

The best things in life aren't free

Von nemuri

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"Please teach me how to control the jump serve!!"

After these words came out of his mouth, he knew there was no turning back. And even while he stared at the floor in his awkward bow, he could feel those merciless brown eyes piercing through him. One minute behaving like a brat, the other being dead serious, Kageyama had never really been able to understand Oikawa Tooru, who had gone dead silent now. And now, it wouldn't be long until he'd get told off by some goofy gesture anyway. After all, no matter how many times Kageyama had asked his former senpai, he'd never agreed to teaching him anything.

It had taken most of his pride to even ask for Oikawa's help, well knowing that he'd be rejected. But fuelled by his teammates' improvement, he simply couldn't pass on the option of simply asking. Up until now, his determination had never been enough to convince the older and Kageyama knew very well that it took quite a lot of benevolence to even teach an enemy. Benevolence, that the other setter probably wouldn't even show to his own teammates. So surely it would be any second now until he'd get shot down. Just why hadn't the older said anything yet?

Kageyama slowly raised his head to check if he wasn't caught on tape yet again. This kind of embarrassment was really something he'd pass on. And not to mention that it wouldn't have been the first time, too. But to his surprise, he was met with Oikawa's serious side.

"You never give up, right? Fine then. We'll meet here tomorrow at 2" The seriousness vanished a second later and was replaced with a malicious smirk. "Don't you dare to be late, Tobio-chan! After all I'm sacrificing my precious weekend to teach someone as annoying as you..." A playful sigh heaved from his shoulders and Kageyama only caught another glimpse of his former senpai's playful wink until he turned away, leaving the boy completely puzzled about what had just happened. He got into a upright position, staring after the brunet and even as he passed a corner, Kageyama still stared until he could believe what had just happened.

The next day, the dark haired stood nervously waiting at their meeting spot. It was the same gym Oikawa used to teach these little kids about volleyball, so Kageyama wondered if he already owned the keys to it. Or had it been difficult to get them? Since there was no way this guy would go out of his way for him, he must've had the keys already. And more importantly, why had his former senpai even agreed in the first place? He had rejected him any other time, so why not now? There had never been much sympathy between them, only rivalry. So could it be that this was... a trap?

The setter shuddered. Surely there would be some kind of payback for him, and knowing Oikawa, it would be especially humiliating. How stupid of him! After getting over the shock of Oikawa's answer, he had spent the whole day yesterday rejoicing without thinking of any kind of consequences. Maybe it wasn't too late to run away now. He could always tell the brunet some kind of lame excuse why he didn't make it to the practice. If he ran away now, he'd surely...

"Aren't you coming in already? You think I have all day training a brat like you?" Oikawa's slightly annoyed voice caught him mid step. There was no way he could escape this now, could he?

"O..Ossu" Pouting, Kageyama turned back around and gingerly stepped into the gym. But when he raised his gaze, he was once again surprised. The opponent's field was already prepared with water bottles as enemy substitutes. When Oikawa noticed his confusion, he just declared "I wanna get this over with fast, you know!", and folded his arms. "Now get ready or you won't last long anyway"

The black haired boy gulped. He really couldn't imagine the older one teaching kids with this attitude, let alone explain in a gentle way. But without a way out, he might as well take in the lesson before his doom. Quickly dropping his bag, Kageyama went to the other side of his field with Oikawa watching from the sideline.

"Show me how you'd usually do a jump serve"

The older setter threw a ball at him. Catching it, Kageyama concentrated. It was time to push all the negative thoughts and consequences away and focus only on the ball, on the game. Otherwise he'd get laughed at in a second. Taking a steady breath, he threw the volleyball high in the air, leaped after it and forcefully struck it back down with his hand. The ball went flying over the net and mercilessly smashed a water bottle out of the way. Lucky! But this wasn't the time to be pleased with himself. He had barely been able to aim the ball in midair. Before thinking any further, another ball was thrown at him.

"Alright. Now do it again 10 times. Try to concentrate properly." There it was again, that serious aura. Kageyama rarely got a glimpse of it, even back then during practices, Oikawa would rather put on playful smirks instead of showing a honest face... But that meant he didn't just take this training lightly, did he? And that was already a big step forward. Surely, with Oikawa's help, he soon would be able to control his serve perfectly. That was, if everything went smoothly from here on.

The black haired once again tossed the ball into the air and jumped after it. He repeated this process a few times, until his routine was broken by an angry shout.

"Don't aim at the same spot over and over again! This isn't how you'll learn to control it!"

Glancing over at Oikawa, he still couldn't believe how calm and serious the other had become in such a short time. He must've been precisely watching his movements until now, his gaze seemed like it was rather fixed on his form than him as a person. It was almost scary, Kageyama thought. A person changing so quickly. But - it was gonna help him develop this technique. And now that they'd already begun, there was no way he wouldn't give his best.

Without complaining, the younger one picked up the next ball and proceeded with another serve. He didn't exactly count but he was sure he'd hit way over ten balls until Oikawa allowed him a short break.

"Well... at least you only missed like one third of your serves. " There it was again, the

cocky attitude. "From now on I'll be calling out positions for you to toss at, so make sure to follow up"

Again, Kageyama only nodded without any objections. If this was part of the training, he could do it. Getting ready with the ball, the older setter shouted the instructions at him while he was already in midair. Even though he had expected it, the sudden command slightly threw him off and the ball didn't even make it over the net. No words were exchanged until the dark haired was ready to strike again. This time, prepared for the sudden calling, he was able to aim the ball in the general direction, but still missed the bottle by far.

"Do it again." Kageyama didn't need to be told twice. His feet lifted off the ground once more to spike the ball into the desired direction. He already knew what was gonna come now. Lots and lots of merciless repetition. He didn't expect the older setter to go easy on him, anyway.

He lifted the ball into the air, jumped after it, aimed, smashed it down. On and on with Oikawa's voice in the background instructing him. During short breaks where they'd put the bottles back up, the brunet would tell him how to improve his posture, especially the way of holding his hand when it met with the ball in order to control it better. To Kageyama, it seemed odd but somewhat pleasant to talk to his former senpai without any attitudes put up on both sides. Their short talks couldn't be compared to a real conversation, but the setter felt that right now, they were on the same level of communication. Of course this was only because Oikawa was focused on volleyball the same as he was, but it was still a surprise. This and that he could feel how he slowly but steadily got a sense for aiming. In his euphoria, he barely noticed the strain put on his legs by the constant jumping.

Being very strict, Oikawa only allowed for very few breaks and constantly switched to different methods while the sun slowly descended. Kageyama found it harder and harder to keep up. His feet felt heavier after every jump and he had to pause often to catch his breath. The gym was bathed in a warm glow and only now did the dark haired notice their long shadows. Just how much time had they spent practicing?

"Hey, what's this? Are you slacking off already?" The brunet approached with folded arms. He too had loosened his strict aura by now, but that didn't keep him from staring down at the younger male who was still trying to catch his breath. Worn out like this, the dark haired just shot his former senpai a angry glance before straightening himself again. Like hell he was gonna give up, but what was the point of pushing him even further if his legs felt really wobbly already? In the worst case, he might get injured. But backing down would only make him look weak. And even the faintest hint of that arrogant grin made him dribble the ball with more force before he tossed it up once more.

As soon as his heavy feet left the ground, he knew something was wrong. Time seemed to slow down, but his hand still couldn't reach the ball properly anymore. As his flight reached its highest point, he caught sight of Oikawa's slightly surprised face until the slow motion was lifted and he descended to the floor with rapid speed.

THUMP.

Unable to bear his weight anymore, Kageyama's legs simply folded underneath him and he landed on the floor with his butt. Seconds after, the volleyball hit the floor as well and bounced a few more times before it came to a halt.

That hurt! Although he couldn't even say what was more painful: falling on his butt or

the fact that his legs had suddenly given in. Speaking of that, he carefully glanced at his legs, but luckily couldn't spot any injuries aside from his slightly swollen ankles. That stupid Oikawa! He must've noticed that another jump would be too much for him to take!

Enraged, he turned his head to find the other standing a few steps away from him. The last signs of concern quickly vanished on the other setter's face and were replaced by a mocking grin.

"DON'T say anything" Kageyama warned him. The training had been going fairly well so the last thing he needed were some cocky words from someone like this guy. Especially while he was sitting on the floor. Proceeding to get up, the black haired soon noticed that his legs didn't like this idea very much. He strained to at least get on his knees, but then the feeling of balancing weight on his feet again was literally too much to bear. There was no way but to return in his original position and rest some more. Which proved as very difficult as soon as a giggling from behind reached him.

"WHAT?" He snapped, staring into Oikawa's somewhat delighted face. There was no way he'd admit that he was unable to move his legs. Not that the other wouldn't be able to tell already anyways.

Oikawa ran a hand through his hair and stuck his tongue out. "Sorry, seems like my training was a little too hard for you, huh?" His arrogant grin only fuelled Kageyama's rage.

"You knew that last serve was too much!! Why did you make me do it anyway?" In return, the older one's cool attitude crumbled away. "Haa? If you knew you wouldn't be able to make it, then why did you listen to me!" He was right, but that didn't mean that Kageyama was gonna accept this. He silently grumbled an answer at the floor. Like hell would he stare into this annoying face any longer.

"Look, if you're done for today, then why don't you just go home?" Another inaudible answer followed by a pout. He should know just how much his legs hurt! And yet he'd still dare to ask in this ridiculous way! As if he... Oh. Of course. Because he knew, he would ask like that. Even while he was down, Oikawa would proceed to torment him. Kageyama knew he had to calm down in order not to further embarrass himself but there was no way he'd give the older one the satisfaction of actually spelling it out!

Silence filled the gym except for the noise of Oikawa gathering the stuff they left around the field. Minutes later he heard his bag being dropped next to him and he could feel the older staring at him again, still waiting for an answer. Even though he'd had a moment of rest, his legs didn't feel any better yet. Kageyama slowly realized that this might become a problem.

"...Can't", he mumbled through pouted lips, still not wanting to admit defeat in front of his opponent.

"Sorry, what was that?" Oh how he hated the mocking tone in the other setter's voice! But then again, he'd known from the start that this whole playing-nice-training wouldn't end well. There was no way he couldn't have seen this coming!

"I can't." Kageyama tried to rise his voice a little without sounding too upset.

"Can't what?" There must've been the biggest smirk on Oikawa's face right now. Damn this stupid egoist! He really couldn't believe it. That surely was a lesson learned. Never again would he ask for anything from this guy. Had this been his intention from the beginning? But other than this final serve, it had been going really well. So even if it was hard to believe, this shallow guy wasn't purely evil.

"I can't get up." With lips tightly pressed together, the dark haired slowly lifted his

gaze. Whatever kind of satisfied grin would greet him, he'd endure it. Somehow. Accept your payment, right.

The pleased smirk on Oikawa's face still hit him hard. Just how could a single guy be so full of himself?!

"Then... what should we do about that?" He really dragged out his words on purpose, annoying him in every way possible. Sulking, Kageyama decided he really wasn't going to answer that question. Especially since he still had to think of a fitting solution for himself. If only he could at least get on his feet, then he'd be able to walk it off, surely... It was worth another try. But struggling under Oikawa's amused gaze was even worse, so he settled back down again. Only now did it strike him that this would turn into a bigger problem than he'd estimated at first. And apparently he wasn't the only one who just noticed the gravity of this situation.

An annoyed sigh came from the brunet. "Wow, are you serious?" He suddenly sounded a lot more tired than before. There was a pause before Oikawa raised his voice again, the mocking undertone finding its way through again.

"You really want me to carry you, huh?"

Kageyama's eyes went wide when he heard those words. "No way!!" he exclaimed, staring at his former senpai in a shock. His reaction made Oikawa's smirk return in no time.

"Aw, no need to be shy now, Tobio-chan" The older crossed the distance between them until he stood in front of the dark haired. Then he added in a thoughtful voice to himself: "I hope you're not as heavy as you look"

"Like hell I'm letting you carry me!" The younger blurted out nervously, still horrified by the thought. This kind of humiliation was on a whole different level!

"Look, I promised the guy who owns this place that we'd be out of here by 7. So if it bothers you so much to be carried, you'd better come up with another plan" The brunet crouched down in front of Kageyama. Even though what he said was indeed reasonable, there was still the hint of a grin on the older boy's face that pissed him off! How could he ever agree to such a ridiculous idea!

But to be frank, he couldn't think of any other way that didn't involve Oikawa helping him one way or the other. His expression darkened. So that was how his life was gonna end. Death by embarrassment. Kageyama imagined that if it was any other member from Karasuno, it would only be half as humiliating as having his former senpai do it. Because he was sure he'd still hear about this ten years from now.

"F..fine", he admitted at last, "but I won't let you carry me like a girl!" The words hastily came out of his mouth and he was sure to regret them a second later. At least as the brunet gave out a chuckle. "You don't even know how to carry a girl, do you, Tobio-chan..." In return he only brought out a lame 'Shut up' to silence the older setter's teasing.

Maybe it was because Oikawa himself seemed a bit surprised that it had come to such an odd situation, but when both fell into silence again, the air around them seemed to cool down at last.

"Put your hands around my neck" The brunet's voice cut the silence once again. It sounded more like an instruction back in the training than another tease. Kageyama's strained gaze had softened during the silence and now he only shot a wary glance at the boy before him before obeying. He gingerly lifted his arms and wrapped them around the older one's neck. Even though he'd already felt hot from the training, his

face once again burned with heat, only this time from embarrassment. Their faces felt too close for comfort and he quickly averted his dark blue eyes. At least he wouldn't have to stare into this stupid mug for long anymore.

"I'm gonna lift you up now, so make sure you hold on tightly" The older one's now calm voice brushed his ear as he leaned in. Just when he thought this couldn't get any more awkward.

The setter's hands found the spot behind his knees, and carefully pulled him close before standing up. To stop himself from sliding down again, Kageyama instantly wrapped his legs around the other one as well.

'You're really heavy' was more to fill the awkward silence than to throw another mean blow at the younger one. Oikawa adjusted his hands once again, which now rested on the dark haired boys' thighs. A little too close to his butt, Kageyama thought, but on top of being in no position to argue, he felt fatigue conquer his body fast. Without paying attention, his head came to rest on the older one's shoulder. He registered a faint grunt in protest, but simply felt too tired to shift his position now. The dark haired boy couldn't remember when someone last carried him in this way – probably when he'd still been a small child – or even hugged someone properly. Now it was both, and it felt weird but at the same time not as bad as expected.

Oikawa also finally set in motion and it was only to hope for that they wouldn't encounter anyone they knew. To avoid glances even further, Kageyama strictly limited his view to the brunet's neck and the small bit of pavement they left behind with every step.

The position wasn't exactly the most comfortable, but since they were both too embarrassed to speak – even Oikawa, who didn't seem too averse to the whole idea in the beginning – and the steady rocking from their movement was enough to make the dark haired boy close his eyes and drift off in a slight slumber. Luckily, the way to his house was still a couple of minutes long...