Farewell to the Past

The unanimous special examination, which lasted about five hours, came to an end. Shortly afterwards, we heard that we were the only ones out of the four classes that had someone expelled. It cannot be said that only a few would come to regret the choice. However, the fact that we gained 150 class points in this special exam, while the other three only gained only 50, will undoubtedly help us in future battles.

If September ends as it is, we could finally move up to Class B.

After school, I was waiting for someone on the stairs leading to the roof as promised.

About ten minutes later than the scheduled time, a person showed up.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting. I had to do some post-processing and it took a while.”

“I don’t mind it all that much. By the way, did you get the ending you wanted? Or was it the other way around?”

“Don’t ask such a difficult question. There is no real right answer to that exam…At the very least, I think that is the case. There is a chance that someone will see us here, let’s change locations.”

“That would be wise.”

Raising the corners of her mouth slightly, Chabashira began to ascend the stairs to the roof.

She then took out a key with a simple blue name holder.

“Every year, there are more and more criticisms against the use of rooftops in schools. Maybe in the near future, this school will become one of those schools where the rooftop will be hard to gain access to.”

Even with the fence in place, there was still a risk of falling off.

Another drawback that rooftops have is that it can be used as spot for bullying or violent acts like what Ryuuen had done before. Chabashira quietly walked out onto the roof, leaned against the railing and exhaled.

“What a long day today has been……seriously.”

Chabashira lets out a soliloquy, as if telling her pure impression of the special examination.

“As I mentioned during the exam…… I, too, took the same special examination during my third year of high school.”

“That does seem to be the case.”

I didn’t know what she was staring at, but Chabashira only continued to stare straight ahead at the direction of the sunset outside the fences.

“if you’re interested……would you be willing to listen to my confession?”

“The Sacrament of Reconciliation is it. I’m not much of a religious person, but if that’s fine with you then go ahead.”

The unanimous special exam that she was said to have taken when she was a student. It was said that they had some of the same motions as we did. The situation of her class made a large impact on the way things unfolded.

“I remember that day as if it was yesterday. We, the third-year B class, were on the verge of catching up with the A class before the graduation exam. The difference in class points was only 73. Even if we couldn’t overturn it with the little time we had left in our daily lives, we were in a position to do so with one special exam left.”

Certainly, it was a very close call indeed, and I’m sure Class A wouldn’t have thought that they had the advantage by that large of a margin either.

“In the midst of all this, the unanimous special exam began. There were five motions. Like you guys, we were able to make it through to the fourth task without a hitch, despite our differences in opinion.”

“You said that the final motion was the same as the one we had, didn’t you?”

“Is that so?……Well, I guess you’re right. It seems that my memory is a little fuzzy from today’s exam.”

The overlapping of the past and present may have confused her on what time she was in, as she thought about her past and spoke.

“Of course, on the first vote, there were only a few in support and the majority opposed, but as the debate continued, the situation began to change dramatically. If Class A had voted unanimously in support, the margin would have grown to 173 points.”

“So you didn’t know what exactly the graduation exam would be at the time?”

“That’s right. As I’m sure that you’re aware, winning a special exam doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s going to give a lot of class points. Even if Class B were to take first place, if Class A is in second place, the class points may not make that much of a difference.”

The difference between the first and second place rewards could be only 100 or 150 points. Of course, it could also be more than 200 points, but there was no guarantee of that.

“The debate grew more heated as time went on, with some saying that there was no way Class A was going to choose to expel someone, so we should all vote in unanimous opposition to get through the special exam, after which we would win the graduation exam and get into Class A. There were also those who said that it was our chance to turn things around if Class A didn’t choose to have someone expelled. We talked about every possible case.”

The decisions that can come out from the very same motion could be very different depending on the situation of the class. There are only two choices. But the only way to get to them is through the many, many twists and turns of the road.

“We spent a lot of time talking about it, but never came up with the right answer. Whether to increase our odds of moving into A class even at the cost of a sacrifice, or to choose our friends and throw ourselves into a harsh fight…….”

Perhaps she’s only now fully remembering her past.

Chabashira’s eyes, that I stole a glance at from the side seemed to be faintly moistened by the evening sun.

“Eventually, my classmates slowly began to lean toward the idea that Class A, whom we class B was closing in on, would make the sacrifice to obtain the 100 points. Once we started talking about it,

the opposition slowly began to shift in agreement towards the motion.”

“Even so, it’s not easy to come together in support of something when someone is to be expelled, is it now? It is inevitable that the less able, the less communicative and the more peculiar will be the first to be expelled.”

“I agree. Once the vote is unanimous in support, it would be impossible to withdraw the decision. It’s not easy for everyone to do so, what you’re saying is exactly right.”

A certain event that would happen in order to change that situation. In the case of this special exam, I had promised my classmates that only perpetrator would be the one expelled, and I was able to convince them to agree with me.

“There was a boy in my class. The student was…..well, I guess the best way to describe him would be to say that he was a combination of Hirata and Ike in your class.”

“Yousuke and Ike huh….. That’s quite the persona, even if I were to try my best to imagine it, it’s something that can’t quite be put together by words”

“He’s serious, but also not quite right. He was a good friend and a smart guy, but he couldn’t read atmospheres. He was the leader of the class and also the mood maker.”

I see, he was a student who somehow included the merits of Yousuke and the merits (and demerits) of Ike.

“That guy had been struggling ever since the last motion came up. That was why he had to hand over the situation to someone else.”

Chabashira’s hand that was holding onto the railing was filled with strength.

“And then… he arrived at an answer. When we got the vote to be unanimous, he told us that he was going to nominate himself to be expelled. I guess he decided that he couldn’t abandon his friends who had fought with him for three years.”

“The only special exam left would be the final graduation exam. It will certainly be painful for the class to lose the leader, but that was only one of the options───wasn’t it?”

Of course, it is hard to say that it would be a wise choice to have him expelled.

However, if all of her classmates were on an equal footing, it would be very difficult to choose one of them.

There is also the option of letting luck take its course, but I’m sure there would be many who wouldn’t be satisfied with that.

“But then again, we never reached a unanimous vote from that point onwards.”

“’Why? It was agreed that the leader would be expelled, no?”

“No……it was only because of a single person, they continued to vote against his expulsion until the end. The one vote in opposition never turned to a vote in agreement, and the remaining time was whittled away. The one who continued to vote against it, was none other than me.”

From the way the story was told, I thought this might have been the case…… which meant that…..

“To Chabashira-sensei, the student who was the leader was more than just a leader to you, right?”

Closing her eyes, Chabashira laughed once at herself, and then slowly opened her eyes again.

She then looks up at the sunset sky as if affirming something deeply.

“That’s right───. For me, he was…..a leader, a friend, and……. and a lover who was more important to me than anyone else…. The irony is that it happened the day before the special exam was held.”

The two had overcome many hardships and had come to an understanding of each other. The future was supposed to be about grabbing the most happiness out of their remaining school life and aiming for A class. This was why Chabashira could not let go of him.

“If I kept throwing my vote in the opposite direction, my classmates would naturally be confused and angry. Some of them even nominated me for expulsion. Well, it was all but natural I guess.”

“But if Chabashira-sensei didn’t get expelled, that means…….”

“Yes. It was an ‘I protect him and he protects me’ situation. Such a stalemate went on and on. We couldn’t finish the special exam on time, so our class went down by 300 points, and class A had chosen to expel someone, so the difference was 450 points. In total, the difference was 523 points. In an instant, the distance between us and Class A, which had been so close, had opened up to the point of despair.”

It was a point difference that no graduation exam could turn around no matter how big.

“If it’s any consolation at all, your lover didn’t get expelled, did he now?”

“I don’t know what I myself was protecting it for, but when the Unanimity Special Exam was over, our relationship naturally ended. It was only a day…. actually, even less than 24 hours……. After that, we were defeated in the direct confrontation of the graduation exam that awaited us, and our three years had came to nothing.”

“And then what happened with him?”

“I haven’t seen him since. I don’t even know where or what is it that he’s doing now. When I was in high school, this school was everything to me, and he too, was everything to me. Fu……… but if you were to think about it over the course of a long life, three years of high school is nothing but a small part of it. Even if we didn’t make it to Class A, we should have fought to the end with no regrets.”

Does this mean that Chabashira has been regretting the mistake of her decision for the past 11 years?

No, in her case, it would not have been a mistake, but rather a continual questioning of whether or not the choice she made was the right one.

“I didn’t have the qualifications to graduate within A class, that’s just how it was. But I wonder what should I have done? Should I have forcefully persuaded him not to nominate himself for expulsion? Or should I have cut him off when he was planning to voluntarily be the expellee?”

“There is no real right answer to this particular special examination. It would probably be impossible to achieve the perfect unanimity from the heart. That is, unless there is a classmate in your class who is so thoroughly unskilled that no one wants them to be in it……”

Nevertheless, this did not mean that there was no way out for them.

“I believe there was only one way left for Chabashira-sensei’s class to make it to Class A at that moment. If I had to say, I would say that the cause of your defeat was because you didn’t see through his strategy.”

“My failure to see through his strategy……?”

“At the beginning, when you all were trying to persuade everyone to vote in opposition, he had already decided to be the dropout in order to leave you all the chance of moving up to A class. What he first needed to do, was to get the vote to be unanimous in support so that his plan could bear fruit.”

Chabashira nodded, as if remembering back to those days.

“If I’d had cut him off then….”

“Was the graduation exam so easy that you could win without a good leader? Your class lost despite having no dropouts during the unanimous exam, no?”

“Indeed. If we could have fought as one and in perfect condition, we might have even been evenly matched.”

“In other words, you couldn’t have chosen to be without a leader. On the other hand, if anyone were to be missing from the class, then A class would’ve been out of reach due to disorder. If that was the case, the only way was for all of you to stay with the option of oppose instead of agree. You should have refused all temptations and incitements and held your ground.”

“But even so, I myself wasn’t in a position to persuade the others to vote in opposition. Although I admit that what you said is true.”

“You didn’t have to persuade them. Sensei’s class was divided in their opinions on how to win. If the votes don’t coalesce, eventual defeat by running out of time would be inevitable. When that happens, the proponents will absolutely move to consolidate the opposed votes. Even if they resist with their mouths, what if it is the final round of voting with less than a minute left? If you had voted in agreement then there would have been no way to move onto the next vote which was to choose a student for expulsion. The interval time is a fixed 10 minutes, but the maximum amount of voting time is only 60 seconds. If you had adjusted the time by deliberately delaying the vote, you could have brought it to a final vote where there would not even be a single minute to spare.”

If they had chosen agreement, they would have gotten -300 class points for failing to clear the special examination; If they had chosen oppose, they would have cleared the special examination with a +50 to their class points. Therefore the option of choosing the former should not even be considered.

“You can’t turn your back on the reality of the situation, even if blood is rushing to your head. You could’ve either run out of time and lost 300 points, or made sure that you cleared the exam and obtained 50 points to bring to the graduation exam in order to reach class A, even if you don’t obtain the extra 100 points. There was not only one conclusion. Of course, I’m not certain that you could have filled the 173-point gap.”

The students were not ready to give up the idea of winning and were preoccupied with the immediate 100 points.

The leader of the class was able to take advantage of this psychology and succeeded in getting them to agree to it.

But that strategy itself was a mistake.

He couldn’t see through Chabashira’s heart, nor could Chabashira see through the stubborn intentions of the opposite sex who had become her lover.

“───I…… If there was a student like you in our class back then……”

As she was about to add-on something more, she closed her mouth.

“No, there’s no point thinking about it now. People can’t go back in time. But let me ask you this, Ayanokouji. Sakura must’ve been a member of your close group. Moreover, that girl even had special feelings for you.”

“You sure know a lot”

“I’m still your homeroom teacher after all. I can often tell by just looking at a student’s eyes.”

She replied, not proudly, but somewhat dismayed.

“Was there no way to save Sakura and sacrifice another?”

“I wonder myself. At that time, Horikita had indescribable control over the class, like a being that could not be denied. I don’t think there was enough time for me to make her fully back down.”

“You’re very clerical, aren’t you? Does your heart…..not hurt?”

“Of course, it would have been best if we could have avoided expelling Airi. I tried to bring it to a unanimous vote in opposition by any means I could, but I couldn’t stop Kushida. I decided that there would be no solution unless I chose to expel her as the perpetrator who forced the class to make such a choice. However, if she had been willing to be consequential, there might have been a possibility of unanimity through opposition. At the time, Kushida was so disturbed with Horikita’s presence that she willingly accepted the choice to stay in this school. I hadn’t expected that at all. I’m not the only one who wants to help the students who are close to me. But with that happening, the only thing left to do was to use the process of elimination. At that point, there was no choice but to bring out the discrimination card to my classmates. Whether or not they could study, whether or not they could play sports, communication skills, insight and observation skills. There was no choice but to look at the objective data, which was the OAA rankings.”

By looking at the system that the school itself had created, everyone could see who was at the bottom of the pile even if they didn’t want to.

“Of course, there are quite a few whose abilities aren’t all that different from Airi’s. But if a quarrel were to start between my classmates, their friends would naturally take their side in order to protect them. However, with Airi, the only major obstacle was Haruka. Even if she self-nominated, it would only be a loss of ten minutes.”

“In other words, what you’re saying is that you deliberately went after your own people……”

“Her personality was another deciding factor. Because of Airi’s personality, she’s not good in behaving as someone who doesn’t want to be expelled or appealing not to vote for her. I could use any number of convenient methods. A good friend, in this case Haruka, would never vote in support to her expulsion. However, the only exception to this would be for Airi to selfnominate. There was no way Airi could’ve chosen to stay in school and bear the burden of having the class sacrifice 300 class points in order to protect herself.”

“You even predicted Sakura’s state of mind, didn’t you?”

“Her overall strength, the people around her, her personality. And as a final push, someone important to inform her that she should be the one to be expelled. If I myself told her that, she’d have no choice but to accept it.”

“Ayanokouji───you’re……”

“People may call someone who thinks like me a demon or an outsider. No one wants to play a role that is detrimental. But if we have to, we have to do it without hesitation. It is an unavoidable part of protecting the class, and therefore the organisation.”

“In this school, expulsion is a constant threat in every possible situation. As a teacher at this school, I am always prepared to accept it. But even so, I will never be able to make a decision like yours without hesitation.”

Acknowledging the weakness of her own heart, Chabashira said so.

“I don’t know you all that well, but how many people have you cut off? How much must you cut off before reaching that territory?…… Actually, no, don’t answer. I’m sure I will never understand it even in my whole lifetime.”

How much have I cut off? I’ve never even thought about such a thing.

Just as we don’t remember the color and shape of each stone that falls by the roadside, those who learn with us and those who teach us will disappear from their positions if they are incompetent.

That is artificial selection.

“Thank you for taking the time to meet me today, Ayanokouji. I regretted the choices I made in the past and stood still for a very long time. But as it turns out, I don’t even have the time to do that anymore. I will fulfill my role as a teacher and guide the students in my class so that they can continue to fight without regret.”

“It seems that through this special exam, you were able to say goodbye to the past.”

Chabashira’s face as she spoke was somewhat more radiant than before.

“It’s not as if I haven’t dreamed of reaching A class before. Even when I try not to think about it, I still hope that I might be able to make my unfulfilled dreams come true. And every time I do, I ridicule myself for being so stupid and erase it from my memory. That’s how it went on and on.”

Chabashira turned to me and showed me a smile that I’ve never seen her have before.

“I’ve decided, Ayanokouji. I’m going to make sure that your class is able to graduate in class A in every way I can.”

“Being enthusiastic is fine, but please don’t deviate from your position as a teacher.”

“Mu……No, of course I’m aware of my position. There is only so much I can do, but I’m ready to do it. You always say things a student shouldn’t be saying.”

“Unlike a student, huh? What is the right way for me to respond to that?”

“’Even if you were to ask me that, I won’t be able to answer it. I’m not a student after all.”

No, no, no, this person is a mess.

“If you’re done talking, I’m leaving.”

“Yeah. Sorry for taking up so much of your precious time.”

“I don’t mind it. Then, please excuse me.『Chabashira-sensei.』”

That’s what I’ve been calling her for a while now, but I said it with a bit more emphasis.

Perhaps because I thought that she was being a bit cheeky. In response, Chabashira-sensei quietly smiled and nodded.

She would be fine now. Through this special exam, she has grown about as much as the students.

Her mind, which had stopped in her third year of high school, quickly began to catch up with her current age.