Ch5 Part 3

Less than an hour had passed since the beginning of the treasure hunt. Many participants had dispersed, and although I no longer saw dozens of people gathered together, I still saw them passing each other again and again, searching hard in the same places.

Psychologically, it was hard to read the first QR you found, because even if it was the QR code that was considered to be the most difficult to find, there was nothing to compare it to. There were probably a certain percentage of students, including us, who had already seen the 500,000 point and 1 million point QR codes but held themselves back or ignored them.

“Good morning, Ayanokouji-senpai.”

“Hmm? Oh, good morning, Nanase.”

I felt I was being approached by a presence from behind, but it was only Nanase. Well, I guess today was another day where I’d broken the record for consecutive encounters since the start of the vacation.

“…Who?” asked Satou, who for some reason showed blatant vigilance and glared at Nanase.

Nanase, on the other hand, didn’t take the gaze as unpleasant and bowed her head. “I am Nanase Tsubasa from first-year Class D.”

“Hmm…It’s hard to believe you’re a first-year,” Satou said as if spitting out at her after spotting a certain body part, but Nanase just tilted her head curiously.

“Do you think so? I don’t think I’ve matured enough to be seen as that much older than I actually am.”

“Is that…so? Hearing your compliments makes me happy. I’m going to devote myself every day to become even more mature.”

“It’s no use trying to get more mature than that. I mean, how exactly are you going to get more mature?” Satou asked somewhat forwardly, as if she wanted to become more mature too.

“It’s hard to explain exactly, but…yeah, I think mental growth is essential.”

“M-mental? So not like drinking milk or getting a massage every day?”

“Of course, I believe such actions that promote physical growth are also important to become a more mature person, but in my case, it was from the mind.”

“Hmm…That’s the first I’ve heard of it. It’s kinda convincing.”

It’s okay to admire her, Satou, but I’m pretty sure you and Nanase aren’t on the same page…

“You treasure hunting too, Nanase?”

“Eh? Ah no, I’m not. For some reason I was just in the mood to take things slow today.”

It seemed she wasn’t participating in the treasure hunt. But if that was the case, why did she show up in this place?

“I’m glad to see that you’re doing well today, Ayanokouji-senpai. Well then, It’s about time I take my leave.”

Shortly after Nanase left, I crossed paths with Nakaizumi.

“Nakaizumi, huh.”

“Hmm? Did Nakaizumi-kun do something?”

I’d been trying not to pay attention to it for the past few days, but as I thought, it wasn’t a coincidence. It also wasn’t a coincidence that I ran into Nanase every day.

First of all, Nanase had been trying to make contact with me to check on my condition. On the third day, I spotted Nanase having lunch on the deck, but even if I hadn’t gone there, I was sure she would’ve come to me instead.

And then, there was Nakaizumi following Nanase’s every step. He might not be following Nanase all the time, but he was certainly up to something. And behind Nakaizumi, Ryuuen’s shadow was hiding in plain sight.

I wondered if he was investigating my relationship with Nanase, but Nakaizumi never once showed any sign of paying attention to me. If that was the case, then it was better to assume that they were marking purely Nanase.

I’ll give a little guess as to why they’d mark Nanase. Ryuuen was looking for the culprit who injured Komiya and the others. If it had anything to do with that, then Nanase was completely innocent. The testimonies of Sudou and Ike would make that clear. In that case, why were they spying on Nanase? She shared with me that she saw Amasawa that day, but if Nanase was withholding more information than that, it was a different story. Anyway, even if I continued to think about it, I wouldn’t learn anything more, so I’ll put it in the corner of my mind for now.

“Ah, I found one Ayanokouji-kun! It’s in a place that’s a little hard to find!” Satou shouted happily and pointed.

It was on the backside of the cover of an almost out of sight stand light. There was a sticker with a QR code printed on it attached in a way that made it difficult to find. Fortunately, there was no one else in sight but us right now.

“But we won’t know how many points this gives until we read it, right?”

“It’s a tough call.”

I had a feeling it wasn’t one of the most common QR codes, but while it seemed difficult to find, it wasn’t that difficult, so it was hard to judge.

“What should we do?”

“Yeah…”

Having said that, there was no doubt that it was a QR code that was too good to throw away. I took out my phone, switched it to the camera mode, and pointed it at the QR code.

“Eh? I-is that really okay? To read it, I mean?”

“No, I’m not going to read it.”

“Huh?”

I pressed the shutter button and took a picture of the zoomed in QR code.

“What are you doing?”

“I’ll take a picture of any QR code that looks like it could be worth a lot of private points like this and then leave it. If, hypothetically, we can’t find any other good QR codes in the future, we can use your phone to read the QR code from my stored photos.”

“Eh? R-really? Will it respond even if it’s a picture?”

“As long as it’s a clear shot, it should work without any problems.”

It would be inefficient to come back here to look for a QR code that we’d already found in the past. There may be times when other rivals might beat us to the punch, but if we could find multiple codes and save them, then when the time came, we could read them in order of how difficult they were to find. If even one of those hit, then we’d make a fortune.

Even with just one camera, it was possible to point the camera at a QR code and display the URL. However, it wasn’t functionally possible for our phones to copy the URL if we didn’t want to access it immediately. In other words, if you wanted to keep the URL, you would be required to input it manually for later. Moreover, in the unlikely event that you mistakenly touched the URL, it would load and the points would be transferred straight away.

“The school said that there were only advantages to forming a pair, but that wasn’t just about being able to share points. Using two phones allows for time saving techniques, and also prevents accidents.”

Although I said so, students who were in a hurry to get started might’ve overlooked this, but I was sure that a lot of them would be using this level of technique.

Now we just had to hope that nobody else would find this QR code. This place would be exposed immediately if we were seen looking at the stand light.

“Let’s move.”

“Yeah.”

I was groping underneath one of the sofas when I noticed a snag.

“There’s one here too.”

“The pattern’s easy to understand, isn’t it? To think it’s under the sofa in the same way.”

“Satou. Could you keep an eye on the perimeter for a moment?”

“That’s fine but…what’s up?”

I sat down in front of the sofa and lowered my face as if looking into it.

“I thought we couldn’t count on these kinds of QR codes?”

“Sure, for the QR code here.”

Rather than below, I touched the base of the sofa with my hand. Normally, even if someone looked around at the floor beneath the sofa, they wouldn’t look at the underside. Rather than say they wouldn’t look, it would be better to say that they couldn’t.

However, when touched with a hand, you could tell that it felt different. Normally, the underside of the sofa would be made of fabric and be flat. Despite that, there was a slight snag from a five centimetres square when I touched it. In other words, a sticker had been attached to it.

I put the phone in my hand under the sofa and took a picture. Using the light from the flash, the QR code that had been hidden in darkness was captured as a photograph.

“Wow, it’s really there! It’s a QR code…! You wouldn’t find this normally, right?”

If I’d participated in this treasure hunt game alone, it wouldn’t have been easy to read this QR code. With the flash turned on, I could save a picture of the QR code, but I wouldn’t be able to read it with my own phone.

Even if I were to turn the sofa over, it would be quite a large and conspicuous task, so I would have to be prepared to read the QR code immediately when considering the fact that other students would see me.

However, as I was in a pair, I could have Satou read the code from the photo, so it would all work smoothly.

“You’re thinking about so much, huh. The school too.”

After finding a new potential code to read, we decided to move on.