Dark Clouds – part 1

Morning for the teachers is unexpectedly busy. This school uses dormitories and their workplaces are within campus. In other words they’re close to the school but they have a mountain of things to do. Preparing lessons, verifying contact, and sometimes examining the water quality of the pool. After their individual morning preparations, they then finish their morning assembly and hold a teachers’ meeting.

Being the day of a special exam, the disorderliness is multiplied twice or even thrice over.

Just because they affect the lives of their students, the school does not allow them to make a mistake.

“Regarding this special exam, the thing we teachers must be careful of the most is class intervention. We want to protect our own classes, but please avoid doing things such as accidentally helping them at all times.”

With all 4 homeroom teachers gathered, Ikari-sensei, who was in charge of inspecting this special exam, warned with a harsh expression.

“Um, it’s a bit you know at this stage but can I have a moment?”

“What is your concern Hoshinomiya-sensei?”

“If I recall correctly… last time this test was executed 11 years ago, weren’t the teachers shuffled in order to prevent them from helping their classes? Despite that, why is it that this time the teachers are to watch over their own classes? I think it should be different considering fairness.”

After giving a warning, the school can feel the homeroom teachers’ desires to prevent intervention from reaching their classes.

But as she said, it’s more reliable to entrust other classes to them.

There shouldn’t be any teachers who would go out of their way and expose themselves to danger in order to help a rival class.

“Is it not because they believe that we will observe fairness?”

Hearing their talk, Sakagami-sensei approached and said quietly.

“Is that soo?”

“…That’s what they decide. I cannot offer any reason aside of that.”

“Something the higher-ups decided, is it.”

In all of the special exams, us mere teachers decide absolutely nothing. It is those higher up like Chairman Sakayanagi or those entrusted with managing the school who make the decisions.

Us teachers only follow and observe the rules until the end.

But being nervous, Chie did not even try to hide her dissatisfaction.

Unable to let that pass, Ikari-sensei raised his voice and opened his mouth.

“This is simply my own imagination, but in this special exam it is possible to see things that the students are trying to hide. That is a mass of information. If it reaches the teachers of other classes, will it not affect the special exams that will be held in the future?”

“Which means, in the end they don’t trust us teachers huh.”

“There’s no helping it. This special exam, it seems that three homeroom teachers have experienced it before… Does it not have anything to do with the fact that they were also entrusted with their own homeroom classes in the class votes that happened last year?” (!!! PLEASE CHECK)

“Sure enough that’s true.”

As if she had already understood from the start, Chie seemed to agree.

“Hoshinomiya-sensei… can we proceed?”

“Yes ye-s. I understand so please continuuue.”

She was obviously displeasured, but Ikari-sensei seemed to have given up and continued his explanation.

“If the person monitoring judges that you had given them advice then you will be given a warning. If this is repeated then your salary may be deducted. Again, I do not worry about everyone, but please do not forget that in case it is deduced that you have deliberately guided your students towards the correct choice, then at worst you can be demoted.”

Choices are everything in the unanimity special exam. If a teacher supports a certain choice and acts to guide them towards it, then it is no surprise that the essence of the special exam will be compromised.

Of course, neither the other teachers nor I have that intention.

Just like always, without getting too attached to the students, just solemnly moving things along.

That doesn’t change even in this special exam of bitter memories.

“That will be all. With that, please take care of the special exam today.”

From there I carried out and finished the usual morning lessons.

No, only I thought that it was usual. I might actually be wrong.

Without any sense of time, when I realized, it was afternoon.

On top of my table in the staff room, I ate.

After I carried a third of it to my throat, my chopsticks completely stopped moving.

I cannot be seen like this. I packed my remaining bento into my bag and tidied up.

And then afternoon classes arrived. The sound announcing its opening.

I stared at the floor and left the staff room. Footsteps and a voice came to me from behind.

“It’s finally time, Sae-chan.”

“…Chie.”

“You’ve been like that since this morning. Were you not able to sleep yesterday, thinking about the special exam?”

In reply to her cheap provocation of having completely seen through me, I listened.

No, perhaps it would be truer to say that I could not reply.

“The current class has nothing to do with me. Whether the students easily clear it or not, I don’t care.”

“Fuumn? I don’t see you making such a clean distinction though. Well, it’s fine. Sae-chan, you’re not forgetting that you don’t have any qualifications to aim for A-Class, right?”

Towards my leaving back, Chie sent a voice without even trying to hide the resentment in it.

I hung my head, unable to raise it until the end.