

Cote 81

Chapter 81: Relax Yourself

Every day after school, the cafe was always packed with customers, most of them girls. It was like this place had become their social hub.

Kaoru Mitoma glanced at the girl sitting across from him. The stir stick in his cup swayed gently from time to time. The new dessert, supposedly a specialty, sat untouched beside her—she didn't seem interested at all.

Maybe someone recognized Amikura Mako, because he could sense a lot of eyes on them—curious, judgmental, like tiny needles pricking at her, making her visibly uncomfortable. Right now, Amikura Mako probably regretted coming here with him.

"Feeling pretty frustrated, huh?" Kaoru Mitoma suddenly said.

The stir stick slowly came to a stop. Amikura Mako lowered her eyes, her voice a little lost.

"I just don't get it. Why does it have to be like this?"

"There are always going to be things in this world you dislike or even despise. The things you take for granted are actually the most precious." Kaoru Mitoma took a bite of the dessert.

"This tiramisu is pretty good. It's a little sweet."

"So it's my problem?" Amikura Mako wasn't used to the way he talked.

Who discusses something this serious while eating?

"It's not your fault, and it's not their fault either. The only thing at fault is this school." Kaoru Mitoma paused. "The school deliberately divides us—there are the obedient, well-behaved students, and the ones who don't follow the rules. They pit us against each other, and try to shape us into what they call 'talent' according to their standards."

Amikura Mako took a sip of her coffee. It was a bit bitter—maybe there just wasn't enough sugar.

"But, no matter what, you really can't stand Class C and the people who deliberately twist the truth, right?"

"Hate them..."

"If that's the case, why not try this dessert?" Kaoru Mitoma said.

"Cake can give you some nutrition, provide the energy your body needs, and it doesn't taste bad either."

Normally, Amikura Mako would have finished the piece of cake in front of her in no time, but right now, she didn't have any appetite at all.

"Are you trying to comfort me, Mitoma-kun?" Girls are sensitive by nature, and seeing him standing awkwardly near the entrance, then inviting her out to a café like this—this sudden concern made her feel a little uneasy.

But she couldn't help feeling a bit grateful to Kaoru Mitoma. After all, they didn't really have any kind of relationship, and it wouldn't have mattered if Kaoru Mitoma had just ignored her.

"It's because I'm also someone who deserves to be looked down on, and I get what you're going through." Kaoru Mitoma's tone didn't waver at all.

There probably aren't many jobs more stressful than being an idol—rumors and scandals just keep coming, one after another. Amikura Mako stared at him for no reason.

After a while, she mumbled something under her breath, too quiet to make out.

....

About an hour later, Amikura followed him to the Keyaki Shopping Center near the school, which had all kinds of shops and facilities. They went up to the second floor together, and immediately saw a big sign.

"Gym?" Amikura read the word out loud, a little confused.

"It's a new place that just opened. For newcomers, they're offering a free trial period right now. You can try it out before deciding if you want to join."

"No, no, that's not what I meant... "

"Are you wondering why I brought you to a place like this?"

Amikura hesitantly nodded. To be honest, she felt like things like this had nothing to do with her, though getting some exercise sounded nice.

"Letting off steam every now and then is actually good for your mental and physical health," Kaoru said.

"If your head is full of all sorts of stuff, it just wears you out mentally. It's better to just throw all that aside, work out until you're exhausted, and then crash into bed."

He wasn't just making that up—idols used to do similar things, keeping themselves as busy as possible. And in this process, Kaoru was in charge of being the training partner.

Yeah, usually the punching bag for all kinds of martial arts. It seemed impossible to refuse him, so Amikura could only nod. The two of them walked to the front desk, showed their student IDs, and were then led into the gym by a staff member, heading to their respective locker rooms to change into workout clothes.

Kaoru changed into his workout clothes and returned to the exercise area, only to see a few students around. Among them, he spotted Koenji Rokusuke.

"Yo, long time no see, Mitoma Boy!"

"Did you use up all your points?"

"That's about it."

"I'll send you more points when I get the chance."

"Heh, Fascinating!"

Kaoru just gave a half-hearted response to this young master who liked to throw in a few English words now and then, then he saw Amikura finally come out of the changing room. The girl had changed out of her school uniform and into a slightly loose sports T-shirt, her pale arms exposed, and the swell of her chest was obvious, pushing up the shirt a little.

It was easy to imagine her figure—definitely more promising than Sakayanagi Arisu. She wore only a pair of athletic shorts on her lower half, tightly hugging her perky little butt. The round curve of her hips was enough to set anyone's imagination running wild, not to mention her smooth, fair legs on full display.

She seemed to notice Kaoru gaze, her pretty face flushing a little. Even though she knew it was just a simple gym outfit, being stared at like this made her feel strangely self-conscious.

Seeing the two of them like this, Koenji Rokosuke couldn't help but show a weird smile.

"Want to start with the treadmill?" Kaoru asked naturally.

"How do I use it?"

"I'll help you adjust the settings, let's start from low speed and gradually move up to medium."

Kaoru tried to explain the controls to her in the simplest way possible. Amikura stepped onto the treadmill and slowly began to run.

At first, she was a bit unsteady, but she gradually got used to it.

"Are you tired?"

"A little... but it's okay... "

"Keep your breathing steady, don't think about anything else."

"Huff... huff... "

"Want to speed up?"

"Eh, eh, wait, wait, I don't think I can... haa... uuuu... "

After about half an hour, Amikura was almost out of breath, her face flushed red, sweat soaking her hair and making it stick to her forehead and neck. Even her T-shirt was faintly clinging to her body, outlining her slender, petite figure.

"How do you feel?" Kaoru looked at her small chest, rising and falling with her breath.

"So tired, I can't believe I ran for so long."

Amikura felt a bit incredulous; she knew her own athletic limits.

"As long as you keep at it, you can do it." Kaoru smiled.

"Wanna try something else?"

She was about to turn him down, but the physical exhaustion and tingling actually felt kind of nice. Especially being drenched in sweat, her whole body felt hot, and her heart was pounding.

So, Amikura Mako ended up following Kaoru Mitoma to try out a bunch of other gym equipment. They kept working out for almost an hour before finally calling it quits.

"You've done enough for today. If you keep going, you'll hurt your muscles. Remember to relax your body when you get home."

"Want me to give you a massage?"

He looked really serious about it, and Amikura wasn't sure if she should be mad or not.

"No way!"

Being all sweaty in front of a guy and then having him massage her from head to toe—just the thought of it was enough to kill a girl.