

"I don't see any wounds."

"Not necessarily bleeding, maybe an internal injury?"

"Internal injury..."

That sounded familiar.

Kaoru decided not to overthink it for now.

Next, he glanced toward the gymnasium.

No one should be paying attention here—everyone was busy practicing, and the idle students had already gone home early.

Except for a few students taking a break, like Ayanokoji Kiyotaka, Sakayanagi Arisu, and Kushida Kikyo.

"Can I take a look at your leg?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Kaoru realized he had misspoken and quickly corrected himself.

"I mean, I want to check if there's any swelling. If it's serious, I'll have to take you to the infirmary."

"O-Oh, sure!" Karuizawa feigned nonchalance, though her heart was already pounding.

Did this count as being affectionate in front of everyone?

It should be fine.

She was still Hirata Yosuke's girlfriend, after all.

Even if people saw this, they wouldn't suspect anything between her and Kaoru—at most, they'd just find it odd.

Besides, she had a perfectly valid reason.

Even if someone questioned her, she could handle it calmly.

Thinking this, Kei felt a twinge of guilt.

It sounded like an excuse for cheating, her mind entirely preoccupied with covering her tracks.

But—but if she didn't do this, she'd fall too far behind!

Kushida Kikyo always wore an angelic smile around the boys, the very image of their dream girlfriend.

Yet, she maintained just the right balance of closeness and distance, something that had always bothered Kei.

Kikyo was too skilled—her pure and cute persona was anything but aloof, yet she expertly controlled the boundaries, making her wildly popular among the boys.

But then—

Kushida Kikyo had shattered that delicate balance herself.

For the first time ever, she openly wrapped her arms around Kaoru in front of everyone while beaming brightly.

Karuizawa bit her lip.

As expected of the official girlfriend.

At this rate, they might make their relationship public soon.

Compared to that, her own progress was lagging far behind.

So, she had to get closer—just a little more cunningly, without being obvious.

Slowly, then a little faster, then even closer.

With her heart racing, Karuizawa lightly lifted her calf, about to extend it towards Kaoru—only for him to suddenly grasp her ankle, her cute little foot now firmly in his grasp.

"Mmm..." She instinctively pressed her lips together to stifle any strange sounds.

This was too weird—why did having a man hold her ankle make her so nervous?

Clearly, Karuizawa hadn't considered her own feelings, nor had she guessed Kaoru's nickname.

Meanwhile, Sakayanagi had already turned her face away, her cheeks burning.

Even after a month, the lingering sensation on the top of her foot was something she'd remember for a lifetime.

"Does it hurt here?" Kaoru carefully flexed her toes, his gaze flickering upward to catch a glimpse of her calves, the subtle curve of her thighs, and the slight lift of her hips.

"A little..." Karuizawa replied, suddenly flustered as she realized the intimacy of the situation.

Kaoru examined her toes closely, finding no visible swelling or redness—only a faint coolness to the touch.

Feet, being the farthest from the heart, naturally ran cooler than the rest of the body.

Because of this temperature difference, Karuizawa could distinctly feel the warmth of his hands, a comforting heat that seeped into her skin.

At the same time, his gentle movements sent faint waves of warmth radiating from her soles, slowly spreading through her entire body. Unconsciously, she bit her lower lip.

"I'll help improve your circulation." Kaoru was well-practiced—he often played the role of masseur, tending to feet, legs, and shoulders, sometimes even giving full spa treatments.

Karuizawa had no idea her boyfriend possessed such skills.

Dazed, she watched him before a sudden jolt of sensation shot through her soles, sending her mind blank and her body limp.

"Mmm... Wh-what is this... ah..."

Not far away, Horikita Suzune happened to witness the scene, her lips twitching in disbelief.

Was this foot-obsessed pervert really doing this in public?

Strangely, an odd tingling sensation crept into her own chest and toes, as if she could still feel the teasing touch from before.

Chapter 275: The Second Fool

It wasn't serious—at least, Kaoru couldn't detect any bruising or swelling.

If anything, her toes looked adorably pink.

However, due to physiological differences, women generally had a lower pain tolerance than men.

Kaoru carefully lifted her calf, straightening her leg to ease the discomfort.

Though he called it a massage, his goal was simply to stimulate blood flow.

If that didn't help, ice or a trip to the infirmary would be necessary.

Kaoru studied her foot attentively—the plump, neatly aligned toes resembled smooth pearls, while her delicate ankle rested warmly in his palm.

As his kneading grew firmer, she instinctively tensed, curling her toes slightly.

Yet her resistance was futile.

His fingers easily parted her toes, his palms pressing firmly against her soles, sending waves of warmth deep into her skin.

Karuizawa trembled lightly, her lashes fluttering as she bit her lip, her body melting into languid submission.

An unbearable teasing sensation coiled inside her.

She didn't need to be told—she already knew she shouldn't have entrusted her feet to him.

Now, she was trapped between reluctance and surrender.

There was no denying it: Kaoru's massage felt incredible, reminding her of the luxury spa aboard the cruise ship.

However, back then it was just a female masseuse giving the massage, but now it was Kaoru doing it, and Karuizawa began to feel shy.

Perhaps it was the heightened sensations from the massage, or perhaps it was instinctive bashfulness, but a faint blush gradually spread across her delicate face.

Her chest rose and fell with each breath, her slightly flushed lips pressed tightly together, her throat moved slightly, and a slightly hurried pant escaped her nose, sounding like a kitten's purr.

"How does it feel now?" Kaoru asked, slightly bent over, forcing him to look up at Karuizawa.

Though he wasn't deliberately looking at the girl's thighs or the curve of her hips, certain things still entered his line of sight.

Because she had to lift her calves, her legs weren't closed, revealing the soft skin of her inner thighs.

Moreover, Kaoru had already caught a glimpse of the most shy and delicate flower between her legs—it was far too noticeable.

"It's almost enough... I didn't expect you to have this kind of skill. Where did you learn it?" Karuizawa blushed, placing her hands on her legs in an attempt to block his view.

Though she didn't mind Kaoru sneaking glances, this kind of thing was ultimately too embarrassing, making her feel like some kind of indecent woman.

"I learned it from online tutorials," Kaoru replied while continuing to gently stroke the soles of her feet.

"It should be fine now, but you should rest for a bit. Just sit here for a while."

"Ah..." A cute sound escaped Karuizawa's lips, her eyes glistening with unshed tears—not from pain, but simply because it was too stimulating, too pleasurable.

"Mitoma-kun, Karuizawa-san, what are you two doing?"

Just then, a cheerful voice rang out as Kushida suddenly appeared before them with a bright smile.

Faced with the ultra-popular little angel on one side and the Brahmin beauty of Class D on the other, Kaoru's knew his limits and didn't push his luck, gently setting down the "ice cream" in his hands.

He could already feel a number of strange gazes directed their way.

"Practicing too much can lead to excessive strain, which might cause soreness the next day, so I was just giving Karuizawa-san a massage."

Hearing Kaoru's explanation, Karuizawa froze for a moment before quickly catching on—her own excuse was too flimsy to dispel the odd looks from others.

"Eh? Mitoma-kun knows how to massage?" Kushida's voice rose slightly, ensuring some people could hear, before she flashed a delighted smile.

"Hey, hey, hey, could you give me a massage too?"

How could he refuse?

No, there was simply no reason to refuse her.

Because Kushida had come to cover for him—otherwise, suspicions would inevitably arise, and those suspicions would bring a lot of trouble.

Faced with Kushida's seemingly radiant smile—which was actually a forced expression—he nodded in agreement.

"Sure, as long as you don't mind my technique."

"It's rare to get to enjoy something like this—why would I mind Mitoma-kun?"

"If you keep praising me, I might have to charge you later."

Their exchange seemed to dispel some people's suspicions, making it seem like it was just an ordinary massage with nothing unusual about it.

However, Sakayanagi Arisu and Horikita Suzune couldn't help but turn their heads away—they knew another foolish idiot had fallen into the trap.

Karuizawa shrank back slightly, her heart filled with unease.

She was afraid of what Kushida might say to her, but the thought that she shouldn't back down made her straighten her posture again, her eyes fixed on Kushida sitting on the other side.

"Even though I know the sports festival is important, practicing every day really builds up fatigue. On the first day, my calves were already sore by that evening."

Kushida, as if oblivious to Karuizawa's gaze, casually slipped off her sneakers.

Then, tilting her body slightly, she rested the tips of her feet lightly on top of the shoes.

The straight arches of her feet made her calves appear even more slender.

Smiling, she turned to Kaoru.

"You won't complain about the smell, will you?"

It was an incredibly mischievous tease.

She knew Kaoru had licked Horikita Suzune's feet before and bringing it up so casually now was clearly meant to mock him.

However, Kushida had also made a mistake.

Regardless of Karuizawa, she—like Sakayanagi Arisu—had underestimated Kaoru.

There are things one always scoffs at before experiencing them, even mocking others for making a fuss—until it's their turn to face reality, which then delivers a harsh blow.

Kaoru gazed at her feet, the delicate toes wrapped in sheer stockings, fair skin tinged with pink, especially at the ankles where the natural hue of a maiden's flesh peeked through, soft and tender—like a premium little popsicle.

"Do you know what's most important in our line of work?" Kaoru suddenly asked.

"What?" Kushida Kikyo was puzzled.

"Washing your hands," Kaoru said.

Kushida froze for a moment before realizing he was teasing her!

Before she could counter, her calf was already seized by Kaoru and in an instant, her ankle fell into the enemy's grasp.

"I haven't even taken off my stock—ahhn!?"

Within the first second, Kushida sensed something was wrong.

She had never imagined that a massage from a man would feel so different from one given by a female therapist.

The man's touch was scorching, his gentle movements carrying a hint of roughness.

Her face flushed instantly, her teeth biting down hard on her lower lip as a faint mist welled up in her eyes.

For some reason, Karuizawa's heart also trembled.

The lingering sensation from earlier crept back through her body, leaving her slightly weak.

Chapter 276: Who Did You Practice With Before?

Unlike the feel of Karuizawa's feet, Kaoru first noticed the distinct, delicate bones and petite contours under his touch.

As he worked, Kushida's instinctive reaction wasn't to curl her toes but to tense her calf abruptly, jerking her leg up and nearly kicking him in the nose.

"Even if I'm not good at this, you shouldn't kick people, right?"

"N-no, I couldn't help it... It's too weird... You—ahhn..."

Though she tried to act indifferent, the sensation was too embarrassing to put into words.

Kushida was red all the way to her neck, utterly at a loss.

"Isn't this a bit exaggerated? Has Mitoma-kun never given you a massage before, Kushida-san?"
Karuizawa knew her reaction wasn't exaggerated at all, but she found it strange.

As his girlfriend, Kushida seemed to have never experienced Kaoru's massages before, which was why her reaction was so intense now.

Could it be because they hadn't been dating for long?

"Ahh... No... This is the f-first time... hnn..." Kushida's mind grew sluggish.

Normally, she would've noticed Karuizawa's probing.

"Maybe... maybe I'm just too tired... uuuh..."

By the end, she sounded on the verge of tears, her voice trembling with overwhelming pleasure.

Her hands gripped the armrests of the chair tightly as she panted heavily.

'How indecent...' Karuizawa felt her face burn.

Had she sounded like that earlier too?

"R-really? I thought the two of you were close and hung out often."

"We do... sometimes... nnggh... hang out... To be honest, Karuizawa-san, I'm more surprised that you seem... ah... close with Mitoma-kun."

"We just talk normally. I don't see anything unusual about it."

"Heh... Normal conversations don't involve letting a man touch... ahh... touch your... hnn..."

As Kaoru applied a bit more pressure, Kushida's reactions grew increasingly intense, her words coming out in broken gasps as sweet, breathy moans escaped her nose.

A normal massage wouldn't have this effect—but he had accidentally drawn a bonus reward, adding an extra function to the otherwise proper technique.

Karuizawa might not have fully understood, but Kushida certainly knew what this additional effect was.

The sensation reminded her of when Kaoru had teased the "big rabbit" before—just a little stimulation was enough to make her squirm, her body reacting in subtly alluring ways.

Perhaps clinging to the last shreds of her rationality, Kushida kept biting down hard on her lower lip, refusing to let out anything resembling a whimper.

Yet, once an unsuspecting prey falls into a hunter's trap, no amount of struggling will help—it only fuels the hunter's amusement.

Karuizawa sat nearby, fidgeting uncomfortably.

Should she leave now and give the two some space?

But something told her that doing so would only draw more attention.

In fact, quite a few people were already sneaking glances in their direction—though unsure of what exactly was happening, and with Karuizawa sitting right there, they could only watch curiously.

Karuizawa instinctively looked towards Sakayanagi Arisu, expecting to see a displeased expression, only to find the girl turned away, her small ears completely flushed red.

Next, she glanced at Horikita Suzune, who continued her practice as if nothing were amiss—though her movements were stiff, her face tinged with pink.

Wait, why was Airi Sakura staring this way?

A flicker of unease passed through Karuizawa.

She barely had any impression of this plain, bespectacled girl, only knowing her as 'Sakura'.

But there was no mistaking that look.

Purely by feminine intuition, Karuizawa's radar locked onto her—because that gaze was definitely not the kind one would direct at ordinary classmates.

Sadness, insecurity... and envy?

Though she rarely bothered to think deeply about things, Karuizawa now found herself straining her brain to decipher the girl's thoughts—and just what exactly was going on here.

Why did everyone seem so embarrassed?

Could it be... that she was the furthest behind?

The moment this thought surfaced, Karuizawa's mood plummeted.

"That should be enough. Without any oil, this is as far as the massage can go."

After a while, Kaoru released Kushida's calf, though he felt a twinge of regret—a massage without oil lacked soul.

SPAs did offer oil massages, and Kushida had experienced them on the cruise ship.

But now, her eyes burned with a mix of shame and irritation, suspecting that Kaoru had ulterior motives.

"Mitoma-kun's skills are amazing. You must have practiced a lot before, right?" Kushida quietly retracted her foot.

As much as she wanted him to keep going—it felt so good—continuing would only leave her embarrassingly damp.

"I learned from online tutorials," Kaoru replied smoothly.

If he admitted to practicing privately, Kushida might casually ask who his practice partner had been.

"So... Mitoma-kun is a beginner?" Karuizawa's voice was slightly muffled, perhaps still flustered from witnessing such a blush-inducing massage.

"If I were to charge, I'd probably be the cheapest masseur."

Though it was just an excuse, Kaoru suddenly felt tempted—could he actually offer paid massages at ANHS?

"Please don't underestimate yourself. I think Mitoma-kun must be a top-tier masseur." Kushida smiled brightly.

"After all, with Mitoma-kun's looks, you'd definitely attract plenty of girls."

Karuizawa narrowed her eyes slightly—was that a subtle jab at her?

Hmph, she couldn't deny that Kaoru was indeed handsome.

Unfortunately, she preferred something else.

"Are you going to keep practicing?"

Both girls were incredibly popular beauties, and Kaoru didn't want to stir up unnecessary trouble here.

Who knew if another one might join the fray soon?

"No, I won't. You've already given me a massage—what else is there to practice?"

As soon as she finished speaking, Kushida suddenly realized her tone had been too casual and quickly schooled her expression into a more serious one.

Sure enough, Karuizawa suddenly asked.

"I'm a little curious—when exactly did you two meet?"

"Hmm, I can't quite remember. Wasn't it around the start of the school year, Mitoma-kun?" Kushida turned to Kaoru as if seeking confirmation, her smile taking on a slightly terrifying edge.

She didn't usually mind him being affectionate with other girls, but when faced with a bold challenger, she wasn't about to play dumb.

"April 6th. We met on the path between the special teaching building and the dormitory," Kaoru answered.

Both Kushida Kikyo and Karuizawa Kei froze.

Especially the former—she was genuinely shocked.

She hadn't expected Kaoru to remember so clearly, and more importantly, why the hell did he remember it so precisely?

Chapter 277: No More Being Polite

After a brief moment of stunned silence, Kushida struggled to suppress the corners of her lips from curling up uncontrollably.

This guy actually remembered it that clearly?

That was completely unexpected—even she hadn't recalled it so precisely.

"Wow, has it really been that long?" Kushida feigned a troubled expression. "I thought it was just recently. Time really flies—before you know it, strangers become close."

Bragging.

She was blatantly bragging.

Karuizawa Kei shifted uncomfortably, pressing her hands against her knees.

She needed to strike back hard.

"So it was that early? How did you two meet back then?" Karuizawa asked in a light, airy tone.

She shouldn't reveal her aggression—the other girl was the official girlfriend, after all.

She had to be polite.

"We just ran into each other on the road and naturally got acquainted," Kushida replied with a smile.

"I think Mitoma-kun was the one who hit on me, right?"

No, it was you who approached me first.

Kaoru silently denied Kushida's words in his mind.

"Because Kushida-san was quite cute, I thought I'd try striking up a conversation. Plus, I didn't have any friends back then, so I wanted to make one."

Hearing this, Kushida's smile deepened.

Then, subtly, she released her grip on Kaoru's hand and instead lightly traced a few characters onto his palm.

Like a feather, it tickled faintly.

Kaoru calmly deciphered what she had written.

'There's a reward for you later.'

Kaoru lifted his gaze to her delicate face and caught a fleeting glimpse of alluring charm in her eyes—so mesmerizing that it left no room to ponder what exactly this "reward" entailed."

"No wonder you two have been getting along so well lately. Some in the class even suspect you might be dating." Karuizawa Kei tried to force a casual smile, but found her expression too stiff to manage it.

This won't do.

She's the official girlfriend—I have to be polite.

I'm still just the backup, not successful yet.

"N-no, it's nothing like that! I just hang out with Mitoma-kun occasionally. I don't have any plans to date right now." Kushida Kikyo feigned shyness but felt an intense satisfaction—finally washing away the irritation Sakayanagi Arisu had caused her days ago.

"Kushida-san, do you not have anyone you like yet?" Karuizawa pressed relentlessly.

She was determined to get an answer today.

"It's too early to talk about that. We're only first-years—maybe second year would be better." Kushida blinked innocently, though she secretly wanted to throw the question back at Kaoru.

"I don't think it's too early. If there's someone you care about, you should act fast—otherwise, someone else might snatch them up." As soon as she said it, Karuizawa realized she sounded too eager, but the words were already out.

"Hmm, I suppose so. But I think there's another possibility." Kushida lowered her voice.

"Maybe he already has me wrapped around his finger. Like, 'Well, since it's come to this, might as well go all the way.' It feels like he dragged me into this against my will."

Under the table, she lightly nudged Kaoru's leg—though the meaning behind the gesture was unclear.

Karuizawa fell silent for a moment before murmuring, "But what if someone tries to take him from you? You know how some guys always have girls swarming around them."

"Are you talking about Hirata-kun?" Kushida's tone carried a hint of implication.

"I don't really mind. Who wins in the end is still up in the air—but of course, I'd support you, Karuizawa-san. After all, you and Hirata-kun are a couple."

"Right. You just have to move fast." Karuizawa forced a smile.

No, this tone is terrible.

I can't embarrass Mitoma-kun in front of him.

But—but this feeling was awful.

This girl, this girl, this girl—she just got to him a little faster, that's all.

Just a little faster in getting to know Mitoma-kun.

"You're right about that. You and Hirata-kun got together in the first week of school." Kushida clicked her tongue.

"So quick—the class barely had time to react."

Karuizawa was barely holding it together.

The more Kushida brought up Hirata Yosuke, the worse she felt.

Because Kushida was clearly flaunting that she had known Kaoru's longer.

"We should probably head back." Kaoru finally found a chance to interject. "We've practiced enough for today. If we stay any later, it'll get dark."

While the two girls were talking, Katsuragi and Sudou had already begun disbanding their respective groups.

ANHS ended classes at 3:30 PM.

After over two hours of practice, the fading twilight signaled the time when the school buildings would soon close.

Even club activities were winding down, with students packing up to leave.

"Alright, see you tomorrow, Mitoma-kun." Kushida stood up effortlessly, having already slipped on her shoes.

Humming a tune, she practically pranced away—like a victorious cat, triumphant as a tiger.

Karuizawa bent down, hooked her fingers into her shoes, and slipped her petite feet inside with a graceful motion that was rather pleasing to the eye.

Kaoru thought the matter was about to conclude, but the next moment, the girl's voice suddenly cut through the silence.

"Is Kushida-san your girlfriend?"

Karuizawa Kei had never been good at overthinking things—the more she dwelled, the more irritated she became.

So she simply asked outright.

Besides, she felt she had the right to ask.

"While my relationship with her isn't exactly ordinary, she's not my girlfriend," Kaoru replied without hesitation, giving a straightforward answer.

Karuizawa scratched her head.

What did "not exactly ordinary" mean?

"So, what is your relationship with her?"

"At first, it was similar to yours."

"Huh?"

Initially, Karuizawa didn't understand his words, but then she suddenly recalled the scene on the cruise ship and immediately grasped his meaning.

"Th-that's unbelievable!"

Instinctively, she flushed with embarrassment before anger took over.

"You already had me, didn't you? Is it because her figure is just a tiny bit better than mine?"

No matter how he answered now, it would be the wrong path.

After a moment of thought, Kaoru spoke up.

"Aren't you going to ask who my girlfriend is?"

Karuizawa Kei froze, momentarily forgetting her anger.

Tentatively, she asked, "You're willing to tell me now?"

"Actually, whether it's Kushida-san, you, or my girlfriend, the initial circumstances were all similar." Kaoru paused briefly before continuing.

"I'm a lecherous person, and at the same time, a despicable one."

If the initial circumstances were similar, that meant Kaoru hadn't just coerced her alone—he had likely threatened others as well?

Karuizawa's heart pounded violently.

She had assumed Kaoru and his girlfriend had a good relationship, but now it seemed the girl might actually despise him.

No wonder they hadn't made their relationship public—was this the reason?

Chapter 278: I'll Strive to Love You

"Suddenly saying that about yourself—do you want me to join in scolding you?" Karuizawa crossed her arms, clearly displeased with Kaoru's self-assessment.

"I admit you're definitely a pervert, but that's not the issue here."

As a boyfriend, it wasn't really a problem if Kaoru had some lewd tendencies.

Even if she didn't fully understand his preferences, she was willing to try her best to accommodate him.

But the real issue was that Kaoru wasn't just perverted toward her—he hadn't even spared a certain loli.

Even as a backup option, Karuizawa couldn't help feeling overwhelming anger and jealousy.

Deep down, there was even a flicker of fear she hadn't noticed herself.

With so many rivals around, could she really win?

"Kei thinks I'm a bit too unrestrained?" Kaoru took advantage of the moment when no one was paying attention and softly called her by name.

"A bit? You're practically reveling in it." Karuizawa Kei's face flushed slightly, her heart pounding uncontrollably, as if he had struck a chord within her.

Seeing her like this, Kaoru sensed an opportunity.

If he said the right words—or even half-forced her to make a decision—she might accept it.

But what came out of his mouth was something else entirely.

"I don't want to let go," Kaoru slowly voiced his thoughts.

"Because Kei is adorable, I don't want to let go. Because all of you are adorable, I really don't want to let go."

The more he realized how deeply connected he was—and would continue to be—with them, the more this thought took hold.

Could he really hand these girls over to someone else?

There was no denying that his initial motive for approaching them was the Wish Machine's desire.

The Wish Machine had revived him, tasking him with fulfilling its wish.

But as he grew closer, Kaoru suddenly found himself unwilling to let go.

Even knowing he was just fulfilling a wish, licking a girl's thigh, their expressions were still fascinating.

Their reactions and thoughts were far more interesting than simply completing the wish.

Take Ichinose Honami, for example.

He could grope her breasts for the sake of the wish, but then she'd blush, whisper for him to do it again, and even offer her lips willingly.

That kind of reaction definitely wasn't part of the wish—or rather, the wish wouldn't dare hope for such a response.

Though he knew Ichinose Honami's actions weren't born of love, at the very least, it proved she didn't dislike him.

That was why she could muster the courage.

No matter what, that courage made it hard for him to let go.

"If I had to give up someone—say, abandon Kei—would Kei be okay with that?" Kaoru paused.

"I don't know, but I wouldn't be. Even if it makes you think I'm a perverted freak, I won't hold back. I'll take responsibility for you for the rest of your life, without hesitation."

He had broached a similar topic before, but now he was even more blunt and direct.

The intensity in his eyes made it clear to Karuizawa—he would never give up on her.

"W-why, though?" Karuizawa murmured.

"Is 'Kei is adorable' not reason enough?" Kaoru said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"E-even if they're cute, everyone is cute, does that mean you have to monopolize them all?" Karuizawa looked incredulous.

"No one would agree to that, right?"

This question sounded familiar.

Kaoru shook his head and replied bluntly, "I don't know what will happen in the future, but right now I don't want to see you with anyone else. So you can keep hating me. Since we haven't interacted much yet, it's better if you leave early."

This was somewhat insincere, because he wasn't sure if he could really let Karuizawa go now.

"You don't want me to be with others, yet you're telling me to leave? Are you planning to make me stay single forever?" Karuizawa found this somewhat amusing.

As she met his gaze, her voice unconsciously softened.

"I... I don't know. For someone as terrible as you, I should probably punch you. But my chest feels tight... I don't feel like hitting you."

"I don't want to lie to you, and I don't want to force you to make a decision either."

"Did you tell them about this too?"

"Sakayanagi-san probably guessed my thoughts. I only told Kikyo-chan and Honami-chan."

Hearing his phrasing, Karuizawa felt confused—how could honorifics and intimate nicknames appear in the same sentence?

Moreover, the honorific was used for Sakayanagi Arisu?

"Honami-chan... is that Ichinose from Class B?" Karuizawa still managed to grasp the key point.

"She's the girlfriend I stole." Kaoru thought to himself—if he hadn't gone to the student council, Nagumo Miyabi might have made his move first.

Calling her a "stolen girlfriend" shouldn't be too much of an exaggeration.

Karuizawa stared at him blankly, finding it hard to connect Class B's extremely popular angel with the man before her.

No, no—they did have a connection! During the sports festival briefing!

Karuizawa still remembered Ichinose Honami's somewhat unpleasant expression at that time.

She'd observed the crowd for a long while, never imagining the real deal was him.

"Stolen?"

Karuizawa seemed to have misunderstood, thinking Kaoru had become some kind of homewrecker.

"It's a long story. In short, the situation was similar to yours—I made a deal with her too."

"Did you touch her?"

Kaoru was momentarily speechless.

Since when had she become so blunt?

Seeing his reaction, Karuizawa's face grew warm, clearly aware of what Kaoru was thinking.

But she had to ask—after all, Ichinose's circumstances were better than hers.

Yet Kaoru's silence was answer enough.

She let out a sigh of relief.

No wonder Kaoru had been so hands-on with her—their relationship wasn't built on feelings, just a transaction.

Then Karuizawa felt puzzled again—if Kushida Kikyo and Ichinose Honami knew about Kaoru's thoughts, why were they still willing to stay with him?

This was probably something even Kaoru himself hadn't figured out.

"Really... this is way too terrible. Absolutely awful. It makes me so angry." Karuizawa sounded extremely irritated, then looked directly into his eyes.

"You're not planning to let me go, are you? You're going to be responsible for me for life, is that it?"

In response, Kaoru just nodded.

"Heh—" Karuizawa laughed. "What an infuriating guy. I really want to punch you. But before that, there's one thing I need to confirm."

"Are you asking me to sign a life-and-death waiver?" Kaoru actually had the nerve to joke.

Karuizawa angrily punched him—hard.

After a moment, she grew visibly uncomfortable and asked in a small voice.

"Do you like me?"

"I wouldn't call it love yet, but yes, I like you, Kei." Kaoru paused briefly. "Call it superficial attraction or selfish possessiveness—whatever it is, the point is, I like you."

By the time he said "like," Karuizawa had already covered her burning cheeks, her reddened ears peeking out.

A muffled voice escaped through her fingers.

"You're not allowed to say you like me in public from now on."

Finally, she added in an even quieter whisper:

"A-about earlier... I need time to think... It was so awful, just remembering makes me angry... B-but I probably won't leave you."

Though Karuizawa stammered the entire time, Kaoru understood exactly what she meant.

Chapter 279: Slurp

Kaoru didn't force her to make an immediate decision.

No one could accept something like that right away—in fact, he should be grateful she didn't slap him.

The two quickly packed up and left the gymnasium with their respective groups.

....

Before they knew it, several more days passed.

Horikita Suzune still kept her promise and visited Kaoru's room.

Out of consideration for her feelings, Kaoru didn't push things too far—he only asked her to wear a gym uniform.

The athletic shorts hugged her perky backside perfectly, leaving her flushed with embarrassment.

Kaoru held her thighs and gave them a thorough slurp, then took advantage of her shyness to lick her armpits.

They were clean and smooth, with no rough texture at all.

Given Suzune's personality, she wouldn't bother with deliberate grooming—was she just naturally hairless?

When Kaoru voiced his question, she didn't hold back, granting his secret wish of being beaten up by a cold, beautiful girl.

After the beating, Suzune awkwardly asked a question of her own.

"Are you the anchor for the relay race?"

Kaoru, who had been lying on the floor, suddenly opened his eyes—right in time to see a pair of plump thighs standing beside him, along with the girl's round, perky ass.

"Is it about me? Or the student council president?"

Seeing his teasing smirk, Suzune pressed her lips together, visibly displeased.

"Can't I want to know about both?"

"I don't know the president's event lineup, but I could convince him to take the anchor position." Kaoru chuckled.

"As for me? I don't plan on being the anchor."

Before Suzune could feel relieved, she frowned. "Why not?"

"Usually, the anchor is the one with the best stamina, right?" Kaoru sighed dramatically.

"Sadly, I'm just a useless guy."

Suzune almost scoffed, but then she remembered his recent training—he really wasn't particularly outstanding.

In some events, she felt she could even catch up to him.

Suddenly, a strange feeling welled up inside her.

Her heart began to pound.

"Oh? Is that so?" Suzune suppressed her emotions, but her tone dripped with mockery.

"I thought I'd get to defeat you fair and square in the competition. Or are you just scared of losing?"

"Indeed, the thought of embarrassing myself keeps me up every night," Kaoru clung to the girl's leg again.

"Right now, all I can think about is the scent of mama Suzune."

Unsurprisingly, Horikita Suzune beat him up once more.

In the midst of the scuffle, she suddenly realized they had somehow ended up rolling around together.

"You bastard! I don't care about you. There's no way I'm losing this time!"

Flushing red, Horikita Suzune straightened her clothes.

She seemed to be growing increasingly casual around Kaoru, often finding herself tangled up with him unintentionally.

After she left, Kaoru silently counted his rewards.

Today, he had managed to extort three wishes from Horikita Suzune.

Combined with the previous four, he was close to reaching another ten-wish milestone.

.....

With only a week left until the Sports Festival, when Kaoru arrived in class the next day, Katsuragi was finalizing the event participation order.

Since the two classes were cooperating, some advantages had to be conceded.

Katsuragi planned to sacrifice certain students to secure as many points as possible—himself included.

In terms of overall ability, Class A was undeniably superior.

Meanwhile, Class D had to yield many points to ensure their students wouldn't end up in last place.

There was no helping it—Class D feared written exams.

However, as Katsuragi announced the participation order, some students couldn't help but glance at Sakayanagi Arisu.

Yet, the latter showed no intention of speaking up.

Instead, it was Kamuro Masumi who voiced dissatisfaction, frowning as she asked.

"Why am I assigned as the anchor for the relay race?"

"Because your physical stamina is excellent, Kamuro. With Kito, Hashimoto, and Mitoma running ahead, I believe you're the most suitable for the final leg," Katsuragi replied calmly, as if his decision had been thoroughly considered.

Truthfully, even he wasn't entirely sure why.

While Kamuro's stamina was good, she wasn't the fastest runner in Class A.

"Tch, fine, whatever," Kamuro grumbled, though she had no strong objections to being the anchor.

"Everyone has been performing well so far. Even those who weren't initially skilled in sports have gradually caught up. I believe this progress deserves praise, regardless of the Sports Festival."

Anticipating the upcoming outcome, Katsuragi felt compelled to prepare Class A mentally, offering comfort in advance.

"Kehehehe! There's nothing difficult about this. I might even come in first!" Totsuka Yahiko was the first to rally behind their leader.

"Exactly! We're Class A—the top of this school. There's no way we'll lose!"

"The school's reward for first place is way too stingy—just 50 points. We probably won't break 2,000 Class Points until the next exam!"

"Ehehe, the other classes are so envious of us. It's almost embarrassing!"

Instantly, the classroom buzzed with lively chatter, most students wearing confident smiles.

From the start of the term until now, apart from a minor setback in the VIP Exam, they had never lost.

Right now, they couldn't even fathom the possibility of defeat.

Katsuragi felt a faint unease.

He could only hope Kaoru would be the one to wake them up.

Otherwise, Sakayanagi—or someone else—might seize this opportunity, and Class A could suffer even greater losses.

Kaoru didn't have any particular thoughts about it—children who've never been disciplined won't learn obedience, and victory or defeat is common in any contest.

His role was to discipline the children, while Katsuragi's job was to comfort them.

As the homeroom session ended, regular classes began.

During Mashima Tomonari's English lesson, Kaoru raised his hand, claiming he had a stomachache, and was promptly granted permission to leave.

He deliberately left his phone behind to avoid anyone tracking his location.

Feigning a trip to the restroom, he abruptly changed course and headed downstairs.

Soon, Kaoru arrived at the track field.

The morning sunlight was far from harsh, casting a golden-red glow across the entire grounds.

Figures moved about, occasional shouts ringing through the air.

Among them, Kiryuin Fuka stood out as the most energetic.

Kaoru lingered in the shadows of a corner, silently observing the second-year Class B's practice session.

With the sports festival approaching and this being a physical education class, they held nothing back, displaying their true capabilities without restraint.

Not far away, Kiriya Ikuyo had already noticed his presence—after all, he had specifically requested to come here.

Yet, Kiriya didn't greet him.

At this critical moment, they couldn't afford to alert Nagumo Miyabi's suspicions.

Chapter 280: Unfairness

As expected, Kiryuin Fuka was the most outstanding—no one in second-year Class B could even come close to matching her.

Kaoru calculated the advantages he currently held.

The sports festival rankings were determined by total points—technically, they didn't need to win every event, as long as their overall score surpassed the second-place class.

Thanks to the "Time-Space Camera," he already knew most of second-year Class A's event lineup.

All that remained was figuring out how to outscore them in the overall tally.

Kiryuin Fuka was the key breakthrough player.

As a top-tier expert hired by Kaoru at a high price, she was expected to secure the championship without any other girl being able to catch up to her.

However, simply defeating the girls' group was not enough to earn more points.

"Energy candies,"

"Imitator Game,"

"Vitality soup,"

"Dominators' wristbands"...

In an instant, a number of rewards flashed through Kaoru Mitoma's mind.

If those options didn't work, he would have to resort to the rewards from the previous world as a last resort.

Kaoru noted down the names of the second-year B class students and then quietly left the athletics field, returning to the first-year classroom as if nothing had happened.

Although his excuse was quite legitimate, he had been gone for a little too long, which seemed to catch Sakayanagi Arisu's attention.

Kaoru was prepared for her inquiries, but instead of Sakayanagi coming over, it was Kamuro Masumi who asked him a few questions.

"Don't tell me you went to meet someone?"

"Kamuro-san, I occasionally need to use the restroom too."

"I didn't see you in the restroom."

"..."

Kaoru wanted to tell her that he had indeed thought about following the cute idol, but that didn't mean he liked being followed by a cute girl.

"Don't worry, that wasn't my intention," Kamuro Masumi said, pouting.

There was no way she would meddle in others' affairs.

Kaoru was a bit skeptical, but seeing her impatient expression, it seemed genuine.

So, the next day, Kaoru raised his hand and calmly walked out of the classroom in front of the whole class, claiming it was due to a stomachache.

Due to the different locations in the class schedule, he ended up in the gym this time, where he saw the second-year A class practicing various events in an orderly manner.

Among them, a boy with tousled blonde hair, exuding a carefree attitude, sat on a bench, chatting happily with a few girls beside him.

Kaoru was slightly surprised; he hadn't expected Nagumo Miyabi to still enjoy his youth even after losing certain desires.

No, perhaps it was precisely because he had lost some desires that Nagumo was now limited to just chatting.

From the reactions around, it seemed this scene was nothing unusual; only Iijima occasionally stole glances, perhaps because one of the girls was his goddess.

Similarly, Iijima quickly noticed Kaoru's arrival and seemed a bit excited.

Kaoru gave him a slight nod, signaling him not to make a fuss, and continued to observe quietly from the corner.

Although he no longer needed to watch the second-year A class practice, he still had to maintain appearances.

It seemed there was no particular object of interest, but the scene of Nagumo teasing the girls was particularly eye-catching.

At that moment, someone suddenly reached out and lightly tapped Kaoru on the back.

"Don't move."

A very pleasant voice, tinged with a hint of playfulness, made it unnecessary to think about the identity of the person.

"May I ask what reward I would receive for surrendering right now?" Kaoru said, raising both hands and slowly turning around, only to see Asahina Nazuna standing behind him, her face serious, her right hand mimicking a gun.

"There's no reward; spies are executed on the spot," Asahina Nazuna said with a stern expression.

Kaoru cautiously took a small step back, and her 'gun' moved slightly, always aimed at him.

"Isn't surrendering supposed to come with leniency, followed by a hefty reward to entice him to reveal the information he possesses?"

"That seems to be the case," Asahina Nazuna pondered for a moment, poking him with her 'gun.'

"Do you have any information to share with me? If not, I'll have to execute you."

"As long as Asahina Senpai is willing to give me a little reward, I'll tell you right away," Kaoru replied immediately.

"Shameless," Asahina Nazuna pretended to put away her 'gun'.

"I'll let you off today; hurry back. I remember it's still class time, right?"

"Are you going back to practice, Asahina Senpai?" Kaoru asked, not in a hurry to leave.

At that moment, she was wearing a somewhat provocative gym outfit, her slender figure hidden beneath a thin short-sleeved top, revealing a large expanse of snowy white arms.

Her chest boasted two high, perky mounds, and it seemed one could faintly see the color beneath, but upon closer inspection, it appeared to be merely his imagination, as he was simply staring at her collarbone.

Her long, fair legs were naturally pressed together, not wearing stockings, just a pair of long cotton socks.

The curve of her lower abdomen was somewhat alluring, and the girl's hips seemed to be maturing, allowing Kaoru to catch a whiff of a faint, elusive fragrance.

Her round ass was a feast for the eyes.

"Of course, I need to go back to practice."

Although she said this, a hint of disappointment inevitably flashed in Asahina Nazuna's eyes.

"So, you didn't skip class, Senpai?" Kaoru was even more surprised.

Asahina Nazuna shot him a glare, dissatisfied. "What, do you think I'm that kind of person?"

"I didn't mean it that way. I just didn't see you on the field earlier and thought you might be in the restroom or had something to take care of," Kaoru explained reasonably.

"And besides, it just feels like Nagumo-senpai wouldn't be so... a bit too close with other girls in front of you."

Seeing his hesitant yet cautious gaze, Asahina Nazuna fell silent.

Although she had grown accustomed to Nagumo Miyabi's carefree nature, it still felt uncomfortable.

It was precisely because she cared about this that she had rejected Nagumo's advances.

And Nagumo, because of her rejection, had become increasingly indulgent in his life, treating the girls around him as mere pretty vases to play with, except for Asahina Nazuna, who was different.

Asahina Nazuna felt quite disgusted by Nagumo's mindset.

However, now was not the time to discuss that.

"I've known Miyabi for a long time; he's just that kind of person. It should be considered part of his charm," Asahina Nazuna said unenthusiastically.

"Everyone is used to it, and he hasn't done anything particularly outrageous."

"So, Asahina-senpai can accept this side of Nagumo-senpai?"

"..."

The atmosphere between them suddenly fell silent.

Asahina Nazuna stared at him intently, noticing that he was completely unashamed, instead looking at her with a strange expression.

It wasn't pity, nor was it questioning, and it certainly wasn't the surprise of finding an opportunity; it was a feeling she couldn't quite articulate, as if he simply felt puzzled and wanted to understand her thoughts.

In response, Asahina Nazuna smiled softly, gathering the strands of hair by her cheek, seemingly teasingly saying.

"What kind of answer does the junior want from the senpai?"

"Indecisiveness; I think it's unfair," Kaoru replied.

Asahina Nazuna blinked, wondering who it was unfair to.