Ichinose Honami’s Choice

Before the start of this special exam, there was one class that every teacher thought was certain to clear this obstacle. On the other hand, it was also foreseen that if the class could not clear the exam without a struggle, they might have to retreat from the competition for A class in the future.

That is the B class, that Ichinose was enrolled in.

Motion ⑤ ・ Expel one classmate and gain 100 class points in exchange

(If the vote is unanimous in support, please vote for the student who will be expelled)

Having reached the last task in the early hours, Ichinose and the others had completed their first round of voting and were waiting for the results. There was no sign of anxiety or unrest on anyone.

Except for one person.

Kanzaki prayed as he looked at the 39 people who had already voted, excluding himself. He strongly hoped that the results of the voting would be a little more divisive.

“…..Well then, I will now announce the results”

With a touch of disappointment, Hoshinomiya operates her tablet.

The result displayed while everyone was watching was…….

1st vote results 1 in Agreement 39 in opposition

After recognizing the worst possible outcome that he could have imagined, Kanzaki closes his eyes.

The overwhelming majority of votes against the motion came as no surprise to the students of Class B, of course.

The reason, of course was that they did not doubt that an unanimous vote against the motion would be passed as a matter of course. This was symbolized by the fact that they felt nothing unusual about the fact that there was a vote in favor of supporting it.

“Hey, who was the one who voted Support? You pressed the wrong button.”

Without a sense of crisis, Shibata who was sitting in front of me, turned around and said so.

Indeed, they did not take any account of the possibility that this one vote was a vote with a clear intention. Not only Shibata, but everyone in the class had the same perception.

Knowing this, a sense of uncontrollable anger welled up inside Kanzaki.

Up until now, Kanzaki has done his best to quietly assist his classmates with their intentions.

However, in no situation are we able to continue the battle to protect our friends delusionally.

It was precisely because Kanzaki was in the position of a general advisor that he felt this concern more strongly than anyone else.

“For the time being, I don’t think there’s anything for us discuss, so let’s just go along with it until the next vote————“

Lack of a sense of urgency. A mindset that would assume that there would be no student who would prioritize their class points over their own classmates.

Kanzaki could not continue to endure in silence as this was shown to him.

“Hold up a moment…….It’s true that we can always make a unanimous decision by dissent. But can we really say with certainty that it is the right thing to do, to keep choosing to protect our classmates?”

Kanzaki interrupted Shibata’s words and stood up, calmly but powerfully tapping on his desk.

“It seems to me that we’re all suffering from normality bias if none of you think that it’s not unusual that 39 people voted against the motion without any hesitation or doubt.”

Normality bias refers to the characteristic of not paying attention to unfavorable events, information, recognizing a crisis and etc.

“In order for our class to win in the future, we’ll have to make new decisions. We’re already at the edge or a cliff, are you guys thinking that we would be able to hold on forever? If we don’t greedily pursue class points, moving up to class A will only be a dream.”

I want you to understand that. Kanzaki created an argument, which was not his strong suit, but the eyes of his classmates watching him were unusually cold.

“What was that, Kanzaki? In other words, you’re saying that you were the one who casted the vote in favor of this?”

Looking unconvinced by the split vote, which was now not a pushover error, Shibata turned around and said.

No, it’s wasn’t just Shibata. The whole class was staring at him aswell, Hamaguchi, Andou, Kobayashi, Amikura, Shiranami.

“Indeed, it was me. It’s certainly important to protect our classmates. However, our class has been slowly losing points ever since we enrolled. If the lower classes prioritize their class points over their classmates, this special exam will drop us back to class D.”

The only person who listened to Kanzaki’s pleas was their homeroom teacher, Hoshinomiya.

However, from the standpoint of a teacher, she could not say anything in agreement with his statement.

“’What you’re saying is indeed true……but there’s no one in this class who deserves to be expelled.”

There was no room for debate, said Shiranami, who instantly showed her opposition to Kanzaki.

“……I know. I know that.”

“You say that we might drop down to D class, but I don’t think the other classes are going to just expel anyone for 100 class points. Well, if there’s one I could think of, it would be Ryuuen, but this

exam requires an unanimous approval from the entire class who will be voting under concealment. I wouldn’t say this for certain, but I don’t think even their class would choose to expel him.”

By foreseeing that all the classes would be unanimous in their opposition, the gap will not, in fact, widen at all.

“Certainly, it’s not easy for any classes to make the choice to cut off their friends. But it’s the process that I’m focusing on. Isn’t it natural for some students, if not half, to think that they should put their class before their friends a little?”

“So what you’re saying is that you want to have a discussion about this? Even though we’ve already decided to be unanimous in our opposition?”

“…… It’s not a done deal yet. It’s just a discussion with a view to unanimity in favour.”

“No no no, that’s crazy. It’s precisely because our friends are here with us that we work hard and aim for the top together with no one missing. So there’s absolutely no way that we can lack even a

single person.”

Class points and classmates.

If it was a simple choice of which of the two was more important, Kanzaki would have no room for doubt.

However, a lot of things has changed ever since he enrolled into this school.

Starting in class B, the class points were side-by-side.

In the first semester of the first year, they took a big lead over the lower two classes. He would’ve never complained about preaching the value of fellowship as long as it was maintained.

“By all means, is there anyone who has an opinion other than opposition to this……?”

Even though he was about to give up, Kanzaki believed in the last possibility and looked around at his classmates.

However, none of them showed any sign of agreement.

Even if they partially agreed with the idea, none of the students could put it into words.

Everyone believed, or rather hoped, that the second vote would be unanimous due to opposition.

“I’m sorry, but I……. I will not let this choice be unanimous in opposition.”

Feeling the pressure, Kanzaki muttered to himself to resist it.

“By that……does that mean you’ll be voting for support in the next round too?”

Ichinose, who had been silent up to this point, asked Kanzaki about his true intentions.

“…..Yes.”

“But, Kanzaki-kun, we’re not going to change our minds, you know? Sacrificing a friend to obtain class points….I don’t ever want to be in a class like that.”

“Yeah, Kanzaki. No matter how you look at it, this special exam is a challenge or rather, a trap made by the school. Sacrificing your classmates for the sake of short-term class points. If you start thinking like that, you’re going to suffer the same kind of pain in future battles, you know?”

“But by giving up on our friends in order to obtain class points, we can get closer to Class A. If such a chance comes again and again, so much the better. On the other hand, if our class is the only one that chooses to protect our friends instead, we will be overtaken by other classes.”

“I don’t think it’s that easy for people to sacrifice others. Can such a class even continue to win? The class that protects its friends and believes in its friends will win in the end. Don’t you think?”

Almost in unison, all of his classmates nodded their heads.

“Look at the reality, Shibata. The situation is very different from last year. We are now in a tight spot. As a result of choosing not to expel anyone, we lost a lot of private points. On the other hand,

the three classes that are missing their classmates are now making good progress.”

“It won’t last forever.”

“What makes you so sure it won’t last forever?”

“If that’s the case, I’ll ask you the opposite, what’s your rationale that it would last forever?”

“Just look at where we are now, we were in second place and now we’re in danger of falling to fourth place.”

“You’re the one who should look at the situation, Kanzaki. Right now, we’re in B class. Whether the lead is 1 point or 100 points, it’s a fact that we’re in B class, right? And even if we drop a few spots, we’ll come back eventually.”

Up until now, Kanzaki had been pushing against the expectations of those around him from beginning to end, but he had tried his best to stay in the game.

He was desperate to make people question this unusual way of thinking.

“Kanzaki-kun. I understand that there are various methods you want us to take in order to win. But there are some methods that you should never take. I think that’s the case with this assignment. It’s not that I don’t understand your way of thinking. I just think that it is wrong to put our class points and classmates on a scale.”

When Ichinose spoke up, the resolve of her classmates became firm.

No, they originally already had a firm will to put their friends first before anything else, but now they had entrenched themselves even more.

Kanzaki was deeply disappointed. This class was often envied by others.

They are kind, cheerful, equal, and have the ideal balance of study and sports.

This is an advantage that Ichinose, as the leader, has created, but on the other hand, she also has a major disadvantage. Her presence has mass-produced followers and created an environment where people don’t pay attention to the dirty things.

Even if they were told that if they were to expel someone, they would be guaranteed to move up to A class, they would still put their friends first before anything else in this class. An obsession that practically says “I would rather stay in B class than cut off my friends.”

Kanzaki was reminded once again that this was their only and greatest flaw.

“I see…… I suppose you’re right. Maybe I am wrong.”

In order to overcome these shortcomings, we must be willing to take risks and try to cure ourselves.

Even though I knew I wasn’t the right person for the job, I had no choice but to do it since there was no one else who would do it.

“What if I still voted in support till the end? One vote has a lot of power in this special test. I can ignore the will of the 39 of you and continue to vote in agreement.”

“There is no way you would do that. If we run out of time and fail, we’ll lose three hundred class points, and then we won’t be able to beat the other classes anymore.”

There was no way anyone would choose to run out of time. It’s called common sense.

“It’s the same thing. If we don’t do this and grab the 100 points here, I don’t think we’ll graduate in A class. In other words, even if we were to lose 100 or 300 points, it doesn’t matter how small or big the loss is─── “

“Okay, stop right there. It’s time to vote now, so please suspend your discussion.”

Hoshinomiya interrupted Kanzaki and moved on to the 60-second voting period.

The tablet showed a switched voting screen, with buttons for support and oppose.

Just quietly, Kanzaki looked at the button. The class stopped moving, and silence fell.

The air seemed as if 39 people had finished voting in less than five seconds.

No, they had already finished voting even before then.

Kanzaki made up his mind and pressed the button, and at the same time, Hoshinomiya moved.

“Okay. Now that everyone has voted, I’ll announce the results.

2nd vote results 1 in Agreement 39 in Opposition

Despite desperate attempts to persuade him, the result was the same as the first vote.

Of course, the vote in support of the motion was cast by Kanzaki.

“You’ve got to be kidding me…….”

“Are you seriously going to continue voting in support of this, Kanzaki-kun?”

His classmates, including Ichinose, were more annoyed than angry.

However, this easygoing atmosphere began to change little by little due to Kanzaki’s firm determination.

“Yeah. I’m going to go again about this for the second time. I want this motion to be unanimous in support.”

At that comment, the class grew silence even though the interval had just begun.

“If I keep voting yes, after a few hours, you’ll have no choice but to unpack your halted thoughts and think. To debate whether voting no is really the right thing to do.”

Kanzaki confidently tells them that he was prepared to use the remaining three and a half hours of test time to the fullest.

“There are only a number of ways we can get out of this situation. We have to make it unanimous.”

“What are you saying, Kanzaki-kun. That kind of thing───”

“That wouldn’t be realistic, would it? Because you guys have never thought about sacrificing a classmate from the beginning. But I’m not moving my vote from agreement.”

Interrupting Ichinose’s words, Kanzaki continues to speak without stopping.

“Since that is the case, then there’s really only one way left: vote in support and expel me.”

I want to change this class, even if it’s at the cost of self-sacrifice. He expressed that will in form.

“If we don’t have the courage to take a step forward in this special exam, we will never make it to Class A. As a result, we’ll just spend the other half of our remaining school life in vain. If that

happens, I would rather drop out than seek another path.”

It seemed like a trap, but it was the only way Kanzaki could do it.

There was no way that this class, which caters for the weak, could take action to select students for expulsion.

On the other hand, there’s nothing that can be done against the heavy penalty of expulsion.

The vote was then repeated more three times, with a new interval each time due to his resistance.

A total of five rounds of voting resulted, all with one vote in support and 39 votes opposed.

The same screen and the same results were repeated without a single vote being moved.

“Well then, I’ll see you guys in the next interval.”

Perhaps tired with the stalemate, Hoshinomiya did not hide her annoyance.

The watcher at the back of the classroom showed no issue with the look of annoyance.

The role they were given was only to maintain fairness.

Whether the students were playing around or if the teacher was feeling tired, they were free to do whatever they liked as long as it was within the rules. But then again, it’s been more than half an hour.

In other words, three additional rounds of voting were repeated, but the results still came out the same.

Only the results of the fixed, unchanging votes reflected back to the class.

“It’s been over an hour now? On this last motion.”

“But it can’t be helped, can it? Until Kanzaki-kun votes in opposition, we will have to wait.”

The hope of the 39 people who were voting in opposition was that Kanzaki would lose his patience and that he, too, would vote in opposition to the motion.

At first, they all tried to be friendly, but then they gradually turned more aggressive. Even so, Kanzaki continued to repeat his vote in silence.

“Hey everyone, I’m getting bored with the silence, so can I talk to you all for a minute? If you’re not interested, you can just ignore me.”

Hoshinomiya, who had been keeping up with everyone during the last motion so far, opens her mouth.

“Actually, when I was a student, I went through the same thing as everyone else. Why? Because I too, had once taken this unanimous special exam. And the content of the fifth motion was exactly the same as now.”

“It’s kind of unusual for Sensei to talk about your school days. Isn’t that a first?”

The relationship between Ichinose’s class and Hoshinomiya was good, and it was known early on that she was from this school. In the process, a few students tried to ask about her school days, but it’s safe to say that there were no serious opportunities for her to talk about it.

“I remember being stranded for a long time on this motion as well, although our class’ situation was completely different.”

She smiles somewhat coldly, as if remembering those days.

“It’s the ultimate choice between choosing class points or friends. That’s why we struggled and struggled. The boys grabbed each other by the chest.”

“I-isn’t that a bit too much?”

Perhaps they could imagine such a situation in their own class. Grabbing each other’s chests.

Shiranami smiled bitterly as she looked at the other girls.

“In my case, it was the third semester of my second year, and it was the time to go all out even if it was only a single point. If you talk even a little bit about expelling a certain person, your friends will certainly defend that person as a matter of course. But sometimes you have to cut someone in order to win, don’t you? If you were in a situation where you needed 100 more points to get to Class A, would you have made the same decision you’re making now?”

Hoshinomiya understood very well what Kanzaki wanted to ask of them, and she put it directly into words.

“We can’t let anyone get expelled. We can always try our best to make up for it in the next special exa——–”

“What if there is no next time? What if this special exam is the last exam for graduation? Now you’ve made it to class A, the class you’ve always wanted to be in. But the gap with Class B is only a few dozen points. If you prioritize protecting your friends here, you’ll end up in B class. So, what to do? Of course, the B class that’s chasing after you doesn’t have a choice, do they? Even if they have to cut someone off, they’ll come to get 100 points, right?”

No matter how many good-natured people are in your class, you would have to think about it.

If they decide protect their friends, they are almost certain to fall into B class.

“Do we make it unanimous in opposition as well? Take a chance on the dream story where Class B gives up on Class A and choose the no-dropout option?”

Kanzaki’s classmates, who had been constantly arguing against him, finally started to talk less.

“I know it’s a nasty question, and that you guys are not actually in that situation right now. But one thing is for sure. If you have the desire to move up to Class A, there will come a time when you will

have to play rock-paper-scissors or whatever and choose to agree. Running out of time is not an option.”

“Sensei, you……what choice did you guys make at that time?”

“Me? I……of course, I’ve made the choice to cut out the unnecessary people. After all, even if someone were to be your friend or best friend, you are the one who is important. Isn’t it true for everyone who’s thinking in the opposite direction right now? In actuality, I myself think it’s okay to prioritize oneself.”

Having everyone graduate within A class. That is what everyone would want.

However, many would understand in their hearts that this is only an idealistic idea.

Fellowship or self-preservation? The students could not find the words to answer the question.

“I can’t tell you any more than that since i’m being watched closely behind me. However, I will respect you all, no matter which choice you make. But you can’t just make any vague or ambiguous decisions. If you’re only friends on the surface, don’t worry about it, just prioritize your class points. You’ve only known each other for a year and a half, right? I’m sure you’ll heal from the loss of your friends in time. In fact, the three who dropped out of other classes were already somewhat in the past, don’t you think? But if you don’t make it to A class, it’s going to haunt you for the rest of your life. But if you really value your friends more than anything else, you have to put them first.”

As if she was saying that she wasn’t advocating either of them, at any rate, Hoshinomiya had to end the conversation there while avoiding the glare of the watcher. As a teacher, all she did was tell

them that there were advantages and disadvantages to both. Just as they finished listening to this story, the next vote was coming up. Everyone felt a strange sensation while each looking at their

buttons, both support and oppose. The result of the vote, which took some time, was 1 vote for suppose and 39 votes for oppose. As in the past, the vote didn’t shift.

Hoshinomiya was not particularly surprised. Rather she seemed to have seen the form of this class.

“Hey, Kanzaki-kun. Why don’t you end this already?”

In the interval immediately after the voting, Himeno called out in annoyance.

“I understand what Kanzaki-kun is trying to say, and I understand what Hoshinomiya-sensei is trying to say as well. But I don’t think that will lead us to vote in favor of it here and now and i’m sure that’s not going to change even if time runs out.”

To protect his friends, he was willing to choose the option for them to run out of time. That was the perception Himeno and many others in the class now had at him.. On the other hand, Ichinose too, expressed her own thoughts.

“Yeah. I understand what both Kanzaki-kun and Hoshinomiya-sensei have said. I understand where you are both coming from now. But what you two were talking about is what you will do when you are put in such a situation. I understand why everyone is upset, and I don’t think that’s a bad thing. But…even if I were in that situation, I don’t see the point of gaining the right to move up to A class, if you’re going to expel your friends in order to do so. So what should we do to avoid that? To avoid such a situation, to avoid being forced to make such an absurd choice, I think it’s important for us make sure that we surely grasp A-class.”

“’Idealistic goal……huh. The overwhelming A-class which had no one expelled. How many class points would have to be raked in to make that happen……”

“We may not be strong enough now, but I want to aim for a class like that.”

His classmates listened intently and repeatedly nodded their heads in agreement to her dream-like narrative.

Kanzaki’s resistance was all but meaningless now.

If he continued to vote in support here, they would only run out of time, as Himeno had said.

“Let’s do our best together, Kanzaki-kun.”

“───Right.”

The one opposing force was preyed upon and absorbed by the fearless.

“In my own way, I tried to change this class, even if it meant forcing it. But it seems that I don’t have the qualifications…..no, the ability to do so.”

This class will not change. He didn’t know whether or not they would end up in B class or D class, but he was certain that they would never reach A class. It was enough time for him to become convinced of that. The look on his face as he accepted to admit his lost was devoid of any vitality, but rarely any of the students even noticed that. After that, it was time to vote, as if there had never been any trouble in the first place.

The answer, derived by the 40 people, was…….

10th vote results 0 in Agreement 40 in Opposition

Choosing to give up on the class points and protect their classmates.

“With that, we have reached unanimous agreement on the final motion, and the special exam is now over.”

“Like I said, it’ll be fine Kanzaki-kun. We’ll be able to get the 50 class points as a reward too.”

The school day would last for approximately 3 hours more, but they were not permitted to remain in the school building so it was now free time for them.

“By the way, it looks like Class A has already completed their special exams.”

“For real? As expected of Sakayanagi’s class.”

“That means that Ryuuen-kun’s and Horikita-san’s classes are still in the middle of the special exam, right?”

“Okay, everyone~ You’ll have to wait until you get out of school building before you start wasting time talking. The other classes are still in the middle of the special exam, so please don’t interrupt

them. The teachers are going to guide you now, so please get out of your seats quietly.”

Kanzaki stood up from his seat as each of them expressed their joy of being released from the special examination.