

# PITA-TEN

VOLUME I

*HOW TO SPEND A DAY  
SLIGHTLY IN THE PAST*

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LOS ANGELES

**PITA-TEN VOL. 1**

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# 1

“Kotarou, do you think you could settle down a little, please? You make me sad, the way you’re behaving...”

Located within the suburbs was Sun Kindergarten. From atop the teaching pedestal, Miss Kana, the homeroom teacher for the Apple Class, the Kindergarten’s oldest group of students, let out a deep sigh.

The reason was quite clear to everyone in the room. If given a moment unattended, the Apple Class’s problem child, Higuchi Kotarou, would pinch another child’s cheek or play with their clay. Listening was simply out of the question, and Miss Kana was at her wit’s end.

“Kotarou is really cheery, fun and vibrant... which is great, but he’s just a bit mischievous, isn’t he? I’m sure he doesn’t mean any harm with the things he does...so I hope you can all forgive him.”

The apology had barely made it past her lips

before she found herself swooping down to comfort the hysterically crying child who sat behind Kotarou, whom he had just finished antagonizing. Even with one eye on him at all times, she didn't know what he'd get himself into next. Every day was a new, draining experience.

Of course, nothing bothered Kotarou. If there was something exciting going on, he'd simply do as he pleased. No matter how much he was scolded, he never showed any sign of remorse—if he even knew what remorse was.

“Teacher, Kotarou just went out of the classroom—and he's outside now! And I don't think that's okay,” reported Koboshi Uematsu, the class's model student, her hand raised.

Pressing her hand to her forehead, Miss Kana sighed for the umpteenth time that day. Doesn't he get tired of just flitting here and there...? she thought. Resigned as she was, she quickly glanced outside.

All alone in the school's playground sandbox, Kotarou busied himself with the passionate production of a giant sand castle. He seemed quite into it, and looked really happy...

Yes, it was her job to expand the talents and horizons of her children, Miss Kana thought. But

still...no, playing alone was an important step in the development of children, after all.

“Guys, just stay quiet a minute, okay?”

“Grr, that Kotarou! He's always causing trouble for Teacher and us! If he does something again, I'm really gonna lay into him!” Koboshi said reprovably as she watched Miss Kana leave the classroom.

Koboshi stared intently at Kotarou. When she joined the Apple Class, Kotarou's was the first name she learned. It happened during her very first drawing hour, when Kotarou defaced her brand new drawing pad.

“Yahoo! It's a sun! Isn't it pretty!!” he proclaimed after doodling over her work with a bright orange crayon. Of course, to Kotarou, it hadn't been a “doodle,” not one bit...

On the other hand, Koboshi just sat there, stunned and speechless. Her only thoughts were, *What? Why?!*

“Don't you think the sun's pretty? I love it!!” he said with a grin, not a smidge of remorse or wrong doing on his face. At which point he proceeded to draw a sun on the drawing pads of the other children around him, that same grin plastered over his face.

Koboshi vowed never to forget the day he ruined

her brand new drawing pad, and ever since that day spoke up whenever she uncovered Kotarou in the midst of a prank or whatever.

After escorting Kotarou back to the classroom, Miss Kana returned to her place before the kindergarteners, slowly recovering her breath.

“I’m so sorry to keep everyone waiting...Kotarou, you apologize as well.”

“Sorry,” Kotarou quipped, bowing his head quickly. No one noticed the glare Koboshi threw him as he returned to his seat. Confirming he sat down, Miss Kana began to speak.

“Today, we’ll be changing seats. I’d like everyone to pull a number from here.” She held up a box. “And sit in the corresponding seat according to the seating chart on the blackboard. Okay?”

One by one, the children pulled a piece of paper out of the box Miss Kana had prepared.

“Let’s see, I’m eight...” Kotarou said. His new seat was in the second row, right next to the window. And Koboshi’s seat was...

“Seven?! What? But that’s right next to Kotarou! Are you serious?!” she cried. Would she go through the rest of the year being teased and pestered by Kotarou, she wondered? The thought was disheartening

at the very least.

“Um, Koboshi...right? Howdy neighbor,” he said, flashing a bright smile.

*No, don’t fall for that smile,* she told herself. She put on a prim countenance and turned to Kotarou.

“Hello. Pleased to make your acquaintance, Kotarou.”



Just because Kotarou and Koboshi were now neighbors, that didn’t put an end to his pranks.

“Look at me, Koboshi,” he’d say to her, squishing his nose up to resemble a pig’s snout.

She’d initially protest before bursting into laughter. “What...? Bwa ha ha ha! St-stop that!”

The laughter was promptly followed by Miss Kana’s chiding, “You two need to pay attention!” It was becoming quite an everyday occurrence, much to Koboshi’s chagrin.

Irritated, Koboshi finally confronted Kotarou.

“Why are you always clowning around, Kotarou?”

“Well, because it’s more fun that way. I mean, aren’t you having fun in Kindergarten now, Ko-

boshi?”

Other than the little, “Eh?” she let out, Koboshi was rendered speechless.

He was right. Since the seat swap, the days had become a lot more fun. But...was that really because of Kotarou? No, it couldn't be. It couldn't be because of someone so overly goofy and unserious. There's no way it had anything to do with him.

Suddenly, Koboshi's mind was filled with a thousand thoughts. But she pushed them all aside and quite coldly asked him to quit bugging her before she turned to face Miss Kana.

“All right, class, today we will be learning some origami. Everyone turn on your listening ears, and let's all make a beautiful tulip, shall we?”

Miss Kana affixed a large sheet of origami onto the blackboard and began to explain the instructions.

As much as he wanted to go outside to play, Kotarou took out a piece of origami paper and placed it on his desk.

*I never wanted to go to Kindergarten*, he thought as he began to fold his paper. It was so much more fun playing at home. Going out to catch bugs, speeding down the slide at the park... But he came because his mother told him he'd meet lots of friends and have

tons of fun here.

And just like his mother said, Kindergarten was indeed fun. He learned a bunch of new games, and Miss Kana was great... But he really disliked sitting in front of a desk all day, except during drawing.

As for the origami, he and his mother had often folded tulips together, so he finished quite quickly.

When he became bored, Kotarou always wanted to do something he was told not to do, like bug his friends. He was especially impressed with his feisty new neighbor Koboshi. The way she got mad, the way she laughed—it was fun to watch the range of emotions she covered. But because all he did was tease her, she seemed to hate him.

Burying his face in his desk, Kotarou stole a glance at Koboshi from behind his arm. Something about her was different today. He wondered what was wrong. Curious, he raised his head.

*Sniff. Sniffle...*

Although she was trying her very best to stifle it, Koboshi was crying.

“What's the matter? Koboshi?”

Koboshi sprawled herself over her desk, frantically covering it with her arms. “I...it's nothing. It's...none of...none of your...business...Kotarou...”

she choked the words out, and stared at her desk. *Sniff. Sniffle.*

Kotarou scanned her desktop. There were a dozen crumpled up origami sheets poking out from her desk. *So that's it...* He nodded. *So she's not good at origami?*

He took out one of his own origami sheets and showed it to Koboshi.

"Here, try to fold yours like I do, okay? Start out like this." He folded his paper skillfully. Koboshi watched out of the corner of her eye, and quickly began to copy him.

In silence, the two folded their origami as best as they could.

"And that is that." Kotarou smiled at Koboshi as he pressed out the final fold.

"I did it...!" she exclaimed out loud despite herself, holding a perfectly made pink tulip in her hands.

Miss Kana walked over to Koboshi. "Oh my, Koboshi. You folded that tulip very well indeed..." She took the pink tulip from Koboshi and showed it off to the entire classroom.

"See Koboshi's tulip, class? If you follow the instructions, you'll be able to fold one just as well as

she did... Now, how about a big round of applause for Koboshi, class."

"Ah, but I didn't make that by..."

The sounds of applause drowned out the end of Koboshi's statement. Koboshi stared at her hands awkwardly. She wasn't able to tell everyone it was Kotarou who showed her how to fold the tulip.

She glanced over to him in apology, but was greeted by a big thumbs up and a bigger smile. A sudden sense of happiness overwhelmed her.



Koboshi waited for Kotarou in front of the Kindergarten room. Kotarou came skipping along, swinging his bag, and Koboshi ran out in front of him.

"Wah!! You scared me! What's the matter?! And what's with that scary look on your face?" Kotarou asked, eyes big and wide.

Deliberately, Koboshi said, "Thank you for today. And I'm so sorry!"

"For what?"

Koboshi lowered her head slightly, in a mix of gratitude and apology, but Kotarou, still quite confused, asked her again.

“Urm, about the origami tulip. You helped me with that, and I couldn’t tell anyone...Miss Kana even praised me for it...”

Kotarou swung his bag around, rather unaffected. “Don’t worry about that. I mean, you’re the one that folded it after all, Koboshi. So it’s all good, don’tcha think?”

And with that, he waved goodbye and began his walk home.

Left by herself, Koboshi felt all the strength and will within her drain away. She was simply floored by Kotarou’s anticlimactic reaction.

*Maybe Kotarou is actually really sweet inside, she thought as she watched him walk away...*

## 2

Since that day, Koboshi saw Kotarou in a new light. Of course, she still got angry at Kotarou for the string of unending pranks he played on her but not in the same, “I’m gonna get you one day,” sense she had before. Although sometimes she wasn’t quite sure if they were friends or enemies, one thing was certain: despite all their arguments, they were beginning to become quite good chat buddies who had a lot of fun together. In truth, to Kotarou, who often had problems talking to girls, Koboshi was the very first girl he felt comfortable talking with.

“In about a month’s time, we’ll be putting on a performance for Parents’ Day,” Miss Kana announced as she gazed over the class. “What type of performance would you like to present?”

Whispers begat murmurs and murmurs became voices as the thoughts of the kindergarteners gained momentum.

“I think a play, teacher.”

“Let’s do a song.”

“That’s bor~ing!”

“How about a magic show? My papa taught me, so I know how to do it already.”

“That’s way lame!”

With everyone talking at once, the classroom became the definition of loud.

“All right, everyone, settle down now. Why don’t we decide this with a vote, then? Please raise your hand for the performance you wish to put on.”

Miss Kana wrote: *play, singing, magic show, dancing* on the blackboard. She called out each choice and the children raised their hands in support of what they liked best. In the end, with a majority vote, it was determined the Apple Class would put on a play. With that decided, they moved on to choosing what sort of play to perform, and with the girls in the class literally screaming for something romantic, “Snow White” was settled upon.

“Now then, who shall we pick to be the actors? Would anyone like to volunteer? You may nominate a classmate, too, if you wish,” Miss Kana continued.

But her words were lost in Kotarou and Koboshi’s

chatter.

“I saw this prince guy on this anime...and oh my goodness, it was soooo romantic. It was the best ever!” Koboshi swooned, staring dreamily at the ceiling.

“Oh yeah?” Kotarou mused, thinking about how much he didn’t understand about girls.

After all, in every picture book he’d seen, princes wore white tights and white tights were simply not cool. He just couldn’t wrap his mind around how something like that could be so dreamy to girls.

“I guess you boys just don’t understand how we girls see things. You just don’t have that dreamer in you.”

“Really, I’m okay with not understanding something like that.”

As customary, they began to bicker.

WHAM!

Miss Kana’s hands landed upon Kotarou’s desk. The jolt shocked the pair and knocked the words right out of their mouths.

Miss Kana stood before them, glowering, her arms folded across her chest. “Why do you two always think it’s okay to chitter-chatter when I’m speaking?”

“Sorry,” the two mumbled hurriedly, completely taken aback by Miss Kana’s forceful manner.

Perhaps thinking she had been a bit too harsh, Miss Kana cleared her throat and continued on kindly. “You two will be performing the title roles of the prince and princess in the play. Do you understand?”

“Whaaaa—t?! I don’t want to. Let someone else do that!”

Although they turned down the parts immediately, Miss Kana was not in a forgiving mood. “I, urm... I can’t do that. While you two were chitter-chattering, the class nominated you for those parts. If you had bothered to listen to a word I said, I’m sure you would have been able to nominate someone else instead... At any rate, good luck as the leads. I’ll be cheering you on... Now then, shall we decide on the other parts too?”

And with that, Miss Kana turned her attention back to the blackboard. *Maybe if I give him more responsibility, he won’t be so rowdy*, Miss Kana thought. *And since he’ll be playing the part alongside his new neighbor and friend, Koboshi, he’ll be sure to have fun with his new assignment as well.*

Meanwhile, Kotarou and Koboshi looked at each other and let out a loud sigh.

“What are we going to do, Kotarooooou?!”

“Don’t look at me...”

From this odd series of events, Kotarou and Koboshi made their theatrical debut.



“Woohoo, we’re all done! It’s perfect,” Kotarou beamed as he packed his things up, getting ready to go home.

Koboshi jumped with joy.

In preparation for the play the Apple Class was putting on for Parents’ Day, they had been working together on the set for “Snow White.” They had just completed the house of the Seven Dwarfs and although the window was a bit lopsided, all in all they’d done a great job.

“I wish I could make sets instead of having to act,” Kotarou said.

“Oh, you’re much better at acting than I am, so you’ll be fine, Kotarou. I...I don’t even know where to start... What am I going to do?”

Seeing the tears well up in the corners of Koboshi’s eyes, Kotarou reached into his pocket and produced a shining pink bead, which he offered to her.

“Eh? What’s this?” Koboshi asked, glancing between the pink bead and Kotarou’s face.

“It’s a leftover piece from the decorations. It’s really pretty so I wanted to give it to you... You can’t tell Miss Kana, though.”

Although he had originally saved the bead in hopes of giving it to his mom, seeing the sad expression on Koboshi’s face tugged at something inside him, made him want to do something to make her smile.

“Are you sure you want me to have it?”

Kotarou nodded strongly. “So cheer up, Koboshi. I think you’ll do great in the play. I really do.”

“Thank you... Gosh, it’s so cute.”

The pink bead sparkled in her hand. Staring at it, she did indeed feel a bit better. But it was the thought that Kotarou was truly worried about her that filled her heart with joy. With so much joy, that to Koboshi, all the world shone with a brilliant luster.



With only one more day to the Parents’ Day performance, Kotarou’s house was abuzz with anticipation. Kotarou’s costume wasn’t quite ready, so his mother was putting the final touches on it as he

watched her intently.

*Wow, he thought. Her hands are amazing. She can make anything.*

“Alrighty... Done! You’re all set for tomorrow!”

His prince costume consisted of bright white tights, a gold lamé vest, and a pair of gym short-like pants that puffed up, like a balloon. Seeing that the costume fit Kotarou quite well, his mother let out a sigh of relief.

“Oh, good. Looks like it’ll do. It didn’t turn out quite as well as I expected, though. I’m so sorry, sweetie.”

He took a seat by his mother’s side. “Don’t say that. I think it’s perfect. But I really don’t want to wear those white tights. They’re just so uncool. If you don’t want to, you don’t have to come watch me in the play, okay?” He pouted, his cheeks as round as his pants.

“Of course I’m going to go. Besides, it’s not about looking cool. It’s about seeing you do your very best at something, and that’s all I could ever ask of you.”

“What if I fail? That would be pretty embarrassing, don’t you think?”

“Even if you fail, my Kotarou’s going to be in that play, so that’s all I care about... I think maybe

when you're older you'll begin to understand the way I feel."

*I don't know about that*, he thought. Right now, he didn't want his mother to see him in anything less than an ideal setting.

"Well then, shall we have dinner? I made your favorite curry so you'd be full of energy for tomorrow," his mother said. She hung up his costume and walked into the kitchen. "Hurry, hurry!"

His mother's curry was his favorite meal of all time. He loved how she always put in huge chunks of potato while skimping on the yucky stuff, like carrots and onions. Of course, little did he know she ground all those carrots and onions into a paste so he wouldn't notice them. Then there was the chicken. And finally that sweet flavoring which made it Kotarou's very own special curry.

His father's curry came in a separate pot. Once, Kotarou was curious about how it tasted and stole a bite, only to end up wheezing from the spice, despite all the water he guzzled down.

They laughed at him, wholly amused. "Still can't handle that, eh, Kotarou?"

He swore to himself that one day very soon, he too would be able to eat the adult curry. He swore it, but

he couldn't help but love his own curry best, cooked in that bright white enameled pot, just for him.

As he stuffed his mouth full of curry, his mother asked how it tasted.

"It's sooo yummy. I promise I'll try my best tomorrow," he said. He stopped shoveling food in his mouth just long enough to flash a V sign.

Even though he hadn't really been motivated about the play before, thinking about how happy it would make his mother urged him on, and he hoped he wouldn't mess up, even in the slightest.



Parents' Day finally arrived, and the Apple Class's play, "Snow White," began. It was filled with little mishaps, like Kotarou nervously pitching forward and dropping his crown during his first appearance, and the kids playing the part of the horse didn't quite get their feet in sync, but all in all the play went smoothly, and the seats were filled with smiling, laughing parents.

Then finally, the grand finale. The scene where the prince was supposed to kiss Snow White on the cheek arrived.

A large spotlight shone upon the two, turning

the stage into their very own world. As Snow White sat upon a chair with her eyes closed, the prince was supposed to walk up slowly and kiss her. Koboshi's Snow White squeezed her eyes shut. Thinking that the play would be over soon, Kotarou's prince let his guard down.

The audience was as quiet as could be, gently watching over the emotional last scene.

*Let's do this*, Kotarou told himself before stepping forward.

Just as Miss Kana directed him to do, Kotarou made sure his back was straight and tall while his gaze stayed forward and not on his feet.

But because of that, he did not notice it. He did not notice the mushroom that was part of the set, positioned right before his next step.

*Crick!* His ankle twisted strangely as his foot made contact with the mushroom.

He wanted to cry out, but told himself that it was a play and to simply deal with the pain. Apparently his legs missed the memo.

Kotarou teetered for an instant before making a beeline towards Koboshi's Snow White.

"They're gonna collide!!" a voice from the audience exclaimed.

*Oh no*, Kotarou thought. He had to stop himself.

Fighting back the pain, he tried to transfer his weight behind him and put on the brakes. But it was too late. With momentum working against him, Kotarou continued to lurch forth. As their bodies met, he grabbed onto Koboshi, almost as if hugging her tight to him.

*Kiss.*

Kotarou's lips missed Koboshi's cheek by a mile, instead landing upon her lips...?!

Still entangled, the two fell over the chair together.

*Boom!* A large crash resonated throughout the auditorium.

Kotarou knew he had to keep Koboshi safe, and at the very last moment, managed to spin his body beneath hers so that he'd take the brunt of the impact as they crashed against the stage.

"Are you two all right?" Miss Kana cried, racing from the side of the stage to help the two up.

"I...I'm okay, but...is Koboshi?"

Koboshi was lying next to Kotarou. Thanks to Kotarou's acrobatics, Koboshi had escaped the fall without so much as a scratch.

“I...I’m okay too!” she said, her face bright red.

“Oh, good. Let’s go do our final bows then, shall we?”

Miss Kana led the two to the center of the stage and bowed.

*Clap clap clap...* The audience howled with appreciation, in part due to excitement the minor accident injected into the play.

*Phew!* Kotarou thought, and let out a sigh of relief.

“Sorry about that, Koboshi. I’m really sorry for messing up that last scene,” he whispered as they received their ovation.

For a second, Koboshi hugged her shoulders to herself. She whispered back, “It’s all right. But...I’m so glad it was you playing the prince, Kotarou... Thank you for protecting me.”

He winked, wearing a cheesy grin. “Well, of course I would! I’m a prince after all, and protecting princesses is my job.”

Koboshi’s heart skipped a beat.

Even after the play was over, Koboshi stood by herself in a daze.

*Kotarou kissed me...*

*Blush.*