Classroom of the Elite Volume 15 Chapter 2 Part 2

Shortly before 4:00 PM. I had just finished up with a Task I was participating in and was about to take my leave from the site.

“Ayanokōji-kun?”

Thereupon, I crossed paths with Horikita for the first time since we parted ways at the start of the exam.

Although she looked a little surprised to see me, she didn’t seem particularly tired.

“It’s been eight days, huh?”

“That it has.”

We were currently in area F7, reunited once again since our last conversation back on the first day of the exam.

“Did you come for the Task, or are you simply passing through? Where are you headed after this, Horikita?”

“I’m heading to G8. I ended up passing through here on the way. What about yourself?”

Apparently, the area she was headed toward was right next to mine.

“F8. It looks like we’ll be going in the same general direction.”

Since it’d be a waste of time to stand here and talk, the two of us immediately set out together without so much as another word.

Traveling together seemed like the best way to go about this, given that we’d be taking the same route for the most part.

“You’re in better shape than I expected. And from the look of it… I assume you’re still on your own?”

“Yes, I am. It’s troublesome in many ways, but being alone tends to make many things easier as well.”

It was true that, by being alone, you didn’t need to worry about taking care of others or matching their pace.

However, throughout the entire exam so far, Horikita’s name had never shown up in the bottom ten. While that was decent proof that she was doing well for herself in terms of points, it was strange that she didn’t seem tired at all.

“Is it really so hard for you to believe that I’m still in such good shape?”

“Most of the students I’ve come across have looked awfully tired.”

“Hmm. Did something unusual happen?”

“Unusual? Ah… now that you mention it, have you heard about what happened with Shinohara?”

“Yes. To be exact, I heard about it today. In light of that, I’m glad that I ran into you.”

Apparently it had gone something like this: somebody from Class 2-A had reached out to Horikita while she was near the starting area earlier today, and they had urged her to meet with Sakayanagi, whereupon she was informed of Komiya and Kinoshita’s retirement.

Afterward, Sakayanagi told her about the strategy that I had proposed back on the fifth day and the two began to negotiate.

“You didn’t refuse to cooperate, right?”

“I had no reason to do that; I had to prevent Shinohara-san from getting kicked out of school. I heard that you were one of the first on the scene at the time, do you know the details of what happened?”

“No, not really. I think it could’ve been both an incident or an accident.”

I explained what I knew as someone who had seen the aforementioned crime scene from up close.

Of course, I kept certain things to myself, such as the fact that Amasawa had been watching from the shadows.

“Shinohara-san’s group ranking has been dropping lower and lower every day. Currently, she’s placed seventh from the bottom. At this rate, it seems she’ll fall far enough to qualify for expulsion by the end of the day today, so we have to hurry. If worse comes to worst and we can’t find another group for her to join, I’ll take matters into my own hands. Before I ran into you, I was lucky enough to secure first place in a Task that rewarded me with three additional spaces in my group.”

This was good news. The Tasks that increased maximum group size were fairly uncommon, and they were highly sought after as well.

Taking first place in such a contested Task couldn’t have been easy.

“But if that’s how things play out, then it’ll be just you and Shinohara scoring all the points. If possible, I hope our collaboration with Sakayanagi goes smoothly so you can merge with a group that’s doing better for themselves.”

Horikita nodded in agreement.

“At any rate, over these past eight days that I’ve been walking around the island, I’ve really come to realize that a lot more groups have walkie-talkies than I anticipated. I’ve seen students making use of them all over the place, Sakayanagi-san telling her fellow classmates about what happened to Shinohara-san is only one such example.”

“It seems like a particularly strong trend among the upper classes, who are capable of taking charge and have the points to spare. Walkie-talkies let you exchange information over long distances, so depending on how well you make use of it, it could be worth spending such a large number of points.”

“If we trusted one another a little more, I wonder… if we could’ve done that as well…?”

Horikita pursed her lips ever so slightly, perhaps having found the notion fairly difficult to imagine, despite having mentioned it.

“While walkie-talkies are certainly useful, that doesn’t necessarily mean that they’d do all that much for us. It’d just be a waste if we didn’t end up doing anything with them.”

“That’s true enough.”

I took out my tablet to see if any new Tasks had appeared, only to find that a risk-free, hassle-free Task that gave out food as a participation prize had shown up not too far from our current location.

Furthermore, there was room for as many as fifteen groups to register for it.

However, it only gave out a single point that all groups would get for participating, so it wasn’t all that appealing on the points side of things.

“I’m running low on food, so I think I’d like to drop by this Task. How about you Horikita?”

If she had her sights set on her designated area’s Early Bird Bonus, then she’d be better off pushing forward without batting an eye.

“I don’t have that much food remaining either, so I’ll drop by the Task as well.”

Since our priorities were identical, we decided to change course and proceeded on our way to the Task.

Although the Task itself was a blessing, participating in it would be highly competitive.

Horikita and I began to pick up the pace as we hurried to the Task site. On the way, we gradually began to catch sight of other groups. From first-years, third-years, and even second-years, all of them seemed to have their sights set on the same destination, given how they were all moving in the same direction as us. In fact, the majority broke into a run as soon as they realized that they were surrounded by direct competition.

“Horikita, you don’t need to worry about me. Go ahead and hurry to the Task site.”

“Look who’s talking. If you’ve really run low on food, then you ought to be a bit more pressed yourself.”

“I just don’t have the energy to run anymore.”

“And I’m in the same boat.”

Despite the rush, it seemed her stance regarding the wasteful expenditure of stamina was the same as mine.

She was all on her own, and yet it was clear that she was acting with a certain degree of flexibility, methodically pacing herself as she tackled the uninhabited island exam.

Not long thereafter, we arrived at the Task site just in time to participate, whereupon we both decided to take some time to mingle with some of our classmates that we hadn’t seen in a while. After all, even if we rushed to our designated areas from here, we’d probably be too late to qualify for any Early Bird Bonuses. With that being the case, we’d be better off looking to exchange information until the last minute so that we could make the most of the rest of the exam.

Moreover, many of our classmates still didn’t know about what kind of situation Shinohara had been put in.

Later on, once the exam was done for the day, I tallied up my score. I had earned 4 points from Arrival Bonuses and 14 points from participating in four different Tasks, for a total of 18. This brought my overall score up to 96, 23rd place on the leaderboards.

On the whole, I got the impression that groups had been more active today than on the fifth or sixth. However, since there were also groups that, for the most part, hadn’t been active at all, a distinct line had been drawn between those who were looking to conserve their stamina and those who weren’t.

The eighth day, which I had otherwise expected to devolve into a fierce battle, hadn’t actually been that bad in the end. There hadn’t been any significant changes in the scores of the top ten either, as the Kuronaga group was still in tenth place with a total of 111 points.

Tomorrow, my goal was to maintain an ideal rank and, if possible, meet up with Sakayanagi once again.

I fell asleep that night hoping that the upcoming designated areas would lead me toward the starting area.