Chapter 1: Different Strategies Amidst Different People

July 20th. A sprawling deserted island of everlasting summer. A wide, crystal-clear ocean beneath a high, blue sky.

It had been decided that this would be where the students would be spending their next two weeks.

On a cloudless night, the view of the stars dotting the sky would probably be enough to take one’s breath away.

Chatting with friends, sitting shoulder to shoulder with that special someone always on your mind.

Sitting around a fire, dancing, making merry; A page taken straight out of the book of youth.

Given such youthful fantasies, one might be tempted to think that this was the beginning of a grand summer vacation envied by everyone.

However, for the students of Advanced Nurturing High School, this uninhabited island would be the location of a major exam.

“This is a much bigger island than the last one, just like Mashima-sensei said it’d be.”

Hirata Yōsuke spoke up from right beside me.

Indeed, in terms of size, this island was considerably larger than the one we went to one year ago.

Furthermore, the exam held thereupon was scaled up accordingly as well.

“We’ll only have to stay there for two weeks, but some students might end up having to retire at some point.”

“Yeah, I think there’s a high chance that something unexpected might end up happening. Securing water will probably be our first priority.”

We could feel the heat and humidity even from onboard the ship.

The red heat blazing down from the summer sun was scorching the sandy beaches of the island.

On this day, late into the month of July, the temperatures were recorded at nearly 40 degrees Celsius. Yōsuke’s concerns were right on the money; We would need to avoid being negligent and stay cautious of heatstroke and dehydration.

As the ship drew closer to the island, the full extent of the situation at hand started to become clearer and clearer.

“I wonder if people used to live here?”

“Maybe.”

A well-maintained harbor had gradually come into view, exuding a completely different aura than that of the rest of the island.

Instead of circling around the island’s perimeter, the ship seemed to be heading straight for one of the ports.

The countdown until the beginning of the special exam was drawing closer. Despite his soft expression, Yōsuke’s hands were clenched onto the deck’s railing. Over the course of these next two weeks, the entire student body would be undergoing massive changes. Classes would rise and fall, certain students would face expulsion, and none of it would be unexpected in the slightest. It was entirely possible that we might find ourselves in a completely different environment next semester. And for Yōsuke, who yearns for peace, that would be anything but desirable.

It wouldn’t be strange if he had been subconsciously bottling up his strength inside himself as a result.

Finally, an announcement was broadcast throughout the ship for the students to prepare to disembark.

“Have you resolved yourself, Yōsuke?”

As danger encroached upon the tranquility and peace that he strove to protect, I chose to pose him a question, my tone strong and serious.

Although he felt anxious, Yōsuke fixed his gaze on my own and nodded his head a single time.

“I’ll put forth every effort so I have no regrets. That’s the only thing I can do for the class.”

It wasn’t like he wanted someone to get expelled. Not at all.

It’s just, there was simply no way that our class could avoid taking any casualties this time.

So with that in mind, he and I set off to leave the deck.