Chapter 20: Step 3 of My Strategy.

Bleep, Bleep, Bleep, Blee–

Smack.

I slammed hard on my alarm radio to stop the ‘bleeping’ that abruptly woke me up.

It was quite a loud one, so even on its first ‘bleep’, it left me slightly awake (and very irritable) as I desperately tried to endure it, but eventually I fully woke up and smacked it.

“Heugh… Well, time to get ready for school.”

Anyway, with that done, I quickly arranged my bed and room before taking a shower. While my hair dried, I read my textbooks in preparation for the special test.

Unfortunately, without my hair gel, my hair would cover my eyes, making me adjust every few seconds.

“Heugh,” I sighed, repositioning my hair. “Why couldn’t I just have been born with transparent hair instead of green hair, especially on today of all days?”

After a quick study session, I put on my hair gel and uniform before packing my bag with most of my academic materials and leaving my room.

I headed out earlier than usual because of the upcoming exam—today was the first day of the special test.

I really hope everyone in class read enough on Saturday and Sunday. Should I have reminded them to?

…Nah, they’re not kids.

At any rate, it felt weird to be leaving the dorms this early because normally I left late, so girls wouldn’t flock

around me, saying something like “Ito-kun, look over here!” or something similar.
They did so even when I left for class, but it was a reduced amount and was fairly manageable. Though today no one flocked around me because I did something different.
However, today I used the Class Epsilon pathway—the reason why I barely used it was that it wasn’t taken care of by the groundkeepers and was basically a “no-go area” despite being my class’s pathway.
Classic.
I hurriedly ran through it so no one would see and report me for being on unkept grounds.
On entering school, I quickly went to the library and hit the books, reading important subjects like maths, Japanese, English, and other subjects.
I did so till I heard the sound of the bell, and then I quickly bolted to the classroom door.
Luckily, I arrived before homeroom.
Everyone seemed engrossed in study materials—well, most people at least, as some still talked about needless things.
I wanted to tell them to stop, but as I was about to head to the class’s podium, Jackson-sensei entered the classroom.
“Good morning, class,” she said, her tone and expression as dead as ever. “As we all know, today is the start of the special test, and we all know how important that is, right?”

No one had the nerve to answer or even nod, but we all understood.
We were all about to give our best—well, except maybe Nakamura and me, considering how he acted.
“That being said, one of the students is missing.”
Hmm...?! Who would miss this?!
I checked left and right—frantically looking for who she was talking about—but I saw no one.
W-Wait! No, he wouldn’t!!
It was then that I turned around and checked a certain person’s desk, and as I suspected, he wasn’t there.
What the hell?! Where’s Nakamura?!!!
My mind wandered around—was this part of his plan? I couldn’t tell yet, but I knew he had a plan from when he ‘mistakenly’ switched the test questions.
It was quite obvious that it was planned; however, I didn’t think much of it because I expected something—no, I hoped for something.
I wanted Nakamura to help the class unconventionally, like he did last time when he solved the Class Beta debacle.
I was desperate for a miracle; however, I still knew that I couldn’t just hope for one.
Especially when the test had already started, so I had to find Nakamura before his reputation got worse from being late.
“I’m sure you all have noticed, but the missing classmate is none other than Nakamura Eiya,” Jackson-sensei said, sounding a bit bored.

“What the hell?”
“Why’s he even doing this?”
“Yeah, even if you don’t know squat, at least just come and write.”
My classmates were clearly not happy with Nakamura’s decisions, especially Honochi; she was biting her nails.
But really, what was Nakamura doing—did he oversleep? Or forget? No, I doubted that, so what was he doing? Was this a strategy?
Anyway, I had to act now before their irritation and anger turned to resentment.
“Jackson-sensei, can I go call him?” I asked.
My classmates’ eyes gleamed at my proposition. They praised me for helping, but never did a thing. Of course, I could understand why they did so.
Everyone loves a hero, but no one wants the added struggles that come with being one.
“No, you can’t. Just sit and wait for your paper.”
“But, I—”
“Just do what I said.”
Everyone’s expression significantly darkened, and so did mine.
We weren’t all that good in academics, so lacking someone would really be a bust; perhaps that was why Honochi looked worried.
It was a very serious situation, but we couldn’t do anything about it. In fact, all I could do was wonder one thing:
What the hell are you planning, Nakmaura Eiya?

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“Heugh,” I yawned.

Ahh, right, you’re probably confused as to what’s going on.

Uh, well, I was in the bushes outside the special building where the test questions were stored. You see, I was waiting for the people carrying the test questions. When they left, I would enter.

I had to be quick because today’s test had started, and I was nowhere to be seen.

I wonder what Jackson-sensei is thinking.

Anyway, after 3-5 minutes of waiting, staff members left the special building.

It was finally time for step 3 of my strategy. After the people inside all left, I dropped my phone, belt, watch, and bracelet in my schoolbag behind the tree where I had hidden, and then slipped into the place.

Of course, I didn’t wear my uniform but brought a change of clothes as well as a coat and hat so as to obscure my face, though I didn't really have to.

The school discouraged cheating; however, that only applied to the test itself—I had learnt it through a clue.

I happened to remember Jackson-sensei’s words, which brought the said clue to my mind and helped with my train of thought—moreover, if they were against it, the cameras would have caught me before I even came here.

Anyway, at the entrance, I noticed metal detectors, though I expected that.

It was why I dropped my phone, belt, watch, and bracelet at the tree I hid behind.
They probably did that because they didn't want teachers to bring their phones and help their students cheat when they dropped off the questions; that was also why there was no security personnel.
In fact, there was a box that was set aside to put one's belongings in. I noticed that someone left their ring—it was a wedding ring.
I admired it before quickly slipping into the special building.
In the lobby, I noticed some untouched papers; on closer inspection, I realised they were test questions. However, if I touched the test scripts directly, I would be leaving a trace.
Of course, I brought gloves for this exact reason, just like my coat and hat. Luckily, I packed them in my travelling box (suitcase) when I came to this school.
Not that I expected that I'd ever need to use this stuff anymore.
Anyway, the papers were wrapped by grade and date. I ignored the test scripts of other grade levels except my own.
I searched for the paper we had today, but there were no sheets there.
It was then that I realised that they made a sheet for each person, meaning there was no extra sheet that I could carry away.

It was quite the revelation, though it didn't really affect me because I simply checked through the other sheets, reading every single question and answer for each day, and then I left.

With my job done, I quickly left the special building and went back to the tree to pick up my stuff. Unbeknownst to me, after I left, someone came in—the owner of the wedding ring.

I was about to go when the person was leaving, but the rustling I made while changing into my uniform drowned out the sound until the person heard it, and by then it was too late.

"Come out," the mysterious person said.

Shit.

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Author's Note:

Anyway, remember to comment, share, and leave a review. Thanks for reading the chapter, and see you in the next one.