Chapter 21: I Lose?

After everyone apologised, I quickly made sure to forgive them. Although my plan was deceitful, I *was* still wronged, but now I made sure not to be bitter towards them.

“Don’t worry, guys, I completely understand. You don’t need to bow—”

“No, we do,” Yoshida said, her head still bowed. “I don’t even think we deserve your forgiveness.”

That may be a bit too much.

“You don’—”

A teacher suddenly entered—Ah, it slipped my mind that we still had class today.

Anyway, we greeted him, and it was now time for class. I was told to go back to my seat since everything was fixed.

I actually preferred my present seat since it was close to the door, but oh well.

I moved back, and class started—and yes, it was as boring as always, so I still ended up looking outside the window.

All my plans went well from step one to step four. From when I got expelled, a lot of stuff had to be handled.

My reputation was in the mud; there was a supposed traitor, I was being bullied, and there was a special test—to top it all, I was told by the chairman to lead my class to victory.

After some investigation and deduction, I created the steps of a grand plan to handle each problem.

Step 1 was to handle my reputation and find the traitor.
Step 2 was to handle my reputation.
Step 3 was to handle the special test.
Step 4 was to finalise the reputation matter and completely end my bullying.
The steps were distinct yet interconnected, and while they were detailed and fully planned, they relied on luck.
Moreover, I still had step 5 and some questions that I would ask Suzuki.
“Hey,” I called to her.
“What is it?
“So, are you helping Kaneko, like some sort of alliance or…?”
“No, we are all trying to individually expel you, no teamwork. That being said, Kaneko made a contract that he would give me 2,000,000 Rp if I successfully expelled you. Of course, I already had a hatred for you, so it aligned—does that answer your question?”
“Yes, so you have 2 million Rp?”
“No, I mean, aren’t you still here? It only counted if you stayed expelled.”
It explained why she helped him, and it also made me understand a bit about Kaneko’s wallet, though he could have made such a deal without the money.
Nah.
I was sure that Suzuki would make sure to confirm it, so that was out of the question. And also made me know who called Yumemiya on the night before my expulsion.

It was Kaneko. While I had a hunch, I wasn't sure, but now it all fits into place, except for why he asked for student records and why it was sent to the chatroom, but I left that out of my mind for now and texted Yoshida.
[Me: Did you get the Rp?]
[Yellow Bear: Yes, how'd you know?]
I already cracked the code for how Rp worked. While yes, it depended on reputation, it didn't mean you had to take a long time building Rp up.
There was a sure way to get a lot of Rp or lose a lot of Rp. This school existed like a prison, but also like a political space.
What helped Rp the most was either a scandal or amazing news.
A scandal worked better, but amazing news was also good, particularly good news that changed the view of a person.
Also, in both cases, it didn't matter what the scandal or amazing news was, but how people reacted to it.
That was why Suzuki cried to elicit more attention, and that was why the rumour about Takagaki didn't work.
Plus, proof also helped.
I combined all these elements to get as much Rp from my class as possible.
As of now, I have 63,000 Rp in my account. While I didn't know how they decided the numbers, that didn't really matter.
Another thing was that people who helped build the story would also benefit from it.

[Me: I promised, didn’t I?]
[Yellow Bear: You planned this?]
[Me: Yes.]
[Yellow Bear: Thank you, thank you, thank you.]
I could feel the enthusiasm through the text. It was a shame that she would momentarily lose said enthusiasm.
[Me: Anyway, I need your help.]
[Yellow Bear: Sure.]
[Me: We need to confront Yumemiya.]
Yoshida saw the text but didn’t answer. It seemed she was still shaken by Yumemiya because she knew her weakness.
[Yellow Bear: Do we need to? Everything’s already fixed, isn’t it?]
[Me: Yes, we do. She’s a traitor.]
[Yellow Bear: Yes, but I’m sure she’s learnt her lesson, right?]
[Me: Don’t worry, I have a plan.]
[Yellow Bear: Are you sure?]
[Me: Do you trust me?]
It took some minutes for an answer, but it was the answer I expected.
[Yellow Bear: Yes.]
After all, Yoshida was a simple girl; no offence to her, of course.
Anyway, she turned to look at me from her phone, and I grinned while giving a thumbs up—that seemed to calm her down; she seemed to be ok.

With that done, I became bored again.
“Hey, Suzuki.”
“Yeah?”
“Wanna date me?”
“Hell no,” she replied quickly.
“Damn, at least act shocked or blush a bit.”
“I, for one, hate deception.”
“Liar,” I said under my breath.
“What did you say?”
“N-Nothing.”
“Please refrain from sullying my reputation with your words, because even the walls have ears,” she briefly glanced at Yumemiya—Suzuki had been whispering since, but was extra careful to make sure that I didn’t raise my volume.
Not that I would make such a mistake; I’m simply testing to see which personality you would show me.
Seems like you wanna be honest… for now.
Anyway, the rest of the day went uninterestingly; I went to the library and enjoyed my lunch break with Kagura and Fuji.
“Girls really care about make-up, huh?”
Kagura was schooling us on make-up, and I felt so out of place—Kagura apparently started teaching Fuji about it on the day I wasn’t with them, and even gave her a little assignment to research it.
“Good work, Fuji. You learnt about eyeshadow, lipstick, lip gloss, and even mascara.”
“That’s not all. I also learnt about foundation.”

Is she talking about the foundation of a building…?
“Now, it’s time for practice,” Kagura brought a strange box—it was probably a make-up kit from the looks of it.
“Practise on myself? I don’t really think I can do that yet,” Fuji stated.
“Yeah, that’s expected. But I never intended for you to practise on yourself.”
“Hmm? Who am I going to practise on then?”
Kagura looked over at me with a wide smile.
I was turned into a girl, but luckily, I ran away when they were halfway through the process.
At any rate, during class, Yoshida would occasionally turn back to look at me for reassurance about what was going to happen, to which I gave her a thumbs-up.
Anyway, after class ended, I waited for everyone else to leave, including those in the hallway, before leaving the classroom, but before I did, I gave her a side glance that told her to keep Yumemiya in class.
Of course, Yumemiya might have understood what we were doing and known I was behind it as I left later than usual; however, I didn’t exactly care, as it wouldn’t deviate from any of my plans.
Hypothetically, that is.
With that thought in mind, I went to get a soda and waited outside class, overhearing their conversation.
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Before the last period, I texted Yumemiya to stay in class. I told her that I would reveal what we did to the school.

Is this really going to work on her? Well, if it doesn't, that's more reason for Nakamura-kun to stop, right? Right? Yeah, and it wouldn't be my fault.
Unfortunately—I mean, uh, fortunately—she stayed in class, so things ended up going well, but Nakamura-kun didn't really tell me what to do, so I tried to just talk; however, she spoke before me.
"Well, that was a bold move; unfortunately, for you, there's no proof of what you speak of. So, why'd you tell me to stay?" Yumemiya asked, engrossed in her phone and barely paying attention to me.
I have to come up with a reason, or else she might leave.
"You said you'd help me with my Rp, but you didn't."
"Hmm...? Didn't Nakamura already help you? Think I didn't notice his schemes. Or don't tell me you want more Rp? Well, since you're an attention whore, I'm not exactly surprised," she replied, her tone condescending.
"...That doesn't change the fact that we made a deal."
"Hey, you *do* know that you should have denied what I said, right? Now I know that Nakamura *did* help you."
Shit!
"And you don't even know how to control your facial muscles either. I'm not surprised if Nakamura knows your weakness, too. So does he know? Wonder if you guys are partners. I'm right, aren't I?"
"..." I made sure to keep my face as calm as possible; I also kept quiet.
"I told you to deny, not to stay mute. Idiot."

“Shut up!” I screamed.
“Hey, who do you think you’re talking to? I have your weakness, remember?”
“And I have yours,” Nakamura walked in.
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“And I have yours,” I said, stepping into class.
It’s time for the final step of my plan—step 5.
“Was that staged? Cuz that was some amazing shit, man,” Yumemiya grinned as she slowly clapped. This was the most talkative I had ever seen her. “So, what’s my weakness?”
“I have a recording of your conversation with your sponsor.”
“Huh?”
I could only do this because of my huge increase in Rp; moreover, Yumemiya wasn’t really close to anyone in the class.
That was why she could instigate. In fact, I had barely heard her voice in class, even after being here for quite a while.
“You’re kidding?”
“No, I am not. I was there when you had a call with your sponsor—”
Yes, I was there, but I didn’t know something might emerge from that conversation, so I didn’t record it; I was just bluffing.
“Bullshit!” she screamed. “If you do that, I will also include Yoshida.”

“And I won’t care,” I shrugged, my tone having a hint of indifference—of course, I would, but I couldn’t let her know.
“Shit,” she swore. “If you do that, then it will interfere with Kaneko-senpai and me. Shit. Shit. Shit.”
You literally told Yoshida to deny, but here you are just blatantly giving away information.
“I won’t let you do this,” she brought out a taser. “Drop your phone or else.”
“Alright, relax. I’ll drop it very slowly,” I tried to slowly drop my phone, but the moment I did, she ran away.
I quickly followed her, inadvertently leaving my phone in the process.
I slowed down when she was in my line of sight because if I didn’t, then I would run faster than her, and I didn’t want to catch her, but to see if she’d lead me to Kaneko.
You see, I planned that if she tried to lead me to a weird place, then I would catch up and overtake her and force her to make a contract with me.
And in the case that she ran to her room, then I would force myself inside and force her to make a contract.
I’d rather try to avoid that method, but if I have to, I’ll go through with it—I can’t let Kaneko go!
In any case, she led me to the special building, but the more I ran, the weirder this felt.
Why would Kaneko want my class’s records? Was my information even there?

Unless maybe he was targeting someone else. Doubt it. And if he were targeting me, he could always check the information in the student council, so why?
Also, I still can't rationalise who snitched to the chatroom. I don't think it was Yoshida, so was it Kato? Ahh, yeah, that makes sense, but how would Kaneko just let that happen?
The weird feeling got weirder when we arrived at the student council office. I stepped in with Yumemiya and saw Kaneko waiting with a wide grin.
On entering, Yumemiya started laughing hysterically.
"Ha ha ha," she could barely contain her laughter.
So it was a trap, huh.
"I'm sure you've already guessed that it's a trap, and yes, we know that there's no recording."
"..." I kept my expression calm, like it didn't bother me. I was thinking of what to do.
"I already know that trick; remember, we had similar childhoods."
He was right. The trick of acting composed in danger was something I was sure that he knew.
Should I run?
"I suppose I should cut to the chase. So, at this moment, someone I sent is putting the picture of the class records on your phone."
"...?!"
I wanted to leave, but I knew better. He probably had a condition.

“I have a message that said Yumemiya caught you with the information and that you sided with Yoshida. If I tap this button, you’ll lose a lot of Rp by morning, like last time, but this time it will be worse since the whole school knows. The chairman won’t be able to help you.”
It was checkmate because last time I escaped expulsion, only my class knew about it, and the chairman made sure to contain it, but if everyone knew, then I would have no way to escape because it would be a clear sign of nepotism.
“But there’s a silver lining,” I said.
“Yes, that’s right. I’m not surprised you saw through me; after all, you *are* the ***Magnus Opus***,” he said, his tone condescending, as he clapped for me.
He was insulting me because I wasn’t able to figure out his strategy.
But at this moment, I understood what he did; he orchestrated this to happen.
He made me overhear Yumemiya, allowed Hayashi into the student council, made me meet Hayashi, made me help Yoshida, and made me confront Yumemiya.
I was in over my head—no, I completely underestimated them because of my constant winning streak.
And as a result of that, I lost.
“So, what’s the silver lining, Kaneko?” I asked.
“No honorific, huh? Well, no matter,” he said. “I have no plan on expelling you; let’s do this instead. Let’s have a match at the sports festival.”
“What kind of match?”

“Aren’t you supposed to ask why I’d reveal such crucial info to a student? Or act surprised? Well, you’re not really one for theatrics. Anyway, you choose the match. The ball is in your court.”
While he said that, the situation was completely the opposite. Moreover, I hadn’t played a physical sport in a long time.
“Let’s play basketball.”
“Fine,” Kaneko grinned.
I chose a sport that I was decent at, even without training in a while—honestly, it was a random decision—but the thing was, if we had the same background, then Kaneko would definitely have trained in this sport within the last two years or so, and might be better than me.
The thought gave me a troubled expression—I had a slight frown with a drop of sweat coming down my face.
“What’s with the expression?”
“Is there a reason for me to fake my expression?”
“Hmm… I suppose not.”
However, regardless of how screwed I was, I would have to win or else.
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Author’s Note:
And that’s the end of volume 3. Woah! The next volume is, unfortunately, not coming out tomorrow. Well, it took many months for it to return because of an unprecedented situation. At any rate, it’s still in the works, so please be patient.

Anyway, thanks for reading, and see you in the next one.