Classroom of the Elite Volume 14 Chapter 4 Part 5

Following the history Task, I participated in the chemistry Task and took first place again, racking up an additional five points.

And thanks to that, with only one designated area left to go for the third day, I had accumulated a total of 48 points.

A three-man group that had only been earning Arrival Bonuses, that is, a group that had foregone any Early Bird Bonuses and Tasks, would have a cumulative total of 30 points.

Since there was no way for me to know what the group rankings were like yet, I could only speculate about how well I was doing.

Just before 3:00 PM, I reunited with Nanase. Shortly thereafter, the last designated area of the day was revealed: area I4.

“Are you feeling better?”

“Thanks to your concern earlier, my energy has recovered completely. I’m prepared for anything you might throw at me.”

This was the last thing on our list for the day, so since she was up for it, I figured that we might as well go full steam ahead.

After deciding on a route, we swiftly began to move, our sights set on the Early Bird Bonus.

We walked together in silence for a bit, but our surroundings were vastly different from before.

“You know, I must say… There’s no decent path forward around here at all, is there?”

“Yeah. When I looked at the map, I thought that this part of the island would be easier to traverse than the D or E areas, but I suppose that was overly optimistic.”

Although the forest wasn’t so dense that the canopy above completely blotted out the sun, the ground below was still rough and difficult to get a proper foothold on. The path was such that, if you wanted to push forward in a specific direction, you’d have to constantly veer to the left and right to do so since it wasn’t possible to move in a straight line.

The students who set foot on this part of the island would probably have a pretty hard time with it.

Any attempts at hastily running through would come at the risk of having your foot get caught on something. Worse case scenario, you might even sustain an injury.

“Uhm, Senpai, how do you plan to go about securing more water?”

While I had taken consecutive first place victories in both the history and chemistry Tasks, water wasn’t given out as a reward for either of them.

As such, my only remaining supply of drinking water was a single 500ml bottle.

“If you feel that water takes precedence over reaching our designated area, then how about we go to the Task in H3 instead?”

In area H3, a Task had shown up with roughly 50 minutes left until the registration deadline. Not only did it reward groups with points, but potable water as well. Furthermore, it was an entire two liter bottle.

“It’ll probably be hotly contested.”

We discussed the idea, but I continued pushing forward without stopping.

Soon, other groups would start to run low on water, just like the two of us.

“Even if we can get water from the Tasks, the opportunities to do so are quite limited.”

On the first day of the exam, 68 Tasks had been held throughout the island.

On the second day, this number went up to 100. And as of today, the third day, there had already been 94.

Although the number of Tasks was increasing day by day, it still wasn’t even close to the number of groups out there.

There would be nothing to complain about if it were possible for every group to win once per day. But even if you included the Tasks that rewarded the top three groups, there just weren’t enough. After all, many Tasks only offered rewards to the group that came in first place.

Of course, it didn’t help that a particularly skilled group could snatch up first place three or four times in a single day either.

Given all of that, it wouldn’t be unusual if there were already groups out there that had exhausted their supply of drinking water.

If that happened to your group, you’d be forced to return to the starting area and compete within what was effectively an established safety zone.

You wouldn’t be able to earn points normally since you wouldn’t be reaching most of your designated areas, and the Tasks that appeared in the nearby area would become incredibly competitive. Forced to fight a losing battle, your situation would only continue to get worse as your points slowly dwindled away.

The closer one’s designated area got to the northeast corner of the island, the less control they would have over their ability to immediately rehydrate themselves.

“You have something in mind, don’t you Senpai?”

Nanase drew closer so as to walk side-by-side with me as she asked, her eyes peering over in my direction.

“What makes you think that?”

“The fact that you don’t seem very concerned about our impending lack of water.”

“Maybe I’m just thinking of leaving it up to chance.”

“T-that would be a bit of a problem for me…”

Nanase made a difficult expression, thrown for a bit of a loop by my joke.

“I originally planned on going back to the starting area in the event of an emergency.”

“Our current circumstances don’t really allow us to do that, right? It would take several hours to return to the harbor from here. And it would be even slower if we chose to do so at night.”

Naturally, it wasn’t a strategy that could be utilized from anywhere on the island.

The farther away you were from the starting area, the greater the strain would be on your time and stamina.

“Even so, it’s still a strategy I’ve considered implementing.”

“Water is an absolute necessity, but if you do that way, you might end up getting hurt. I don’t think it’s a very wise idea, not by any stretch of the imagination.”

Her concerns here were definitely justified.

“And yet, you’re telling me this dangerous idea is the only one you’ve been considering, Ayanokōji-senpai?”

“If you look at the rules of this special exam, it’s clear that the only method to get more water is to purchase it at double the price back at the starting area or win it by completing a Task.”

“That… Yes, I suppose you’re right about that.”

“And between those two methods, the only truly reliable method of getting safe, potable water is to buy it with points.”

“Safe, potable water huh…?”

“Outside of that, you’d have to rely on natural sources of some sort, be it seawater, rainwater, or river water. This is allegedly an uninhabited island, but we weren’t really informed about the island’s history. If people used to live here, then it’s possible that the water has been contaminated.”

Of course, it was hard to imagine that the school would have us come here if that were the case, but there was no way to be sure.

“As a one-man group, if I were to get sick, I’d be done for. I’m not going to do anything that would put me at risk.”

“Forcing yourself to move across the island at night is already more than risky enough.”

“If it fails, then that’s that.”

“…So you’re saying that, if it’s you, you won’t fail?”

In any case, it was meaningless to continue talking about this at this point.

After all, from the moment I allowed Nanase to accompany me, I no longer had any intention of going through with the idea.

“It’s a bit late to be bringing this up now, but I do have a way to utilize seawater or river water. If necessary, we can sterilize our own drinking water by boiling it in a pot that I’ve prepared.”

Upon hearing this, she let out a sigh of relief with her hand on her chest.

After walking together for a while longer, Nanase eventually caught sight of the flowing river and hurriedly took out her tablet.

“Uhm, Senpai, it seems we’ve gone off course. We need to go further to the east.”

We were supposed to be heading toward area I4, but we were currently moving toward the center of area H4 instead.

If we wanted to get to I4 as quickly as possible, then we would need to go east, just as Nanase had said.

“It’s fine. We aren’t aiming for the Early Bird Bonus this time.”

“Eh─?”

Though she had her doubts about what was driving my decision, Nanase followed along.

Eventually, we arrived near the center of area H4, where we encountered Sakagami-sensei, hard at work setting up a Task site.

It seemed that my predictions so far were right after all. The site was exactly where I had thought it’d be.

“Hello.”

“Oh… Ayanokōji?”

Although Sakagami-sensei looked surprised when I called out to him, it went without saying that somebody would have to set up a Task before it officially started, so there was always a possibility of coming across students early like this.

“Is it alright if we’re the first ones to sign up, Sakagami-sensei?”

“Yes.”

“This is great Senpai. We’re lucky to have found another Task before it showed on our tablets.”

“Lucky indeed.”

Sakagami-sensei didn’t seem to have the time to talk with us, and quickly got back to the construction of the site.

After waiting for a few minutes, the clock struck 3:30.

“Well then, you can register for the Task now.”

As soon as I heard this, I immediately approached Sakagami-sensei and reasserted my intention to participate.

Nanase promptly followed suit after I finished the registration process on my tablet.

“Though, I wonder what type of Task this is?”

Just as Nanase was about to open up the map to try and answer the question herself, Sakagami-sensei spoke.

“This is a Task where you earn water according to the order in which you arrive, a race, essentially. Ayanokōji, having come in first, will receive 2 liters of water and three points. As you came in second, Nanase, you’ll receive 1.5 liters of water and two points.”

“That means─ We’ve already cleared the Task haven’t we? …What a surprise.”

Sakagami-sensei went and retrieved the water we had won and presented it to each of us.

“Luck is also an extension of your abilities, you two. Be proud.”

“…We are truly fortunate.”

Nanase seemed somewhat embarrassed as she bowed her head and accepted the water.

“With this, we won’t have to think about drinking water. Well, at least for a while.”

“Say… Could I perhaps confirm something with you?”

Not long after we left the Task site, I looked back at Nanase who had stopped to ask me something.

“What is it?”

“If I’m not mistaken, I believe that you’re someone who can aim much higher, Ayanokōji-senpai. Be it designated areas or Tasks, I’m sure you’re capable of scoring quite a large number of points.”

She was looking to confirm what had been weighing on her mind as we traveled together these past two days.

“I never planned on exerting myself during the early stages of the exam. Since I’m on my own, it would all be over if I were to get sick or injured due to negligence.”

“But, with the way things are going now, aren’t you afraid that you’ll just continue to fall behind the other groups? No matter what, time efficiency is important. It isn’t something that you can work to overcome in a single day.”

She was saying that tirelessly working to rack up points was the only real approach available.

And as an approach, it was a steadfast one that the more prominent groups would undoubtedly look to implement.

“Let’s just say that this is only one part of my strategy.”

“A strategy… that involves deliberately holding yourself back when it comes to earning points?”

I nodded and set off walking again. This wasn’t something that I wanted to go into more detail about with her.

Even though we were traveling together, that didn’t change the fact that our different school years made us natural enemies. Moreover, there were many mysteries surrounding her as well.

“Anyway, there’s still a chance for us to get the Early Bird Bonus at the designated area. Let’s hurry.”

“Y-yes.”

Nanase hurriedly scrambled to catch up with me as I left, and together, we quickly made our way to area I4.