Classroom of the Elite Volume 15 Chapter 4 Part 1

A little after 6:30 AM on the following morning, the eleventh day of the exam, the Kiriyama group and the six Free Groups had successfully surrounded Kōenji’s campsite.

Kiriyama prompted Mikitani for an update.

“What’s the situation?”

“There doesn’t seem to be any movement inside the tent yet, so he’s prolly sleeping like a log right now. Though, it’d sure make things a lot easier for us if the dude just fell sick and slept the whole day like this.”

It was at this time that Mikitani voiced a suggestion, not only to Kiriyama but to the nearby members of the Free Group as well.

“Hey, why don’t we trap him in his tent before he gets a chance to come out? If we make it so that he can’t pack up his campsite, the guy won’t be able to do anything.”

Upon hearing Mikitani’s suggestion, the other members of the Free Group began to nod in agreement. Kiriyama, however…

“It’s true that if we stall him here long enough, we can delay him from making it to his first designated area on time. However, how exactly would we explain ourselves if a third party saw us doing that? We need to refrain from doing anything that might seem crude to onlookers, even if it means doing something less effective overall.”

Even though they were already violating the rules, they had to prioritize reducing the risk as much as possible.

“Can’t we just run a GPS Search first then? It’s not like we can’t spare the points.”

“Don’t forget that a GPS Search isn’t the end-all be-all; our tablets aren’t going to tell us the locations of any faculty members. We’ll stick to the plan and strike once Kōenji packs up camp and starts moving. In the meantime, if you cross paths with any first-years, second-years, or even a faculty member on their way to set up a Task site, immediately look to distance yourself from Kōenji.”

Essentially, Kiriyama was warning everyone to stay out of arm’s reach of Kōenji.

As the clock neared 7:00 AM, the situation finally began to change.

“He’s on the move.”

Kōenji seemed blissfully unaware that he had been surrounded, humming a tune to himself as he started to tear down his tent. His movements were practiced and skillful, and it seemed like he’d be ready to depart by 7:00 AM.

And then, once he was done, he took out his tablet and began to wait for the exam to start at the turn of the hour.

“Go.”

Having decided that now was the time to strike, Kiriyama issued the command and proceeded to close in on his target.

Mikitani and the rest of the Free Group followed after from a distance.

It was unclear whether or not Kōenji was aware of the situation he was in, as he simply kept his eyes glued to his tablet without so much as lifting his head to keep an eye on his surroundings. Even though he had been surrounded by an army of 18 people, he continued to act as though he was oblivious to their presence.

Mikitani began closing in, having judged that Kōenji was just feigning ignorance, but Kiriyama stopped him with a stern look before taking the lead himself.

“Kōenji, do you have a moment?”

Despite being addressed by name, Kōenji still didn’t look up from his tablet.

“What do you want from me?”

Kōenji’s response was curt, by no means a proper way for someone to speak to an upperclassman, but Kiriyama paid it no mind.

After all, he was fully aware that Kōenji Rokusuke was somebody who lacked any form of common sense.

“I didn’t expect you to put in so much effort this time around. If you were always this capable, then why haven’t you taken any of the previous exams seriously before?”

“Is that really something we ought to be talking about right now? It’ll be 7:00 AM soon, so shouldn’t you all be getting ready to scamper off to your next designated area?”

“You should understand without me needing to say anything, Kōenji. You’ve scored far too many points.”

Kōenji spoke as though he hadn’t connected the dots yet, but Kiriyama was pretty sure it was just an act.

“I’m going to have to ask that you stay here for the rest of the day today.”

“To stop me from earning points… is that how it is?”

“That’s right.”

Naturally, there was no way that Kōenji would simply go along with a request like this.

“I don’t know who you are, but anyone can tell with only the most trivial amount of thought that you’re just being unreasonable. Alas, however, seeing as you’ve brought along so many with you… I suppose that means you’ve come prepared to contain me here should I refuse to comply, yes?”

“Even if you keep going at the pace you have been, it’ll be impossible for you to take first place. You’re all on your own while Nagumo’s group has seven people, and my group is in third place with six. I’ll admit that you’ve been doing quite well for yourself these last several days, but I imagine you’ll start to hit a wall as you begin running out of energy.”

“It doesn’t sound like you need to worry about me then, do you?”

“We’re doing this just in case, that’s all. Moreover, as third-years, it’s hard to accept that we’ve had to do so much to compete against a single person. Of course, nothing bad will have to happen if you’re obedient and agree to follow our orders. Nagumo is the student council president, so getting on his good side would make your life at school easier too.”

Essentially, Kōenji had been offered two distinct choices: he could either be strong-armed into submission, or obey and curry favor with Nagumo.

As silence fell between them, the hour changed, and with it came the revelation of the day’s first designated area.

After checking the notification, Kōenji slowly put his tablet in his backpack.

Kiriyama and the others kept their eyes trained on him, watching to see if the second-year student would take action or not.

“I’ve got somewhere to be, so if you’ll excuse me.”

As soon as these defiant words passed his lips, Kōenji instantaneously sprinted off, breaking past the members of the Free Group encircling him.

“Wha- Hey!!!”

Even though they had him surrounded, there were still gaps in their formation large enough for a person to slip through, which Kōenji had taken full advantage of. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that everyone, even Kiriyama, had been complacent with how they were approaching the situation. They had discounted the possibility that Kōenji might just disregard their orders and escape.

“After him!”

Mikitani hollered for his colleagues to give chase, but by that point, Kōenji had already disappeared deep into the forest.

“Don’t panic. You’ll only get yourself hurt if you try to keep up with him.”

“We don’t have time for that right now man! He’s getting away!”

“He might get his hands on the first Early Bird Bonus, but that’s it. If he decides to run around and try to escape from us, then that means he won’t be able to take part in any Tasks. And if he has the gall to participate in a Task in spite of that, it’ll be easy for us to catch up with him.”

While they wouldn’t be able to determine which area Kōenji was headed toward based on the direction he had fled in, the existence of the GPS Search meant that he wouldn’t be able to hide forever. This was something that Kiriyama was well aware of.

Mikitani, however, was impatient and raring to go, and ran ahead once everyone collectively began their pursuit.