Dark Clouds – part 2

September 17. The end of lunch break. Less than three weeks after the summer break, the next special exam has arrived.

Returning to the classroom five minutes before the exam started, an adult was waiting outside the classroom.

From outside the classroom, they were quietly observing the students.

What surprised me was that we were given instructions to sit not in our own seats, but in other predetermined seats for the duration of the exam. It’s probably to protect the rules more thoroughly. Interestingly, I sat at the seat I sat on at first year, at the back by the window. Other students were… arranged randomly without any significant correlation with their seats in first year. It looks like this was a coincidence. Looking at Horikita who was going to her seat, it seemed that she was sitting at the front row around the same place she usually sat in

At my right is Satou, and at my front Onizuka had taken a seat. The students gathered one after the other.

The test we will challenge from here is the 『Unanimity Special Exam』.

Choose a choice for five motions prepared by the school and repeat it until a unanimous vote is achieved. A simple test that was nothing more or nothing less.

There’s not many special things to say about it, but there are few preparations that can be done beforehand.

Regardless of the contents of the motion, since we can’t communicate before the first vote, I’ve promised to cast my vote in such a way that we would avoid an accidental unanimous vote. Be careful about the time limit. Since there will be fighting and division over what choice to pick, decide who to follow beforehand, etc. No class can make preparations aside from something like that.

Because of that, it could be said that there was about no heaviness in the atmosphere within the class.

If this test were to be expressed as a research, it would be one wherein all participants could easily finish by 『deciding their choice and pressing the vote button.』 The main element can be easily summed up.

Of course it’s also a special exam, so there’s a feeling of nervousness but…

A film was tightly stuck onto our tablets in order to prevent peeking.

Even if someone sitting nearby looked, they wouldn’t be able to see the screen.

Since we couldn’t stand during votes, it was impossible to determine another person’s choice based on sight.

Even if by some method or accident, a third party were to see the results of the vote, whether they would be believed if they said it was a different problem. In the first place it was forbidden to peek and no matter what choice someone picked it was impossible to stand up in and of itself.

There’s no choice but to face this special exam from the front.

If the batteries of the tablet on the table fell out, just picking them up was forbidden.

“Hey. If we finish in an hour or two let’s go to Keyaki Mall.”

“I’d like to, but I need to study in the dorms, right. So could we go at night?”

Ike and Shinohara, the two who got along completely and became a couple, were talking about after school.

A special exam that could be easily cleared… huh. But it’s doubtful how many students currently understand that depending on the conditions, the difficulty may change.

The net is the anonymity of the votes. Of course, it cannot be known who voted for what as long as the test is ongoing.

Complete anonymity. How big of an influence this factor will give is everything.

Anyway the special exam’s time limit is the five hours from 1pm to 6pm; very time-consuming.

Thinking simply it would be fine to spend one hour per item.

It would be no wonder if the test were finished in one or two hours as Ike said.

And if we clear it within the time constraint, we easily gain 50 class points.

On the other hand, the worst case scenario is losing 300 class points from not being able to clear it within five hours. So we absolutely must reach unanimous votes on these five items. Considering the contents of the test, the heavy penalty and the light reward is permissible. After passing by half of the seats in the classroom, I lowered myself onto my seat in the corner. At the teacher’s podium was Chabashira-sensei, who was to advance the exam, and at the back was a teacher who was to monitor us.

“As mentioned beforehand, I will take all of your communication equipment.”

The restriction on what we can bring and the overseer from behind was there to prevent peeking at other tablets. They’re being more thorough than they need to be. That alone is proof that they’re trying to prevent people from knowing what others voted. It seems strict, but taking these measures is correct. In order to reflect the students’ simple feelings on their choices, it’s necessary to have 100% anonymity.

If there were gaps through through which to peek at each other, peer pressure would be more significant.

Everyone picks a choice α so despite wanting to pick β, you pick α.

They want to avoid that sort of thing.

The 『student’s individual thoughts』 which give meaning to the test are being treated with importance.

But as for us students, whether it’s by peer pressure or anything else, we want to achieve unanimity. So this treatment doesn’t work in our favore.

Anyway, there’s no room to cheat.

No matter what the motion is, we will want to reach unanimity.

“Hey Airi. You’ve decided to say it properly haven’t you?”

Hm? When I returned my gaze from outside the window back to the classroom, Airi’s back was being pushed by Haruka.

“U, um Kiyotaka-kun…! If…if possible, after school… can, can I have some of your time?”

While nodding, Haruka asked me with her eyes if I knew how to respond.

“Um… for the cultural festival, I have something to talk about.”

“Is that what it is. I’ve also been thinking that I have to talk speak with you directly, so I don’t mind.”

“Th, thank you! Th, then, I’ll see you after.”

Airi separated from me as if to run away, arrived at her seat and sat down with her back turned towards me.

“Looks like that girl has calmed a bit. It’s not as if her wounds are healed but she’s trying to look forward.”

Though I didn’t even try to touch on that, she inevitably made eye contact in front of me.

“But we’ll know whether she can truly accept that later. It depends on Kiyopon’s efforts.”

“I intend to negotiate with her as well as I can.”

“Yeah. Then I’ll see you after school.”

Rather than taking good care of her, recently these two have always been together.

When two minutes remained before the start, the homeroom teacher Chabashira started speaking.

“Now then – we will start in a while. We will be having a special exam now, but since it will take long, a maximum of four bathroom breaks is permitted. Fundamentally, you can take a break after reaching unanimity and before challenging the next motion. Thus, you cannot take breaks for as long as unanimity is not achieved. One break has a maximum of 10 minutes, but the special exam’s countdown will continue. It will likely be important to skip taking breaks if you deem them unnecessary.”

Since everyone has gone to the toilet because this has been announced before, there’s no problem for now.

Students who are unexpectedly in bad condition such as a stomach ache don’t seem to be in this class either.

The special exam will finally start.

That’s what I thought, but as she stared at the direction of the students, Chabashira-sensei didn’t start the test.

She was staring blankly, as if she was there in body but not in spirit.

Even the students who didn’t notice at first started meeting eyes little by little. The teacher standing at the back also seemed to have noticed that something was strange.

“Chabashira-sensei. It’s time.”

“Y, yes. Sorry. With that, let us begin the Unanimity Special Exam. The rules will be kept as we advance. Standing outside of intervals or chatting at forbidden times will not be tolerated, so be careful. Do it carefully.”

The monitor switched on and a countdown started from 26 seconds.

That’s probably because we started a little bit late, but it won’t obstruct the students.

After the count finally reached zero, the monitor changed to display the first motion.

Motion ① ・ Choose which class to compete with at the year-end exam at the 3rd term

(Even if the class’ standing changes, this choice will be prioritized)

※ The numbers within () represent how many class points can be gained in the event of victory

Choices A-Class (100) B-Class (50) D-Class (0)

“At the end of the third term of your second year, there will be a year-end special exam. These are the choices for which class you will compete with in that exam. As indicated, if you pick the current A-Class, even if the current A-Class drops to B-Class, you can still be given extra class points befitting  A-Class. Again, if the entire class is not able to reach unanimity regarding this motion, the school will select one at random.”

To say it simply, the one we choose to fight against here, whether it be Sakayanagi, Ichinose or Ryuuen, will not change.

“It’s important to see through which class you could win against if you fight. Of course, it’s not guaranteed that the class you will be able to fight against the class you wish to…”

If Horikita chose A-Class, and at the same time Ichinose chose A-Class, it will depend on whether Sakayanagi’s class chose Horikita’s class or Ichinose’s class, huh. And if Sakayanagi’s class chooses neither of them but instead Ryuuen’s class, then it will be up to Ryuuen’s class’ choice. If they avoid Sakayanagi’s class even here, then in the end it will be random. You’d normally want to pick the weaker lower classes.

However, it can be seen from the choices that the treatment given against upper classes is a little different.

If you’re able to defeat a higher class, then you will be rewarded with more class points in return. Even if you fight against lower classes you won’t be able to gain additional rewards.

One would usually want to avoid fighting against A-Class, but if there are merits like these then this in itself falls well within the scope of the test.

“Now then, we will move to the first vote. The time limit is 60 seconds.”

If you go past these 60 seconds then you’ll enter the penalty time.

Of course, in order to avoid trouble like that from the beginning, as Horikita had decided and announced beforehand, our classmates voted for what choices they liked by thinking for themselves.

I’ve discussed with Horikita that I would invariably pick the first choice, so I picked A-Class without hesitation. Horikita picked the second choice, B-Class.

With that we definitely wouldn’t reach unanimity, but we can see from the other 37 votes which class others want to fight against.

“Because everyone’s votes have been received, we will display the vote results.”

1st Vote Results A-Class 5 B-Class 21 D-Class 13

The votes weren’t concentrated on the lowest D-Class, but on B-Class, where Ichinose belonged to.

“Since unanimity has not been achieved, the interval will now start.”

For 10 minutes from now, we are allowed to stand from our seats, see other students and talk with them. There will be some noise, but some students will whisper. It doesn’t matter.

“In order to not waste time on the first motion, please allow me to make a proposal first.”

Horikita raised her hand, stood from her seat in front of Chabashira and turned around.

Being the leader for this special exam as well, she will take the lead.

“Just as the poll is divided, you must have your own thoughts. I don’t mind being asked any number of questions if you have doubts, so I will tell my views to the whole class unreservedly.”

Saying that, Horikita inhaled and started to express her choice.

“For me, the ideal class to fight against at the end of the year will be B-Class. In other words, Ichinose-san. I have three reasons. Firstly, unlike Ryuuen-san and Sakayanagi-san, Ichinose-san will most likely put up a fair fight that will simply pit our potentials against each other. Even if it will be an irregular test, there will be few reasons to watch our back. Next, they are currenlty B-Class. We will be able to gain more class points, so it will be more effective to pick upper classes who have the lead over the others. Then the final third reason. The title of B-Class is currently hollow. They are already close to our C-Class and Ryuuen-kun’s D-Class. They were once far away in terms of class points, but right now her class is declining. They are ideal partners to compete against, aren’t they.”

As if she was keeping the time limit in mind, she spoke a little quickly. But she still clearly conveyed her reasons. It left an impression on most of the students’ hearts.

“If there are students who object, I’d like you to state your perspective here. On the other hand, if you don’t mind voting for B-Class and will already do so, then that will make things faster.”

For this motion we’ll want to achieve unanimity on the second vote.

Such an intention was conveyed from Horikita. As if to act in tandem, Yousuke stood up.

“I agree with what you just said Horikita-san. The rewards for defeating Sakayanagi’s A-Class are big, but there’s no doubt that they’re stronger than anyone else. Of course, we can’t afford to take the strong bonds and reliable fighting methods of Ichinose and her classmates lightly, but I think they’re the best for us to compete with.”

Hearing the two pushing for B-Class, the direction our classmates will take has started to harden. Then as if she was getting carried away, one more person, though seated, expressed her opinion.

“I think I agree too. We won’t get any rewards if we’ll fight against Ryuuen-kun’s class. It gives me a bad taste. And if we get beaten by Sakanagi-san it wouldn’t be a laughing matter-“

Before opposing opinions come, Yousuke and Kei immediately support the case for B-Class. You could say that they were following up as was expected, but these two probably also want to fight against B-Class. That could also be seen from how B-Class got the most votes. It’s easy to understand.

In the end, the interval with about six minutes left passed without opposing opinions being expressed.

Checking the time, Chabashira started moving forward again.

“Well then, since the time is up we will commence the second vote. As the screens on your tablets change, make sure to vote within 60 seconds. As explained beforehand, time going above 60 seconds will add up to your penalty time. Take caution.”

So quickly that that caution was unnecessary, everyone’s votes were settled without 10 seconds passing.

Then on the monitor, the results of the tally were immediately displayed.

2nd Vote Result A-Class 0 B-Class 39 D-Class 0

Kouenji didn’t even mess around and vote for another class. Without taking any longer, we’ve succeeded in unanimity in our first vote after starting.

“Since the vote is unanimous, the choice of your first motion been determined to be B-Class. Your official opponent for the end-of-year test will be announced, but that will be tomorrow at earliest.”

We’ve cleared the first of five motions in as little as 10 minutes.

And we were able to pick B-Class which Horikita and the others had wished for.

Individually, I would have definitely picked Ichinose’s class to fight against myself.

Horikita said all of the reasons for that. I don’t have anything to add.

Now we just have to pray that Sakayanagi and Ryuuen’s class will pick matching choices, but Ichinose’s class is easy to aim for. If it goes badly then us three classes might be vying for her. Let’s hope that Ichinose’s class picks Horikita’s class without any complications.

“I don’t think it’s been long enough to take a break, but just to be sure I’ll ask. Do you mind if we move to the next motion?”

Of course, since there was no one among the students who protested, we immediately started the second motion.

“Now for the next one. Allow me to start the second motion.”

Motion ② ・ For the study trip in the last 10 days of November, choose which destination you wish for.

Choices Hokkaido Kyoto Okinawa

What’s this? I could hear such voices leaking out from the students.

Since murmuring was prohibited, when Chabashira looked at them they stopped talking immediately.

But there’s likely no mistake that most students thought, “What’s this.”

Even so, if we don’t vote first we won’t be able to talk.

There’s no choice but to simply think about what choice you should vote for yourself and vote.

“This vote will be like the previous votes. It will not be set in stone. Depending on the other classes, the result may change, so please keep that in mind.”

1st Vote Results Hokkaido 17 Kyoto 3 Okinawa 19

Aside from Kyoto, the results this time were closer than the last.

“Since unanimity has not been achieved, we will now have the interval.”

“Hey hey, can you call this a special exam? We can do something like this easily…”

When the interval started, Hondou spoke smiling as if not to let the moment pass.

As he said, the first and second motions weren’t enough to prepare such a dramatic place for. It could have fit amply into homeroom time.

It’s only been two items. But it’s already the second item.

If this ends we will have finished two out of five motions.

The contents are a little bit too simple. More than being nervous, most students are probably relaxed.

But interestingly, there are also students who get more uneasy the more this sort of situation continues.

They’re represented by people like Horikita and Yousuke. Careful students who think well.

As others were laughing and talking about which one to pick, they were earnestly staring at the motion.

That’s right. It’s completely unthinkable that motions as easy as these will continue until the end. Rather, the easier the first parts are, the more pressure the later ones will carry.

While expecting something like that, I quietly looked at how this interval was going.

“I think everyone has their thoughts. But first, let’s focus on this motion.”

Yousuke warned against being distracted and tightly corrected the whole class.

For the first time I voted for Hokkaido as promised. Now, what will we do.

The contents of the motions will be the same. Which means that at least one choice will definitely have at least two classes voting for them.

There’s no mistaking that every single vote is important for determining the destination of our study trip.

“Horikita-san, it seems that we have different perspectives. Do you have some advice to give?”

Unlike before, as if she was worried about Horikita not saying anything right away, Kushida herself said such.

But instead of replying right away, Horikita 一was silent as the grave.

“Horikita-san?”

Kushida called her name seeming worried. Horikita flusteredly replied.

“Sorry. I was a little absorbed in my thinking… I was thinking these choices were random and of no consequence, but it may unexpectedly be difficult to reach unanimity. A study trip is an important event for us students. Of course it cannot be decided with a few words from myself.”

They promised to follow the leader if worse came to worst, but that didn’t mean that Horikita could decide where they were going for their study trip on her own. Considering that it’s not a question of advantages and disadvantages but of preference, it’s a difficult choice to make.

“Anyway, we have no choice but to start by listening to each others’ views on which destination we’d like to go to.”

As if he was waiting for that, Sudou raised his hand.

“Then let’s start from me. I’ve been to Okinawa. When you think study trip, the sea has to be there so of course [it should be]Okinawa right? Besides, it has the most number of votes, so shouldn’t we decide on that?”

“Wait a second. I agree that Okinawa is [], but if that’s the reason then Hokkaido is also the same. And besides, the difference in votes is small isn’t it? Everyone, don’t you wanna go skiing?”

Maezono seemed to have voted for Hokkaido. She spoke opposing Sudou.

“I’m fine with Okinawa-. I wanna try snorkeling!”

“I’ve gone to Okinawa so many times already so Hokkaido is-“

The two destinations were similar in the number of votes they had. The opinions for them started to butt heads.

Everyone was picking their destinations with the best in mind, so it’s understandable that they would grow critical of other choices.

“To begin with places like Hokkaido are just full of snow aren’t they? That’s so boring-“

“No, a place like Okinawa doesn’t have anything but the ocean does it?”

For several minutes, the discourse got out of hand. Yousuke, unable to do nothing, cut in.

“Both Hokkaido and Okinawa have about the same amount of popularity so I understand why you’re fighting… but it might be better to sympathize with the other party a little bit.”

I’d like you to stop talking in a way that’s almost violent, Yousuke appealed.

The people who were at the beginning talking about how their desired destination was wonderful had started to show contempt for the other side’s desired destination.

“Hirata-kun is for Hokkaido right?”

“Oi Hirata, you picked Okinawa didn’t you?”

“Eh? Um…”

Caught in between the two groups, Yousuke showed a troubled expression.

“That’s um… a secret… I think?”

In that situation, answering either of them was difficult. In a way, he got anonymity at that moment.

“A place you can swim at in November would be Okinawa you know? Don’t you wanna go to the sea?”

“I said I don’t want the sea anymore. I’ve had my fill of it in the uninhabited island test and then some. It’s definitely Hokkaido!”

The argument had been interrupted for a moment, but they heated up and started over.

Sudou and Maezono’s exchange can probably be taken as a microcosm of the whole class’ views.

“Wh, What do we do Horikita-san?”

Kushida asked for Horikita’s help with a troubled face.

“Rightm, this is a troublesome motion.”

The difficulty of unanimity. That problem may have materialized sooner rather than later.

Without expecting to be able to simply settle the discussion, we reached the end of the 10-minute interval.

By the way, for this second attempt I’m thinking of voting for Kyoto.

The historically rich Kyoto. I strongly felt that I wanted to see its scenery.

“Now then, since the second vote has been fully completed, the results will be displayed.”

2nd vote results Hokkaido 18 Kyoto 4 Okinawa 17

“Ah, Hokkaido turned it around! We did it!”

“Damn, who changed sides from Okinawa to Hokkaido!?”

Hokkaido had gathered a little more votes than last time. It’s about a 50-50.

The groups of those who had voted for Okinawa and those for Hokkaido started to quarrel.

Even if we expect to settle it at this rate, we wouldn’t reach a conclusion even after several repetitions.

The only sad thing is Kyoto not getting any more votes. Only my vote was added…

Which meant that Horikita’s vote might have not moved from Kyoto, the second choice. But of course it’s possible that Horikita voted for Hokkaido or Okinawa and someone else changed their vote to Kyoto so I can’t say for certain. We could have changed our votes to the option with the most votes on the first try, but that would easily leave a grudge. After all, it’s not even Okinawa’s second consecutive win but Hokkaidou’s first win.

“It can’t be helped. If it’s become like this, there’s likely no way but to decide it with a match. Three people for Hokkaido, three people for Okinawa. Choose your representatives and play rock-papers-scissors. Pick the first, second and third player, then see which team wins. But let’s allow one person from Kyoto, which has few votes. Because though it will be a tough battle for them, I want to be as fair as possible.”

Allowing the minority in Kyoto to fight against the other two on equal footing indeed gives a strong feeling of fairness.

In order to settle it forcefully without wasting time, I suppose this is what should be done.

There may be some degree of dissatisfaction but since this has been decided as a rule from the beginning, we must follow.

Even while quarreling mildly over who will be their representative in rocks-papers-scissors, they started deciding the participants immediately.

Hokkaido Team

1st player ・ Maezono 2nd player ・ Ishikura 3rd player ・ Shinohara

Three people. A women’s team.

Okinawa Team

1st player ・ Onodera 2nd player ・ Hondou 3rd player ・ Sudou

A mixed gender team.

“Now, out of those who voted for Kyoto, is there nobody who wants to participate in rocks-papers-scissors?”

Horikita wished for one representative. Towards her one man finally raised his hand.

“If nobody will come then let me act as the general. I will definitely take everyone to Kyoto.”

(TN: The word Keisei used for general here is the same one I’ve been translating as third person[大将].)

Declaring his strong will, the one who threw himself into the raging battle was Keisei.

The first student for Kyoto who raised his voice. Kyoto was the study trip destination that I wished for.

I’m leaving my part to you Keisei. It will be a tough fight, but please win somehow…

In order to make it in time for the third vote, they started to play right away. First, Onodera brought out scissors. In reply, Maezono and Keisei opposed him with paper. The Okinawa team ended up winning the first game right away. The Kyoto team, whose dream was broken in an instant, disappeared from the battlefield in disappointment.

From the time Keisei volunteered himself it hadn’t even been ten seconds. His time was too short.

I witnessed Horikita the moment she palmed her forehead and sighed. I was confident that sure enough, she was one of the people who wanted to go to Kyoto.

As if the people who wanted to go to Kyoto had never existed in the first place, the match continued. After defeating two people at the beginning, Onodera went on to defeat Ishikura, advantaging his team in one fell swoop. But their general, Shinohara, defeated him and Hondou in an unbelievable development.

She made it a fight between generals. The two glared at each other.

“It’s definitely Okinawa! Soki soba! Shisa! Fishing!”

(TN: Soki soba is an Okinawan soba. Shisa are lion statues in Okinawa believed to ward off evil and used as guardians.)

“It’s Hokkaido for sure! Crabs! Hot springs! Skiing!”

They gripped their fists while saying things that I didn’t quite understand.

When the two brought down their raised fists, they were both paper. A tie.

It was a tie already, so I wanted them to continue. But the both of them stopped moving and rested.

Even though they’re just deciding the destination of our study trip, there’s an abnormal tension in the air.

“I’ll do rock-! Rock, paper-scissors!”

The second clash. What Sudou brought out was a powerful rock. And on the other hand, Shinohara had cast a magnificent paper for the second time.

“We did it-! It’s Hokkaido!”

Wa-. The whole Hokkaido faction raised a victory cry.

“What have you done Sudou!”

“Ku, sorry…!”

I don’t want to be a bother, but this only means that our class will cast our one vote to Hokkaido. If Okinawa or Kyoto gather two votes, then we will go there.

As if understanding that this wasn’t the mood to say that, Horikita looked exasperated in a way.

The third vote started and everyone used their tablets.

3rd vote results Hokkaido 39 Kyoto 0 Okinawa 0

Even as half of the class was left dissatisfied, because of the fight that had been held with fair rules, we had succeeded superbly in achieving unanimity by the third vote.

My own wish for Kyoto did not come true, but Hokkaido is also very enjoyable in itself, and depending on the directions of the other classes we could easily go to Kyoto or Okinawa.

Anyway, no matter where we go, this motion has built up excitement for the school trip.

“Now then, allow me to commence the third motion.”

Chabashira didn’t seem any different from the start, but a small change in the tone of her voice could be perceived.

There may be some deviation from the easy motions that we’ve been having until now.

Motion ③ ・ The monthly grant of private points will become zero. In exchange, three random students in the class will be given protection points. Or halve the private point grant and one random person will be given a protection point. In case neither outcome is selected, the students with the five lowest scores in the next written examination will forfeit all of their private points.”

※ Regardless of the choice, private points will be forfeited for the next half year.

Unlike the two motions until now, the one offered contained large merits and demerits for our class. Many private points will be lost in the first choice so the reward is also big, but the fact that it will be given to random students can’t be overlooked either.

The protection points are an extremely powerful system, but depending on what happens, there will be those who will pass the three years here without needing them. If such a student receives it, then it could become a pearl thrown before swine.

Half the private points will be paid in the second choice. It’s no small sum at all. Nevertheless, only one person will be granted. But being able to pick the student is a big factor.

The third choice prevents as much loss of private points as possible. It’s the choice to pick if the protection points are judged to be too expensive or unnecessary in the first place. But though five people will shoulder it, the demerit can’t be forgotten.

Of course this should be analyzed in terms of merits and demerits, but it seems that things like the class’ feelings must also be considered.

The students probably want to say many things, but there is no choice but to vote first.

“I’ll talk about the second choice, or the case in which you vote unanimously for a certain student to be granted the protection point. If you reach unanimity for this choice, the third motion will not end. Instead, you will transition into deciding who the protection point will be given to. You remember my example right?”

Pick one person in the interval and vote for whether or not they will be granted the protection point. If we’re in unanimous agreement that person will get a protection point, and if it’s unanimous opposition then the chance of that student being nominated for this motion will become zero. Then the remaining 38 people will discuss and select another person. Then some will support and others will oppose them, and we will be forced to repeat the motion.

“All of that being said, I will now display the results of the first vote.”

1st vote results Grant to 3 random people 12 Grant to one chosen person 5 Don’t grant 22

The result of the first vote seemed to be that many people are avoiding the slight inconvenience and leaving the protection point. That also means that it’s already decided, that the ones with the lowest five scores in the next written exam will lose their private points. For students who don’t fall into that category, there is no risk. On the other hand, there are probably people who think that if we will lose private points for half a year anyway, it would be better to get a protection point.

“H, hey wait a second! I don’t really get it!”

“Me neither! Won’t only five people suffer if we don’t get a protection point!?”

The ones who raised their voices first were Ike and Satou. Students who could get the lowest scores.

“Well it can’t be helped can it. Not getting private points for half a year is a bit… And the chances of getting one if they’re given randomly are low, and if it’s given to one person it probably won’t be me… so please sacrifice yourself, Kanji.”

Sudou spoke, admonishing him. He’s already broken out of the bottom five in academics after all.

“It’s unfair! I need private points for a lot of things myself!”

“You’re not gonna say it’s for your dates with Shinohara are you?”

“Ehh? Eh? Ehhh, really, how did you know? I give up…”

It didn’t seem like he would collapse from having that exposed, but it seemed like a matter of life and death.

“Alright, it’s decided. We’re unanimous in not granting anything.”

“That’ll be hard for me~!”

“Then study. That will settle it right?”

“Gu… I kinda feel like I can’t accept being told that by Ken of all people!”

Of course it’s important to break out of the lower ranks by studying, but no matter how many points he gets the fact that five people will be sacrificed won’t change.

“I understand what you want to say, but it’s too early to be pessimistic. We can minimize the amount of private points lost and split the burden with everyone. Raise funds among the remaining 34 people every month for the five who won’t get any private points such that we’re equal. With this no single student alone will be unsatisfied right?”

simply put, if a single student will receive 50,000 private points per month, then five people will lose 250,000 points. The remaining 34 people will gain 1,700,000 points. Dividing this among 39 people and rounding it off, we’ll get 43,589 points.

We won’t be able to avoid a deduction, but we can end it with each person losing about 6500 points.

Even if that went on for half a year, the stress on each student would be minimized.

“W, Well that’s also fine but come on…”

“I’m fine without splitting it though. Well I guess it doesn’t matter.”

It seemed like there was dissatisfaction, but it also seemed like there was some will to help Ike.

Most students wished for the option to not grant a protection point, and they naturally started to decide which direction to head to among the three choices. But Yousuke raised his voice.

“Horikita-san, do you think that not granting any is for the best?”

“That’s the difficult part. Honestly, they’re very troubling choices. Protection points are extremely strong tools that can defend against expulsion. But, you could say the same for private points. Hirata-kun, do you not think so?”

“This is only a single perspective, but I think that we should gain protection points from this motion. Of course, for three people.”

“It’ll be considerably tough to not gain any private points for half a year. It’s not only our everyday lives that will be strongly affected. Depending on the situation it may even affect our special exams.”

The possibility that private points will make the difference between victory and defeat couldn’t be denied.

“Even if unforeseen circumstances arise, we will be able to protect three people. Since we rarely get opportunities to receive protection points, they’re simply priceless.”

Yousuke appealed while becoming slightly heated. I didn’t not understand his feelings. The value of a protection point that can prevent expulsion in practicality can be up to 20,000,000 private points.

There aren’t many opportunities to give that to three people.

Naturally, for Yousuke who thinks of his comrades, it’s something that’s hard to replace with money.

Unlike the destination for our study trip, this is a discussion that we won’t be able to reach unanimity in easily.

It’s hard to think that the destination of our trip will affect the class’ future, but these protection points are of concern to the whole class. If we gain them then we will be able to save someone.

“Sorry, but please allow me to state my view.”

Here and now, Keisei stood up and explained his view.

“For the next half of the year starting next month, we do intend to increase our class points, right?”

“Of course. To aim for higher classes, we have no time to stagnate.”

“50 points from this special exam, and if we do well in the Cultural festival, 100 points. If we gain a similar amount of points in the Sports festival… by the time our second term ends, we may have 200, or depending on the situation up to about 300 more points. Is it fine to think that?”

“That would be the case.”

If we assume that we will gain 300 points within the year, our class points would recover even as much as 1000. If that happens then the amount of private points that will be granted to us from here will increase by up to 50% and total about 20,000,000.

If that’s the case, we would make revenue exactly equivalent to the maximum value of a single protection point in half a year. A pretty figure comes out from the calculations. But if we choose to give protection points to three people here then we will receive each one for about 7,000,000 private points.

Certainly a superb line, isn’t it.

And the least probable choice, halve the private points but give one person a protection point in exchange. You could cherry-pick, but practically speaking it’s the most difficult to pick when looking at the cost. But the merit of being able to pick a certain student is a big factor.

Only, if it’s to be given to someone we choose, we would of course have to hold a vote for that until we reach unanimity.

If we clumsily adopt this choice, there will be fights over who it should be granted to.

“So prioritizing the private points is an offensive strategy while prioritizing protection points is defensive?”

As if to organize the situation Kushida asked. The three who were standing from their seats nodded at about the same time.

“But if we don’t use the protection points, it wouldn’t have been worth buying right? Of course, that’s fine with me but…”

In order to let the people around him know, he probably can’t avoid bringing that up.

“Yes. In the end, if we don’t use it, it might as well be worthless. It goes without saying that possessing it gives security and a feeling of safety, but…”

“Whether it’s worthless or not is a different matter, isn’t it. Even if we end up not using it for its purpose, we could use it in suicide strategies that intentionally spend it to mount unexpected attacks. We might be able to use it not only for simple defense but also for offense.”

Keisei was explaining that there were various ways to use protection points. I understood that well.

We could fight by putting an unexpected twist on the fact that we would be able to avoid expulsion. That is a big merit.

But whether the special exams come sooner or later, we won’t know as long as we don’t know their contents.

There is no guarantee that there will definitely be chances to use it effectively in the future.

This motion, no, this special exam is surprisingly deep.

Even if the motions are the same for all classes, things change depending on their standing and situation.

If we had zero class points or something like that, then we would unanimously vote for the three protection points without fighting. Then we would be able to catch up to the other classes. On the other hand, for A-Class which has a large lead, it would become more expensive compared to other classes.

Even if you don’t see a significant meaning in each individual motion, there are definitely small differences.

Conversely, the first and second choices are slightly less convenient for A-Class.

“So Yukimura-kun. You think that we should give protection points to three people?”

In order to wring out the final choices with accuracy, Horikita tries to get his statement.

“No… I’m backing the second choice. Have the protection point granted to a certain student.”

It turned out that he was for the least popular second choice. Horikita showed surprise.

“That is, you are implying that it should be granted to you?”

“If you would do that then I’d honestly be happy. But that isn’t realistic. Wanting it to be granted to themself is fundamentally what everyone thinks.”

Even if he simply raised his hand, it wouldn’t be strange if the rest of the class did the same.

“It’s difficult to pick a certain person. But no matter how much of a good bargain it seems, we can’t see how effective giving protection points to three random people will be.”

“It seems that a distinct someone you should give it to comes to mind. Who do you want to give it to?”

“For our future plans… Horikita, I don’t think there’s anyone but you.”

Towards the person he had been confronting, Keisei says clearly.

“…Me?”

“Yes. Right now, you are displaying ability as our class’ leader. There is nothing lacking in your ability according to the OAA. Since we will be competing with people like Sakaynagi and Ryuuen from here, the most dangerous role will be the leader. If it’s those two, it would come as no surprise for them to mercilessly try to have you expelled. If that’s the case and you’re granted a protection point, we will be able to face the other classes, formidable as they may be, without hesitation. I’ve imagined such a situation.”

They would usually show some defiance, but our classmates were naturally lending their ears.

It’s because his reasons weren’t half-minded but true.

“That’s not the only reason. Usually if someone possessed a protection point then they would feel more relaxed. They might not try their best because they would be safe themselves. But, I don’t think you’re that type of person… that’s the feeling I get.”

Don’t just give it to someone competent. The one who should be chosen should be able to bring out even more of our class’ power than before. That is Horikita, Keisei said.

“I understand what you’re saying, but look… it’s expensive you know?”

If I don’t get it, I’ll just have my private points halved for the next half of a year.

It’s natural that people who think like Hondou would appear.

“It’s just, I think that I’m only losing private points, so it feels like a loss. This is an upfront investment. The private points that we’ll pay with this choice will be converted to class points by Horikita. Isn’t it easier to think that way?”

“You overestimate me quite a bit… I might fail you know?”

“We can’t win against A-Class without taking any risks. I myself have been fighting in this school for a year and a half.”

“Fuufuufuu. It’s fine is it not? I also endorse your proposal from now, Megane-kun.”

(TN: megane = glasses)

Kouenji, who I thought would have nothing to do with this special exam, indicated his endorsement with words.

“In order to pay for receiving the protection point, Horikita-girl could work harder and more desperately than anyone else.”

“Though you don’t seem to be doing your best despite having a protection point.”

“Effort is for ordinary people after all.”

Even though he was jeered at by Sudou, Kouenji didn’t seem to even take it to mind.

Anyway, being able to get an endorsement from Kouenji who could have been the biggest hurdle is significant.

I had my thoughts about the first and third choices, but I can agree with Keisei’s presentation.

More than anything else, I would have to have an appropriate reason to express an opposing opinion here.

If I were to say that I simply don’t want to go without receiving private points, then it would hardly be for the sake of the class.

In the atmosphere brought about by Keisei, the next time to vote came.

2nd vote results Grant to 3 random people 0 Grant to one chosen person 39 Don’t grant 0

Excellently weaving through the gaps, Keisei’s proposal was adopted.

But what’s slightly annoying is that it’s also been decided that we would have an interval to decide for the object of our choice.

Just now there were no students objecting to granting the protection point to Horikita who appeared, so the students killed time by talking freely. We didn’t even hold a popularity poll. It had been decided that Horikita would nominate herself and be granted.

And without any disturbances, 39 people agreed for Horikita, and we had reached unanimity.

I thought that we might have needed to toil for this motion. Settling it more smoothly than I had imagined is a big thing.

“The third motion will now be concluded. For half a year starting from now, the private points paid to all of you will be halved, but at this point in time a protection point is granted to Horikita.”

Of course it won’t come to fruition in this special exam, but with this we have succeeded in giving Horikita, who’s acting as our leader, a precious defense.

It wasn’t cheap at all, but it didn’t seem to be too expensive either.

Motion ④ ・ For the written exam at the end of the second term, the chosen rules written below will apply to your class.

Choices Higher Difficulty Additional Penalty Decreased Rewards

The choices that appeared were somewhat mean-natured

All of them were demerits for the class.

If we were allowed to speak in this time, discontent and grumbling would probably fly about.

1st vote results Higher Difficulty 6 Additional Penalty 18 Decreased Rewards 15

Fundamentally none of them were desirable to pick, and the votes were split.

After that there was a heated debate between students who were confident about the special exams from here and those who weren’t. I thought that the motion could drag on, but we were guided to unanimity for the second choice, 『additional penalty.』

If we join our forces together upfront then it wouldn’t be difficult to avoid a penalty. Horikita’s strong persuasion seemed to be effective.