Classroom of the Elite Volume 14 Chapter 8 Introduction

Chapter 8: True Colors Revealed

The dawn of the seventh day. So far, I had accumulated a grand total of 67 points.

Hypothetically speaking, if a four-man group forewent all participation in Tasks and just focused on getting all of their Arrival Bonuses, they’d have 92 points. From that perspective, my score might make it seem like I was in a tough spot, but… there was more to this exam than that. My overall rank had been steadily going up these last few days, and I was now at 51st place. This helped illustrate just how difficult it truly was to continuously traverse the island without missing any designated areas.

Chances were that around half of all groups had pushed forward full steam ahead for the first three or four days until they exhausted their initial supply of food and water. And then, when their progress stagnated by the fifth day, they probably began setting their sights on the harbor to try and get back on their feet.

However, it wouldn’t be easy for a group to get back into perfect shape. The physical stress and fatigue that had been continuously building up wouldn’t go away immediately. There was also no getting around the mental burden that came hand in hand with the prospect of traveling long distances.

Furthermore, since they’d have no choice but to try and curb the loss of points from missing designated areas, they’d probably have to take alternative measures such as sending one of their fellow group members out on their own to reach designated areas. Though, while this would let them avoid the penalty, they’d be forced to give up on any Early Bird Bonuses and they’d only receive a one-point Arrival Bonus as well.

In comparison, I had successfully managed to conserve my energy. I felt just about the same as I did back when the exam started.

I was ready to step it up a notch now that we were moving into the second half of the battle.

In the meantime, Kōenji had been steadily pushing forward, and it didn’t seem like he would be slowing down anytime soon.

He was currently second place on the leaderboard, and only trailed behind the first place group, Nagumo’s, by a slim eight-point margin.

When it came to the second-year groups in the top ten, Ryūen and Katsuragi’s group had gone up a spot and were now sitting in ninth place.

Well, all that aside─── I finished washing my face in the river and turned around to look at the tent behind me.

Over the course of the last several days that we had been traveling together, Nanase had been a consistently early riser.

But today, even though it was already 6:50 AM, she still hadn’t come out of her tent. I couldn’t help but wonder if she had just overslept, or if there had been some sort of change in her health.

After all, the burden on her body must be substantial due to all the traveling and Tasks she had done every day.

After wiping off my face with a towel, I approached her tent and somewhat loudly rummaged through my bag as I brought out my tablet.

Having heard the noise that I was making, Nanase finally emerged from her tent.

“…Good morning to you, Ayanokōji-senpai.”

“Yeah, good morning. Are you feeling alright?”

“Eh? Ah, yes. I’m feeling perfectly fine. Nothing wrong at all.”

While I had expected her to show signs of fatigue, neither her words nor her movements gave off that impression at all.

She had apparently just not slept very well, as there were very slight bags visible under her eyes.

“I’ve been checking the rankings while I waited. There’s a group of first-years that have been doing quite well for themselves so far.”

Of the ten groups currently at the top of the leaderboard, there were six third-year groups and three second-year groups, but only one made up of first-years.

As it was now, the leaderboards were a perfect representation of the strength of the more senior, experienced students.

“The group that’s doing well is Utomiya-kun and Yagami-kun’s, correct?”

They had been in seventh place yesterday, and as of this morning, they had risen up to sixth.

The group consisted of three boys: Takahashi Osamu from Class 1-A, Yagami Takuya from Class 1-B, and Utomiya Riku from Class 1-C.

“After all, amongst all the first-year groups, well… Yes, they’re definitely one of the best.”

Despite her use of the phrase ‘one of the best’, her response had been fairly inarticulate.

“As a member of Class 1-D, it’s honestly difficult for me to earnestly support them in their efforts.”

“I see. That does make sense.”

Given the situation, Class 1-D would probably rather see students from the other school years succeed than see Takahashi’s group get into the top three.

“Nevertheless, our third-year senpais really are amazing, aren’t they? Every class from Class 3-A to Class 3-D has someone currently in the top ten.”

This was something I also found impressive.

As of this morning, the number of third-year groups in the top ten had increased to six, with Nagumo’s group up in first place undoubtedly paving the way.

Not only had they taken part in more Tasks than any other group, they had the most first-place victories in those Tasks by an overwhelming margin.

It was as though he wanted to illustrate the tenacity of the third-years to the rest of us.

“That said, you’re also amazing, Ayanokōji-senpai. Despite being all on your own, you’ve managed to earn quite a large number of points.”

“While that may be true, it won’t be easy for me to push into the top ranks from where I’m at now. At the end of the day, if you aren’t part of the top three, you won’t get the reward that matters most.”

Avoiding expulsion and taking the reward given to the top 50% of groups simply wouldn’t suffice.

That probably wouldn’t even be enough to pay back the points that I borrowed from Horikita.

“Although you say it won’t be easy, you don’t seem to be very anxious about it, Senpai.”

“I’m hoping for a miracle. People in other groups should start retiring soon enough.”

“…That is true, I suppose.”

As our conversation came to an end, we both looked up into the sky at just about the same time.

We had been blessed with near-perfect weather for the last six days, but starting today, it was looking like things were going to be very different.

Thick, grey clouds lined the sky and it looked like it would start pouring any minute. From what I saw in the weather forecast, it should start raining sometime this morning, meaning that we had two or three hours left at most.

I personally hadn’t spent any of my provision points on rain gear. If my clothes and shoes were to get soaked, I’d have to spend extra energy dealing with the added weight and lower temperature. Additionally, the muddiness of the ground would limit our travel speed making our journey without the gear even more difficult

We couldn’t check on the rankings of any group that wasn’t part of the top or bottom ten.

As such, I wondered if Horikita, who was also traveling alone, would be okay. After all, we hadn’t seen each other at all since our conversation at the start of the exam. If she were to get sick or injured, her fate would be sealed.

At any rate, I wanted to get the first designated area out the way before the weather took a turn for the worse.

Once we finished packing up our things, I looked to see which area had been designated first.

Fortunately, the first designation of the day was close to area C3.

It shouldn’t take us long to get there from where we were now.

But, just as I was about to put away my tablet, a notification popped up on the screen.

If I wasn’t mistaken, the school would send out global messages like this in order to contact us.

『Depending on the state of the weather, Basic Movement and Tasks may be put on pause until further notice. Please be sure to keep an eye on your tablets for future updates.』

Apparently, the weather was forcing the school to make a tough decision about the sustainability of the exam.

Losing out on the opportunity to earn points for an extended period of time could prove fatal for the lower ranked groups.

It didn’t seem like the school would come to a decision until they absolutely had to, but this was a thought for another time.

“Alright, let’s go.”

After taking a couple of steps, I noticed Nanase wasn’t following me. When I looked back, I saw that she was just absentmindedly standing there, seemingly unaware that I had even started walking.

“Nanase?”

Only after I called out her name did she realize she was being left behind.

“Sorry, I’m coming now!”

She apologized as she hurriedly ran to catch up to me.

If there was nothing wrong with her physically, then it was most likely a mental block that was causing her to act like this.

Either way, the one thing I could say for certain was that something about her had changed somehow since yesterday.

There hadn’t been any noteworthy changes in the way we had been interacting…

Although, I didn’t think that she’d had the opportunity to make contact with a third-party either…