Classroom of the Elite Volume 14 Chapter 5 Part 1

About five minutes had passed since Ayanokōji-senpai went running up the slope in pursuit of Ike-senpai.

I gently laid Kinoshita-senpai, who I had been holding in my arms, onto the ground beside Komiya-senpai.

After which, I stood back up and quietly stared into the deep forest behind me.

“Hey, what’s wrong?”

Sudō-senpai spoke up, suspicious of my actions. I felt sorry about not responding to him, but I didn’t have the time to explain anything right now.

Someone was clearly trying to provoke us.

They had been watching over us this entire time, and although they were making their presence known, they had chosen not to approach us.

Though, while their presence was obvious to me, it was no more than a subtle difference in the atmosphere that ordinary people wouldn’t be able to notice.

But how long had they been there? Right, it had been since Ayanokōji-senpai left to run up the slope.

They were continuously emitting a viscous, demanding aura that only became more pronounced with time.

I didn’t know what their motives or reasons for this were exactly, but that was irrelevant.

After all, whoever they were, any information they had would still be valuable, given the current circumstances.

I quietly set the tablet onto the ground and took a moment to steady my breathing.

The presence was well aware that I had noticed them, yet they hadn’t moved an inch.

They may have confidence in their speed, but so did I.

“Sudou-senpai! Please take care of them until I’m back!”

“Eh? Wha, hey!”

The only thing I could be certain of, right here, right now, was that somebody was watching us.

I kicked off the ground and broke into a sprint in one fluid motion, headed toward the direction of the presence.

And then, if they trip up on something, even if it’s only just for a second, I would catch them and force them to answer my questions.

The distance between us was ten to twenty meters at most. As the morning sun continued to rise, the forest slowly began to light up. And even though the terrain was difficult to traverse, it didn’t take long before I caught up to them.

However…!

“So fast!”

I managed to grab hold of the cuff of their jersey for a split second, but their movements were far too nimble.

Making clever use of the surrounding trees, they skillfully managed to break free without showing hide nor hair of their identity.

I chased after them at top speed, but despite my best efforts, the distance between us steadily proceeded to widen.

“Damn!”

In terms of speed and stamina, the two of us seemed evenly matched.

That said, from the way they were effortlessly navigating the forest as they ran, their understanding of the terrain was clearly far superior to my own.

Just how were they able to do that?

Although my knowledge of the area was no doubt inferior, I still tried my best to overcome it.

“Please wait! I simply want to talk to you!”

I shouted as we continued to dash into the depths of the forest, but the person I was chasing showed no sign of stopping.

It wasn’t that they hadn’t heard my cries either. No, they had chosen to ignore them.

In which case, I was left with only one conclusion: That the person I was chasing definitely had something to hide.

“The reason those two are hurt so badly is because of something you did, isn’t it!?”

At this point, I decided to change strategies. I shouted out a harsh accusation, looking to make them falter. To make some sort of mistake.

After all, if I could get them to make a mistake before I did, I’d be able to close the distance in an instant.

Even if I was wrong about their involvement in what had happened, as long as I could get them to trip or fall, nothing else would matter.

However, instead of faltering, they began moving even faster than before.

I held full confidence in my prior training and physical ability, at least to the point where I didn’t think I would lose to anyone else at this school.

And yet, the distance between us only continued to widen.

Occasionally, I would manage to recover lost ground, but that would never last for long. It was clear that they were just toying with me, showing me just how superior they really were.

They were taunting me; all but whispering the words ‘catch me if you can’ into my ear.

But, even so, I had no intention of giving up until the bitter end.

If I couldn’t win in a contest of speed… then I’d win in a battle of stamina instead.

For less than a second, a ray of light came streaming through the canopy above and I managed to catch sight of my opponent’s hair swaying in the wind as they ran.

“What, you!?”

The distinct, almost characteristic color and style of their hair was seared into the back of my eyes.

I knew exactly where I had seen it before too.

“Dammit…!”

Before long, my foot got caught on the root of a tree, bringing an abrupt, unsatisfying end to our chase.

“Haa, Haaaa…!”

I had gotten distracted, caught off guard by a revelation that I never saw coming.

The fatigue and exhaustion I had built up came rushing at me all at once, and my breathing soon became erratic.

“Haaaa, Haaa…! Haaa, Haaa…!”

In order to calm the incessant beating of my heart, I closed my eyes and focused on getting my disordered breathing under control.

Although I hadn’t been able to get a good look at them, there wasn’t a doubt in my mind.

“Don’t tell me… They… pushed Komiya-senpai and Kinoshita-senpai…? But, why…?”

My gaze continued to wander for a while, as if searching for the back of the person who had disappeared into the depths of the forest.