Chapter 3: “C-Class on the Move”

On the same day after school, the atmosphere in one of the classrooms was abnormally frozen.

The reason was clear. It was the feeling of intimidation that came from the man sitting at the podium, overlooking Class C.

“Looking back on the exams so far, there are several unnatural things.”

The name of the man who spoke to the class was Ryūen Kakeru. He’s the leader of Class C and a dictator. Standing beside him was Albert Yamada, Ishizaki, as well as other students proficient in martial arts. One could feel the silent threat being made… in the event that there was a student who wanted to rebel against Ryūen, they would not hesitate to resort to violence.

“For it to come to this, it couldn’t have been by chance.”

It was like he was talking to himself, but there was a vague feeling as though it was being spoken to someone.

“Based on what happened on the uninhabited island, and at the sports festival, there appears to be a person in Class D who thinks like me.”

“Someone like Ryūen-kun? I don’t think Class D has someone like that…”

Ishizaki couldn’t help but speak, doubting that there could be someone else out there like Ryūen. This is because Ryūen is both respectable and detestable, an amazing and incomprehensible existence. Ryūen smiles and looks at Ishizaki.

“I used to think that too, but I feel like I need to face reality.”

“Is this also related to the results of the uninhabited island exam and the sports festival?”

“That’s it. But rest assured, I have a general idea of how the other side is doing things. Listen you. Moving forward, we’ll be looking to launch an all-out attack on Class D. I must take out the person running Class D from the shadows. Class A and Class B will have to be put aside for now.”

Few students had objections to Ryūen’s plans. Even if someone was against it, it would be impossible to speak up because the class has signed a contract with the devil himself.

“Ryūen-san…… Does Class D really have someone working in the background? Someone other than Horikita or Hirata?”

“Yes. And, the people in this class have the key to exposing their identity.”

His eyes moved away from Ishizaki and once again went to Class C.

“What are you trying to say, Ryūen?”

In this heavy atmosphere, Ibuki stood in the classroom with her arms crossed at her chest and threw these words at Ryūen.

“Kuku. Ibuki, can you not even listen quietly?”

“I don’t have that much free time, and you don’t get to keep intimidating your classmates.”

“You’re a big talker for someone who hasn’t asked for permission. Haven’t you already made a fool of yourself?”

“That’s…”

In the face of his remark, Ibuki had no choice but to eat her words. In particular, her failure at the sports festival was embarrassing. Ryūen had changed the students lined up to race against Horikita after Ibuki had requested to compete with her directly. The result was a very narrow defeat. It was a pity, she had almost caught up with Horikita.

However, Ibuki also had the option of rebuttal. She lowered her arms and glared at Ryūen.

“Are you one to talk? At the end of the day, you failed to defeat Horikita at the sports festival. Did you manage to get the private points for the collection? Aren’t you the same as me?”

“The same as you? Don’t make jokes like that. The strategy I set up at the sports festival was perfect.”

“What’s up with that outcome? You don’t even explain anything to us and now you say there’s another guy that thinks like you in that class? You want us to just accept that?”

All of the students in the class were trembling due to the rebuttals being made by Ibuki. They all wanted to avoid offending Ryūen. But Ryūen paid them no mind, and showed a constantly slight smile.

“Don’t you think that no matter how perfect a strategy, it will fail if somebody leaks it?”

“……Leak?”

“The mysterious success of Class D is due to the mysterious existence of ‘X’, who dares to draw and manipulate the Class C students at my command. In short, we have spies among us.”

There was a little confusion in the classroom because of his remark. Ibuki’s eyes blew open in surprise.

“Are you serious…?”

“This is a fact. My cohesiveness… no, it seems that authority was not enough. It truly is a pity.”

Ryūen smiled happily at the fact that he will become intertwined with the spy.

A disaster had sprung for everyone in the class, not just those looking to get out of the room and attend club activities.

Everyone present began praying that this would be over soon.

“However, this noisy espionage will end here.”

Ryūen slammed the podium with his palm and silenced the chaos of the room. The scene sank into silence.

“First of all, I will try to asking honestly. The student who betrayed me, raise your hand.”

He did not hesitate to issue a direct declaration. Of course, none of the students raised their hands. Some of the students glanced around at each other, which was responded to with feigned ignorance. There are also those who stayed still and held their breath to avoid attracting attention.

“Oh yeah… if you come forward easily, you won’t have betrayed me at all.”

The presence of a spy may shake Class C, but there was nothing but joy in Ryūen’s heart.

“I knew that the spy would choose to hide. Then, you don’t have to raise your hand. No, rather, don’t raise your hand. Even if you’re now considering it, stay completely hidden.”

Ryūen made an unexpected statement to the spy who would have been found sooner or later.

“What are you saying? Are you really tolerating traitors?”

“You’re annoying, Ibuki. Don’t disturb my pleasure. I’ll kill you if you do that again.”

Ryūen’s smiling face tightened into an expression of anger for a moment and he glared at Ibuki.

His sentence seemed to be a joke, but his message was serious. Ryūen wouldn’t treat anyone differently due to their gender. As long as he judges them to be the enemy and in the way of his plans, then no matter what, he would settle the matter with his fist.

“I’ve been trying not to make a big deal out of it. Others may think I’m lying, but it’s true. To put it simply, I’ve been slacking off.”

‘Bam!’ ‘Bam!’ He struck the podium twice. It was the sound of the upcoming purge.

“However… Maybe that’s a bad thing. After all, there is a traitor.”

‘Bam!’ The classroom further resounded with the sound. Every time this happened, timid students began to shake.

“All this means is that I’ll have to play some games. It’s nothing. Not a big deal. It’s just a silly game where we find a spy who’s trying to remain hidden. For most of the students present, this should be meaningless, so there’s nothing to be afraid of. It shouldn’t take long, it’ll take less than 30 minutes.”

Ryūen said this since, other than for the spy, this situation was not relevant to everyone, so there’s no reason for them be afraid.

The room was full of an atmosphere of fear, so it wasn’t so simple. The only one who had remained calm in the face of Ryūen was Ibuki, but even she was beginning to be swallowed by the authority of Ryūen.

“First things first, everyone unlock your phone and place it on your desk. I’ll check it myself. Are there any idiots who don’t have their phone with them? If you don’t, speak up immediately. That person is the culprit.”

Complying with Ryūen’s instructions, the students placed their phones on their desks immediately to avoid suspicion.

“A very sensible decision, it’s very helpful.”

Ishizaki went around the classroom and gathered the phones one by one. As he didn’t know whose phone was whose, he attached a note paper with their name written on it ahead of time.

Ibuki also took out her mobile phone from her pocket. Although she wasn’t convinced, she handed it over to Ishizaki.

“Ryūen-san, everyone’s phone has been collected. Our phones have also been included.”

“Thank you for your hard work. Then, it’s time we conduct a thorough investigation.”

“But where should we look… Call history?”

“As if someone who is trying to stay hidden is going to use the call function! Look at the email history, and of course look at the text messages. Even if it’s a conversation with someone, look at all of it. We can’t rule out the possibility they’re interacting with each other under an alternative name.”

“Wait, wait a minute, there are a lot of very personal messages on my phone!”

A girl shouted. She couldn’t help but scream.

The fear of her personal information being seen had surpassed her fear of being suspected.

“Nishino. You don’t want me to look at your phone?”

“Of course! Even if it’s you Ryūen-kun, It’s unacceptable!”

“Are you joking, Nishino? You gave your phone to Ryūen-kun on the cruise ship, didn’t you? Why are you so concerned now?”

“This, this is different from that time! All he did then was do a confirmation check of my email from the school!”

Ryūen was not surprised at all, and listened to Nishino’s appeal indifferently. During the special exam on the cruise ship, Ryūen collected all of the phones in Class C and confirmed their contents. However, as she had complained, nothing personal was inspected at that time. It was simply a confirmation of the messages received from the school. This was the same type of event, but altogether the situations are different. If it’s private messages, information such as who someone liked or disliked would inevitably be read. Those type of things people would absolutely prefer to remain hidden from others.

“Of course you know that you will be suspected, Nishino.”

“I, I will obey you, Ryūen-kun, but there are some things that cannot be accepted!”

Nishino wasn’t the type who would usually take a strong stance, but she didn’t seem to be willing to back down.

It was as she if was broadcasting that she had something hidden that she didn’t want to be seen.

“Nishino, was it you?”

Students in the class had begun to suspect Nishino.

One of them, Takumi Oda, had voiced their doubt.

“No! I am not the spy!”

“But you’re hiding something and acting so suspicious…”

“I just want to protect my privacy!”

Ryūen didn’t show any interest in the conversation happening in the classroom. He reaches out and grabs one of the phones on the table.

“Your cell phone is this one, isn’t it, Nishino?”

“Hey!”

Nishino expects for him to start to look over the contents and begins to panic. However…

Ryūen hands Nishino’s phone over to Ishizaki and says:

“Give this back to Nishino.”

“Sh-should I? You didn’t confirm the content.”

“I told you to return it to her.”

Ishizaki promptly apologized to Ryūen and returned the phone to Nishino.

In the face of this series of events, Nishino, as well as the other students are shaken.

“It’s not such an incredible thing. I judged you to be innocent, that’s why I returned it to you. That’s it. It’s to be expected right? It wasn’t the traitor’s cell phone. It would be a waste of time and energy to look at it.”

Ryūen disregarded the dumbfounded Nishino and other students, and without any change to his attitude he continued:

“If you find this unacceptable like Nishino has, feel free to raise your hand. However, be prepared to be suspected much more than she was.”

Nishino didn’t have her phone inspected, and was considered ‘innocent’, the second and third people wouldn’t be so lucky. His statement conveys this message: choose between raising Ryūen’s suspicions, or privacy.

In the face of these two options, four girls and two boys raised their hands despite their fears.

“There are actually six people who are defying Ryūen-san… The spy is definitely one of them! And the last one to raise his hand, Nomura, you aren’t thinking of saving yourself by jumping on the bandwagon, are you?”

Ryūen showed a gloomy smile in response to Ishizaki’s words.

“No, no! I wasn’t going to do that!”

Nomura denies out of fear of being suspected.

“Gather their phones.”

“Yes.”

Ishizaki collected their six phone and handed them over to Ryūen.

“So, even if you all are suspected, you don’t want us to take a look at anything?”

They all gave different responses, but they all agreed to this statement.

“Nomura, you took quite some time before raising your hand, don’t tell me you were waiting for the right opportunity?”

“Eh! No, that…”

“Your eyes are darting around the room in an exaggerated way, and you’re sweating.”

“What!?”

Nomura’s personality was originally weak, and it seemed that he was so distressed that he was on the verge of fainting.

Looking at him in such a state, Ryūen gave out a happy laugh before turning to Ishizaki to give out instructions.

“Ishizaki, these people are all ‘innocent’, give them their phones back.”

He was ordered. This was another shock. Ryūen did not look at the contents and had Ishizaki return all of the phones. None of the students outside of Ryūen could understand the reason behind these actions.

“Will you explain what’s going on?”

“I’ll explain it later.”

Ryūen did not give Ibuki the answer she was hoping for. He ran his hand through his hair and picked up her cell phone.

“As for the rest of the cell phones let’s thoroughly investigate. We’ll start with Ibuki.”

“……Whatever you say.”

(Intro End)

(Part 1)

Ryūen finished going through the final phone, having confirmed the content of them all on his own.

The whole situation took about 20 minutes, and he spent less than a minute on each phone. It was impossible to feel as though he had thoroughly gone through all of them. Most of the students had their doubts, but none of them would dare speak up about it.

But for the spy, the tens of seconds that their mobile phone was being examined should have been very long and stressful.

“I see. It turns out that there is no information contained within these phones.”

“Then Nishino or one of the others who were ‘innocent’ turned out to be the traitor after all…”

“That’s not it.”

Ibuki’s irritation and doubt did not disappear even with Ryūen’s assertion.

“But, in fact, you didn’t find any spies, did you? Explain to me exactly what’s going on here. Is there really a spy here in the first place?”

Ibuki’s heart was in doubt. Ryūen said there was a spy, but was it just a lie created in order to hide his failure?

Ryūen had believed in an invisible presence working behind Horikita ever since he had received the results of the uninhabited island test, but there had been no conclusive evidence since then that such a puppet master ‘X’ actually exists.

In fact, other classes had started to pay attention to the girl named Suzune Horikita.

“Proof is stronger than theory. In that case, let me personally tell you something. I assume this is something everyone here already knows very well.”

Ryūen played the audio file sent to him by ‘X’. The voice on the recording was one that every student in Class C had heard before. The voice of Kakeru Ryūen explaining his strategy for the sports festival to his classmates.

“This was sent to me when I was one step away from victory over a desperate Suzune. Thanks to this, I wasn’t even able to see her kowtow to me, much less see any points. Do you understand now?”

“Wait a minute. Even if we assume that you didn’t record that yourself, but instead it was recorded by a spy, there are still strange questions left unanswered. We didn’t discuss a detailed time for having Horikita kowtow to you. They managed to know the whole plan as well as the details we didn’t speak of? There’s no way.”

Such a conclusion made sense when considering the details Ryūen gave. Not only was their strategy leaked, but the timing for his discussion with Horikita after the sports festival was as well.

“It was a coincidence, purely a matter of probability. The best time for him to make a move was after school after the sports festival was over. Besides, I don’t believe the other party was interested in stopping Horikita’s apology. There is nothing written in the message that came with the audio file.”

“What’s going on…?”

Ryūen analyzed the blank message he received that contained the audio file.

“X, the master of Class D, is very clearly telling me that he’s aware of the strategy I came up with by sending me this audio file. Since he knew about my plans, he could have avoided the attacks I had targeted against Suzune at the sports festival. He should have been able to prevent Suzune from being defeated and being forced to apologize altogether. However, this X deliberately ignored these openings. Despite knowing my strategy, I was allowed to rout Suzune, and of course, she suffered due to this. She didn’t expect that she would be hurt, and the results of the competition for Class D weren’t going to improve. On top of all this, there’s the guilt of having hurt someone else. Her mental state should be in a pretty bad place.”

“By letting Ryūen-shi carry out his strategy, did he not make the audio file into credible evidence?”

It’s understandable why the mushroom-headed student with glasses, Kaneda, would think this. Although the plan carried risk, if the plan failed entirely and didn’t bring any results, the sound file would not be considered valid evidence. It would just be considered as ‘a failed plan to defeat Horikita’.

“How very smart of you, Kaneda. As long as we execute the strategy, the audio file has meaning. Then it could make sense as evidence.”

“The plans made by this ‘X’ are truly brutal. He knows harm will come to his partner, but he takes no steps to avoid it.”

“Yes. This type of guy isn’t interested in Suzune’s apology. That’s the reason why nothing was written in the message. This is to say, from his perspective, he doesn’t hold any regard for Suzune’s pride or the loss of pride that she will go through.”

“I can’t understand. Wouldn’t it be better to prevent Horikita from getting hurt……?”

Other students were probably agreeing with Ibuki’s feelings on the topic. It was clear that Ryūen had intended to target Horikita, so X should have been able to resolve the situation before the sports festival even began. There were options available such as changing the participation table according to Class C’s strategy, or sending the audio file to Ryūen to stop him in advance. If he had done that, Horikita wouldn’t have been hurt.

“What if X intended to submit the audio file to the school?”

If you know the plans of the enemy beforehand, the typical strategy would be to use this knowledge to save your classmates. But if there were any merits to not doing anything and deliberately ignoring the plans, it would be that you could strike a major blow at Class C. If the audio file was given to the school after the operation had already played out, Class C would undoubtedly take the most damage. If it was revealed that he had deliberately used foul play against Horikita, and then tried to squeeze points out of her as compensation, the worst outcome would be Ryūen being forced to drop out.

But now that it’s already halfway through October, the possibility of this happening has almost vanished entirely. If they were to bring up such an old topic now, the investigation itself would not only be very troublesome, but Class C would be able to destroy all their evidence and plan their retreat. So why would X do such a thing?

“This naive way of fighting has saved us entirely by chance. Could it be said that he has not fully utilized his assets? He went out of his way to obtain this information, but then proceeded to act passively. If Horikita-shi had paid the private points to Ryūen-shi, we would have won, and it would have been X’s defeat.”

Kaneda analyzed the situation and came to this conclusion.

Since X had learned of their strategy before the sports festival, it follows that he should have had a complete victory during the festival.

“That’s not right. X had found a useful way to use the information by deliberately not using it. Even if Suzune had paid out the private points earlier to make amends, he could have easily used the sound file as evidence in order to retrieve them. He could have included a message such as ‘If you do not return the private points, this matter will be made public.’”

“You mean he knows how to use threats, but he deliberately doesn’t use them?”

“Yeah, and he even allowed me to force Suzune to kowtow. Kowtowing, unlike the private points, is not something that has a numeric value. It’s only there in the physical form. You can’t undo or reverse it later, right?”

In other words, this is what it all boils down to.

The only thing that X had been aiming for:

“That is to say, X welcomes the idea of playing with Suzune.”

He had used valuable information obtained from the spy for that purpose alone.

“This kind of situation… I don’t understand. Class C was saved by X, who we don’t even know.”

Ryūen was different from Ibuki. He knew why X had done such a thing.

“Kuku…… that is to say, he does not intend to reveal himself.”

As long as Ryūen tracks down the source of the audio file, Class D’s X will eventually be forced to show his face.

If Ryūen got desperate enough, he could even ask the school, which manages all the phones, to provide him with the email and call records, and he would then thoroughly investigate and discover X’s identity.

At the same time, he did not feel an obsession with rising to Class A from X. He didn’t feel like X had the desire to move upwards, this was the conclusion Ryūen had come to.

At the same time, he also came to another conclusion.

“Well, we’ve gotten a bit derailed, so let’s get back to the point. I’m not sure what method he used, but the fact remains that ‘X is someone who thinks like me’, and he has made someone in this class spy for him. Because otherwise, he couldn’t have gotten his hands on the audio file. However, the premise is that X’s true identity will remain hidden even if we find the spy. If the spy knew his identity, this game would be over the moment I find them. Because of this, in order to be able to conduct espionage, mail or other exchanges of communication would be necessary. Although it’s not impossible for them to be using old-fashioned letters to communicate, that method would be very limited and inefficient.”

“But there was no evidence on anyone’s cell phone. Are you sure you didn’t skip over any details?”

“Of course. I looked at the phones as a matter of principle. It was only for done for the sake of appearances.”

“Huh? You said you’d know who the spy is if you just looked at the phones. Right?”

“Think about it carefully. If you were the spy, would you risk leaving a suspicious mail on your phone?”

“I… would not. Because of that, I had thought that checking the phones like this was a waste of time.”

“Right. If you think about it, checking the classes cellphones is an obvious result of this. It’s not incredibly difficult to destroy the evidence. Even if the spy didn’t think to destroy it, X would have certainly instructed them to do so. In other words, the spy attempted to look innocent by willingly letting me look at their phone. It follows that those who refused to show me their cellphones are clearly innocent, and the spy wouldn’t have taken that chance.”

Because of this, those who had refused to let Ryūen look at the contents of their cellphones such as Nishino and the others, were inevitably excluded from his search. If someone isn’t the spy, it ultimately doesn’t matter if they’re under suspicion. It was a stunt that was possible simply because there were people who were able to speak up. Of course, Ryūen could have also just simply checked the contents of their mobile phones to eliminate the small possibility that he was wrong, but it would have only provoked his classmates. This tactic was selected because he was relying on power to dominate the class. Even if he had to bear some risks, his plans worked out in the end.

Because he hadn’t looked at each cell phone for a meaningful amount of time, he had effectively told the students of Class C that he hadn’t looked at the details of their private lives at all. What Ryūen was looking for in the phones was not the presence or absence of suspicious mail, instead, he was looking to see the extent at which the spy was dominated by their invisible partner, and how much they feared them. And what he saw from that…

“I’m going to ask the spy again.”

Ryūen looked at each person’s eyes and movements one by one.

“Are you afraid of the unknown X? Or of me? Ask yourself which one is truly terrible to make into an enemy. Are you making a mistake? Remember when the admissions ceremony was over? What happens to the people who resist me? Right, Ishizaki?”

“Y-Yes……”

Ishizaki slightly shivered after being mentioned. Albert who always calmly stood at Ryūen’s side also gave a slight reaction. In the beginning, nobody consented to Ryūen’s orders. Both Ishizaki and Albert had initially protested against him, but in the end, they both gave in to the ‘violence’ that Ryūen exerted. Ishizaki had far more fighting experience, while Albert clearly had superior physical strength.

However, it was these two men who had fallen to the ground in the end.

“The strongest force in the world is ‘violence’ when it’s fully committed. I will not succumb to authority. Even if the school tries to expel me, I’d be certain to kill the traitor before it happens. Do you understand what I mean? If I end up expelled because of this betrayal, I will make sure to stomp the life out of this spy like the insect they are.”

This was different from the former student council president Horikita or the current president Nagumo who had dominated the gymnasium with authority.

Instead, Ryūen marched forward in a frenzy of violence.

“I will welcome the confession of the traitor now, but this will be your last chance. If you are to confess now, I promise to not get caught up on this betrayal, and vow to prevent your classmates from accusing you in the future. As I had said in the beginning, if you believe in and obey me, I will lead this class to Class A. As long as you follow me, I will protect you.”

Ryūen stepped down from the podium and stood in front of the classroom, watching the eyes of his classmates.

His words gave off the feeling that they were addressed to the entire class, and not just the spy in question.

“Do you understand? What it means to offend me?”

He stared into the eyes of his classmates one by one. For Ryūen, this was the easiest way to find the traitor.

Then, Ryūen finally walked over to a female student and stood before her.

Of course, this wasn’t by chance. Ryūen had set her as the target from the beginning.

“What’s wrong? Can you not look into my eyes?”

“Ah…… A-A…… I……”

Her breathing was disorderly, and she had a face that was about to burst into tears.

“Kuku. It’s you, Manabe, Class C’s traitor.”

Most students hadn’t imagined it to be her, and were unable to understand this unexpected revelation.

“Don’t be so afraid, Manabe. You didn’t take the initiative to report it to me, but I knew you were the spy from the beginning. Your complexion has been bad from the start. There was no way for you to hide it.”

Ryūen smoothed out her hair next to her ear and touched her face. Manabe began trembling as if she were exposed to the extreme cold.

“Please. Sorry, I’m sorry, I—”

“Don’t worry, I’ll forgive you. I’ll handle this with magnanimity. So let’s hear it. Tell me the true nature of X who had you betray me.”

Ryūen turned from Shiho Manabe and shot a sharp glance to her friends Nanami Yabu and Saki Yamashita.

(Part 1 End)

(Part 2)

After holding everyone in Class C hostage, Ryūen finally allowed most of the class to leave.

Those who remained in the classroom started with Ryūen, Ishizaki, Kaneda, Ibuki, as well as the three traitors.

“Question: Do you know the identity of the guy who gave you instructions?”

Manabe and the others denied the question by shaking their heads from side to side.

“Well, next question: What are your reasons for betraying Class C? Explain it to me.”

“That is–”

“There’s no use to concealing it now. If you choose to hide it anyways, then tomorrow is when your time as my classmates’ end and you’ll be treated like nothing more than maggots.”

In a situation where there is no longer any escape, Manabe would decide to come clean with the truth.

“D…… Karuizawa of Class D, do you know……?”

“Just the name and her face, she’s Hirata’s woman right?”

“That girl, she is acting strong right now… but I believe she was a victim of bullying in the past.”

“Oh? Then?”

“Rika was treated terribly by Karuizawa, so we attempted to retaliate…”

Even though Manabe was scared, she spoke about the events that happened during the summer on the cruise ship. From how they were members of the same group in the special test, to how they had found out about her past with bullying, and even the violent act of revenge that they took part in. She spoke of everything.

She also brought up that the reason for their spying was due to threats being made from the other side with evidence.

If the facts were to come to light, they would be subjected to expulsion or even worse. And, of course, they would receive a scolding from Ryūen as well. She said it was something that had to be done in order to avoid punishment from both the school as well as Ryūen.

“Indeed. You’ve been having a lot of fun.”

“Are you an idiot? They’re being threatened by a guy who they don’t even know the identity of. Don’t you know that things might get even worse from here?”

“Don’t blame them, Ibuki. When humans are cornered, they turn into vulnerable creatures.”

Ryūen had decided to forgive Manabe and didn’t continue to accuse them.

“Here’s the bottom line: Did anyone else witness the scene where you had bullied Karuizawa?”

Manabe nodded to the question and uttered the names.

“At that time, we were seen by two students from Class D. Yukimura-kun and Ayanokōji-kun.”

The names of two students emerged.

“A picture was sent to us afterward. A photograph of when we were involved with Karuizawa.”

“So that’s how it is. I had expected there to be evidence since you were being threatened, but for the photograph to have been taken back then… What happened to this photo?”

“I deleted it. If somebody saw it… We would…”

“So the situation has reached its conclusion.”

“So it’s a definitely either Yukimura-shi and Ayanokōji-shi?”

Said Kaneda, who hadn’t spoken on the situation until now.

He was one of the few people in Class C who Ryūen considered to be of any use.

“Wait a moment, Ryūen. I don’t know much about Yukimura, but I don’t believe Ayanokōji is the one pulling the strings for Class D. I’ve had the chance to interact with him a few times, and he didn’t strike me as that kind of guy.”

“Yukimura does seem a little suspicious in that sense. He seems to be quite capable at academics.”

Ishizaki added.

“Isn’t it impossible to come to a conclusion like that? Ayanokōji-shi is always together with Horikita-shi. Besides, Ayanokōji-shi had been hiding his running ability at the sports festival. I think the more suspicious of the two would have to be him.”

“I think the two of them are irrelevant. Ayanokōji just has a quick foot and Yukimura just has his grades, right? I think that there would be more to the mastermind.”

“Who else could it be?”

“There are some really capable guys in Class D. Someone like Hirata.”

“That guy? I speak to him pretty often and I don’t think he’s that kind of person.”

Ryūen smiled slightly at his classmates who had been speaking freely.

But in the next moment, his hand smashed down on the desk.

“Shut up a little.”

Ryūen let out a small laugh as the room was instantly enveloped in silence and terror.

“Did I ask for even a single word of your opinions? I will find the guy who is manipulating Class D from the shadows. You all are just my pawns for that goal. Small fry should act like small fry. Looking at the facts, only Ayanokōji or Yukimura could have taken the picture. However, coming to the conclusion that one of them have to be the mastermind is unreasonable. They may also be under the influence of someone.”

This was the main issue. There was a decent chance that one, or both, of them had taken the picture of a situation that they thought could turn into a weakness of Class C, and then sought advice from the person running things behind the scenes.

“But, Ryūen-shi. Especially regarding Ayanokōji-shi, shouldn’t we be suspicious?”

Fully prepared to incur Ryūen’s anger, Kaneda dared to give some input because he believed it was necessary.

“That’s right.”

Regarding Ayanokōji, he was suspicious because of his relations with Suzune Horikita.

However, this was a cause for suspicion in and of itself.

It was unpleasant to come to easy deductions like that.

The idea that the man who was near Horikita Suzune was also the man who was manipulating everything as the mastermind of Class D.

If he had intended to use Suzune from the beginning, he would have never chosen this tactic.

“He’s hidden in plain sight huh? No, I can’t really imagine that.”

The feeling of desperation was an unpleasant one.

“I’m gonna use him.”

If the situation has already progressed to such an extent, the rest is certainly just one push away.

In order to make the next move, Ryūen sent a message to the person registered on the cell phone.