Chapter 19.2: Just Three More Steps

With that done, I left the rooftop. I was still thinking a bit about Suzuki Aiya.

She was really someone from somewhere similar to ***there***. It was surprising but not impossible, especially with the NE Project.

That being said, there were 5 of these students in this school, and I only knew 3 of them.

What was scarier was that they could work together because Suzuki worked with Kaneko to expel me.

While I didn't ask her directly, it was quite obvious that they had made a deal.

I didn't know the contents yet and would probably have to ask Suzuki after this, but what was on my mind right now was the mastermind of the class records theft.

"Maybe it was—" I was about to come to a major conclusion, but the bell signalled that such thoughts should be at the back of my mind for now.

Ring, ring, ring.

Lunch break had ended, so I had to head back to class.

On my way there, I noticed a text from Kagura.

[Kagura-chan: You didn't come to the library for lunch break today. Did something happen? Fuji was worried sick.]

[Me: Sorry, I was a bit busy.]

[Kagura-chan: Busy? Busy doing what?]

I frantically thought of a lie—wow, I really lied a lot today.

Alas, I still had to tell two more.

[Me: I had to meet the nurse. She said I had to come during lunch break.]
[Kagura-chan: Oh, I guess that makes sense. What even happened to you? Ito was also looking for you.]
[Me: Tell him not to worry. Nothing serious happened. I just fell and hit my nose.]
[Kagura-chan: Oh, ok. But you can't tell me you stayed in the nurse's office for the entire break. What happened next?]
Seems I had to add another lie, huh. Well, it was a natural question for her to ask, but couldn't she keep her curiosity to herself?
Heugh.
I sighed inwardly as I was still walking to class, though at a very leisurely and casual pace.
[Me: I was hungry and didn't feel like going to class, so I took a detour to the cafeteria.]
[Kagura-chan: How can that be when your Rp isn't enough for such purchases?]
Oh, right, I told her and Ito my balance a while ago.
Talk about the mistake of a lifetime.
I paused to think of a response, but it took longer than usual, so Kagura sent another text.
[Kagura-chan: Or are you hiding something?]
Somehow, that text seemed more sinister than just electrical impulses on my phone; it was like a thief being caught red-handed—it quickened my response.
[Me: 😅 You got me; I just bought a drink and sat down for a breather before the bell rang.]

[Kagura-chan: Oh. Also, Nakamura-kun, hurry to class; Kobayashi-sensei is here.]
“Huh?”
Shit! I completely forgot that I still had class today.
I ran to my class at full throttle. Luckily, no one was in the hallway, though that was also unnerving because it meant that I would be the last person in class.
Needless to say, when I entered class, I was indeed the last person.
I was immediately bombarded with English questions by Kobayashi-sensei, to which I made sure to fail most of them because I didn’t want the attention I got last time.
The day went on normally with the casual bullying from Honda and Co. until it was the end of the day.
Everyone left the class, but no one seemed like they were going to the library—maybe Ito had told them to rest for today.
I was about to stand up and leave when Honda and Co. came to me—Emi had her usual cheery smile, Honda had her condescending one, Aimi looked happy, and Ayumi still had her signature deadpan.
“Ready?” Honda asked.
“Could we do this after the special test?”
“...?!” The girls all seemed surprised; it seemed they expected me to be consumed by fear.
“If I don’t read, then we could get last and lose even more Rp,” I added.
“Shut up and let me think for a moment,” Honda glared—she seemed a bit conflicted.

Ok, Ms 'I'm actually super smart.'
On one side, she wanted to play with her toy, and on the other, she did not want to lose more Rp.
While she was still trying to make a decision, I looked over to Ayumi, maintaining eye contact for five seconds before looking away.
"Honochi-chan," she said.
"Yes?" Honda replied.
"Let's just leave him for now."
"Huh? But—"
"But nothing. We need to study so we don't end up last."
"Yeah, I agree with Ayumi," Aimi said.
"Me too," Emi affirmed.
"Well, if you all agree, then fine."
The girls soon left, and I was left alone. I was quite thankful to Ayumi, but now wasn't the time to focus on that.
I brought out my phone and searched through it to find the first questions I had created, then went to Jackson-sensei's faculty room.
Unlike the second time I came, she allowed me in with no real issue.
"Here are the finalised test questions," I showed her the questions on my phone.
"Alright, let me go through it."
It didn't take her a lot of time to finish reading it—it took about 5 minutes, less than I expected.

“It’s different from what Ito showed me—the supposed final version. This is ok, but the way the questions are asked is a bit…”
“But can it work?”
“Yes, it can.”
“Alright then, I shall take my leave,” I turned around to leave, but Jackson-sensei asked a question.
“Did your team approve this?”
“So you know that there’s a committee for test questions?”
“Answer the question.”
“Just inspect my results, not my means.”
“Naka—”
Before she could finish her sentence, I left. I didn’t wanna seem disrespectful, but her questioning would probably not end anytime soon.
Anyway, I used my old questions because the first questions I made were written only in Kanji and would be very hard for a first-year student to understand because of the lack of okurigana and particles.
(Writer Note: Don’t ask me why or how; tell ChatGPT to explain cuz I’m too lazy.)
It would, therefore, make most sentences ambiguous; however, I made sure that it was something that most first-years would know, but not too easy.
I made the questions calculation-heavy, to have conceptual traps, and to have multi-step reasoning.
It would be hard to answer under normal conditions, but with the kanji, it would be way harder.

I didn’t plan on doing this originally when I heard the rules on Monday; instead, I planned on forcing Jackson-sensei to put in insolvable questions.
However, after I finished my deductions about teachers, I concluded that teachers probably couldn’t just put whatever they wanted, and the school still decided.
Anyway, with all this done, I went back to the dorms and informed the members of the committee that I ‘accidentally’ gave Jackson-sensei the wrong questions, but she accepted them so quickly that I didn't notice.
[Ito Yuuto: This is very bad; we might be screwed.]
[Kagura-chan: Yeah, what the hell do we do now?]
Arakawa didn’t say a word.
[Me: I apologise. Also, here are the test questions. The first.pdf]
Everyone read it and quickly changed their demeanours—especially Ito.
[Ito Yuuto: Yes, this will work. This is even better than the last one. Don’t you all agree?]
[Kagura-chan: Yup, I agree.]
[The Perfect Being: I also agree.]
[Ito Yuuto: Alright then, I’d like to ask everyone to delete the file, and also thank you all for working with me. See you all on Monday.]
With that, the committee came to an end, and the group was deleted. I lay on my bed thinking of all that had happened thus far, and remembered one thing.
Just three more steps and my plan is finished.
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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.