Volume 14 Chapter 4 Part 1

It was nearly 9:00 AM, and we were currently in the southeast corner of area I8. The path ahead was rugged, but Nanase’s breathing wasn’t labored in the slightest. It seemed like she wouldn’t have any problems keeping up if I picked up the pace a bit. Sudō’s group had been together with us until just a few minutes ago, but the moment we arrived at I8, they ran off to take part in a Task that had appeared back in I9.

“For now, let’s head over to J9.”

“This is to lower the chances of being in the next designated area at nine o’clock, correct?”

“Yeah.”

From our current location, we should be able to reach J9 in only a few minutes.

We pressed onward, arriving in J9 just three minutes short of 9:00 AM, our eyes glued to our tablets as we stepped foot into the area.

For the three short minutes we had, we sat down on the ground and took a break as we waited for the second designated area to be announced.

From where she was seated, Nanase peered at the screen of my tablet. Seconds later, the clock struck nine.

“Senpai…”

Upon seeing the next area, Nanase looked up at me. It was the second random designation of the exam, but it wasn’t that far away at area J5. It would be a tricky journey if we went through the forest, so we could just head all the way east and travel north along the beach instead.

Even if there were students on our Table who had successfully made it to area H7, it would take them a lot of time to navigate through the forest.

We had more distance to cover, but there was a chance we could surpass our competition in one fell swoop.

When it came to random designations, the fact of the matter was that there was no way to tell where they would pop up.

In this case, we were lucky that it had turned up within a reasonable range.

We immediately resumed our journey without exchanging another word.

It had been tacitly understood that we would take a path straight to the beach.

Not even twenty minutes later, we stepped foot on the sand in the northeast corner of I8, and from there, we pushed north along the shore.

As we traveled, we passed through area J6, where we encountered several adults in the middle of setting something up.

I cast them a sidelong glance as we passed through, then opened up my tablet to find that a Task had just appeared here.

“Beach Flags Showdown, huh?”

Beach Flags is a sporting event that was originally designed for lifeguards to train various skills essential to their practice, such as running speed and reflexes. A perfect fit for the sandy coastline.

They were apparently looking for eight boys and eight girls, who would be participating separately.

Since only one person would be allowed to participate per group, the Task needed a total of eight different groups per gender.

Only the first place group would receive rewards, earning 6 points along with the ability to choose an additional reward out of several provided options.

Outside of that, every group would receive a 500ml water bottle as a prize just for participating.

Usually, new Tasks would be announced via the map on our tablets, but if you just so happened to be passing by while one was being set up, you’d be able to learn about it ahead of time. You’d get to register for the Task before any other group, but subsequently, you wouldn’t be able to discern what type of Task it was going to be until it started. Of course, if it was something straightforward, you could probably figure it out just by looking at what was being set up, but if it was some sort of academic test, that would be almost impossible.

This Task, however, had a registration deadline of one hour. If we registered for it now, we’d be stuck in the nearby area, effectively casting aside any chance we had of earning an Early Bird Bonus by reaching our designated area.

For that reason, I decided that we would look the other way for the time being and prioritize reaching our designated area instead.

Not too long after, just as I began to feel like we had arrived in area J5, a notification showed up on my watch.

“We did it Senpai.”

In total, it had taken us about an hour to get here. Under normal circumstances, taking a full hour to reach a designated area would only net you the Arrival Bonus. However, I was apparently lucky enough to have been the first group to get here, whereas Nanase had secured herself the one-point Arrival Bonus, so we both came out ahead. Whether or not she would get the Early Bird Bonus as well depended entirely on Amasawa and Hōsen, but I had no way of knowing about that.

Since we had dealt with our designated area, our next step was to go back to area J6 and register for the Beach Flags Task.

The two of us went back the way we came, our sights set on earning accumulating as many points as we could.

We were met with something unexpected when we arrived back at the Task site, however. A long line of students, both boys and girls, had already formed at the registration point. The area had been empty back when we passed by earlier, so just where did all of these people come from?

“If we’re lucky, we might be able to take up the last spot?”

“Perhaps. Maybe J6 is the designated area for another Table?”

“Perhaps…”

“Let’s go check it out for the time being.”

“Right!”