Y2V4.5 Ch6 Part 1

The date had just changed to August 9th, and the time aboard the cruise ship was coming to an end.

It was past 1am, and most students were likely already asleep.

In the late night bar lounge, which was only available to adults, three people had met up.

“Ahh, I’m so tired. Why do we teachers have to work so late, day in and day out? My skin will get all rough. We want a summer vacation too~” grumbled Hoshinomiya, who was slumped face down on the bar counter.

“You’ve had more than enough rest. You should’ve been able to rest on the fifth and sixth days.”

“That’s only two days you know~? I was so busy today and yesterday~ And what’s with the treasure hunt bonus game? I want my bonus~”

“I understand how you feel, but we’re working people, Chie. We don’t get long summer vacation like kids do.” Chabashira, who was sat to the right of Hoshinomiya, admonished her.

“Don’t force reality on me… I don’t wanna hear it, I don’t wanna hear it.” Hoshinomiya covered both ears with her hands and shook her head in refusal. “Well, at least let me have a vacation on the ship. It’s not fair that the students have access to the pool, the movies, and everything else while we get nothing, is it~?”

Hoshinomiya couldn’t accept the situation where she was just watching every day with her fingers in her mouth.

“That’s what it means to have a job.”

“That’s normal when you’re a working adult, Chie.”

“Ahh nooo, I don’t wanna hear it, damn working people!” She covered her ears with her hands even more strongly.

However, not long after, she released her hands, put up her right hand and raised her voice. “Please give me a drink strong enough for me to escape from reality. Master’s choice.” Then, with her left hand, she banged on the counter table and demanded alcohol.

“Seriously…you never change.” Chabashira sighed in disgust after seeing Hoshinomiya like that.

“Because your goal is to stay beautiful and young forever?”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Then what~?”

“…No, don’t worry about it. There’s no point trying to explain.”

Mashima and Chabashira also ordered beers a step later, and when they all had their drinks, they tipped their glasses and toasted.

“But this time’s special exam had a lot of strangely rough developments. There were too many unplanned incidents.”

“A student was seriously injured, and the watch malfunctions were obviously the result of the students doing whatever they liked. Moreover, to think that only third-year students were expelled… There were a lot of things that we didn’t expect.”

Hoshinomiya took a sip of the cocktail she was served and sighed. “As I thought, giving the students too much freedom was a problem. There haven’t been any reports, but I’m sure there were some boys and girls doing that in places where they wouldn’t be seen.”

“I’d like to think that, at the very least, that line wasn’t crossed.”

“You’re naïve, Mashima-kun. Just looking won’t be enough to stop a young girl’s passion.”

“You’re the only one who thinks that.”

When she was told off, Hoshinomiya immediately asked for a refill.

“We’ll be busy again after the summer vacation ends.”

“Ugh, I can’t take it anymore. I don’t want to be a low salary teacher who’s worked to death. I want money.”

“You’ve been bitching the whole time we've been here.”

“Well of course. I set all this up because I wanted to bitch didn’t I?” Hoshinomiya said without a trace of remorse and sipped from her second glass.

“You never change, Chie. Although that’s one of the good things about you.”

Chabashira asked for some nuts as a light snack.

“Anyway, I’m relieved about this uninhabited island exam. That the second-years didn’t lose, that is.”

“Though it was ominous that only third-year students had to drop out.”

While sandwiched between Hoshinomiya and Chabashita, Mashima quietly listened to their conversation. However, just as they were about to move onto another topic, he put the half-empty glass of beer on the table somewhat forcefully.

“The second-years are doing well. However, on the flip side, that can invite trouble.”

“What’s that? Are you saying it’s not good to try so hard?”

“It’s not like the school wants anyone to drop out, but still, in reality, not even one of our second-year students has dropped out of school during any special exams so far.”

“In reality, yeah. Even though the school ended up having to choose students to be semi-forcibly expelled from school, a drop-out’s a drop-out, right?”

All three of them remembered the Class Poll very clearly.

“I’d like to believe there won’t be any more special exams with no way out like that.”

Even Chabashira, who usually treated her class with a cold-hearted attitude, wasn’t without heartache. She didn’t agree that students who didn’t make any mistakes should be forced into a corner. Both she and Hoshinomiya were in agreement on that point.

However, Mashima’s face remained grim. Seeing that, Chabashira looked into his eyes as if peering into his soul.

“Don’t tell me another special exam to force people out of school has been prepared?”

“An exam like last year’s class poll isn’t something the school can do just like that.”

“Then there’s no problem. As long as there are no mandatory expulsions, my class will get through it.”

“Oh my? You’ve started talking big all of a sudden, Sae-chan.”

Over Mashima’s back, Hoshinomiya poked Chabashira’s side.

“Stop it.”

When Chabashira grabbed her hand a little angrily, Hoshinomiya turned her sharp eyes back to her.

“You’re not thinking you’ll make it to Class A are you?”

“Nobody said that. However, I’m just saying that this class is superior to the classes from previous years.”

“Hmm?”

In the midst of the tense atmosphere, Mashima guzzled the remaining half of his beer.

“Indeed, there are no mandatory expulsions. But…”

Chabashira, together with Hoshinomiya, turned to look at Mashima, who was at a loss for words.

“The outline for the next special exam was announced recently. It will be implemented for the first time in 11 years.”

“11 years…We’ll be 29 this year, so…you mean since our third-year of high school? It’s unusual isn’t it? For such an old special exam to be adopted.”

Many of her memories from high school were buried deep in the back of her brain and had already melted away. What conversations she’d had, what special exams she’d done. If she were asked to recall all of them immediately, she wouldn’t be able to answer.

“The school makes special exams according to a year-long schedule. If we take it a step further, it’s based on a four-year rotation. You know this much, yes?”

“It’s to make sure the contents of the special exams don’t get leaked to other students while they’re at school, right?”

Throughout its history, the Advanced Nurturing High School had conducted a number of special exams. Some had only been done once, and some had been included in the quadrennial framework due to their versatility.

“Of course, there are times when we intentionally repeat the same special exam within a short period of time, and there are also some special exams for the purpose of sharing information, but it’s basically a predetermined rotation. However, depending on how the year goes, there are times when special exams from further back than four years are brought in.”

“So you’re saying it’s not that unusual for old special exams to be adopted?”

“That’s right. As long as it’s not a ‘problematic’ special exam, that is.”

Mashima said it in a suggestive way, but the two didn’t think about it too much. Rather, they showed great enthusiasm in response to the new special exam.

“Maybe Sae-chan and I will end up fighting each other~”

“You seem to be expecting that to happen. You think you can beat my class in a fight?”

“Nothing like that. But is it better than fighting than fighting Ryūen-kun’s or Sakyanagu-san’s?

Hoshinomiya grinned and the smell of alcohol streamed out of her mouth.

“My class has grown a lot. Don’t think it will be easy.”

“Heh~ To think you’d say something like that, Sae-chan. Are you acting all tough because you’ve got that special kid, Ayanokōji-kun?”

“Certainly, Ayanokōji is a gem as well. But there are a lot of students in my class who show a lot of potential.”

“As well? Aren’t you relying on Ayanokōji-kun too much, Sae-chan?”

“What in the world are you talking about? When did I rely on Ayanokōji?”

They seemed to be having their usual back and forth, but Mashima, who was sitting between them, felt their conversation could chill his insides. If he just kept his mouth shut and listened to their conversation, it would only take a few moments for an argument to break out.

“Let’s leave it at that. There’s no point arguing about it here and now.”

“That’s right; I might’ve got a little heated.”

While expressing her remorse, Hoshinomiya gulped down her drink until it was empty.

“You’re going too fast.”

“I’m fine, I’m fine. I’m not so weak that I could be crushed that easily.”

“No, that’s not it. I’m saying it’ll affect your work tomorrow…no, today.”

“I’m saying I’m fine, it won’t affect it, it won’t.”

Hoshinomiya showed absolutely no signs of stopping and asked for a third glass.

“Then, let’s talk before you get too drunk. You can have a look at the outline for the next special exam.”

Mashima operated his phone and placed it on the table.

“The important thing is the name of the special exam. You’ll understand straight away once you see it.”

“The name of the exam?”

“Go ahead, read it.”

The two looked at each other and then, at almost the same time, they peeked at the phone. After seeing the name, Chabashira gasped, as did Hoshinomiya.

It was a special exam that Chabashira and Hoshinomiya experienced when they were students. The news was that it had been decided that it would be held at the beginning of the second semester.

“11 years ago… Even though it was a long time ago, you should remember this particular exam very well.”

Chabashira looked at the name of the special exam over and over again and was left speechless. Hoshinomiya turned away from the phone and held the third glass that had been brought to her in her hand. She looked at the reflection of her face and smiled.

“To think we’d see this special exam again, huh…”

Chabashira, unable to say anything, just silenly cast her eyes downwards.

“I thought last year’s class poll...wasn’t that supposed to be a substitute for this?”

As if to confirm, Hoshinomiya looked at Mashima.

“In the end, they’re both used for a similar purpose. It means the school had no choice but to include it. If any of the second-year students had dropped out during the uninhabited island exam, the next special exam was going to be a different one.”

“Well, I guess it can’t be helped. We can’t make the written exams too hard just to get people to drop out. So a special exam that’s a big problem has come up because Sae-chan’s class is just too good~?” Hoshinomiya emphasized, as if she were trying to make a point.

“It’s too early to decide it’s a big problem. Depending on how you look at it, it’s just a trivial test.”

“But if you make one wrong choice, it can turn into a difficult problem. Isn’t that right? Sae-chan?”

Chabashira, who had her eyes closed, wouldn’t answer with a yes or no.

“That’s right…you two suffered a great deal with this particular exam.”

“For us, it was the third semester of our third-year. I’ve never forgotten what happened on that day.”

The words were directed to herself and also Chabashira, as if she were nostalgic for the past.

“So, how long are you going to keep your mouth shut? Don’t you have anything you want to say?”

Even after being asked like that, Chabashira couldn’t utter a word, as if she couldn’t get hear head around it.

“Pathetic.”

After complaining briefly, she ignored the unresponsive Chabashira and looked at Mashima.

“What do you think, Mashima-kun? The next special exam…will there be any dropouts?”

“Even though Class A is a head above of the rest, there’s still a chance for those in Class B and below to turn things around. If you put up a strong challenge with the intention to win, there’s a good chance we’ll end up on the same path that you were on."

“A premonition of quagmire───I guess,” Hoshinomiya muttered, and asked for a fourth glass. The pace of her drinking was going up and up.

“Well, my class is probably okay in a bad sense, but what about Sae-chan’s? Right now, they’re flying high and coming up from the bottom. If they can increase their class points here, they could become Class B straight away. If it were me…”

“I’m going back to my room.”

Chabashira, who had been silent the whole time, stood up and said so before she even finished her first glass.

“Just when I thought you were finally going to talk, you say you’re leaving...The lively atmosphere’s been ruined…”

“I’m sorry, but you two will have to continue without me.”

Chabashira turned her back, and Hoshinomiya’s sluggish expression changed completely.

“Hey!”

Hoshinomiya strongly slammed the now empty glass down onto the table and stood up with great vigour.

Perhaps because it wasn’t just Chabashira, but also Mashima, who were surprised by her actions, she was unable to speak and showed signs of agitation. It was probably fortunate that they were the only three customers at the bar.

“How long are you going to chase after your boring love?!”

“…What are you saying?”

“Do you know how old we are now? We’re 29 you know? That romance was years ago!”

“Hey, you drank too much at once───”

“You stay quiet, Mashima-kun!”

“…”

The bartender, who’d been wiping glasses nearby, sensed it was a serious matter and excused himself to use the restroom.

“If you consider just your age, you’re getting older and older, and yet you’ve been stuck in your third-year of high school all this time. And now you’ve taken it upon yourself to weigh down the kids…hah? Are you an idiot?”

Chabashira left in silence, not even bothering to say anything back in response to the barrage of abuse.

There was silence between Hoshinomiya and Mashima, who were left at the counter.

“Oh my, she’s gone.”

Feeling disappointed, Hoshinomiya retrieved the drink left by Chabashira and sat back down.

“You’re a malicious one too, Hoshinomiya.”

“I had no choice, you know. It’s bad that this special exam of all things is coming up.”

“It was this special exam that proved decisive for you two after all.”

“If Sae-chan had chosen the right answer, we would’ve graduated from Class A you know?”

“…You’re still holding a grudge, aren’t you?”

“Of course I’m still holding a grudge. I failed, and now I’m a teacher at this school. In reality, I should’ve gone on to a more sparkling world.”

“Dorm life must’ve been tough after that exam, since you and Chabashira were in the same room.”

“There was no way we could live together after what happened. We probably would’ve killed each other.”

“The fact that I can’t even say that you’re exaggerating is what’s so scary about you two.”

Hoshinomiya grabbed a strand of hair and pulled it out.

“Didn’t you fix that habit?”

“Ah, I shouldn’t have done that. I did it unconsciously…my precious hair…you want it?”

“I don’t.”

“Sharing a room isn’t a good idea. It’s fine when things are going well, but when there’s trouble, relationships change drastically. At least when love and the future come into play that is.”

Before anyone noticed, Hoshinomiya had returned to her usual cheerful expression.

“Even though all the second-years worked so hard to stay afloat during the uninhabited island exam…the school does some terrible things.”

“Originally, a few students would drop out every year, that’s the policy this school was built on. There are too many second-years still here. However, the school fully acknowledges the hard work of the second-year students. That’s why we have this special exam. We still don’t know what the outcome will be after all.”

“That’s true, but…that exam brings out the ugliness and the weakness in people’s hearts. At least it helps that the first semester of the second-year has only just ended. Oh, so the fact that the school approved it has something to do with that.”

“The less time remaining in the school year, the more valuable class points are and the more difficult special exams become. There’s some salvation compared to what we had to do in the third semester of our third year.”

“I definitely wasn’t at fault…It was all Sae-chan’s fault…”

“That depends on how you think. You and Chabashira both made the right decision.”

“I’m not so sure…”

When she went to reach for her newly arrived drink, Hoshinomiya’s hand stopped.

“What’s wrong?”

“My class…at the very least, won’t reach Class A.”

“What are you saying?”

“I already know it. I don’t think we can reach Sakayanagi’s class. But…but even if that’s the case, I absolutely won’t let Sae-chan’s class graduate from Class A. For us, graduating from Class A was a long-held dream. The one who destroyed that dream has no right to have her students graduate from Class A. Isn’t that right, Mashima-kun?”

“Aren’t this and that separate issues?”

“They aren’t separate. Absolutely, you hear?”

“Besides, Ichinose’s class is excellent. There’s still a long way to go until we graduate from Class A. Ichinose’s class will probably get through the next special exam with ease.”

“I’m saying they’re not good enough. No matter how unjust a future awaits, you need to become a demon to win Class A. Just like I tried to do.”

“Even if it means students are expelled?”

“Even if it means students are expelled.”

“At any rate,” she paused for a moment. “Hirata, Kushida, Horikita, Kōenji, Ayanokōji…No matter how much I think about it, it’s too unfair.”

“As usual, it’s a class with many students considered to be troublemakers, but there’s a strange sense of solidarity. It’s as if every flaw is being eliminated one by one.”

“I’m hoping the next special exam will smash that to pieces.”

Saying that, Hoshinomiya rested her head on Mashima’s shoulder.

“I might’ve gotten a little drunk…I think I’d like to take a little break…in your room, Mashima-kun.”

“If you’re going to sleep, sleep in your own room.”

“So harsh. Surely there’s a kinder way to put it?”

“If you’re going to sleep, it would be better to go back to your own room.”

“It hardly changed!”

She pulled herself closer, as if hugging his muscular left arm. However, Mashima used his strength to forcefully pull it out of her grip.

“Are you bothered?”

“I’m not bothered.”

“Ehh, then at least take me back to my room~ And then maybe we should have another drink in there? Until morning.”

“I’m sorry, but I’m also going back to my room. You too, don’t drink too much, okay?”

“Don’t you think this is a once in a lifetime opportunity?”

“I’m sorry, but I have no intention of getting involved with you or Chabashira. It’ll only cause trouble.”

“Sooo strict~”

Hoshinomiya quietly sipped her drink at the now empty bar counter.