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KAMIGAMI NO ASOBI – Sports Festival Chapter (Takeru)

After school... I was called out by someone unexpected.

LOKI: Hey hey! Do you have time right now?

YUI: Ah, yes.

LOKI: I have a question for you.

...A question? What could it be?

LOKI: I just heard that there's something called a "clubroom"? Or do we not get one?

YUI: Ah, now that you mention it...

I suddenly remembered the existence of clubrooms. There were just too many things this school didn't have that I forgot there were some key things that were missing.

YUI: We should get those ready, then. Let's make some preparations.

LOKI: Please do.♪Give me a good place since I want one the most, okay?

YUI: Even though you're in the going-home club?

LOKI: You should get what you can get, right? Anyway, I might use it. Maybe.

Judging from the sound of his voice, I didn't think he'd use a clubroom effectively if he got one...

YUI: Let's decide this fairly. It would be a problem if there are disagreements later on.

LOKI: Wow, you are so serious and boring. ...Anyway, how do we decide on clubrooms?

YUI: Um, well... I guess we could do a lottery, but that might be too simple...

YUI: Everyone's all split apart, so I don't think it would work if we tried to discuss it...

No matter what I thought of, nothing seemed appropriate for this situation. I didn't just want to pick the rooms. I thought that it'd be good if we could get a little bit more solidarity in the group through choosing clubrooms.

LOKI: Hoooww about... we compete for them?

YUI: ...Huh? Compete?

LOKI: Yes! The winner of the sports festival acquires the rights to choose a clubroom first! ...Or something like that.

YUI: Sports festival? Why that?

LOKI: A sports festival is like a school-wide war, right? A struggle unfolds between two teams, white for flesh, and red for blood – a true flesh-and-blood battle!

LOKI: Will you reduce your opponent to ashes, or tear apart their flesh? It's a vicious, bloody campaign unfolding on our very own campus! ...Or so I read in a book.

It seemed like he misunderstood things, and had somehow made the competition into something really sinister.

BALDER: ...You're having a sports festival? I was also interested in doing that.

Balder overheard us and joined in the conversation.

BALDER: I read that we could paint the first page of our youth with dazzling memories of sweat and tears.

BALDER: Ah, youth... what a beautiful word. It expresses a blue spring¹... how wonderful.

His information wasn't incorrect, but Balder seemed to be having some interesting fantasies about youth. I should try not to be surprised at these things anymore.

LOKI: When we fight in the festival... the last guy left alive gets a clubroom!

YUI: No one is supposed to die...

BALDER: Oh, a clubroom? I definitely want one of those.

FEMALE NORDIC STUDENT: Balder-san, I want to enter your club!

¹ The original word for "youth" is 青春(seishun), which is made up of two kanji that literally mean "blue/green" and the season spring.

FEMALE GREEK STUDENT: Me too!! Please let me play tennis with you!

Several students approached Balder with entrance forms in their hands.

BALDER: Thank you, let's work together. Our members are gradually increasing, so we have to win through the sports festival, okay?

As always, he was absurdly popular.

LOKI: Alriiiight, we going-home clubbers have to get ready! We're going to need a looooot of traps.

YUI: Traps are not allowed!

LOKI: I got it already, we just have to not get caught, right? Hehehe!

Light on his feet, he turned and disappeared somewhere. It looked like the sports festival had already caught his interest.

THOR: ...Are we really going to have a sports festival?

THOR: ...If you want to stop it, I can only do that now.

Thor looked over in my direction.

THOR: ...Loki is just deciding these things on his own.

YUI: We need to decide on clubrooms... And he looked so happy about it, so I think it would be okay to make it a school event.

And for once, he was interested in doing something.

THOR: ...Looks like you're taking his feelings into consideration.

YUI: Ah, no, that's...

YUI: I'm just really happy that he's interested in human culture and told me he wants to do something.

I checked with the other gods, and after hearing their opinions, I decided we should hold the festival in two weeks. Knowing the winner would get priority in choosing a clubroom, everyone prepared thoroughly for the event.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

HADES: Why do I have to practice for this? I don't need a clubroom.

Hades didn't seem to like exercising, nor was he willing to go through with this.

DIONYSUS: But you don't want my old man to make a fool out of you, right? It's not often we have events like these.

Coming from someone who was popping a grape into his mouth and lazily looking around, those words didn't have much persuasive power.

YUI: Dionysus-san, why don't you practice with us?

DIONYSUS: I'm practicing already! My specialty is cheering. See? Go, go!

...It didn't sound very energetic.

TAKERU: Yeah—! One lap down. Hm, Hades-san, what's up? You're not gonna do it?

Takeru was practicing more eagerly than I would've thought.

TAKERU: If you do that, then you're gonna lose. Losing in a competition is a man's shame! Here, I'll lend you a hand, so come over here.

He was already the active type, but he really seemed enamored with the idea of competing. It'd be nice if he could direct this passion to his studies, too.

HADES: I don't really...

TAKERU: Don't be so shy! Let's get you flexible. Here, sit down.

Takeru pulled Hades, who was much bigger than him, down to the ground.

TAKERU: Okay, here we go. Take a big breath, breathe out... Ready, go!

HADES: Ah ow ow ouch... Wait, Takeru. Stop—ow ow ow...

TAKERU: It always hurts in the beginning. Okay, one more time!

It wasn't going so well, and I couldn't help smiling a little.

LOKI: If we set up a trap here... Oh no, what if we make it look like this and put it here?

Loki was taking a look around campus by himself. He looked like he wasn't up to anything good. A sports festival for gods... I wonder what would happen if we actually did it.

BACKGROUND: CLOUDS

THOTH: Ah. Ah...

THOTH: Test, Test... Mic test...

THOTH: No problems. We have no choice but to start.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS FIELD

The field was dressed up in flamboyant decorations. Thoth held a script in his left hand and a microphone in his right, and was standing in front of the student body.

THOTH: We will now begin the First Athletic Festival of this school. ...First? We're not going to do this again.

THOTH: Well, whatever. Anyway, it's beginning.

THOTH: Okay, you fools. Rise up to your hearts' content.

In response to the halfhearted announcement, every student gathered on the field clapped their hands.

THOTH: This competition is modeled after human festivals, but there are a few points of difference.

THOTH: You have some nerve making me say all of this, Kusanagi. It's annoying, so we'll cut it here. You fools can observe those differences yourselves.

YUI: Seriously, he is so...

The main point of difference was the number of people. Every student in the school was gathered on this field, but only the gods were participating, since they were the ones needing education. There were six people competing in the festival. On the red team were Apollon, Tsukito, and Balder. The opposing white team included Hades, Takeru, and Loki. The remaining three people, including me, stood watch on the sidelines. The gods were separated into teams by rock-paper-scissors. The gods who weren't participating were still put into teams and were supposed to cheer for them.

THOTH: There will be three bouts. The type of competition will be decided by lottery. The first team to two wins will be the victors.

THOTH: ...The explanation ends here. Once preparations are complete, begin the competition.

THOTH: I leave the rest to you. I'm going back to the library.

Tossing the script and microphone to the ground, Thoth turned and left.

APOLLON: I'm up first, it's my turn. I'm going to win and get everyone fired up.

With great enthusiasm, Apollon went over to the start line.

YUI: Remember your training! If you calm down and breathe, it'll be okay! Do your best!!

In response to my encouragement, he raised a hand lightly and smiled. Next to him was...

...Apollon's uncle, Hades.

APOLLON: Okay Uncle, I'm taking this seriously. I'm definitely going to win, definitely.

Besides the desire to show the results of their training, there seemed to be some other kind of aggressiveness between them.

HADES: ...I will do the same. I don't plan on losing.

Perhaps because he had an adult's composure, Hades spoke only a few words. However, I felt that his intentions were directed beyond Apollon. One of the students in charge pulled a lottery ticket and announced its contents.

GREEK STUDENT: The first competition is... an obstacle course!

The obstacle course stretched beyond the school grounds. Various kinds of obstacles related to Greek myth were set up as obstructions in the race.

GREEK STUDENT: Are you ready? Alright!

GREEK STUDENT: On one... Gooo!

The sound of feet kicking off the ground. The incessant cheering. The competition between them reached a climax.

GREEK STUDENT: Gooooooooaaaaaall! The goal has been reached!

GREEK STUDENT: The winner is the white team's Hades-san! Hades Aidoneus-san!

APOLLON: I lost, I seriously lost... I... I'm just...! Ah!

Exhausted, Apollon sat down on the ground. Hades, our first winner, had gotten injured during the heated race, and he was carried to the infirmary.

YUI: I-Is he okay...?

I wanted to celebrate, but I couldn't right now. The results had been a little unfortunate.

LOKI: Thanks to Mr. Death, victory is on the horizon! Sorry, but I'll end it all on my turn!

Loki triumphantly stepped out in front.

BALDER: This is bad. If I lose, it's over.

YUI: Please, do your best.

BALDER: I'm planning on it. I'll do it for your smile.

LOKI: Are you ready? Let's get started!

BALDER: Yes, let's go.

Their competition was a scavenger hunt.

NORDIC STUDENT: ...Ready?

A mischievous god who loves playing tricks, and a gentle god whom animals are drawn to. An unimaginable exchange happened, and victory lay with...

NORDIC STUDENT: ...Winner, the red team's... Balder-san...

YUI: It's now one to one.

In other words, everything would be decided in the third match. When I looked at Takeru, who was competing at this extremely important part of the game...

TAKERU: It's gotten interesting. This is a huge responsibility.

Excitement had flared up inside him. When Takeru returned to his regular life after this, he seemed to get along with everyone, more or less. It wasn't that he was always getting excited. It was more like he began to show his care for others.

YUI: Please do your best!

I tried my hardest to talk with him, but...

TAKERU: Shut up, weed! Don't talk to me when I'm concentrating!

YUI: So-Sorry.

I couldn't do anything but watch, but I thought it would be nice if we could be closer someday.

TAKERU: Okay, I'll be back.

Takeru set off a brisk pace toward the start line. I didn't want to discourage him, so I said nothing and just watched him go.

TAKERU: Bro! I'll do my best!

Instead of his usual scary expression, he smiled and ran back and forth around Tsukito. It was completely different from when I tried to talk to him.

TSUKITO: ...

Tsukito was the same as ever.

JAPANESE STUDENT: Alright! I will now draw!

The student took a folded piece of paper from the box. Inside was written...

JAPANESE STUDENT: A bread race!

JAPANESE STUDENT: Are you ready?! Let's go!

JAPANESE STUDENT: Take your positions! Ready?

At the shot of a pistol, the race between Tsukito and Takeru began. The results were one to one. The students' cheering was louder than ever, now that the decisive match had started. Inspired, I thought of cheering for Takeru too.

CHOICE

>Call out his name

>Watch quietly

>Just yell for now

CHOOSE: Call out his name

YUI: Takeru-san, you can do it! Takeru-san!

I turned toward the lanes and continually called out his name.

CHOOSE: Watch quietly

I swallowed my excitement and watched the match.

I didn't want to distract him with unnecessary words. I held back several different emotions.

CHOOSE: Just yell for now

YUI: Do your best!

YUI: Don't lose! You can win this!!

My yelling mixed in with the voices around me. It sounded as if one loud voice was resounding throughout the field.

(choices converge here)

A noticeable gap had formed between the two of them. Takeru was in the lead. Even though he was so short, he ran powerfully, leaving Tsukito behind in an instant. A few meters ahead... he arrived at a checkpoint where two red bean breads were suspended. Keeping his momentum, Takeru kicked off the ground and leapt high. He opened his mouth wide and flew toward the bread.

TAKERU: Guah!!

He missed. It looked like his own height had sabotaged him.

TAKERU: Piece of shit!!

His energetic jump had landed him farther away from the bread. He frantically retraced his steps and tried to get it again.

Finally, Tsukito caught up. He ran for the bread at the same time as Takeru...

TSUKITO: ...Mn.

He easily took the bread in his mouth. With his usual calm expression, he continued to run along the lane, no sign of joy in his eyes. Seeing him quietly munching on the bread in his mouth, making sure not to use his hands, was a really strange sight.

On the other hand, Takeru had missed again. When Tsukito had taken his bread, the string swayed, and Takeru's bread had gone slightly out of alignment.

TAKERU: Damn it! I'll take it down this time! Ha!!

He bent his knees, body brimming with energy. Taking aim once more, he jumped. His lips just barely touched the bread, but he managed to get it down. What amazing jumping power.

TAKERU: ...Okay!

Bread in mouth, he ran with all his might. Tsukito was right in front of the goal... but he was slow. Takeru lowered his short body and ran, almost crawling along the ground. He flew along the track

even faster than before. His speed was almost bizarre. Whether or not he knew about his pursuer, Tsukito continued with the exact same pace.

APOLLON: Go for it, go for it, Tsuki-Tsuki! Fight, fight, Tsuki-Tsuki!

However, his slender body seemed to be at its limit, and he was uncharacteristically gasping for air.

BALDER: Be careful not to fall over! He's coming up behind you!

Everyone was cheering for him in their own way. The two competitors ran for the goal with all their strength. They were only a few steps apart. The audience was going wild, and the cheering became louder than ever.

YUI: Takeru-san, please!!

I closed my eyes as I prayed. And...The signal for the goal sounded. I fearfully opened my eyes.

JAPANESE STUDENT: Winner...!

JAPANESE STUDENT: White team, Totsuka Takeru!

JAPANESE STUDENT: And the red team, Totsuka Tsukito!

YUI: What...?! A tie?

The audience was roused at the unexpected results. The students in charge of the proceedings looked very confused. Still surprised at the new development, I ran up to Takeru. He had put up a valiant effort.

TAKERU: I thought I could win... as expected of my bro. I still have a ways to go.

Hearing that it was a tie, Takeru clenched his fists in regret. It really looked like he'd taken this race seriously. He had a complicated expression on his face, a mix of respect for his brother and regret of losing. Seeing him look so serious, I wanted to talk to him. I searched for the right words...

CHOICE

>Say it was a heated competition

>Talk about the next match

>Praise his efforts

CHOOSE: Say it was a heated competition

YUI: Takeru-san, that was really a heated battle...!

I told him that excitedly.

TAKERU: Of course it was. I ran with everything I had. Well... I didn't win, but...

YUI: But the most important thing at the sports festival is giving it your all. I was moved.

TAKERU: You're a weird one. There's no point if you don't win, stupid.

YUI: Really?

Though his words were still insults, he seemed nicer than usual.

CHOOSE: Talk about the next match

YUI: I wonder how we're going to decide the winner now.

TAKERU: It's all because of my half-assed results. Shit!

Takeru kicked up some sand.

YUI: P-Please calm down.

YUI: It's a shame that it was a tie, but we still have a chance.

TAKERU: Yeah. I'll definitely win the next one.

Pushing away his regret, Takeru renewed his determination.

CHOOSE: Praise his efforts

YUI: Takeru-san, a good effort!

TAKERU: Hah? What are talking about?! Are you blind, you weed?!

YUI: B-But... everyone's all fired up...

TAKERU: They don't have anything to do with this! I didn't win. It's nothing to be proud of.

Takeru pouted and looked away from me.

...It looks like I said the wrong thing. I felt bad and mentally apologized to Takeru.

(choices converge here)

Takeru's training for the sports festival and his passion during the last match showed me how serious he could be. I thought he was a problematic slacker at first, but... maybe that's not the

case. My chest swelled with these thoughts. Though, if I said that to Takeru, he might get mad at me again.

TAKERU: ...What are you grinning about? It's creepy.

YUI: Nothing. I'm just a little happy.

TAKERU: You're happy about this outcome? You're so weird. What a carefree little weed.

Looking kind of appalled, Takeru snorted at my words. Then... the red and white teams discussed how the victors should be determined... And we all decided that there should be one more match. A representative of the student body put a hand into the box, and pulled out a slip of paper.

GREEK STUDENT: This will be the final match!

GREEK STUDENT: A cavalry battle!²

JAPANESE STUDENT: A cavalry battle requires four players! One of our students will be added to each team!

NORDIC STUDENT: ...I'll be the referee.

HADES: It's the last match. If you all use your skills correctly, then our opponents won't be unbeatable.

Having returned to the competition, Hades encouraged his teammates.

LOKI: Right, right! I mean, you have Lord Loki, trickster genius on your side!

HADES: If it's you, then you should be able to win without tricks.

TAKERU: That's right! Do this seriously!

LOKI: Even tricks are forbidden? Hooow strict. But... hearing you say it like that, I'm getting fired up!

TAKERU: If you need power, leave it to me! We'll win for sure.

HADES: That's the spirit. Alright, let's go.

LOKI & TAKERU: Yeah--!

² T/N: This is a popular sports festival game in Japan where teams try to grab each other's flags, and this is what it looks like: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxIppw4EqHE>

With that single shout, the unorganized teammates became one. Hades brought them together, Loki set the mood, and Takeru pulled them along. With their powers combined, they can become stronger. The three of them wouldn't have been together normally, but there was a sort of connectedness, as if they were held together somewhere in their minds. The white team strode onto the battlefield. They met with their fourth team member and arranged themselves. The red team was doing their preparations too. The white team's rider was Hades. The short Takeru was in front of him, and to his right was Loki. The remaining student was on his left.

HADES: Shouldn't the rider be someone lighter, like you or Takeru?

LOKI: Too easy, too eaaasy! This is fine. Ta-tan has good reflexes, so he has good mobility.

LOKI: And, Mr. Death is the most qualified to be the rider because he has the longest reach! Ahh, my strategy is so perfect!

TAKERU: It's true that if the main riders have to battle, that would be the best choice.

LOKI: And anyway, Ta-tan is gonna work really hard as the horse, so go ahead and go wild, Mr. Death!

TAKERU: You work hard too, idiot!

Even while arguing, they got into position. Somehow or other, a good form of teamwork was born among them. The red team's rider was Apollon. The extra student was in front, and to his left and right were Balder and Tsukito.

NORDIC STUDENT: ...The game will continue until one team falls. In the case that both collapse at the same time, there will be a redo.

NORDIC STUDENT: ...This will truly be the final fight. Use all your power so you have no regrets.

NORDIC STUDENT: ...Are you ready?

Both teams nodded.

NORDIC STUDENT: ...Okay!

The start signal echoed across the field. The two teams kicked off and rushed at each other... And they headed straight toward each other with no hesitation. Neither of them had as much energy as in the first game, but the look in their eyes was different as they fought for victory. As Loki had predicted, Takeru rushed forward with terrifying force.

TAKERU: Uuuuooooohhhhh!

The white team rushed forward wildly, just like a real horse.

The two riders on top grabbed each other's hands and tried to push each other over with all their might.

APOLLON: Fall doooooown!!!

As if threatening his opponent, Apollon yelled from the depths of his belly.

APOLLON: Gooooooooo!!!

HADES: ...!

Hades clenched his teeth and withstood the attack. He wasn't being pushed back; he was patiently waiting for his chance. Apollon seemed to notice this and continued to push forward without hesitation. But Apollon's face looked grim. This kind of tactic was a little too difficult for him.

LOKI: Hey, general!

HADES: Right!

It was a meaningful exchange. Hearing Hades's voice, the white team members breathed in unison and pushed their opponent. Using that momentum, Hades almost pushed Apollon off. With his large body and long reach, he put strong pressure on his opponent. Apollon tried to resist, but his hands couldn't reach Hades, only grasping at the air.

APOLLON: Oh no no no no...!

Apollon lost his balance, and his body leaned backward. If he fell to the ground, he would lose. The two people at his sides desperately retreated to try to remedy the situation... but they got separated from the student in front. Having lost his rider and his comrades, the student suddenly turned pale.

TAKERU: Let's get him!

LOKI: Go, go, forward!

The white team members yelled in unison. They pushed over the student and charged toward their unstable opponents. They rushed madly ahead, confident of their victory. The red team...

APOLLON: Gh, we're not down yet!!

...was trying to endure the attack.

APOLLON: We can... still fight! We can fight! We'll grasp victory in our hands! Do you... Do you think we'll fall over that easily?!

Even in this extremely disadvantageous situation, the red team showed some immense strength. With insane looks on their faces, they grabbed their opponents.

HADES: There is no way we'll lose either...! Let's deal the finishing blow!!

At Hades's encouragement, his team's morale increased.

LOKI: Okay! Ta-tan, approach them at a 45 degree angle. Mr. Death, ride with that momentum and attack!

TAKERU: Alright, leave it to me!!!

When everyone showed off their own abilities, the whole team had tremendous power. As if showing off that power, they mercilessly grabbed onto the red team and pushed, pushed, pushed.

APOLLON: Ngh...!

The red team leaned dangerously. They were already just barely staying in, but this time they finally collapsed.

BALDER: Sorry, I can't!

TSUKITO: I'm very sor...!

The red team fell over in a cloud of dust.

NORDIC STUDENT: The match is over!!

NORDIC STUDENT: The winners are the white team! Victory has been decided!!

The crowd raised their voices in celebration.

YUI: We won...

YUI: We're victorious...

At the beginning of this sports festival, could this team have won? I felt embarrassed at having suspected them a little.

TAKERU: It's our win! We won, Hades-san!

HADES: Yes. With your hard work and Loki's strategic thinking, we succeeded.

LOKI: Well, if I actually got serious, it'd be an obvious win. But everyone did well!

The three of them had originally rejected school itself, but they managed to cooperate and take the victory. If they try, they can do it. My chest tightened with pride as I thought about it. I felt it was important that they trust each other. They tried without giving up in the face of something very difficult. If they put their minds to it, they could get good results. Their achievements made me feel all these nice things.

LOKI: If you want to thank me, you can just treat me to something!

TAKERU: Don't act all big, you weren't all that helpful! You even lost in your own match.

LOKI: I'm not the type to dwell on the past!

TAKERU: At least dwell on it a little!

HADES: You can put that aside for now, you two. You won too, Takeru, so let it go.

TAKERU: Gh... If Hades-san... says so...

YUI: Oh, everyone, it looks like they're giving out awards now.

YUI: Let's go over there.

Hearing me urge them on, they moved in front of the winner's podium. The three of them received a trophy as proof of their victory, and the curtains were drawn on our first sports festival. Takeru looked at their trophy with a smile on his face.

LOKI: Where should the clubroom be, hmm? Having a room for the going-home club is awesome!

HADES: Anywhere is fine as long as we can see the stars. We can even have books and equipment in the room.

Riding on our own hopes, we returned to the dorms.

BACKGROUND: CLOUDS

It will be almost one month since school started. With everyone's honest effort, we managed to take another step forward. I felt that the gap between humans and gods closed, just a little. Everything was thanks to everyone's hard work—the work of all the classmates I've met here. I'll put in more effort to deepen their understanding of humans.

...The real school life was about to begin.

NEW CHAPTER: TAKERU CHAPTER 1 - "A Serious Match"