Classroom of the Elite Volume 15 Chapter 4 Part 2

With Mikitani in the lead, Kiriyama and the rest of the Free Group were currently tracking down Kōenji.

“What’s his current location?”

“About that, it doesn’t seem like he’s moved at all since earlier. I’ve searched three times now and he’s been in the same place every time.”

It was far too unnatural for someone to stay completely stationary when it wasn’t even break time yet.

Kiriyama glanced down at his tablet in an attempt to wrap his head around Kōenji’s incomprehensible behavior.

“It doesn’t look like there are any Tasks near him either.”

“Yeah. We should catch up with him in 200 meters or so.”

“Don’t be negligent this time. Drive him into a corner once and for all, got it?”

“You don’t have to tell me twice.”

About six hours after Kōenji had made his escape, Kiriyama and the Free Group finally managed to catch up to him.

Surprisingly, the reason for this turned out to be because he had chosen to take a nap in the broad daylight, completely disregarding his current circumstances.

Upon seeing such a sight, the third-years exchanged glances in astonishment.

Taking initiative, Mikitani approached the sleeping man. He peered down at him from above for a moment before speaking up with a strong tone.

“Rise and shine, Kōenji. You’ve got a lot of balls to be taking an afternoon nap like this after trying to run from us. Or maybe you’ve just tuckered yourself out after all the work you’ve done these past ten days?”

Mikitani could only come up with a single reason as to why Kōenji would do this, given his current situation.

That, even if you didn’t want to rest, sometimes your body would give you no other option.

Kōenji slowly opened his eyes with a peaceful, leisurely smile.

“Isn’t it obvious? Like you, I am but only human, after all.”

“Then how ‘bout you just sit right there and take the rest of the day off? You must’ve worn yourself out quite a bit these last few days. Your senpai’s out here givin’ you some real thoughtful advice, so you’d best take it to heart.”

“Take the rest of the day off? You’re quite the comedian.”

Completely unphased by the fact that he had once again been surrounded, Kōenji rose to his feet.

Mikitani had been the one looking down at him just moments earlier, but once Kōenji, who was over 180cm tall, stood up, he found that he was now forced to look up instead.

Kōenji’s eyes were brimming with vitality, and he seemed far larger than when he had first emerged from his tent earlier that morning.

“…No need to push yourself. If you just sit back and enjoy a short rest, nobody’ll have to suffer.”

Although he felt intimidated, Mikitani still pressed on.

“There’s no need to worry about that. My stamina has already recovered unto utter perfection. I’d suggest you refrain from lumping me in with those of an average ilk.”

Taking Kōenji’s composed demeanor as a mere bluff, Kiriyama spoke up in response.

“You do indeed look healthy, but as Mikitani said, you’ve been running around quite a lot these past ten days. There’s no doubt about it, given that you’ve earned more first-place Early Bird Bonuses than any other group. However, even if you have more stamina than an average person, you should be nearing your limit any time now.”

“I must say, having a limit at all strikes me as something that would only apply to someone stuck in their normalcy.”

“Or in other words, you’re saying you still haven’t reached your limit yet?”

Kiriyama put forward a question, his voice dripping with skepticism, but Kōenji responded without so much as a second thought.

“I’ll have you know that I’m an immensely short sleeper, seldom predisposed to even the strongest spells of REM sleep.”

“The hell? Predisposed to spells of what now?”

While Mikitani voiced confusion about what Kōenji was talking about, Kiriyama’s expression hardened immediately.

“A short sleeper, huh…? If that’s true, this is quite the serious problem.”

“What do you mean, Kiriyama?”

“An average person ideally needs to sleep for seven to eight hours per night in order to stay healthy. After all, if you get any more or less than what your body needs, you won’t sleep comfortably. However, a short sleeper has the aptitude to stay perfectly healthy with less, sometimes only needing as little as six hours per night.”

As a whole, sleep repeatedly cycles between two different states: REM and non-REM. Put simply, REM sleep is the state where the brain is active and awake, whereas during its non-REM counterpart, the brain is asleep.

And since short sleepers spend less time in REM sleep, they could rejuvenate both their minds and bodies with a simple short break or two.

“I thought it was strange for you to be sleeping out in the open like this… So that was the reason…”

Even though Kōenji has extraordinary strength and stamina, fatigue would undoubtedly begin to take its toll after a long period of intense physical exertion during Tasks and travel.

However, by napping intermittently during whatever downtime he had after reaching a designated area or whenever there weren’t any suitable Tasks nearby, he had managed to conserve a good portion of his stamina.

If Kōenji was truly as short a sleeper as he claimed to be, then not only did his stamina eclipse that of an ordinary person, but his recuperative abilities did as well.

Now, for the first time, a faint feeling of anxiousness began to take shape within Kiriyama.

Despite the overarching incentive they faced to pace themselves, every group felt tired and fatigued by this point.

The feeling of your legs crying out for a break with every step you took. The feeling of your drive to take part in the exam gradually fading away.

These were feelings that all students shared, deep down in the most unconscious parts of their psyches.

Or at least, that’s what Kiriyama had assumed, and it was due to that assumption that he had thought Kōenji would be easy to take care of.

What if, however, the threads holding that assumption together began to snap…?

“By the way, do you all still have something you need from me?”

“We don’t care how much stamina you’ve got or how short a sleeper you are; you’re gonna listen to us whether you─”

Having lost his patience, Mikitani once again tried to mandate Kōenji’s obedience, but Kiriyama intervened just as the words were coming out of his mouth.

“We don’t have anything else, you don’t need to concern yourself with us.”

Kiriyama wanted to avoid using any inflammatory language as much as possible and try to keep things civil.

It was a soft, lenient approach, and although Mikitani felt increasingly frustrated, he still went along with it.

“Fufu. You say that, and yet the lot of you seem awfully belligerent, hmm?”

Kōenji didn’t seem to pay any mind to their warnings or threats.

It was around this time that the third designated area of the day was announced, prompting Kōenji to immediately set off after a brief look at his tablet.

Mikitani spoke up once Kōenji had gone out of earshot.

“He’s not the sorta guy who’s gonna listen to us, Kiriyama.”

“That might be true.”

“And I’m pretty damn sure he’s bluffing about that short sleeper shit too.”

However, while many groups had already seen a noticeable drop in their efficiency, Kōenji had maintained a quick pace since just about the beginning. It was obvious that he was constantly honing his body, day in and day out. In fact, Kiriyama even hypothesized he only saw the uninhabited island special exam as a means to further refine his training.

“We’ve got no choice but to change plans. We’ll force him out through Tasks alone.”

With that, Kiriyama finally came to a decision and gave the order for everyone to chase after Kōenji.

However, Mikitani looked displeased, seemingly upset with the direction Kiriyama had taken things in.

“I’m the one in charge here, Mikitani. Don’t create any waves.”

“Hmph…”

Despite their misgivings, the various third-years began to fan out, forming an 18-person triangle formation around Kōenji, who was at this point leisurely making his way to his next destination.

In the meantime, Kiriyama began issuing orders over his walkie-talkie.

Kōenji, however, simply continued to walk without paying any mind to their actions.

He didn’t stop moving forward, nor did he stand still.

Kiriyama had a total of three different plans in mind. The first was simple: to try and persuade Kōenji into giving up on getting first place. Of course, this particular plan involved having everyone close in on him to help magnify the pressure and get him to concede. The second plan revolved around staying in formation around Kōenji as he made his way around the island in an attempt to inhibit his movements. And finally, the third was to try and anticipate which Tasks he would aim for and make it there before him to fill up the slots.

Between the six Free Groups and Kiriyama’s own, they had a total of seven groups at their disposal, which should be more than enough to impede Kōenji from registering for Tasks. And, even if he still managed to register, they’d at least be able to lower his chances of winning by having everyone compete with the sole intention of crushing him.

While each Task had differing conditions for participation eligibility, there were generally two different types.

There were those in which you participated as an individual, and those in which you participated as a group.

While the Free Groups couldn’t register for the group-based Tasks since they didn’t have all of their members present, those very same Tasks usually required a minimum of two people to participate. This meant that Kōenji was restricted to Tasks that allowed him to take part alone, which in hand meant that any of the third-year students could take part in those Tasks as well.

The third-years shadowed Kōenji for a while without any issue, but as time went on, they began to grow more and more restless.

From an outsider’s perspective, Kōenji’s walking speed was so fast that he could’ve been mistaken as a professional speed-walker of sorts, so much so that chasing after him took up quite a fair bit of stamina. The third-years were already beginning to show signs of fatigue just by trying to match his pace.

The pace was so foreign to them that before long they became completely exhausted.

Frankly, it probably would’ve been easier on them to run instead.

“Kōenji! Stop it with all this tough-guy show-off shit!”

Mikitani shouted loudly, having judged that Kōenji was simply pushing his way forward under a false show of courage.

“My my my, you’re quite the loud one, aren’t you? In which case, how about I pick up the pace a tad?”

With that, Kōenji began to run for a second time.

“Not this time! Surround him!”

The various third-years who’d been following from a distance closed in all at once.

But, just before they had him fully surrounded, Kōenji instantaneously slipped through the cracks in their formation.

“No way-!?!”

One of the third-years exclaimed in surprise, the sound of their voice drowned out by the sound of the wind.

The man in question was already long gone, swiftly crossing over the harsh terrain as though he was running on a well-maintained track at a school sporting event.

And then, with a level of speed that’d put a high-level sprinter to shame, he disappeared into the forest.

Many of the twelve individuals who made up the Free Group were highly confident in their athletic abilities.

Even on the OAA app, all of them had Physical Ability ratings of a B or higher.

In a sense, they were a unit of soldiers that Nagumo and Kiriyama had assembled for the sake of monopolizing most of the Tasks.

“After him! Don’t let him get away!”

“Wait, Mikitani! Don’t take action without my say so!”

“Shut your mouth! You really want him to escape again!? We’ll catch that asshole and drag him back by force!”

Ignoring Kiriyama’s orders, Mikitani and the rest of the third-years proceeded to chase after Kōenji.

“Those idiots…”

Kiriyama momentarily deliberated over whether or not he should chase after them, but he ultimately decided to just pull out his tablet and attempt to reformulate his strategy.

It felt hard for him to believe that Kōenji would just break into a sprint for no reason.

Therefore, it followed that he was either headed toward his next designated area or a Task.

“Out of the Tasks nearby, the one in E3 is the only one he’ll be able to participate in, but the reward for taking first-place is only 8 points… It wouldn’t be surprising for him to prioritize the 10 points from the first-place Early Bird Bonus instead, but… where exactly is his next designated area anyway?”

Area D4 was the most likely candidate given the direction he had gone in, but it easily could’ve been a randomly designated area as well.

“…What a tough opponent to figure out.”

It had truly dawned on Kiriyama that Kōenji was more than just eccentric; that he was someone whose actions seemed to defy common sense and logic altogether.