

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12(Y2V1)

Full Pdf – Thanks To All Translators.

Author – Shogo Kinugasa.

Hope You Enjoy The Volume.



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ようこそ**実力至上主義の教室へ**2年生編 衣笠彰梧 × トモセシユンサク  
Welcome to the Classroom of the Second-year







「おーい。優秀なパートナーをお探しなら、ここにいるけどー？」  
「あなたの名前は？」

「私は1年Aクラスの天沢一夏。」

堀北先輩と同じく学力判定はAなんだよね」

ギョルっぽい感じの見た目にそぐわず、  
頭の良い生徒だ。

「上位を狙うんだったら組んであげよっか？」

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12(Y2V1) Prologue

## Prologue: **Operating Behind the Scenes**

TL: Graze, Referencing Alice's Old Translation  
ED: Graze/Liam/PuffyPyjamas

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Going back in time to a certain day in February two months earlier...

In a meeting room, within a certain facility somewhere in Tokyo, a man believed to be in his 40's was reading out information displayed on a screen.

A teenager was quietly listening in.

A 15-year old teenager, soon to be entering high school.

That being said, their identity wasn't that of an ordinary child.

They were somebody who had been given a special education from the secret facility known as the White Room.

"With this, we've now gone over the data for Ayanokōji Kiyotaka and the other 156 second-year students. Have you committed everything to memory?"

The man, Tsukishiro, was showing this teenager all of the data that they had collected on the students of a certain high school over the course of the last year. Not only did it have standard information such as their full names, date of birth, and former schools, but it even had information on their parents and siblings, grades and accomplishments since early childhood, and even who they typically interacted with. It was a top-secret meeting with detailed information that even the school's homeroom teachers weren't allowed to see.

"I believe you're already aware of this, but it's crucial that Ayanokōji-kun is expelled and returned to the White Room before the end of April. After all, we can't afford to prolong the plan any longer. Please be clever about how you do it though. Make sure the public learns nothing. If the government hears of this, that person... Sensei's name might be stained, I'm afraid."

After Tsukishiro's explanation, the White Room student slowly raised their hand.

"So you're saying that I shouldn't attract unnecessary attention, right?"

“That’s right. That’s precisely why only someone like you, who can pose as a student, is able to do this. I’ll do whatever I can to support you, but Sakayanagi’s faction is definitely going to be more vigilant from now on. That limits any large moves I can make.”

The teenager showed signs of understanding, but a certain look of dissatisfaction could be seen on their face, one that Tsukishiro wasn’t able to overlook.

“You seem to have some complaints, I can see it on your face.”

Tsukishiro turned around and glanced at the picture of Ayanokōji on the screen behind him, then turned back and met the teenager’s eyes.

“You aren’t pleased that he, Ayanokōji-kun, is being praised as our masterpiece, are you? Not only are they sending me out there, but they even went so far as to interrupt the experiments and send you out when the White Room had only just resumed operations again. I must say, it does feel like far too courteous of a response. As someone raised within the same facility, the humiliation you’re feeling must be unbearable.”

Tsukishiro strongly emphasized this point as he explained.

He was looking to get the teenager to surpass their own potential by fanning their sense of rivalry.

‘Ayanokōji Kiyotaka is our masterpiece.’

Each time they hear these words, Tsukishiro thought it would invoke feelings of competition lurking within the teenager’s mind.

To Tsukishiro it probably seemed as though he had dealt with everything flawlessly, but in reality, he had misread one crucial part of it.

There was an idea that been painstakingly instilled within the mind’s of those in the White Room:

[Become someone who can surpass Ayanokōji Kiyotaka.]

This idea had led them to feel a sense of ‘hatred’. One that a third-party like Tsukishiro, who hadn’t been raised in the White Room, would never be able to understand.

At times, this hatred would swell up to the point where they couldn’t contain it anymore, causing them to act recklessly.

“The stage has been set. All that’s left is for you to make use of the full extent of your abilities. I took a look at your file, and I have no complaints. If you really do have this level of talent, expelling him should be a walk in the park, right?”

His explanation ended along with a distorted provocation. Tsukishiro then powered off the screen.

The room became engulfed in darkness in a moment, but before long, the room was yet again enveloped in the lights shining from the ceiling.

“Well then, we’ll leave it at that if you don’t have any further questions. Time is so very precious, after all.”

Hearing this, the teenager turned their back and began to leave the room as if nothing had happened.

Tsukishiro was slightly bothered by their calm attitude.

His intuition told him that he had made a mistake at some point during his explanation.

However, it was impossible to take back words he had already said.

“One thing— There is one thing I forgot to confirm with you.”

He called to the teenager, speaking to their back as they had stopped just before they left the room.

“You aren’t hiding something from me, are you?”

Even if the teenager was on his side, everyone in the institution wasn’t always on the same page, and Tsukishiro knew that.

If the two of them didn’t see eye-to-eye from the beginning, something that could’ve gone smoothly might end up going away.

That was why he had called out to the teenager.

Without turning around, the teenager simply nodded their head before silently leaving the room.

Once he was alone, Tsukishiro turned off the lights once again before reshifted his attention back to the screen.

Displayed upon it was all of Ayanokōji Kiyotaka’s data from his time in the White Room.

“I don’t really like using these types of words to describe things, but... he really is a monster.”

It goes without saying that his academic abilities were excellent, but his physical abilities could put adults to shame.

His track record of fights against professional fighters was lined with nothing but victories.

“A battle between two fellow White Room students... I wonder how it would turn out in a fair fight?”

Of course, Tsukishiro had already devised a clever plan to ensure that he would win.

But even so, victory wasn't guaranteed.

“It's hunt or be hunted. It may be a game between children, but it will certainly still be an interesting one.”

As an adult, Tsukishiro wasn't worried. He just slowly took his time executing the mission he had been tasked with.



# Classroom of the Elite V12 (Y2-V1) Chapter 1 Introduction

## Chapter 1: True Ability

TL: Graze  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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It was a certain year, long after people had become familiar with the 21st century.

As the world was facing all sorts of different problems, Japan was also at a turning point of its own.

Between declining birth rates, an aging population, environmental issues, and a fall in national power, Japanese society was beginning to show signs of decay.

In order to rebuild from the ground up, the government began seriously focusing its efforts on cultivating its human resources.

And, as one part of this shift in policy, a certain high school was established.

The goal of this school is to gather various students from all over the country and foster them into individuals equipped to take on the outside world.

[Advanced Nurturing High School]

One of the most distinctive features of this school is that it doesn't consider an applicant's middle school grades when selecting who they enroll.

The students chosen through the school's custom selection criteria have a wide variety of characteristics.

There are those who can study, but struggle when it comes to communication. And there are others who excel at athletics but struggle in their academics.

Some, on the other hand, don't even seem to have a single redeeming quality, and yet the school still lumps them together with the rest and teaches them all just the same.

It's a learning system that would be unthinkable at an ordinary high school.

Despite all of the vastly different personalities, these students are prompted to live their lives in groups and compete with each other for the sake of their class.

The purpose behind all of this is probably to create the necessary foundation for them to take part in a competitive society and survive as a group.

And, those who are deemed as unqualified are doomed to the fate of expulsion without the slightest bit of mercy from the school.

Students won't be able to survive at this school by simply being able to play sports or study effectively.

Each school year is divided up into four different classes, ranging from Class A to Class D.

At the time of enrollment, each class is assigned 40 students, for a total of 160 students overall.

All that being said, there are other aspects of this school that makes it so dramatically different from other high schools.

Starting off with the basics, students aren't allowed to communicate with the outside world until the day they graduate, three years after enrollment. At the same time, they are prohibited from leaving school grounds and forced to live within school-provided dormitories. That being said, the school boasts an immensely large campus, fully equipped with all sorts of facilities to support its students with anything they could ever want or need during their time there. There's also a large-scale commercial establishment for the exclusive use of students and school personnel called 'The Keyaki Mall' that has everything the students might ever need, varying from cafes and volume-sales electronics stores to barbershops and karaoke parlors. And, even if there happens to be something the mall doesn't sell, students can always purchase and order it over the internet.

Furthermore, students are provided with a form of money called 'private points', which they can use to make these purchases throughout their time at the school. These points have an easy to understand one-to-one exchange rate with the Japanese yen, and can be used as real money.

However, these private points don't just appear out of thin air.

Every month, the students are provided with private points equal to their current number of class points times 100.

In other words, in order to stock up on the private points that the students need to live their lives, securing these class points became the first priority.

There are several ways to earn these class points, but the most standard method involves clearing challenges given by the school called 'special exams'.

Basically, during these special exams, the four classes would compete against each other, with those who come out on top gaining class points and those coming out on the bottom losing class points. If a certain class ends up with 1000 class points, then the students of that class would earn a monthly allowance equivalent to

100,000 yen. Conversely, should a class continuously lose these exams, their class points would eventually plummet down to zero and they would be provided with a monthly allowance of zero private points as a result.

This inseparably interlinked relationship between class points and private points is probably the school's way of getting students with different ways of thinking to work together for the common goal of preserving their class points. This is because, for students, securing a large sum of class points means that they would be securing the perfect, fulfilling school life that everyone wanted.

However, the charm of Advanced Nurturing High School went even one step further than that.

The school's biggest selling point came from being a member of Class A upon graduation. The students who managed to win it all were granted the luxury of being able to move forward to any university or employment opportunity they desired. Even in the most extreme cases, whether it be a university boasting the lowest imaginable acceptance rates or a major first-class company, the students would be guaranteed to get in with a free pass. However, this didn't mean they could afford to be overly optimistic. After being accepted, if one's raw potential wasn't enough to get the job done, it's only natural that they would be screened out and eliminated eventually.

Even so, there was no denying that this was still an exceedingly attractive offering.

I guess this is probably a good enough overview of Advanced Nurturing High School.

I, Ayanokōji Kiyotaka, am currently a student enrolled in this remarkable high school where I'll soon be embarking on my second year.

As of April 1st, I'm a student in Class D, with a total of 275 class points. This means that every month, I'll receive approximately 30,000 yen's worth of private points. Incidentally, the current highest ranked class, Class A, was led by Sakayanagi with an overwhelming total of 1119 points. Following behind that is Class B, led by Ichinose, with 542. And following only just barely behind that was Class C, led by Ryūen, with 540.

When comparing our class with the other classes, the difference in class points may seem large, but even so, it may be more accurate to say that the gap between us has shrunk.

The extent to which we can close this gap over the course of this next year would make all the difference.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 2 Introduction

### Chapter 2: A New Stage

TL: Graze/Liam/Reg  
ED: Josh/PuffyPyjamas

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After a long and yet somehow short spring break had come to an end, the day of the opening ceremony finally arrived. We moved out of our old, familiar first-year classroom and relocated to a new one for second-years. At a glance, the desk and chairs seemed to be the same, but for whatever reason, the room gave off a different feeling. The first thing that awaited us as we arrived in this new classroom was a message 'displayed' on the blackboard.

[Sit down in the same seat you used last year and wait for further instructions.]

Last year, the blackboard was one that the teachers would write on with chalk.

However, the blackboard before me was a blackboard, yet not at the same time.

Put simply, it had been replaced by a large monitor.

The school had probably chosen to install it this year, judging from the fact that it was shining with a radiance that made it seem like it had just come out of the box.

The students who arrived in the classroom after me also seemed rather surprised when they saw the monitor. Either way, I made my way to where I sat last year, the window seat in the very back of the room, and sat down as instructed.

Later on after this, the opening ceremony would be held in the gymnasium.

After that, the homeroom teachers would spend the next two hours or so briefing us on this year's schedule and other important details before dismissing us sometime before noon.

The students still seemed to be a little out of it since spring break had only just ended. Friends who hadn't met up with each other over the break began excitedly talking about all sorts of things like what they had been doing over the holidays.

"Yo."

I was leisurely surfing the internet on my phone when I heard a voice call out to me.

It was my classmate Miyake Akito, a member of a small group I had become good friends with.

"I've been a little worried about you cuz you didn't really hang out with the group all that much over spring break."

What Akito said was true. I hadn't interacted with the Ayanokōji group over the break almost at all.

Or rather, I had been so occupied with other matters that I ended up neglecting them.

"Don't get me wrong, there's no rule stating you've gotta hang out with us, but even Haruka was kinda worried, and on top of that, Airi really seemed like she was thinking about you a lot."

Akito was essentially advising me to keep the feelings of the girls in our group in mind.

"My bad. I'll hang out with you guys more often moving forward."

"That sounds good to me. I was feeling pretty lonely without you too, you know."

I felt sorta uneasy hearing a friend tell me something like that, but it wasn't exactly a bad feeling.

It didn't seem like Akito planned on staying for very long, as he casually raised his hand and went back to his own seat.

As he did, I found myself thinking about how I had found myself a truly good friend.

After all, he had gone out of his way to give me some good-natured advice like that.

Once he was back at his seat, I didn't feel like playing around on my phone anymore, so I decided to listen in on what some of my classmates were talking about.

The topic had shifted from what people had done during spring break to the newly enrolled students.

Tomorrow was the school's entrance ceremony where the incoming first-year students would enter the school.

Last year, our Class D had taken the school's good treatment for granted and had the rug pulled out from under us shortly after enrollment, but that was the natural consequence for our actions at the time.

We had been given 1000 class points when we first came here. In other words, we had been given the equivalent of 100,000 yen every month. Spirits were high as students burnt up their points, recklessly buying whatever they wanted under the impression that they'd receive the same amount at the start of every month. Meanwhile, being tardy or not even showing up to class happened more and more, and a fair number of students had fallen into the habit of talking with their friends or dozing off during lectures.



On the other hand, the diligent students were so focused on themselves that they didn't pay any attention to the behavior of those around them.

These diligent students probably had several reasons for why they didn't speak up about it, but the main reason was probably the fact that the school let the problem children do whatever they pleased. After all, if the teachers weren't doing anything about it, why should they?

However, you could say that all of this had been nothing more than the first 'special exam' the school had in store for us.

The school was seeing whether or not we would realize that this was different from the compulsory education we went through during elementary and middle school.

Testing us as high school students, trying to find out whether or not we were capable of doing what we needed to be doing without being told.

And our superb Class D was presented with the lowest possible assessment the special exam could've given us.

The following month, on the first of May, our class points dropped down to zero, sending our monthly allowance of private points plummeting down to a wonderful zero as well.

For the rest of the year, Class D went through one trial after the next, but after falling to the very bottom once, our class slowly began piecing itself back together, maturing and growing closer in the process. At one point, we had even managed to rise up to Class C, but after the results of the end-of-term exam, we were unfortunately relegated back down to Class D. That being said, we still managed to recover an overall total of 275 class points over the course of the year. There's still a huge gap between our class and Class A, but in order to reach the top, it comes down to just how much we're able to close that gap over the course of this next year.

"G'mornin'~"

The lively voice of a girl filled the room. Immediately afterward, the female students who were already in the classroom responded one after another, gathering around the girl in question. It was Karuizawa Kei, the leading figure of the girls in the class. The number of girls gathered around her kept increasing, and just like that, they started talking about the same things they had already discussed with each other not too long ago.

It was only just the other day that I began dating Kei.

As of right now, the only other person who knew about that was Kei herself.

As I thought back on what had happened while I listened in on their discussions, a surprised voice more akin to a scream spread throughout the classroom. I looked over to see what was going on and immediately noticed what had caused the commotion.

You could say that it was a reasonable reaction after seeing the appearance of the girl who had quietly entered the classroom.

Without acknowledging the attention she was getting, the female student simply went over to her seat. That is, the seat right next to mine.

Her once long, beautiful black hair was now short, not even reaching down to her shoulders.

She had chosen to cut her hair after reconciling with Horikita Manabu, her older brother, and bidding farewell to her former self.

I personally wasn't surprised because I had already known about it beforehand, but if this was the first time I had seen it, I would've probably reacted just like the people around her.

"S-Suzune...? Wha... What's up with your hair!?"

The one who shouted this out was none other than Sudō Ken, a male student who had fallen in love with Horikita.

He had broken away from the chat he was having with one of his buddies and rushed over to us.

He was accompanied by one other person, a girl who also seemed bewildered over Horikita's sudden change in appearance.

"Horikita-san, that is... quite the drastic makeover. I'm surprised."

Said girl was Kushida Kikyō, one of our classmates who had attended the same middle school as Horikita.



“Is it really so strange that I chose to get a haircut?”

Horikita glared not only at Sudō, but also at the many students who were staring at her.

“N-no, rather than strange, it’s more, surprising, ya know...? It like, makes you seem like a totally different person... Uhm, that’s not to say it makes you look bad or anything. Short hair actually looks really good on you. W-wouldn’t you agree, Kushida?”

Although it gave a strong impression, for Sudō, things like the length of Horikita’s hair were trivial.

In fact, he readily welcomed his crush’s new look, emphasizing that he really approved of it.

On the other hand, the one Sudō had sought agreement from, Kushida, was unable to hide her bewildered expression.

“I think... so? Yeah. I think it really suits you, but... did something happen?”

It didn’t seem like Kushida wanted to share her full thoughts on the topic, as she shifted the conversation toward finding out why Horikita had cut her hair.

“Whattaya mean by ‘did something happen’!?”

Before Horikita could answer, Sudō eagerly butted in with a question of his own.

“Like... maybe she had her heartbroken, or something?”

“H-h-h-heartbroken!?”

“If I had to say, I suppose I’d call it my way of showing my resolve.”

Horikita replied in no time at all, dispelling any further speculation that she had done this out of heartache.

“T-that makes sense. There’s no way you’d be dealing with an unrequited love or anything, right? Right?”

Despite saying that, Sudō seemed to be breaking out in a cold sweat.

“This year, as a second-year student, I’ll be fighting to bring Class D to the top. I wanted to do what I could in order to make that happen.”

“Ah, I see. Well... I guess I'll do the opposite and try growing my hair out.”

Kushida sounded cute and innocent, but somehow, I was able to pick up on the true meaning behind her words.

She felt disgusted that her hair was now the same length as the person she hated. I didn't think anybody would take what she said seriously, but it was possible that she might actually grow it out. I couldn't help but imagine the raging emotions hidden inside her words.

“If you're satisfied, could you both return to your seats?”

Horikita prompted them to leave. After all, she didn't want to have people gawking over how long or short her hair was.

Although her haircut had made waves with those around her, Horikita seemed somewhat unhappy about all the attention she was getting for it.

She was in a bad mood, but fortunately, the bell rang shortly afterward, bringing an end to the ongoing chatter.



# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 2 Part 1

TL: Graze/Reg/Hina  
ED: D3nj4l/PuffyPyjamas

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Several days had passed since the opening ceremony. The weekend came and went, and it was Monday once again.

A peaceful school life. A daily routine constantly repeating itself over and over again.

The start of the new school year brought about many changes, the most notable of which being that the blackboards had become digital and that all of our textbooks had been replaced with electronic tablets. I looked down at the brand new tablet that the school had distributed the week before.

All supplementary class materials were also now on these tablets, truly highlighting just how popularized electronic books had become these days.

Each student had been given one of their own, and high-speed charging ports had been freshly installed at the back of the classroom. Portable battery chargers had also been made available to us whenever we needed, just in case our tablets were to run out of power during class. While, as a general rule, we weren't allowed to bring our tablets back to the dorms with us, we could always transfer any data we needed over the school's wireless network and use that at home instead.

The cumbersome number of textbooks we used to have was now stored within one 12-inch tablet. Not only did it make it easy to utilize visual aids like graphics or photographs, but it also had support for more globalized uses, allowing us to seamlessly communicate with foreigners during our English classes.

For a school overseen by the government, it seemed rather behind the curve when it came to introducing these changes.

At the same time, it was hard to say whether or not these changes had been the right thing to do.

The value of these changes would greatly depend on whether or not the students needed them in order to integrate with society later on down the line.

This year, the scope of our studies would naturally be more difficult than it was during our first year. I had no frame of reference to compare this to, but it seemed reasonable enough to assume that this school was at least above average in terms of difficulty. I found myself wondering if Sudō, Ike, and some of the other students would be able to keep up on their own. In order to prevent any of them from being expelled, they'd need more support than ever before.

All in all, most of the major changes had to do with the digitalization of the education system, but if I had to name something else, it would probably be how we could now choose where we wanted to sit through the use of private points. I moved from my old window seat to the desk right next to the hallway at the back of the room. The seats next to the hallway generally weren't very popular because of all of the traffic, but that wasn't really something I cared about.

And, while I was running into the new first-year students more often over the course of my day to day life, I wasn't involved in any club activities, so I hadn't actually spoken with any of them yet. Last year, the first time I properly spoke with one of the upperclassmen was when I needed to collect old exam questions for a special exam, so it wasn't exactly strange that they hadn't spoken with me yet.

In short, the first several days of the new school year had been pretty quiet.

"Everyone's here, right?"

Our homeroom teacher, Chabashira, walked in the classroom only seconds after the bell rang.

As morning homeroom began, she took her place behind the teaching podium with an extremely serious look on her face.

This, coupled with the fact that there were no regular classes scheduled for both first and second period today, meant that it was safe to assume something was about to happen.

Our brief, peaceful break was about to come to an end.

"Sensei, is there a special exam?"

Ike asked a question before Chabashira even had a chance to open her mouth. From the look of it, he had probably spoken because of restlessness, not as some sort of joke. Chabashira understood this as well, so she didn't reprimand him for speaking out of turn. In the past, every time a new special exam reared its head, most of our classmates would feel consumed by anxiety and suspense. But now, special exams felt more like hurdles we had to get over on our road to the top. The class's mindset had begun to change, to face toward the future.

"I understand that you're concerned, but there's something I'm gonna need all of you to do before I get to answering that. Something very important for the rest of your life here at this school."

Chabashira took out her phone and held it up for us as she spoke.

"Everyone, take out your phones and place them on your desks. If you didn't bring it with you, you'll have to go back to your dorm and get it, but... I doubt any of you forgot."

Nowadays, cellular phones have become one of life's necessities. You could probably even say that it was the number one most important thing to have on you at all times. Before long, 39 phones had been placed on the desks. After quickly checking to make sure nobody had forgotten theirs, Chabashira continued speaking.

"So, the first thing you all need to do is navigate to the school's homepage and install a new application. It should be available to download any second now. The official name of the app is 'Over All Ability', but once it's finished installing it'll show up as just 'OAA' on your phone."

The blackboard switched over to a different screen, where a captioned live-action video demonstration began to play.

You could say that this was one of the various conveniences that had been brought to us thanks to the new technology.

After following along with the explanation given to us in the video and successfully installing the app, an icon of what appeared to be an illustration of the school together with the letters 'OAA' showed up on my phone's home screen.

"Put your phones down after you've finished installing the app. Raise your hand if there's something you don't understand."

The installation process was extremely simple. Everyone here was experienced with using their cell phones, so everything progressed without a hitch.

"You're not the only ones doing this either. Right now, every student in the school is installing it. From here on out, this app will be a very useful tool for you here at Advanced Nurturing High School. Well, seeing is believing as they say, so go ahead and get it running."

I pressed the icon on my home screen to launch the app, but my phone's camera came up instead.

"Just take a picture of your student ID card with your camera and it'll take care of the initial setup process."

Following along with her instructions, I took a picture of my ID card. The app then scanned the card for various pieces of information like my ID number and portrait photograph and continued with the login process.

"At this point, each of you should have your own personal account. Moving forward, you won't need to login anymore, as your account is linked directly to your phone, so please be careful not to lose it."

After finally logging into the app, several different menus showed up.

"This app holds the personal data of all students across every school year. For example, if you press on the menu for Class 2-D, your names will be displayed in alphabetical order. Go ahead and try it."

The school pictures and full names of all 39 of us were listed in alphabetical order on the screen, just like she said they'd be.

"You're free to look at any profile you want, but you should probably take a look at your own first."

I tapped on my own name as Chabashira suggested.

I expected to be met with basic information like my date of birth, but that wasn't the case at all. Instead, I was presented with data I had never seen before.

### First-Year Evaluation

Academic Ability: C (51)

Physical Ability: C+ (60)

Adaptability: D+ (37)

Social Contribution: C+ (60)

Overall Ability: C (51)

“S-sensei, my scores look like they’ve been converted into video game stats!?”

“That’s right. The school calculated those ratings for each of you based on your accomplishments up until the end of your first year. Of course, you also aren’t the only ones who can access this information; It’s possible for students of any class or school year to access whoever’s info they want. The system was adopted because we believe it’ll be an important tool for the future of your education.”

In other words, the purpose of this OAA app was to provide a numerical evaluation of everybody’s abilities.

On the side, it also seemed like it could be used to send public messages to every student in the school.

There was a question mark icon on the top right corner of the screen that, upon being pressed, presented me with a detailed description of each of the different categories on my profile.

**Academic Ability:** Primarily calculated based on your written exam scores conducted throughout the school year.

**Physical Ability:** Calculated based on your performance in physical education classes, club activities, special exams, and other physical endeavors.

**Adaptability:** Calculated based on your capacity to adapt to the world around you. This includes, but is not limited to, whether or not you consistently demonstrate the ability to think on your feet, your communication skills, the size of your social circle, and whether or not you act in a way befitting of your social standing amongst said circle.

**Social Contribution:** Calculated based on a variety of factors, such as your general attitude during class, your attendance record, the presence of any potentially problematic behavior, or your contribution to the school through programs like the student council.

**Overall Ability:** A student’s comprehensive ability is derived from each of the four values calculated above. However, the effect Social Contribution has on the overall score is reduced by half compared to the other three values.

※ Formula for how Overall Ability is calculated:

$(\text{Academic Ability} + \text{Physical Ability} + \text{Adaptability} + (\text{Social Contribution} * 0.5)) \div 350 * 100$  (Rounded)

I see. With evaluation criteria like this, I could understand why my Adaptability rating was lower than the others.

After all, the size of my social circle and my communication skills weren’t very high by any standard.

My ratings for the other categories were reasonable, given that they were calculated based on various things that I did on a day-to-day basis.

Alongside the information for my first year, there were additional pages for my second and third-year information, but those were currently blank.

“Right now, only the ratings for your first year are displayed, but from today onward, new ratings will be reflected on the second-year page as they become available. They’ll be updated on the first day of each month, the same day private points are distributed. As an example, Sudō, your current Academic Ability rating is an E, but if you were to get full marks on the next written exam, you’d receive an A+ for Academic Ability on your second-year page.”

This meant that our second-year ratings would be evaluated separately from our first-year ratings.

Furthermore, the ratings for each year would always be held on record. Even if Sudō were to get full marks on April’s first written exam and get an A+ rating, if he were to take a zero on the next exam, he’d end up with a C rating, or something along those lines. And after a full year of that, our average rating would be what’s left in the end.

One of the most noteworthy features of this app was that it allowed us to check up on not only our own class, but every other class as well. Before this, I couldn’t find out about students I had never interacted with without personally going out and gathering information, but now, with just a glance at the app, I could find out anyone’s name, face, and what kind of ratings they had gotten, regardless of whether they were in my school year or not. Incidentally, the data for the first-year students seemed to be based on information from back in their third year of middle school along with the results of their entrance exam. This meant that Academic Ability, Physical Ability, and Social Contribution ratings aside, it was possible that their Adaptability ratings may not be very reliable.

It was a useful grade checking tool... Or, no, there had to be more to it than that.

The app was obviously meant to play an important role of some sort.

“There are probably some students here who aren’t satisfied with their ratings and feel frustrated with how they’ll be kept on a record like this. But to those students, I can only say that you’re the ones who spent the last year acting as you did.”

The closer one’s important ratings like Academic Ability and Physical Ability were to an E, the more disgraced one would feel as a student.

“However, your first-year ratings are a thing of the past, and they won’t have any influence on the evaluations you’ll be getting as a second-year. In other words, it’s important that those of you who received unsatisfactory results take advantage of this opportunity to improve yourselves. The school expects that being able to visualize your progress will help promote growth like that.”

Since the app holds a record of personal ratings that anybody can look at, many students would probably start putting in effort in order to make themselves look as good as possible. This would probably have some sort of promotional effect on getting better ratings like Chabashira said it would, but...

“Sensei, why is Social Contribution the only one that’s factored in differently than the other three categories?” This question came from Hirata Yōsuke, who had been wondering about why the Social Contribution category had less than half of the influence on Overall Ability compared to the other three.

“Academic Ability, Physical ability, and Adaptability. The school considers these three categories to be extremely important. Social Contribution, on the other hand, is a little different. Social Contribution is based on morals and manners. It’s an assessment of what you look like as a student in a general sense, considering things like the tone and attitude you take with your teachers, the presence of absences or tardies on your attendance record, whether or not you’re willing to abide by various rules, and even the influence of your voice and the accuracy of your words. It covers the type of common-sense abilities that you can’t afford not to have, so the impact it has on Overall Ability is lower as a result.”

Unlike the first three categories, where you couldn’t just improve dramatically overnight, you had the ability to greatly improve Social Contribution-related skills any time you wanted just by changing your mindset and the way you went about doing things. That was the difference.

“This app considers everyone equally. It doesn’t matter what class you’re in or where you are amongst your peers, the app evaluates you just the same. As it is now, you could say that those of you with high ratings in the Overall Ability category have done something worthy of praise as individuals.”

In the app, the students were listed in alphabetical order, but it also seemed to be equipped with a sorting function.

And thanks to that, there was no need for me to look through each student in Class 2-D one by one to find out who had the highest Overall Ability rating.

Upon testing out the sorting feature, I found that Yōsuke was the one to take that spot.

#### Class 2-D – Hirata Yōsuke

##### First-Year Evaluation

Academic Ability: B+ (76)

Physical Ability: B+ (79)

Adaptability: B (75)

Social Contribution: A- (85)

Overall Ability: B+ (78)

Yōsuke's excellence was obvious after just one look at his numbers. His ratings were objectively high-level all across the board. If he hadn't exposed his weakness at the end of the first-year, his scores might've been even higher.

On the other hand, when sorted in descending order, Ike was the one to take the top spot with an Overall Ability score of 37.

Right below Ike was the name Sakura Airi, with the same Overall Ability score of 37.

Sudō, somebody that many students had expected to take the lowest place on the rankings, was actually placed several places above that.

#### Class 2-D – Sudō Ken

##### First-Year Evaluation

Academic Ability: E+ (20)

Physical Ability: A+ (96)

Adaptability: D+ (40)

Social Contribution: E+ (19)

Overall Ability: C (47)

His Academic Ability and Social Contribution ratings were both profoundly low, given his bad behavior last year. However, his rating for Physical Ability was more than enough to compensate for that, saving him from the bottom of the list. Upon further inspection, I found that, out of every student in the second year, he was the only one who had gotten A+ in the Physical Ability category.

Sudō had grown both academically and mentally when compared to when he first came to this school, and his ratings would probably only continue to get better as time went on.

“On another note, while this doesn't directly have anything to do with Class D, there are special exceptions in place for second-year students. Class 2-A's Sakayanagi Arisu's Physical Ability rating will take on the same value as the student with the lowest Physical Ability rating in the school year.”

Sakayanagi Arisu had been physically handicapped from birth.

She had to use a cane to get around, even while walking.



In other words, physical activity wasn't something she was capable of, even if she wanted to. Having said that, the Physical Ability category couldn't just be removed from the calculation for her overall score. So in that sense, having her take up the same score as the lowest placed student seemed like a reasonable compromise.

At any rate, this tool for visualizing abilities was probably an integral part of Nagumo's proposed individualist meritocracy.

"I'm sure this app will distinguish itself as an important tool, not only for changing your mindsets and improving yourselves, but also for interacting with others since you'll now have a medium to quickly familiarize yourselves with the names and faces of students regardless of what school year they're in. However... I also think there's more to it than that. This is just my own personal speculation, but... maybe a year from now, students who fail to keep their Overall Ability rating above a certain threshold will be given some kind of penalty of sorts."

"Penalty... You're not saying, like, expulsion, are you Sensei...?"

"It's possible. But, as I said, this is just speculation. It's not a cold hard fact or anything. But the closer your Overall Ability rating is to an E, the more dangerous of a position you're in. It's best you keep that in mind." For the time being, Ike and Airi were ranked at the bottom, with both of their Overall Ability ratings close to an E.

If they spent this next year doing the same things they did last year, they'd be in hot water.

"Some of you are also probably dissatisfied with how the school's assessment may not line up with what you think you should've gotten, but keep in mind that this is just how the school sees you as of right now. If you're dissatisfied, then you've got this next year to prove us wrong. After all, the school isn't infallible."

"B-but Sensei, how are we supposed to do that!?"

Ike frantically raised his hand as he asked, having realized that he was at the bottom of the ranks.

"Well, as an example, the accuracy of the Physical Ability rating depends on whether or not a student takes part in club activities. If you're confident in your abilities, it might be a good idea to join a club."

Chabashira was saying that students who showed their abilities to the school would generally end up getting better results. That being said, it still depended on the individual. If a student were to appeal to the school in a bad way, it could end up coming back to bite them.

"It's like we're fighting on our own."

Horikita's quiet muttering didn't go unheard by Chabashira.

To Horikita, it probably felt like the introduction of this app did away with the notion of class-focused competition she had come to expect during her first year here.

And she probably wasn't the only person who felt this way either.

"You're both right and wrong, Horikita. The school approved and implemented a proposal by the current student council president, Nagumo Miyabi, and that is the very system we're introducing this year."

So Nagumo's dream of creating a system where individuals are evaluated based on their own merits was finally being realized. The reason why he wasn't very active last year must've been because he was busy pouring his time and resources into making this app.

"But, the fact that the school's emphasis lies on working together as a class still hasn't changed. Keep that in mind as you work hard to improve yourselves every day."

With the apps installed and the following explanation finished, the first period came to an end. As soon as the break between periods started, everyone's eyes were immediately glued to the screen of their cell phones. Not only did they want to see their own ratings, they also wanted to know how their classmates and the rest of the school were doing.

"I ain't happy with how they're treatin' me like I've got less common sense than Kōenji!"

Sudō complained loudly as he scowled at Kōenji, completely fixated on the ratings of the app.

I eavesdropped on his conversation (though, he was speaking so loudly it was hard not to hear him) while looking to confirm what he was saying on the app.

#### First-Year Evaluation

Academic Ability: B (71)

Physical Ability: B+ (78)

Adaptability: D- (24)

Social Contribution: D- (25)

Overall Ability: C (53)

Kōenji had received high ratings in both Academic Ability and Physical Ability, which made sense given that he had demonstrated a certain degree of proficiency during our standard classes and tests.

“What’re you on about? Your Physical Ability rating is like, way higher than his anyway.”

Ike, who didn’t have any particularly outstanding ratings of his own, enviously complained right back to Sudō.

“That’s cuz Kōenji isn’t taking this shit seriously. It’s hard to come to terms with.”

Kōenji’s physical abilities were extraordinarily high, just like Sudō said. His potential was on the same level as Sudō’s or maybe even greater, but, he wasn’t a member of any club and his participation during PE classes was largely dependent on his mood, so there was no way to tell for sure. Unless he’s personally invested, he was one to just suddenly give up on something or skip out on doing it altogether. It wasn’t even all that uncommon for him to not even lift a finger in the first place either. Sudō, on the other hand, tackled physical problems head-on and always pounded out top-class results, no matter what task he’s been faced with. Even though their physical abilities may be similar, it was obvious why there was such a great difference in the ratings they had been given.

That being said, the category Sudō was upset about was the Social Contribution category.

That is, the category that had to do with morals and manners.

In that regard, Kōenji, the one being singled out and criticized, was just as much of a problem child as Sudō.

It seemed that Sudō couldn’t stand the fact that his Social Contribution rating was the lower of the two of them, even though that was only just barely the case.

It’s not like I couldn’t understand why Sudō wanted to complain, but...

The reason why Kōenji’s Social Contribution rating was higher than Sudō’s was probably because he hadn’t had as many opportunities to cause problems for the class or the school. Given the suspensions and violent behavior Sudō exhibited last year, the fact that he was below Kōenji wasn’t all that surprising.

Even though Kōenji himself could hear everything Sudō said, he paid no heed to any of it.

He also hadn’t bothered with using the OAA app any more than necessary, unlike those around him who were completely engrossed with it.

Over the course of the last year, Kōenji was probably the one who had changed the least.

In any case, thanks to this app, we were now able to quantify the results of our first year at this school.

And, there were both advantages and disadvantages for us as a result.

For example, the existence of the Overall Ability category had created a provisional competency ranking of sorts.

Now, if a troublesome special exam were to take place again, the class probably wouldn’t even need to discuss who the expulsion candidates would be. The students with the lowest overall scores would be the ones in the hot seat.

Deep down, Airi, who was ranked at the very bottom together with Ike, probably wasn’t very happy about that either.

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With the introduction of the OAA app still on everyone's minds, the second period began. And yet, the class was probably more concerned that Chabashira would officially start getting into 'that' now. Unsurprisingly, this prediction had been spot-on.

"Now, I'll give you guys an overview of the next special exam."

With that, Chabashira broached the subject, almost as if she was starting off a normal, everyday lesson.

"The first special exam you'll be taking this year will incorporate new experiences that you've never come across before, just like with the introduction of the app."

Was this Tsukishiro's doing, or was Nagumo the one behind it? Either way, the school seemed to be going through some major changes.

"The bottom line is that the exam will take the form of a written test where you second-years will be partnering up with the newly admitted first-years."

"Partnered with... the first-years...?"

We had only rarely ever done something that skipped across the different school years before.

There were exceptions to this such as the training camp, but the established trend was for classes of the same year to compete against each other.

Had the barrier between school years been broken due to the introduction of the OAA app?

"This special exam will primarily focus on your test-taking and communication skills."

Test-taking skills and communication skills.

Two concepts that, at first glance, didn't seem to have anything to do with each other.

"The importance of test-taking skills needs no further explanation. However, before now, this school has never had any in-depth interaction between students of different school years other than during things like athletics festivals or training camps. Therefore, the school determined that your communication skills have fallen by the wayside."

"B-but we'll still be competing with others in our own school year, right? Something feels suspicious about this."

The idea of getting heavily involved with the first-years seemed to make Ike a bit frustrated.

"It's not like I don't understand where you're coming from, but try and think about it objectively for a second. In your first year after entering the workforce, the people you come in contact with won't be fresh graduates like you. Some will be in their second year at the job, while others will be veterans touting 20 or 30 years, and you'll be competing with them all the same. Despite the huge gap in experience, they very well might become rivals for you."

"That's... well, I guess I can imagine that."

"While the world as a whole is slowly shifting over to a meritocracy, many Japanese companies are still bound up in the concepts of seniority and lifetime employment. For those of you who felt that it would be uncomfortable to interact with your upper or underclassmen when you heard about this special exam, I suggest that you reconsider. Put in a way that's easy for you to understand, let's consider the concept of grade skipping. Grade skipping is a fairly commonplace occurrence in other countries like America, Britain, and Germany. In those countries, it isn't all that rare for small, young children to study together with high school or college students. Can any of you imagine or even accept the idea of an elementary school student studying together with you here, in this classroom?"

At Chabashira's inclination, the class began to visualize the scenario. A scenario that they almost certainly weren't able to comprehend. They must have felt that it was strange or even impossible.

It's true that there were hardly any cases of students skipping grade levels in Japan. Although specific conditions had to be met, most people were probably unaware that it was even possible. In Japan, the concept doesn't really align with the status quo where the education system is relatively linear. But, that doesn't

necessarily mean that Japan wasn't willing to consider the concept in and of itself. For example, the White Room didn't conform to this structure of education, so I could understand this fairly well.

However, I was certain that this wasn't all there was to what Chabashira was saying.

It wasn't just about imitating what other countries are doing. It's also essential for Japan to adopt an education style suited to the Japanese climate. Chabashira was most likely aware of this herself, but had no choice but to give this explanation to us as instructed by the higher-ups.

"In the future, there will probably be more cases where you'll compete against the first and third-year students. However, this particular exam is about helping you build cooperative relationships, so do well to keep that in mind."

I found myself wondering if this was the reason why the special exam required both test-taking and communication skills. Some students seemed to be unable to wrap their heads around what the rules would be like, as they looked visibly confused at this point.

"The easiest way to get all of you to understand would be to remind you of one of the special exams you went through last year. You can think of this exam as an improved version of the Paper Shuffle exam, where you were partnered up from among your classmates."

Paper Shuffle.

It was a special exam where we partnered up with a classmate and tackled a written exam together.

Essentially, this meant that we'd be partnering up with one of the first-years this time instead of partnering up with a classmate.

Even though that seemed to be the only difference, it was quite a large one.

"You're free to partner up with anyone you want from the first-year students. The testing period will last until the end of the month, which is about two weeks from now. You'll have plenty of time to both carefully choose your partner and focus on your studies."

With a special exam like this, it made sense why they had us install the OAA app.

The first-years wouldn't be familiar with the names and faces of the upperclassmen.

And naturally, the second-years wouldn't be familiar with the names and faces of the underclassmen either.

During the Paper Shuffle exam last year, we were able to freely choose our partners after coming up with some workarounds thanks to the fact that the exam's partnering system was handled from within the class.

In other words, students who weren't very good at studying were able to just rely on someone else to survive the exam. However, the exam this time around would be different. Partnerships would be made on the premise that both sides would be looking for excellent students to pair up with. Moreover, instead of partnering up with our peers, we'd be partnering up with underclassmen we had little to no relationship with. The circumstances we were facing now in our second year were different from our first.

Above all else, it takes a fair amount of time to build up a trusting relationship from scratch.

Without the app, it would almost certainly be impossible to establish a meaningful relationship in just two weeks' time.

But thanks to OAA, some shortcuts could be taken since you could just match someone's face to their name in the app.

Furthermore, since the app also provides you with a rough idea of a prospective student's academic abilities, it'd be easy to use it as a reference when making your decision on who to partner up with.

"You'll be tested on five subjects on the day of the exam. Each subject will be worth 100 points, for a total of 500 points. Now for the most important part... this time, you'll be evaluated based on two different standards. The first being your results as a class, and the second being your results as an individual."

Chabashira tapped on the screen of the blackboard, bringing up the details for the special exam that she had just talked about.

#### Class Rewards (Split Based on School Year):

The inter-class competition will be based on the average score of each class in your school year. This will be derived from the combined scores of each person in the class added together with their respective partners.

Each class will be rewarded with either 50, 30, 10, or 0 class points, based on how their overall average score compares to the other classes in their school year.

#### Individual Rewards:

You will be graded based on the combined score of you and your partner.

The top five pairings will each receive a special reward of 100,000 private points.

The top 30% of pairings will each receive 10,000 private points.

In the event a pairing's combined score fails to exceed 500 points, the second-year student will be expelled from the school and the first-year student will not receive any private points for the next three months, regardless of how many class points they might have.

Additionally, any student judged to have deliberately marked questions incorrectly or otherwise found to have manipulated or lowered their scores will be expelled regardless of their school year. Similarly, in the event a third party is found to have forced a student to lower his or her score, said third party will be expelled from the school as well.

“You should already be somewhat aware of this, but in this exam, the students with high Academic Ability ratings will be sought after first.”

If OAA didn't exist, nobody would've been able to find out the true abilities of the other students. But now, with the advent of the app, that information was exposed for all to see. The lower your Academic Ability rating was, the harder it'd be to find a partner.

In all likelihood, the students who seemed weaker academically would get left in the dust.

Smart students would naturally join up with a smart partner and aim for the top rewards. Academically insecure students would also seek out intelligent partners in order to survive. The students with weak academic abilities would inevitably partner up together and, in the end, probably fall below the 500 point baseline. In which case, the harsh reality is that second-year students would then be expelled from the school.

The second-year students understood how the school worked and had developed lasting friendships with many of the people in their class.

Even if they didn't go after the top rewards, they would probably still move to help support their classmates.

The first-year students, however, hadn't had the chance to get very close to their class yet. As a result, the concept of somebody that they're not very close friends with having to go without private points for three months probably wouldn't seem like a very big deal. It would be just like at the beginning of last year when most of Class D was fine with abandoning Sudō... No, it would be even more extreme than that.

“Partnerships will be formed once both sides agree to it, and you can finalize the process by confirming it on the app. You're allowed to form your partnerships whenever you want after this, but once you've confirmed who you're going to pair up with, you won't be allowed to change to someone else.”

With that being said, it would be difficult to make an immediate decision unless your partner's academic abilities were insanely high.

A careless decision could lead to regret later on.

The monitor on the blackboard updated, presenting us with information on choosing partners.

#### Rules and Regulations for Choosing a Partner:

Once per day, you are allowed to send a partnership application to a prospective student through OAA. (If the other party does not accept, the application will be reset after 24 hours.)

If the other party accepts your application, the partnership will be finalized and you won't be allowed to cancel it thereafter.

※ The only exceptions being extenuating, unavoidable circumstances such as expulsion or serious illness.

Once a partnership has been finalized, the information displayed on the OAA app will be updated at 8:00 AM the next morning and no new applications to either student will be accepted.

※ The details about who a person has chosen to partner up with won't be listed on their profile.

Due to these restrictions, one couldn't just send out a large number of applications at random. And, even if you sent an application to somebody, you wouldn't know if they ended up partnering up with another student on that same day until 8:00 AM the next morning, meaning that it was possible for you to waste an application entirely.

To be fair, I don't know if anyone would actually accept an application from a student they didn't know all that well anyway.

It's possible that these rules were implemented to help obscure who partnered up with whom. After all, if the information was updated as soon as a pair formed, it'd be rather easy to analyze the overall strength of each class.

"Sensei! There's no way that one of the first-years is gonna wanna pair up with me! Is an idiot like me really supposed to rely on communication skills in order to get through this!?"

Ike's lament was understandable.

Unless all of the good partner options were taken already, the probability that somebody would actually want to pair up with someone with a poor Academic Ability rating was very low.

Or at least, that's how it should be as long as nothing shady happens.

"Don't worry. It has been set up so that, no matter how many of you are unable to find partners, nobody will be left without one. This is because, in the event that you don't pair up with somebody, a partner will be randomly selected for you at 8:00 AM on the day of the exam."

Upon hearing that there were protective measures in place, Ike breathed out a sigh of relief.

"That being said, those who aren't able to find themselves a partner before the deadline shouldn't expect the same level of treatment as those who do. Therefore, pairs formed past the deadline will be subject to a 5% penalty to their overall score."

This short reprieve lasted only a second, as the class collectively groaned the moment Chabashira mentioned the penalty.

While you'd still be allowed to take the exam, you'd be put at a fairly painful disadvantage.

"Sensei, there have been three expulsions amongst the second-year students so far. Won't the first-year students have three people left over?"

Upon hearing Yōsuke's trivial question, Chabashira replied indifferently.

"The three extra students will have their exam scores doubled to make up for their missing partner. However, they'll also be subject to the very same 5% penalty, so there probably won't be very many of them who would want to face the exam alone."

Essentially, one person would be playing out both roles. It seemed that the three first-year students leftover at the end wouldn't have anything to worry about as long as their academic abilities were good enough.

Either way, I couldn't afford to be worrying about just Ike and Sudō during this special exam.

After all, this was going to be an exceedingly difficult special exam for me as well.

The reason it was going to be so difficult was the rule where, if my partner and I didn't score over 500 points, I'd be expelled from the school. Put another way, this meant that my partner absolutely had to score at least 1 point in order to clear the special exam. Even if I were to get full marks in each of the five subjects, if my partner scored a 0, my expulsion would be set in stone.

Under normal circumstances, this would be an extremely pointed, dangerous rule. Because the first-year students aren't at risk of expulsion, if they purposefully took a low score and threw the exam, this rule meant that the second-year student would be unreasonably forced out of the school... However, in order to prevent that from happening, the school had come up with another rule.

[Any student judged to have deliberately marked questions incorrectly or otherwise found to have manipulated or lowered their scores will be expelled regardless of their school year. Similarly, in the event a third party is found to have forced a student to lower his or her score, said third party will be expelled from the school as well.]

This rule was probably an extremely indispensable factor behind the legitimization of this special exam.

It was designed to protect against unfair behavior such as threatening the other party that you'd cut corners or demanding for them to hand over private points. It made it impossible to blatantly misbehave during the exam. In a sense, it meant that the average student would be more robustly protected by the rules.

However, even though the rule would usually be more than enough, it still fell short of ensuring anything.

Because— for the White Room student, it was a completely different story.

The White Room student was setting up on the premise of being expelled later anyway, so this rule wasn't a deterrent to them at all.

If they successfully managed to pair up with me, they'd most likely end up taking a 0 without even the slightest hesitation.

In other words, if I chose the White Room student as my partner, I'd be done for. Even though the special exam only just started, I already had at least a 1 in 160 chance of being expelled.

Typically, there'd at least be a rule stating something like: 'In the event one student is expelled from the school due to dishonest conduct, the other will be treated as though they passed the exam without any further penalty.'

However, based on everything I had heard so far, there was no way of guaranteeing that.

The reason why nobody bothered to ask about it is because everyone was under the same self-serving assumption, convinced that nobody would dare do something that would deliberately get themselves expelled.

No, that wasn't the only reason.

In the unlikely event that somebody actually did, the school itself would probably deal with it quickly.

After all, the school most likely felt that it would be far too harsh to expel a student who simply got caught up in their partner's unfair behavior. However, if I was the one who ended up getting caught up in it, that man would probably force me out of the school without batting an eye.

He'd say it was my fault for partnering up with somebody who didn't take the exam seriously.

He had set up a small loophole in the rules so that he could react flexibly depending on the student in question.

The image of that man, Tsukishiro, rose up in the back of my mind. I had no doubt that he was the one who had concocted these rules.

There was no way he wouldn't take advantage of this opportunity. If I was too slow at finding a partner, the regular students would start getting chosen one after another and my chances of ending up with the White Room student would go up.

It'd be nice if I could act quickly and pair up with somebody that doesn't seem like they came from the White Room, but according to the OAA app, my Academic Ability rating was a C. I didn't have the luxury of being able to choose whoever I wanted.

Having said that, even if I wanted to choose someone with an extremely low Academic Ability rating, my C rating wouldn't be enough to dispel their worries about the exam, so they probably wouldn't be willing to partner up with me.

In which case, the logical conclusion was to find a partner with a rating similar to mine that I wouldn't have any issues pairing up with, but it's possible that my opponent was already lying in wait in anticipation of that. Even though we had only just been told the rules, it was already clear that this exam would be more challenging than any other special exam we had taken before.

"Sensei. How difficult are the exam questions going to be?"

With the raise of her hand, Horikita asked Chabashira a crucial question that most of the class was probably wondering about.

"To tell you the truth, there are many extremely difficult questions on the exam. It'll definitely be one of the most challenging exams you've taken so far. But... that's only the case if you're looking to get a high score on it. The exam has been designed so that even students with an E rating in Academic Ability can score at least 150 points without any prior preparation. With a couple days of studying under your belt, 200 points should be more than manageable. This is only a rough estimate, but—"

Chabashira cut off mid-sentence as she displayed a table of estimated scores for the exam split up by Academic Ability rating.

E Rating – Between 150 and 200 Points

D Rating – Between 200 and 250 Points

C Rating – Between 250 and 300 Points

B Rating – Around 350 Points

## A Rating – Around 400 Points

“If you study properly, you should be able to get a score close to those shown here. However, don’t forget that if you’re conceited and neglect your studies, you may end up with a lower score than this.”

Chabashira was saying that we shouldn’t just blindly trust the scores being shown to us on the monitor.

“In addition, as you can see from the part of the table that says that students with an A rating are expected to score around 400 points overall, it’s unlikely that anyone will score over 90 points in each subject, let alone get a perfect score.”

This was probably what she was talking about back when she said it would be one of the most challenging exams we had taken so far.

In any case, this simply meant that, if two students with E ratings were to pair up with each other, the second-year student would be at risk of facing expulsion.

“That should be everything for the overview of the special exam you’ll be taking in April. Get ready to buckle down and do your best.”

At this point, Chabashira began to explain the scope of topics that’d be covered in the test for each subject. According to her, as long as we went back over the material we learned last year, we should be fine for the most part.



Once the break between classes began, many students inevitably went and gathered around Yōsuke.

Upon seeing that, Horikita quickly got up from her seat and joined them.

I decided to listen in on their conversation as well, for the time being.

“W-w-w-what should I do, Hirata!? My Academic Ability rating is an E! I’m screwed!”

With his head in his hands, Ike begged Yōsuke for help.

Yōsuke looked out over the whole class as he tried to calm Ike down.

“Let’s calm down first, and then we’ll settle on a course of action.”

“Yes, there’s no need to panic in the slightest.”

“B-but!!”

“This certainly won’t be an easy exam, that’s for sure. A second-year student with an E rating in Academic Ability needs to pair up with a first-year student with at least a B to ensure they’ll score above 500. But, conversely, this exam should be fairly low-stakes as long as they pair up with somebody with at least a B rating.”

She made it seem like the condition required to overcome the exam wasn’t very complicated, perhaps to calm him down.

“Furthermore, we’ve gone through similar exams together as a class over our last year here. If we coordinate and study as best we can like we’ve done in the past, it shouldn’t be impossible for you to score over 250 or 300 points.”

“Yes. It’s exactly as Horikita-san says. If we work together, we should all be able to get through the exam safely.”

Yōsuke echoed Horikita’s standpoint and the people around them gradually started to calm down.

“The important part of all of this is that you don’t partner up with someone without thinking it through first. Even if you think it’s urgent, you shouldn’t rush the process unless a first-year student with at least a B rating is willing to pair up with you.”

It was true that, if you got ahead of yourself and partnered up with someone early on, your decision would be set in stone for the rest of the exam.

You had to make sure that you and your partner would definitely score above the 500 point baseline.

“As for those of you with a B+ rating or higher, I’d like for you to take a good objective look at the situation. It might be important for us to reserve a certain number of our more skilled students in order to save everyone. At any rate, regardless of whether you’re good at studying or not, if something comes up please consult either Hirata-kun or me.”

Horikita only asked them for the bare minimum: to avoid making a panicked decision. The honor students such as Keisei and Mii-chan nodded along without hesitation, indicating their willingness to cooperate. Horikita could’ve taken on the responsibility of sorting out the negotiations for everyone in the class, but that would’ve made it more difficult for the partner-making process to run smoothly. There would be lots of competition for every prospective partner, so every second would be essential.

“For now, I’m going to try and negotiate with the first-years who joined the soccer club. It seems like some of them are good at studying, so I’m thinking we might be able to get them to partner with us.”

After Horikita finished talking, Yōsuke proposed his own idea to her. It was a good strategy to approach problems with more numbers.

“Can I count on you for that? It’d be reassuring to have your support.”

Nevertheless, club activities were outside of Horikita’s zone of influence. Yōsuke smiled kindly and nodded.

“Additionally, I think we should consider holding a hearing for the students with Academic Ability ratings below a C-, just in case.”

“That’s a good decision. Let’s work together to help everyone find partners.”

Explaining the plan of action to the entire class at such an early stage would probably make all the difference. Not only would the weaker students receive helpful feedback, they’d also feel assured that nobody would be abandoning them.

“Horikita-san, just one more thing. Some—”

“Some of the students who have ratings above a C aren’t very good at communicating. I’ll also follow up with those of us who’d struggle to find partners for reasons other than poor academics.”

Their thoughts were so in tune that they understood each other without even needing to discuss it in detail.

Only a few words were needed for the two of them to be in perfect sync with each other.

“Thank you. That’d be very helpful.”

Horikita and Yōsuke continued their conversation without any hiccups, sorting out the situation into a form that they were both satisfied with.

At one point, they used to butt heads with each other, but now they worked unbelievably well together.

It wasn’t just that Horikita had become more amiable, Yōsuke’s flexible way of thinking had also played a part in it.

“By the way, Sudō-kun, what about the basketball club? A few first-year students must’ve joined by now as well, right?”

Horikita inquired of Sudō, who was utterly devoted to his club.

However, Sudō seemed somewhat uncomfortable as he looked away.

“Y-yeah. But...”

“But?”

“Club started a few days ago and all, but, well, we’ve kinda gone full-on Spartan on ‘em... or how should I say it? We’ve been pretty harsh on ‘em, ya know?”

“You mean you’ve been intimidating them?”

“Well, I guess it might be like that. Basketball can be pretty hardcore, aight?”

The point was that he might’ve already gotten himself into a position where his underclassmen didn’t like him.

Of course, this was all because of how seriously he took basketball.

Underclassmen had a tendency to be very divided on seniors who are strict during practice.

“Alright. Just focus on your studies and don’t worry yourself too much about the special exam.”

“O-ok.”

It would be counterproductive if Sudō tried to do something and messed it up, so Horikita gave him a firm warning to focus on something else instead.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 2 Part 4

TL: Graze/D3nj4l  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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Later on, during the lunch break, Horikita called me out to the hallway after I finished eating.

“I want to talk about something that isn’t suitable for the classroom. By talking out here, we’ll know if someone is listening in on us.”

“So? Does it have to do with the new special exam?”

“Yes. Chabashira-sensei said that this new special exam will be considerably difficult. It’ll be problematic for the academically weaker students, but it’s an ideal setting for our competition.”

She must’ve intended to get our personal business out of the way first, so she started with that.

During the spring break, Horikita and I had promised something to each other. Namely, that we’d compete to see who got the higher score in one subject of a written exam. If I won, Horikita would join the Student Council, and if she won, I’d use, without reservation, the abilities I’d been hiding this past year for the benefit of our class. They had announced that even students with an A rating in Academic Ability would struggle to get more than 90 points. With an exam that difficult, we wouldn’t botch the competition with a draw because both of us got perfect scores.

“I trust you have no complaints?”

She wanted to confirm that I had no objections to settling it with the next written exam.

“Of course.”

As there was no point in dragging it out any longer, I naturally agreed with her.

“That’s great. Then, let’s move on to the next topic.”

Satisfied with the reaffirmation of our agreement, she took out her phone.

Then, she launched the OAA app we had installed just this morning.

“I looked up the number of students in the first year with Academic Ability ratings of a B or higher. There are 17 in Class A, 13 in B, 13 in C, and 11 in D.”

54 in total. A reasonable percentage, you could say.

“There are 4 students in our class that have an E rating in Academic Ability. Make that 12 if you include those with D ratings. There should be more than enough firepower available amongst all the first-years to cover for them.”

“The question then becomes, how many of the first-year honor students can we draw to our side?”

Even though there were 54 of them, they would inevitably be hotly contested. The slightest opening could lead to all of them getting snatched away from us.

“Yes. The class that ends up with the most of those 54 students will naturally have an advantage. On the other hand, the class that ends up with the students with a D+ or lower will be at a disadvantage.”

The app they just introduced to us was packed with extremely useful functionality.

The class that made the best use of it would probably have the best chance of coming out on top.

“Sakayanagi-san, Ryūen-kun, and even Ichinose-san. Odds are that they’ll all make their first move today.”

Of all the leaders, Class A’s Sakayanagi would probably go on the attack straight away.

Thanks to the fact that her class had the fewest number of students who weren’t confident in their academic abilities, the only thing she had to do was entice the smarter first-year students over to her side. The overall stability of Class A was easy to see with just a glance at the app, even for the new students. If they worked together, they could rake in the rewards for the top scorers all in one go.

Meanwhile, that simply wasn’t an option we had available to us.

“First and foremost, we need to prioritize helping our classmates with Ds or Es get paired up with higher ranking students.”

Horikita nodded lightly in agreement.

“I won’t say it’s perfect or anything, but I tried making a list for who we should prioritize finding partners for. Either way, I think we need to start by taking care of Sudō-kun first.”

“Hold on. It’s true that Sudō was given an E in Academic Ability, but is that really the case?”

Sudō’s grades were so horrendous when he first enrolled here that he had received an E rating as a result.

However, in the latter half of his first year, his academic performance slowly began to improve.

In other words, his current abilities were probably better than what was reflected for him by the school.

“Right... He’s certainly grown by leaps and bounds compared to how he was before. Even during spring break, he spent his time studying in order to make up for the stuff he missed earlier in the year.”

“Were you tutoring him the entire time?”

“Of course not. I don’t have the time to keep him company every day. He’s already learned how to study by himself to a certain extent. I just checked in on his progress every so often and gave him feedback on how he was doing.”

“Hoh...?”

I thought Sudō was only studying due to Horikita, but this was an honestly admirable development.

“To be honest, Sudō-kun is at a slightly higher level in my book... When I compare him to other students, I feel like he’s between a D and D+.”

Of course, this was nothing more than optimistic speculation.

However, as someone who knew just how Sudō was a year ago, he had indeed matured quite a lot.

“If I’m not mistaken, Sudō used to panic a lot more when he heard about a new special exam. I’d expected him to be upset this time, but he was pretty composed instead.”

Then again, he did make quite a fuss about losing to Kōenji in the Social Contribution category.

“You think his Academic Ability ratings are above a D, and yet you placed him above Ike in priority on your list?”

“His personality and outward appearance had a large role to play in that. What he said this morning about how he’s heavy-handed with the newbies in the basketball club had a part to play in it too.”

Apparently, it seemed like she wasn’t being partial to Sudō after all. She had reached this conclusion after properly analyzing all the factors.

“If you were a first-year student who knew nothing about any of the second-years... who would you find it easier to pair with, Ike-kun or Sudō-kun? Considering that, on the surface, they both have the same rating.”

“Well, it would have to be Ike.”

The combination of Sudō’s tall stature, red hair, and harsh tone of voice gave off a terrifying impression.

If I had to pair up with someone at their academic level, I’d prefer to go with Ike, who was easier to deal with.

“Nevermind finding a partner that would compensate for his lack of academic skills, it’d probably be difficult to find him a willing partner in the first place.”

This was the exact reason why she chose him as the student she wanted to sort everything out for first.

“Got it. If possible, we want to get him paired up with a first-year with at least a B- in Academic Ability, right?”

“Yes. I think he’ll definitely make it through that way. I’d like to get moving as soon as possible, so will you help?”

“Help? I don’t think there’s anything I can do, though.”

“Just stay by my side and tell me what you think. Having someone I can trust close by would be great.”

“So, you’re saying that you trust me?”

“I trust you the most out of our classmates who act independently.”

With the way she phrased it, I couldn’t tell if she trusted me much or not...

“Or, perhaps sparing even a single minute from your studies makes you worried about losing your match with me?”

Her provocation was rather counterproductive.

It was like she had given me a perfect excuse to avoid helping her. All I had to do was say that I was worried and study in my room.

“I’m *very* worried about—”

Just as I was about to gratefully take advantage of that excuse, my cell phone vibrated.

It was because Ichinose Honami, the leader of Class 2-B, had posted a message in the global chat the school had provided for us in the app. The message was—



[I have been given permission to host a meet-and-greet for the first and second-year students in the gym today from 4:00 to 5:00 PM. If you can spare the time, please feel free to join!]

This message was undoubtedly a lifesaver for the students who had been racking their brains about how to make contact with the first-years.

“As expected of Ichinose-san. She acted with due consideration for everyone, not just her own class.”

Although it’s unclear just how many students would attend, it’d be safe to assume that there would be a decent turnout.

It was more than possible that some people might establish partnerships on the spot.

However, instead of joy, a hint of frustration could be seen on Horikita’s face.

Perhaps she had been planning a similar strategy.

“What’s wrong? The special exam only just started, you know.”

“Yes, you’re right. It seems like our first order of business has been decided for us.”

By that, she must mean participating in this meet-and-greet after school.

And before I knew it, I was being roped into helping her out.

Well, I suppose it’s not that bad if I’m just keeping her company...

It seemed Horikita knew exactly what I was thinking, as she looked me in the eyes like she was testing me.

“Alright, I’ll go.”

“Oh? You’re actually going to lend a hand? I thought you’ve been avoiding me lately, but... you’ve become awfully cooperative, haven’t you?”

Brazenly imposing on me like this despite being aware that I’ve been avoiding her was really quite the feat.

“I was just thinking of taking a closer look and seeing what kind of strategy you come up with.”

“I see. It was premature of me to say you’d be cooperative.”

Even so, Horikita seemed to be willing to accept this, relatively satisfied with me coming as a compromise. This was all just as front, however, as this was an exam where I had no other choice but to take action myself in order to survive. Acting together with Horikita simply made a bunch of things easier.

“In which case, you can just treat what I say next as though I’m talking to myself. While it’s true that our primary goal here is to get students like Sudō-kun and Ike-kun over the finish line, competition between outstanding students is one of the fundamental principles of this special exam. So naturally, we have to pay close attention to the movements of Ryūen-kun and Sakayanagi-san... That is to say, we have to pay close attention to their strategies.”

Although what she was saying was obvious, the Horikita of the past wouldn’t have thought it through to this point.

She would’ve focused solely on helping Sudō and the rest of her class survive, neglecting to pay any attention to her enemies’ strategies.

This time, however, she was being very cautious from the start.

“Of course, at this point, there’s no way to know what kind of tricks those two will pull. That being said, I believe private points will play a key role in their strategies.”

Private points, or in other words, money. Horikita believed that, in this school, the power of private points spoke for itself. For the time being, there was no common factor connecting the first and second-year students. This meant that using private points would be the best way to quickly settle discussions with them.

“I don’t know how much financial power Class A and Class C have right now, but if it turns into a competition over the excellent students, they might very well take up the strategy of just buying them outright.”

“Right. Private points will be the easiest thing to understand as far as the first-year students are concerned.”

Anybody could imagine the process of taking private points and exchanging them for the assistance of students with study skills. Though, if you irresponsibly used piles of money to fight this battle, you’d probably run out of private points in the blink of an eye. This was especially true for us in Class D as we had a sluggish financial situation for the past year. It was incredibly obvious that the amount of private points we had, our financial power, was significantly lower than that of the other classes.

“Under normal circumstances, we should invest our funds to secure a fixed number of students for ourselves as well.”

The reason I said this was because, fundamentally, the only way to fight money is with more money. We had to play the money game, asking ourselves who can stack the bills higher.

However, the fact that Horikita seemed frustrated about the message Ichinose posted in the global chat earlier must mean...

"Let's start by scouting out the meet-and-greet. I can take action if the opportunity presents itself, but I have no intention to rush things. Are you fine with that?"

It seemed like she still hadn't settled on a course of action herself, as she didn't say anything further than that.

"As an aside, Ayanokōji-kun. Can I safely assume that you'll find yourself a partner on your own?"

"Would you find me one if I asked you to?"

"Objectively speaking, your Academic Ability rating is a C, so it pretty much doesn't matter who you pair up with. It should be easy enough for me to take care of while I'm at it, though."

"Well then, I'll reach out to you if I'm in trouble."

If a first-year student decides to pair with Horikita or Yōsuke, I could rule out the possibility of them being from the White Room. It wouldn't be impossible for me to reach out just before the pairing is finalized and switch places with them. However, if my opponent knew all about this ahead of time, it was also possible that they might predict that I'd choose to do that if I'm in trouble. Since I'd have to watch out for them outmaneuvering me, it'd be hard to say that this would definitively keep me in the clear. Furthermore, the first-year student who decided to pair up with Horikita or Yōsuke wouldn't be very happy with having me replace them, so they probably wouldn't accept the change very easily either.

"It'd be better if you didn't take your time with it. It's not like there's nothing to be worried about. The 5% penalty for running out of time won't come cheap."

"That's true."

While I didn't intend to take too long with it, I was concerned about the student who had come from the White Room.

There wasn't a doubt in my mind that they had blended in with the first-year students.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 3 Introduction

### Chapter 3: The Problematic Group of First-Years

TL: Graze/Reg  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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Dozens of students, both first and second-year, had gathered together in the gymnasium. The majority of those in attendance were first-year students. Most of them probably saw this meet-and-greet as an important opportunity to meet other students. Since I wasn't acquainted with any of the attending first-year students yet, the first thing I did was check to see who among the second-years had decided to participate.

The leader of Class A, Sakayanagi, was nowhere to be seen. I did, however, catch sight of Hashimoto Masayoshi, but it wasn't clear if he was here as her substitute or not. Sakayanagi's legs weren't very strong. Her range of motion was limited, and she couldn't move very fast. Hashimoto played an important role in helping her compensate for that. As far as I could tell, Hashimoto was the only member of Class A who was here. Moreover, he didn't seem to be going out of his way to speak to anyone in particular.

He was probably here on some sort of reconnaissance, figuring out who everybody got into contact with during the meet-and-greet.

As the organizing class of the event, about half of the students from Class B were present, Ichinose included. I could see Kanzaki standing together with her to support her. However, I didn't get the impression that, as a group, the rest of Class B was academically insecure or influential. If anything, it seemed like the students in attendance were the more sociable students in their class. On the other hand, there didn't seem to be any students from Class C participating in this event. It was as if they had completely disregarded the idea of the meet-and-greet from the very beginning. From this one gathering of students, you could roughly grasp the intentions of each of the different second-year classes. But for Horikita, the second-year students weren't the important ones today.

The important ones were the first-years we hadn't had much of a chance to get to know yet.

As first-years who had only just enrolled in the school, they shouldn't know their left from right yet.

The fact that they were suddenly being asked to pair up with second-year students probably put many of them at a complete loss about what to do. During the event, they latched onto their classmates, that is, the students they were already familiar with.

Seeing this, Ichinose decided to avoid bringing up the special exam in the first place. Instead, she focused on trying to make friends with the first-years by introducing herself and sparking up casual conversations with them. Of course, this didn't mean that everyone opened their heart to her right away.

Having understood this, Ichinose didn't rush the process. She approached them with a gentle smile on her face, slowly melting away the walls of ice that had closed off their hearts. It only took a few minutes of close observation to get a rough idea of what would happen next.

"Instead of prioritizing the special exam, she's focusing on building up relationships based on mutual trust. What an incredibly Ichinose-san way of doing things; A dazzling approach that not just anyone would be able to implement."

Horikita spoke, expressing her first impression of this meet-and-greet.

Strategically, it was unknown to what extent Class B would make use of this, but it was extremely important nonetheless.

Ichinose's actions provided benefits for first and second-years alike.

Horikita had described Ichinose as 'dazzling' for trying to take on such an active role.

From a look at the profile of Horikita's face, I could catch a glimpse of the strategy she had begun to formulate.

"Are you thinking of a similar strategy yourself?"

"...I am. A strategy based on private points would be too much for our class to handle. That's why I thought it'd be important for us to establish a trusting relationship with the first-year students. But, we're no match for Ichinose-san when it comes to doing that. Or rather, that sort of strategy is pretty much her exclusive way of doing things."

A certain 'something' was necessary in order to get the other party to accept you as their partner. That 'something' could be all sorts of things like private points, trust, friendship, or even obligation.

"The face and name of Class 2-B's Ichinose Honami have already become well-known amongst many of the first-year students. The anxious students will flock to her, and I'm certain that she'll live up to their expectations."

"Yeah."

They wouldn't bother with trying to approach a class like ours that they didn't even know anything about.

"But, even if we can't replicate that dazzling approach of hers, we still have options."

Apparently, Horikita had gleaned some sort of idea from this meet-and-greet event.

The key to this probably had to do with how she was constantly looking at the first-year students as she used the OAA app.

It didn't seem like Horikita had any intention of leaving just yet, as she continued to observe the first-years.

I wasn't the only one watching her observe the first-years either, as a large figure showed up beside her.

"But you know what I think? Every last one of 'em looks damn wimpy to me."

Next to Horikita, Sudō thoughtlessly shared his own impression of the first-years he had been looking at.

He had originally planned to head straight to his club activities after class today, but the school had accepted Ichinose's request to hold a meet-and-greet and hastily decided that it'd be held in the gymnasium until 5:00, so he had asked to accompany Horikita to the event instead.

Horikita had flatly turned him down, saying that he didn't need to come, but he probably thought it was fine to come since he'd be heading to the gym later on either way.

"Don't glare at them for no reason. We gain nothing by scaring them."

"I ain't glaring though. This is just the face I was born with. Well say what ya want, but is it really alright to be taking it easy like this? Won't the smart guys get snatched up by Ichinose? Shouldn't we go and say somethin to 'em?"

Sudō impatiently spoke to Horikita, saying that it'd be better to reach out to the first-year students as soon as possible. Even if a student that wasn't from Class 2-B made advances on one of the first-years at the meet-and-greet, Ichinose wouldn't be angry about it. In fact, she'd probably be happy instead.

"What are you gonna do, Horikita?"

I was curious about Horikita's actions, so I asked her a question as well.

"Do you really think we can out-socialize Class 2-B in a place like this?"

For the time being, Ichinose seemed to be placing more emphasis on saving the first-year students than winning the exam for her own class.

Nobody from Class B had even left the event yet, and they seemed to be trying to deepen their friendship with the first-years.

The first-year students had probably picked up on their raw enthusiasm as well.

“Well, I don’t think so.”

I conceded to Horikita’s question. It might be possible to out-socialize Class B for Yōsuke or Kushida, but the three of us lacked the ability to do something like that.

She must’ve come here knowing full well that that was the case.

When the meet-and-greet really began picking up steam, Horikita finally took action.

“Let’s get going.”

That is, rather than participate in the meeting and greeting, we were leaving instead.

This meant that Horikita hadn’t planned on trying to win over the first-years at this event in the first place.

“Is that really okay, Suzune?”

“More than half of the students invited to this didn’t even attend. Those are the students I’m going to negotiate with.”

In other words, she was looking to target the first-year students who didn’t bother with what Ichinose had to offer.

At the same time, however, winning over those students wouldn’t come easily.

Some of them were students who felt like they could find a partner on their own without relying on others or simply didn’t have the courage to attend the meet-and-greet. Some might have even already come up with a strategy for the exam. Whatever the case, it’d be safe to assume that most of them would have rather eccentric personalities.

“Let’s hear your basis for thinking that.”

“There are two reasons. Based on my observations earlier, there was a higher proportion of academically insecure students out of those attending the meet-and-greet. Right now, we need to be looking for students with a B- rating as a bare minimum. That is to say, we need to find confident students who are ready to put up a fight without even going to the meet-and-greet.”

I see. With that being the case, it definitely made a certain amount of sense for us to give up on the meet-and-greet.

“Our top priority is not to pair up students who have A ratings in Academic Ability. Instead, we need to coax the academically gifted students into covering up for the weaker ones so that nobody gets expelled.”

However, even if Class 2-B chose to save a fair number of the first-years who came to the meet-and-greet, there would naturally be some first-years left out. Moreover, Ichinose was probably going to prioritize rescuing the worse-off students over the more academically capable ones. We could’ve stuck around and picked from the leftover relatively capable students Class 2-B wasn’t able to help.

Her second reason seemed to have something to do with that.

“Besides, there was a slight inconsistency in the people who showed up for the meet-and-greet that didn’t have anything to do with Academic Ability ratings.”

“Inconsistency?”

“The students from Class 1-D didn’t attend the event at all.”

They didn’t attend at all? That was indeed an interesting inconsistency.

“It seems like you understand, Ayanokōji-kun.”

Horikita seemed to catch on to what I was thinking, but...

“Huh? Is there some kinda meaning behind Class 1-D not attending or somethin’?”

Sudō tilted his head, unable to understand the significance behind this.

“There are 40 people in Class 1-D. Some of them don’t know how to study, and others aren’t very good at socializing. But despite that, not even a single person from Class 1-D participated in the event, which obviously reflects the will of the class as a whole.”

Clearly, somebody had taken control of the class and convinced them not to participate in the meet-and-greet.

It was unusual, considering that only a short amount of time had passed since they had enrolled here.

“So, you’re saying that Class 1-D already has a leader, and they’re the one who refused to attend the meet-and-greet...?”

“If there’s someone we can negotiate with at the class level, it isn’t necessary to try and bargain with people at the individual level.”



In other words, her strategy was to have the students in Class 2-D and Class 1-D cover up for each other.

“That’s reasonable, but like, wouldn’t it be hard as heck to win the special exam?”

It wasn’t a bad idea in that it would prevent expulsions, but it would also make it impossible for us to beat the other classes.

“You’re right. In that sense, I don’t plan on engaging in the inter-class competition this time around.”

“I get that I’m not in any position to say anything and all, but like, is that really alright?”

“Yes. There’s no problem at all.”

Horikita spoke definitively. Although there were some fundamental differences in the way they were each going about it, Horikita’s strategy was pretty much the same as Ichinose’s.

At the end of the day, the concept was to give up on the valuable chance to gain class points in the special exam.

Class A’s Hashimoto had already left the gymnasium, probably because he had finished up with his investigation of Ichinose’s meet-and-greet.

Horikita followed in Hashimoto’s tracks as she headed toward the exit, Sudō and I tagging along behind her.

However, just before we walked through the door, I turned and looked at Ichinose one last time.

She was talking to the first-year students with a smile on her face, completely oblivious to our presence.

Ichinose would readily extend a helping hand to any student, no matter how low their Academic Ability rating is.

She had ditched the idea of taking the top spot in the special exam and was instead fighting to prevent any of her own classmates from being expelled.

It was pretty much identical to what Horikita was planning to do, just with a different approach.

However, in essence, were they truly the same thing?

“Yo.”

After we left the gymnasium, Hashimoto called out to us as if he had been waiting for us.

“Ichinose sure is the same as always, eh?”

“It seems like she has her heart set on saving her classmates along with the first-years.”

“Sure does. As things are right now, she won’t be a threat. Doesn’t she realise bringing idiots onto her side is just gonna drag her down? It’s like she’s tossing her chances of winning in the trash.”

Hashimoto spoke as if he couldn’t wrap his head around it. There was no way he could’ve realized that Horikita was going to execute pretty much the exact same strategy. After all, the fact that Horikita also planned on giving up the competition was an idea he had never even considered.

“Perhaps she set up the event precisely because she knew the first-years were going to drag her down?”

“Aaah, I see. You’ve got a point there.”

“Class A... no, Sakayanagi-san understood everything without even having to come to the meet-and-greet. She had already anticipated which students would show up. That’s why she didn’t participate, isn’t it?”

“Well, maybe.”

Even so, she had probably sent Hashimoto in alone as a scout.

“So, how does Class A intend to draw the honor students over to your side?”

“That’s up to our Princess to figure out. I’m just here to follow orders, ya feel?”

With that, Hashimoto left, apparently satisfied with what he had talked to us about.

“Don’t trust a word that bastard Hashimoto says, Suzune.”

Sudō spoke up after Hashimoto was out of earshot.

“I don’t need to be told that. Though, are you saying you’re well-acquainted with Hashimoto-kun?”

“Not even a little.”

Sudō’s response was confident, if not cocky.

“...I see. Well, Class A has a huge advantage just by being Class A. To some extent, I suppose it’s only natural that they’ll have people flocking over to them.”

Having enrolled in this school, it was only a matter of time until the first-years realized that Class A was the best of the best.

Even if they weren’t aware of that fact right now, word would spread soon enough.

“Anyway, let’s get moving. It hasn’t gotten too late, so there should still be some Class 1-D students at the school somewhere.”

We headed off toward the first-year classrooms to try and find out what had gone on inside Class 1-D.

While the eyes of her surroundings were focused on the meet-and-greet, Horikita seemed to be taking hold of the opportunity that had presented itself to her.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 3 Part 1

TL: Graze/Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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We made our way to the floor where the first-year classrooms were located, a place where we had spent our days not too long ago.

There didn't seem to be very many students lingering in the area, given that most of them had gone to the gymnasium.

We silently observed the students in the classrooms from Class 1-A through 1-C, but once they realized that a group of upperclassmen were watching them, they uncomfortably turned and looked away from us. The fact that they weren't very receptive to our sudden intrusion wasn't all that surprising.

Those who didn't care were few in number, as most probably hated the uncomfortable atmosphere our presence had created.

This atmosphere would only get worse in the days to come as well. The second-year students would constantly reach out to the first-years at all times of the day, desperate to find themselves a partner as soon as possible. However, doing so would be a risky gamble that may end up backfiring on them.

But even so, within each of the classrooms we checked, we could see first-year students engaged in light-hearted conversations with each other.

They might have felt like there was no need to worry about the special exam, or perhaps they didn't think that the exam was a very big deal yet.

"It seems like most of the students who stayed behind aren't worried at all, just as expected."

"Ain't that nice. Even though I'm freaking out over here."

Even if a pair were to score less than 500 points during the exam, the first-year student would just be cut off from earning private points for the next three months. While this would undoubtedly be a great loss for them, it probably didn't feel that critical since they should've gotten their first payment just after the entrance ceremony.

"Kuku. You're awfully late, eh Suzune?"

Horikita was just about to finish up her inspection of Class 1-C when she was greeted by a familiar voice.

The voice belonged to none other than Class 2-C's Ryūen Kakeru, who had his eyes fixed on us daringly.

The door leading to Class 1-D was behind him, and it seemed as though he had just come out of it.

"Ryūen-kun, are you here to observe the first-years as well? I don't think I saw you at the meet-and-greet."

"It was all just a buncha dipshits groupin' up in the gym, right? Going there'd be a waste of time."

Ryūen had adopted the same strategy as Horikita. That is, to go after the students who didn't attend the meet and greet.

Based on his tone, it seemed reasonable to assume that he was aiming for the best students the first year had to offer.

He had gotten here a mere 20-30 minutes earlier than us, but...

With that much time, it was possible that he had already successfully scouted several people.

We'd have to wait until 8:00 AM tomorrow morning to see what pairings he had made.

"Chill out. I haven't found anyone yet."

Horikita and Sudō wouldn't trust his words very easily.

That is, at least until the app is updated with the pairings that had been finalized for Class 2-C.

"Looks like you don't believe me."

"At the very least, I'm going to take everything you say with a grain of salt."

"That so? Seems like I've become quite the untrustworthy person!"

"Oh? But I've never once treated you with anything resembling trust before, though?"

"Kukuku, ain't that true."

Sudō glared daggers at Ryūen, seemingly displeased with the joking nature of his back-and-forth with Horikita.

The average person would probably shrink back in fear from the sharp look Sudō was giving off, but it had no effect on somebody like Ryūen.

“I see you got yourself a bodyguard, but god did you choose a dumb one.”

“Whadja say!?”

Horikita casually held out her hand to stop Sudō, who was on the verge of losing his temper.

“Oh my, does one need brains to be a bodyguard? Talk about a pot calling the kettle black.”

With her hand still holding Sudō back, Horikita stared straight back at Ryūen, her gaze unfaltering.

“Are you looking to scare the first-years? You do know that attitude of yours will end up backfiring on you, right?”

The first-year students would probably shrink back upon seeing Ryūen walk around as if he owned the place.

“I thought that with a couple light threats they’d immediately agree to help. Somethin’ like that.”

Horikita had responded to his provocations tit for tat, but this time, Ryūen confirmed what she asked him instead.

“...You’re kidding. Do you really think that’s an acceptable way of doing things?”

“Who gives a damn about whether it’s acceptable. What’s wrong with a couple of threats? We were told we couldn’t threaten someone to get a lower score on the exams back when the rules were explained, but I don’t remember being told we couldn’t use some threats to help pair up with people.”

“That’s because it should be obvious without the rules even needing to say it! You’re the one in hot water if something goes wrong.”

“Then how ‘bout you make somethin’ go wrong for me then? I ain’t dumb enough to get caught either way.”

His words were as confident as ever.

Not only was it extremely likely that he’d threaten the first-years, he even went so far as to declare that the truth about it wouldn’t get out either.

Regardless of whether he was telling the truth or not, Horikita should’ve realized once again that Ryūen would always toe the line.

“Well, then do what you want. Just know that if I ever find any evidence, I won’t think twice about reporting you.”

She probably meant these words as some sort of deterrent, but it most likely didn’t have any effect on Ryūen.

“Then what? Who’re you gonna persuade?”

Thinking there was no need to respond, Horikita kept her mouth shut.

“You figured somethin’ out while you were at the meet-and-greet, didn’t you? Then you came running over here to check out everyone else?”

“The same as you then, perhaps?”

“Kuku. Maybe.”

With that, Ryūen continued to address Horikita, almost as if he was trying to spice things up.

“If that’s the case, I’ll clue ya in on somethin’ since we’re on the same wavelength here. The first-years this time around only just enrolled here, and yet they’re awfully calm don’tcha think? That is, there’s a good chance that the people from the school told ‘em how things work around here.”

If what he was saying was true, it would be quite the unexpected piece of information. Back when we first came to the school last April, we had no idea how things worked and goofed off the whole time. Of course, Class A and Class B were far more composed than we were, but that could probably be attributed to the large difference in our perspective backgrounds.

But in this instance, Ryūen wasn’t just talking about a specific class, but the entire school year as a whole.

Did the school do this in order to have the first and second-year students partner up from the very beginning?

Or perhaps the school had another motive altogether?

“Could it be that this batch of first-years just have things figured out and we were exceptionally dull in comparison?”

“Seems like some of ‘em have already started up on bringing their classes together. It’s too early.”

Even if they began to take action the moment the special exam was announced, there was no way they would’ve been able to come together this quickly.

Ryūen was saying that this wouldn't be the case unless something had happened beforehand, that is, right after they entered the school.

“...What kind of cowardly trick are you trying to pull by telling me all of this?”

“It's nothin' like that. I can't just beat down my opponents in a special exam like this. But, I'll have to pull some strings in order to come out on top overall.”

This wasn't an easy special exam to get students from the other classes expelled. After all, the strong anonymity of the partnering system made it difficult to know who people were partnered with. It would be extremely difficult to figure out who somebody paired up with the OAA app unless they went around telling everyone or you collected information. Even if you managed to get a student with a low Academic Ability rating to partner up with someone specific in a rival class, it'd be virtually impossible to force them to throw the exam. If they were to score lower than their Academic Ability rating would suggest they were capable of, the school would deem it as intentional and they'd be expelled regardless of what school year they're in.

In the end, the only thing that would influence the outcome of this exam was the raw ability of your own class and the first-year student you paired up with. In terms of strategy, you needed to focus on persuading as many high-performance first-years into joining your class as possible. Put all of this together, and it wouldn't be easy for Class 2-C to take the top spot in the exam, as their Overall Ability ratings didn't seem very good from an outsider's perspective.

There was no way that Class 2-C would come out on top if they decided to compete with Class 2-A from a financial standpoint, and their fundamental academic skills were off by miles as well. Things would be tough for them no matter how many private points they invested in trying to entice the first-years. With that being the case, they should give up on the top overall score and instead focus on getting their hands on the rewards given out to the pairs who score in the top 30% in the individual competition.

Of course, there was no way Horikita would mention all of this to Ryūen. After all, if Class 2-C didn't compete with Class 2-A to take the top spot overall, we'd be the ones put in a tough spot. Instead of letting Class 2-A effortlessly snatch up the win, I'd like to see the two classes going at it in a large-scale tug-of-war and wear each other out, even if only a little.

“Just try your best so you don't get left in the dust.”

“I could say the same to you. Your concern is completely unwarranted.”

“Kuku, my bad my bad.”

With that, Ryūen set off, leaving the first-year classrooms behind him.

The amount of time he had spent here had been far too short to get things done.

“The first-year students might be more opposed to negotiating with us than I expected.”



It made sense that they'd be hesitant if they really had been told about the true, desperate nature of the school.

"Then shouldn't we negotiate with 'em as soon as possible or somethin'?"

"Yes... Of course we should, it's just..."

Horikita turned and looked further on down the hallway.

Her eyes were fixated on the classroom of Class 1-D.

"Let's get goin'. Come on."

Sudō urged us to keep moving forward to the classroom ahead of us.

"I'm afraid it may not be that simple."

It seemed Horikita had noticed it during the conversation earlier as well.

From the time Ryūen walked out of the classroom to the time he left, not even a single student had come out into the hallway.

We couldn't hear a single sound coming from inside as we approached either.

Our suspicions were confirmed when we finally arrived at the classroom and opened up the door.

"W-what the hell's goin' on here!?"

Panicked, Sudō scanned the room from one end to the other.

"Negotiating with Class 1-D may be far, far more difficult than I expected."

The classroom was completely empty, not a single soul to be found.

It seemed as though the forty students who hadn't attended the meet-and-greet had vanished without a trace.

"This class as a whole might be more troublesome than I thought."

However, we couldn't just stand around feeling anxious about it forever.

After all, we needed to take measures of our own before the other classes began moving in earnest.

Horikita's battle would start tomorrow, from the moment when she finally makes contact with the students from Class 1-D.

I also needed to go home and memorize the names and appearances of all the first-year students on the OAA app.

Horikita had her battle to fight, and I had mine.

And so, on the very day the special exam was first announced, a total of 22 sets of partners had been finalized.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 3 Part 2

TL: Graze/Hina/Liam  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Josh

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The next day, at the end of lunch break, the situation took a sharp turn.

Everyone was waiting patiently in the classroom for our afternoon lessons to begin after having finished up with their meals.

“H-hey, some first-years seem to be headed over here!”

The one who called this out was my classmate, Miyamoto.

The special exam would only be possible with the cooperation of the first and second-year students.

That was why, given the circumstances, I didn’t think we needed to be so surprised by this, but apparently the rest of the class didn’t feel the same.

“They must have an awful lot of courage to come to their upperclassman’s classroom.”

As I pondered about it, Yōsuke spoke up to explain it to me.

“Imagine if we went to visit the third-year students. We’d probably be much more careful about it, right?”

“That’s true...”

It’d be a different story if we were on close terms with a lot of the upperclassmen, but that wasn’t the case for the first-years.

For most students, it would probably feel like they were marching into enemy territory.

So in that sense, a few people showing up like this may very well be something worth being surprised about.

Yōsuke went out to the hallway to take a look, so I tagged along with him.

Horikita and Sudō followed close behind us as well.

The first person that I noticed was a young man with a large build.

There were several reasons he stood out. The first being that he was about the same height as Sudō.

But even more than that, the confident, brazen way he walked down the dead-center of the second-year hallway was profoundly impressive.

The second-year students shrunk back and avoided him as he walked by instead of the other way around. A female student walking just a little behind him.

Having noticed that this wasn't some simple act done for the sake of looking for a partner, Horikita went out and stood in front of the male student, blocking his path. Sudō followed suit shortly after.

For some reason, as the confrontation with the two first-year students began, the first person they looked at was me, even though I had been watching from a distance.

Not long after that, they looked away, shifting their focus over to Horikita.

I thought back on the information I memorized on the OAA app yesterday.

From the look of it, Horikita would be coming in contact with that class earlier than expected.

"Who's this chick?"

"Please wait just a moment... Ah, found it."

The girl fiddled around on her phone for a moment before showing the boy her screen.

"Class 2-D, Horikita Suzune. Academic Ability A-, eh?"

The girl spoke much more politely compared to the boy, so the two of them came across as an odd pairing.

The boy then turned and looked at Sudō, who was standing next to Horikita.

Once again, the girl fiddled around with her phone and showed him the screen, just like she had done with Horikita.

"Sudō Ken? ...Hah!"

After seeing Sudō's ratings, the young man scoffed demeaningly.

“I am known as Nanase, a student from Class 1-D. And this here is my classmate H—”

“Hōsen.”



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This Is An Extra Page . Please Continue Reading From Page 63.

The duo introduced themselves by last name only. To supplement, the bulky male student's full name was Hōsen Kazuomi, while the girl's was Nanase Tsubasa.

Both of them were genuine Class 1-D students, just like she said they were.

Students from the very class we hadn't been able to meet yesterday. Although their sudden appearance here was definitely unexpected, for Horikita, it was both a blessing and a curse. The reason being that, it wasn't exactly a good idea to start negotiations with them right now, given the presence of students from the other classes.

"For a couple of new students, the two of you have gone and done something pretty drastic. I admire your courage."

"Hah? You admire what now? Damn full of yourself aren't ya bitch?"

"You reckon she's the one full of herself? Fuck off with that cheeky attitude, first-year punk."

Hōsen flared up at Horikita, prompting Sudō to flare up as well and cut into the conversation.

Even though they were about the same height, Hōsen's build was a size larger, so Sudō looked small in comparison.

"An E+ in Academic Ability? Seems you're just as retarded as ya look."

"Wanna say that again!?"

Sudō got angrier, but Hōsen just ignored him and continued talking.

"Well, fuck it. Seems like there's only a buncha Class D twerps here anyway. Works for me."

"And what is that supposed to mean?"

"You guys are the shit at the bottom of the barrel. You wouldn't even be able to find partners without beggin' our class for it. So I'll lend you incompetent retards a hand, aight? You get what I'm sayin'?"

Hōsen responded to Horikita's question and posed her one of his own, almost as if he was testing her.

"So, you're essentially saying you want to partner up with us? And yet you're asking with an arrogant attitude like this?"

"No shit I am. You should be the ones begging us to partner with you. I did you idiots a favor by dragging myself over here."



Hōsen challenged her, brushing aside her viewpoint and asserting his own.

“So hurry the fuck up, get your heads on the fuckin’ floor and beg.”

As she held Sudō back from letting his temper get to him, Horikita spoke up once again.

“You seem to be misunderstanding something. Our positions are equal.”

She spoke with even more conviction than before, paying no mind to the physical disparity between Hōsen and herself.

“Equal? Could you let that retarded friend of yours be the only one spewing bullshit?”

“You’re in Class D just like we are. You’re no different from us.”

“You just don’t get it. If we felt like it, we could do all sorts of things to trash like you. You don’t want shit getting outta hand, right? If so, then know your place and start waggin’ your tail for me.”

Apparently, this Hōsen guy had already noticed the special advantage the first-years had against us.

“And just what are these ‘things’  
you could do to us?”

Horikita should’ve been well aware of what the answer was, but she still dared to question him, wanting Hōsen to be the one to say it.

“You get it, don’tcha? We’ve got the means to intentionally tank our scores on the exams.”

Upon hearing his words, Horikita bit down on her lip a little.

“Huh? The hell are you sayin’, you first-year bastard! Cuttin’ corners on the exam’ll get you thrown outta school!”

“Stop it, Sudō-kun. Losing your temper all of a sudden like this is a bad habit of yours.”

“But...”

I could understand why Hōsen’s excessively aggressive way of speaking made Sudō want to lose his temper.

However, what Hōsen was saying wasn’t untrue.

“Sure, the rules say you’ll get expelled if you get caught throwing the exam. But the penalty that comes with not findin’ a partner by exam day is different. That’s only a problem for you second-years, yeah?”

If you ran out of time, a random partner would be chosen for you.

Furthermore, you’d receive a 5% penalty on your total overall score.

Since the second-year students had to face the danger of expulsion, they’d feel the effects of this penalty more than the first-years.

“I-is that really true!?”

Unable to believe it, Sudō sent Horikita a look that demanded confirmation.

But the only thing Horikita could answer with was a nod.

“Wouldn’t you be strangling yourselves by doing that? Are you really alright with sustaining losses immediately after enrollment?”

If they incurred a penalty, their chance of scoring above 500 points would naturally go down.

“It won’t be as much of a pain in the ass for us as it will for you second-years though. Right?”

Hōsen sought confirmation from Nanase, who was standing just behind him.

“Yes. It is said that we wouldn’t receive private points for 3 months, but at most, that would only be 240,000 points. I don’t believe it would be a fatal problem.”

“You get it now, Horikita-senpai?”

Hōsen stood before Horikita, an upperclassman, as if he was the one with higher standing.

Having seen that, Sudō couldn’t hold himself back anymore.

However, he still had enough willpower to prevent himself from throwing a punch, choosing instead to take up an imposing, aggressive stance in front of Horikita.

“You lookin’ to fight?”

Hōsen challenged Sudō without even a trace of hesitation in his voice.

“You’re a cocky one, ain’tcha!?”

“Don’t lose your composure, Sudō-kun. You’re well aware of how it is at this school, right?”

It wasn’t surprising that the first-years didn’t know about this, but the hallways here were constantly under school surveillance.

As the surveillance cameras were always running, if something were to happen, the school would dig up the footage to use as evidence.

“I know...”

Having been repeatedly admonished by Horikita, Sudō stood down despite his irritation.

His short fuse was definitely one of his faults, but at the very least he was willing to listen to Horikita.

Sudō turned and looked away from Hōsen, but as he did, Hōsen raised his hand and shoved him in the chest.

“Woah!?”

At that moment, Sudō lost his balance and fell backwards onto the floor, catching himself with his hands.

“Are you just some tall-ass bitch? I barely touched ya!”

Even the second-years who had been watching the situation unfold couldn’t hide their shock at Hōsen’s excessively reckless behavior.

Considering how immensely audacious it was, it wouldn’t be surprising if this was considered an act of violence.

If he understood the difficulty and risk that came with exercising violence at this school, he never would’ve done this.

This new batch of first-years were apparently more familiar with the school’s inner-workings than those of previous years.

If they really did know more about the school like Ryūen claimed yesterday, then I had no choice but to say that Hōsen’s conduct here had been straight-up reckless.

Do they not actually know as much about the school as I thought they did?

No, that didn’t seem to be the case here. If that were the case...

“You son of a bitch!”

Despite having almost regained his composure earlier, Sudō realized what Hōsen had done to him, and was seconds away from exploding with all of the fury he had kept bottled up inside.

However, before that could happen, a young man who had been watching the situation from a distance jumped in between them.

“The hell are you doin’!?”

It was Class 2-C’s Ishizaki Daichi. While he was normally categorised as a delinquent who was quick to lose his temper, he was also a guy with a lot of heart. It seemed like he wasn’t able to hold himself back any longer upon seeing how cruelly Sudō, one of his peers, was being treated.

“These second-year guys just keep poppin’ up like cockroaches.”

Hōsen let show an amused expression, while the girl who introduced herself as Nanase very tactfully brought him back under control.

“Didn’t you come here to have a discussion, Hōsen-kun? If you came here because you wanted to get violent, I’ll be taking my leave.”

“Violent? I just touched him same as I would petting a cat. My bad, Sudō.”

He addressed the second-year student in front of him without using honorifics, almost as if he was spitting on him.

“Oi! Being an asshole has its limits, got it!?”

Ishizaki reached out his arm, looking to grab Hōsen by the collar of his shirt.

The moment he saw the arm moving toward him, the corners of Hōsen’s mouth just barely crept up into a smile.

“Give it up unless you wanna die, Ishizaki.”

Ishizaki’s arm stopped mid-air, only moments away from taking hold of Hōsen’s shirt.

The warning had come from none other than Ryūen, who had apparently been watching the situation from the sidelines as well.

“Wh-why are you stopping me!?”

Ishizaki was visibly confused by the fact that Ryūen had stopped him.

“To think you’d step in. What are you doing?”

Ibuki, a student from the same class, also spoke up, surprised by Ryūen’s sudden involvement.

Ryūen didn’t hate these kinds of confrontations, far from it. He usually welcomed them with open arms.

If the moment called for it, he wouldn’t hesitate to throw down, regardless of whether surveillance cameras were present or not.

Which was exactly why the fact that he had stopped the fight from happening was so unexpected.

Ryūen sent Ishizaki back, and then proceeded to approach Hōsen himself.

“So you’re my opponent now? You look piss weak compared to that retard Sudō over there.”

Given that Ryūen’s physique didn’t seem all that large or impressive, Hōsen spoke his mind.

“I’ve heard a lot about you. A guy named ‘Hōsen’ was a bit of a local celebrity back where I’m from. I certainly never thought you’d have such a retarded lookin’ face, though.”

Ryūen insulted Hōsen with the exact same word that Hōsen had used to repeatedly insult Sudō. It was truly the typical Ryūen behavior. Normally, Ryūen was our class’s enemy, but seeing him take a stand in a confrontation like this was reassuring. In fact, Sudō had even managed to successfully get a hold of himself thanks to the change in atmosphere.

“Y-you know this guy, Ryūen-san?”

“You just say Ryūen?”

Hōsen’s facial expression changed upon hearing Ryūen’s name, his slight smile turning into a wide, toothy grin.

“Oi oi, seriously? This must be fate or somethin’. I’ve heard so many rumours about you that it pissed me off, Ryūen.”

“Looks like you’ve got enough brain cells to at least remember someone’s name.”

The two of them had apparently known each other for quite some time now. It seemed like Hōsen was from somewhere relatively close to Ryūen’s hometown.

In any case, judging from the interactions between Ryūen, and his classmates Ishizaki and Ibuki, it seemed safe to say that he had made a complete revival. Although he had stepped down for a short while, he had taken command of Class 2-C all over again.

“However, for the Ryūen to have such a scrawny-lookin’ body... What a let down.”

“And I guess you’re as much of a muscle-head as I imagined.”

“I’ve went to lookin’ to pay you a visit a buncha times to beat the shit out of you, but we never met. You were being a lil’ bitch and hiding from me back then, weren’t you? You ran away and left all the work to your underlings, or am I wrong?”

“Kuku, fate was on your side, Hōsen. If you had crossed paths with me back then, you wouldn’t be nearly as full of yourself as you are now. Seems you’ve gotten lucky since you don’t know what it’s like to experience defeat yet.”

“I was sure you were just runnin’ away with your tail between your legs. But if you’re sayin’ that’s not the case, how ‘bout we set the record straight right here, right now.”

Hōsen clenched his large hand into a fist, displaying his confidence.

If Hōsen really knew Ryūen from back during his middle school days, his impression shouldn’t be that different from our own impressions of him. Perhaps he didn’t see Ryūen as someone you wouldn’t want to make an enemy of?

“Chill out. I’m not gonna exchange blows with a gorilla when there’s nothing in it for me.”

Despite having been offered a fight, Ryūen ignored his provocation and refused.

Of course, it was because there was no way he could fight in a place like this, but...

Ishizaki and the others probably thought Ryūen would accept the offer, even if they had to change places to do so.

“Is this guy really all that scary? He’s bigger than Sudō and all, but...”

“Who knows.”

It didn’t seem like Ryūen had any intention of giving an answer right now. He just let show a slight smile before giving his next directions to his classmates.

“Let’s call it a day.”

“Are you really gonna just let a first-year look down on you like this?”

Ibuki was well aware that Ryūen was the type of person who'd exchange blows with anyone, no matter who it was, so she couldn't help but ask him this.

"Hah! We can settle this any time we want. It doesn't have to be now."

Ryūen responded to Ibuki with a completely calm, collected attitude.

While it would've been best for it to end with that, Hōsen walked forward, closing the distance between himself and Ryūen.

"Is that chick also one of your underlings?"

He posed this question to Ryūen, having been watching as they talked with each other just moments earlier.

"Well, somethin' like that."

"Huh? Who? Who died and made you the boss of me?"

"What, you even have chicks doin' your dirty work?"

"I could say the same to you. You're the one who brought along that pretty lil' doll of yours, aren't you?"

In a similar fashion, Hōsen had the girl named Nanase standing right next to him.

"She ain't my underling. Well, I don't really give a fuck either way. Let's take this outside, Ryūen."

"I told you I ain't doin' that."

No matter how many times Hōsen provoked him, Ryūen still wouldn't get caught up in it.

And, as if to symbolize that, he turned his back on Hōsen, illustrating his intention to withdraw.

"That so? Well then—"

Ryūen wasn't biting, and Hōsen didn't seem to find that very funny. All of a sudden, he casually extended his arm out toward Ibuki. She tried to brush his arm away as he did so, but...

Just before she could knock his arm away, Hōsen's movements accelerated, and he latched his hand around her neck and raised her up in the air.

"!?"

Ibuki frantically tried to rip his arm away as the fight or flight response flooded her brain.

However, Hōsen smiled fearlessly, his arm unyielding as if it had been cast from steel.

Ryūen turned back around, taking notice of what was happening to Ibuki.

She did whatever she could with her hands and legs to try and get away, but Hōsen didn't budge in the slightest.

"Haha! Just you try and escape, girl. That, or I don't mind if all of you pussy-ass onlookers come at me as well."

Instead of fearlessness, his expression exuded an aura of absolute self-confidence.

That being said, getting involved in the situation certainly wasn't an easy choice to make either. If you were to cause a commotion in a place like this, the school would naturally end up catching wind of it. Given that the school would inevitably get involved, nobody did anything. Nobody, that is, except for Ryūen, who stepped forward despite the surprise. He put himself right up in Hōsen's face, not so much to strike a blow on Hōsen as it was to save Ibuki. Ryūen kicked at Hōsen repeatedly, but Hōsen just casually shrugged it off even though his movement was restricted with one of his hands around Ibuki's neck.

"You bastard!"

At that point, Ishizaki, who Ryūen had previously told to stop, joined in as well.

It was turning into the type of commotion that made it hard to imagine that we were in the hallway of a school.

"Yes... yes! It was worth comin' all the way out to this school after all!"

A full-blown fight could start at any second.

However, Nanase, who had been watching in silence the entire time, opened her mouth to speak.

"Please stop, Hōsen-kun."

Hōsen was making a show out of going up against two opponents despite being handicapped by his hold on Ibuki, but when his classmate Nanase called out to him, the show stopped.

"What did you just say?"

Rather than just obediently following her request, he made full display of his irritation over the fact that she interfered.



“The upperclassmen have been worried about the surveillance cameras for a while now. Based on the circumstances, I’ve determined that there’s nothing to be gained by lashing out here.”

“No shit. I know that already. That’s why I’m fuckin’ around with ‘em, aight?”

He admitted he was aware that our actions were limited due to the surveillance cameras.

In which case, the series of actions Hōsen had taken here were still incomprehensible.

Hōsen proceeded to ignore Nanase’s request and refocused his attention on the fight unfolding before him. At that point, however, Nanase became even more forceful with her words.

“If you know what you’re doing, then that’s all the more reason to stop. If you continue to waste time with this pointless quarrelling, I’ll take matters into my own hands. You have me considering whether or not to tell everyone about ‘that’, right here, right now.”

Upon hearing her mention the abstract term ‘that’, Hōsen stopped for a second time.

Then, with a dull, tedious look on his face, he released his grip, dropping Ibuki down to the floor, coughing violently as she did.

“Aight then, Nanase. But, just know that if you betray my expectations, I won’t show any mercy, even to a girl like you.”

“I’ll gladly take you up on that when the time comes.”

No matter how much Hōsen intimidated her, Nanase still spoke confidently.

She seemed so calm and composed that the fact that she was in front of the second-year classrooms didn’t even seem to matter to her.

Nevertheless, this Hōsen guy was no ordinary person. Amongst all of the second-year students, there were a fair number who were proud of their fighting abilities. There were guys like Ryūen, Sudō, and Albert. However, despite being a first-year student, I could tell from just a glimpse that Hōsen was the real deal. Even if I were to confront him, I probably wouldn’t be able to keep him in check. Since I had only seen a glimpse of what he was capable of, I couldn’t even predict what would happen if he went all-out. The reason why Ryūen tried to stop Ishizaki from acting carelessly was probably because he judged that engaging in a simple fist-fight would put them at a disadvantage. An outrageous first-year had arrived.

“I’ll stop. We did what we came for. Let’s get outta here, Nanase.”

“Yes. That’s a wise choice.”

Seemingly satisfied with everything except the fight, Hōsen turned and looked at Ryūen one last time.

“If you prostrate yourself to me, I suppose I could let you pair up with me, Ryūen-paisen.”

“Sorry, but I only work together with humans. I have no intention of being with a wild gorilla.”

“What a shame.”

However, this unexpected turn of events didn’t end with that.

Because, besides Hōsen and Nanase, there was one other first-year student who had been watching as the situation unfolded the entire time.

This student had probably gotten on Hōsen’s nerves, as he turned his attention to them at the end.

“You just gonna slink around and watch, Fucker?”

“A wise man keeps away from danger. Perhaps you’ve never heard the proverb?”

With that, the first-year boy eloquently fended off the scowling Hōsen’s question.

“A friendly conversation is one thing, but it’s not a very good idea for you to cause any more trouble here, Hōsen-kun. I think you should be the one to withdraw first. Do you disagree?”

As the boy spoke those words of advice, an adult finally arrived in the hallway.

“What are you doing here, Hōsen?”

A lone man donned in a suit had come in order to break up the turmoil of the students.

And, when the man spoke, many of the second-year students who had been watching from the sidelines fled to their classrooms.

“Hōsen, I understand that you feel restless, but I’m sure you’ve been hounded on the school’s rules to the point where your ears hurt.”

“Yeah yeah, I get it.”

“If you really get it, then go on and disperse. You shouldn’t fight in the hallways.”

“This shit wasn’t even a fight.”

With a scornful laugh, Hōsen put his hands into his pockets and turned away.

He had backed down unexpectedly easily, giving off an order for Nanase to retreat as well.

“I’ll see ya later, Horikita.”

Housen expressly dropped Horikita’s name before he left... no, rather, it was more like he was saying this to Class 2-D as a whole.

“I’m sorry for the disturbance.”

With that, Nanase bowed her head in a final apology, successfully drawing an end to the situation.

And then, when she raised her head, she looked at me once more before she left. It was the same look as the one she gave me when she first arrived here. That is, an inquisitive look that seemed as though she was probing for something.

But, as soon as I noticed she was looking at me, she immediately looked away and ran after Hōsen.

“I must apologize to all of you. The students of my class have caused you trouble.”

The teacher apologized to Horikita, who had been watching the situation unfold from nearby.

“No...”

“While I’m at it, please allow me to introduce myself. I’m the one who’s been put in charge of Class 1-D, Shiba Katsunori. Although I’ve only just arrived at this school, I’m looking forward to getting to know you moving forward.”

After a brief self-introduction, Shiba-sensei turned around to follow after Hōsen and Nanase.

Then, as if to change places with Shiba-sensei, the eloquent first-year student who fended off Hōsen came and bowed to the second-years.

“It seems that my peer, Hōsen-kun, has gone and troubled the upperclassmen. I shall present you with yet another apology on the behalf of the first-year student body.”

Unlike Hōsen, he seemed to be a student who was well versed in the art of communication.

“We first-years still don’t really understand this whole special exam thing. I apologize for the inconvenience, but we’d appreciate it if you all could take care of us.”

After finishing up with his apology-slash-introduction, the student began to turn his head, implying that he was about to leave as well.

But then, he suddenly noticed something, or rather, someone.

A small group of girls from Class 2-D had just gotten back from eating lunch together.

It consisted of four people: Matsushita, Kushida, Satō, and Mii-chan.

He stared at one of them, Kushida, with a surprised expression on his face.

“Everyone seems kinda shaken. What happened, Horikita-san?”

Despite taking notice of the student’s presence, Kushida reached out to Horikita, curious to find out about what had taken place here.

“Nothing you guys need to worry about.”

“Is that so?”

At Horikita’s dismissal, Kushida shrugged, ready to return to the classroom together with her friends.

“Uhm... Are you Kushida-senpai, by any chance?”

“Eh?”

Having heard someone speak up to her, Kushida turned back around. I found myself wondering if the fact that the student knew Kushida’s name meant that they were acquaintances from the past, but...

“Erm?”

Kushida looked at him with visible confusion in her eyes. The atmosphere between them seemed to leave no room for familiarity.

“Don’t you recognize me? I suppose it’s understandable if you don’t but, it’s me, Yagami Takuya.”

After hearing his name, Kushida thought it over for a little bit before it dawned on her.

“Yamagi... Ah! That Yagami-kun!?”

“Indeed, that Yagami. It’s been a while, hasn’t it!”

“So you came to this school too, Yagami-kun! What an amazing coincidence!”

“I certainly never thought I’d see Kushida-senpai again here!”

“You two know each other?”

Satō asked curiously, to which Kushida nodded.

“Yep. Although, we’ve hardly ever interacted with each other. Yagami Takuya-kun. He gave me the impression that he was incredibly smart. We never said very much to each other outside of greetings because we were in different school years, though.”

“Do you know anything about this?”

I whispered to Horikita to check what she knew and she responded immediately.

“Well, not really.”

“You don’t seem to remember much of anything about your old classmates, do you?”

“You’re not wrong. Back then, I didn’t have the time to pay attention to people I didn’t have any interest in.”

Apparently, she really didn’t remember... or rather, she didn’t even pay attention to it in the first place.

Given that she didn’t even bother to pay attention to her own classmates, there was no way that she’d remember an underclassmen.

Well, even though Kushida didn’t remember him at first, a boy probably wouldn’t be able to forget about Kushida once they’ve seen her.

After all, that was just how eye-catching her appearance truly was.

“I’m really quite lucky to attend the same school as Kushida-senpai, who I admired so much, again.”

“That’s too much...”

Kushida responded with humility. However, if she really did go to the same middle school as Yagami, a few concerns came to mind.

“Does this Yagami guy know about *‘you-know-what’*?”

I whispered to Horikita once again. My use of the term 'you-know-what' was, of course, referring to Kushida's past.

Back during her time in middle school, Kushida had brought about the destruction of her own class.

Furthermore, she saw Horikita, someone who had gone to middle school together with her and knew the truth about what had happened, as her enemy. This is because Kushida felt that it was dangerous for somebody to know what she was capable of, and wanted to get rid of Horikita as a result.

Since he had also gone to the same middle school, it wouldn't be strange if Yagami knew the story as well, but...

"I wouldn't be surprised if he did, but there's no guarantee either way."

In which case, Yagami's presence here wasn't very reassuring as far as Kushida was concerned.

Since there were people who came from the same middle school in our grade, it made sense that people from the same school could be in the other grades as well.

"I know this is sudden, but if it's you, Kushida-senpai, then I'd have no complaints. Would you be willing to partner up with me?"

Although he had only just met her again, Yagami made his offer, holding out his hand with a smile on his face.



Was he trying to emphasize that he didn't know anything about her past? Or was it that it didn't matter even if he did?

"Would you really be fine with someone like me? You should pair up with someone who's better at studying, Yagami-kun."

Yagami Takuya's Academic Ability rating was an A, that is, nothing short of impeccable, so Kushida's modesty was understandable.

Horikita, who was messing with her cell phone right beside me, was looking to confirm his rating for herself in the OAA app.

"I don't know my left from right at this school yet, so I'd like to partner with somebody I can trust."

Even though the app could tell you about somebody's academics, it wouldn't tell you a thing about their personality.

That being the case, Yagami had probably decided that it'd be better to choose somebody that he knew would produce reliable results.

"Erm, well, let me think about it for a little bit, I guess...?"

It wasn't clear whether it was because she was wary of Yagami, or there was some other reason, but Kushida decided to put his offer on hold for the time being.

"Why of course. I'll hold off on partnering up with anyone and patiently await your reply, Kushida-senpai."

With an A rating in Academic Ability, there was no need for him to find himself a partner immediately.

Therefore, Yagami calmly agreed to her request.

"Damn, how lucky. I wouldn't have hesitated to pair up with ya if it were me..."

Given his E+ rating, Sudō seemed jealous of Kushida's ability to pick and choose who she'd be pairing up with.

"Then you should try harder moving forward."

"I'll definitely get me some way better scores!"

He was longing to improve himself, dissatisfied with staying where he was now.



I distanced myself from Horikita and the others for a moment.

It was because I saw Haruka beckoning me to come over to where she was standing.

She was together with the rest of the members of the Ayanokōji Group: Akito, Keisei, and Sakura.

“H-he was super scary, huh?”

The very first thing I heard after joining up with them was Airi’s impression of Hōsen.

“It sure feels like there’s a buncha troublemakers like Sudō-kun and Ryūen-kun in this new batch of first-years, huh?”

Having watched the whole ordeal play out from a distance, Haruka spoke, her words filled with exasperation.

Standing right beside her was Akito, who was motionlessly staring down at the end of the hallway where Hōsen had disappeared.

“Miyachi? What’s wrong?”

“One hell of a guy just enrolled here. This school might get pretty stormy moving forward. That guy... Hōsen is so strong that Sudō and Ryūen can’t even compare to him.”

“What? You know him too, Miyachi?”

“I’ve never seen him in person or anything, but Ryūen and Hōsen are both quite famous back where I’m from.”

Akito apparently used to live somewhat close to the middle schools that Ryūen and Hōsen attended.

“Put simply, the gang leader at my school was pretty confident in his fighting skills, but one day somethin’ happened and the guy just up and disappeared all of a sudden. Not long after that, I started hearing stories about how some first-year middle schooler named Hōsen had beaten him to a pulp in a one-on-one and sent him to the hospital despite being two years younger than him.”

“G-gang leader? This is like something straight outta one of those delinquent manga! It’s like, kinda spooky.”

“The place I’m from is famous for how it’s always attracting all sorts of delinquents.”

“Huh...”

Akito had been using a lot of words Haruka hadn't heard very often, so she looked a bit bewildered.

"And just like that, Hōsen went around, tightening his grip on each of the middle schools in the area, one after another."

"Isn't Ryūen-kun famous too? It seemed like this was the first time those two met, though."

"I get the sense they just never happened to run into each other is all."

"Say, were you a delinquent too, Miyachi?"

"I... I've stopped doing that sorta stuff. I'm a proper student these days."

"So you were a delinquent after all."

"...I had a bad temper until my second year of middle school. Ever since then I channelled all of it into archery."

"So, in other words, you're saying you were a delinquent, right?"

Akito scratched his head uncomfortably as Haruka constantly hounded him with strange questions.

"Is that a bad thing?"

"Not rea~lly. Instead, it's like, kinda super cool, isn't it?"

"It's not cool at all."

It seemed like the reason why Akito was so well-informed when it came to fighting was because he had been on both sides of the issue before. It was true that we had seen things from him that suggested it before, from his nerves of steel to the agility of his movements.

"Since you're a former delinquent, what if you went and showed Hōsen what's what?"

"Stop joking around. I'm one to choose my opponent before I fight with someone, and there's no way that I'd choose to fight Hōsen."

Akito raised a white flag before a fight even took place. His words and conduct were such that, rather than admitting his own weakness, he emphasized and acknowledged Hōsen's strength.

Ibuki had a good enough sense for combat as well, but she couldn't do a single thing to stop Hōsen earlier.

The difference in their physiques was overwhelming. Moreover, she had been no match for him in terms of speed either.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 3 Part 3

TL: Graze/Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Graze

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After school, I was approached by Horikita, just like yesterday.

As we were about to leave the classroom together, Sudō came along, strong-arming his way into accompanying us. Although Horikita tried to turn him down like she did last time, she was apparently persuaded by his desire to lend a hand until he managed to find a partner. She agreed to it under the condition that it didn't get in the way of his studies or participation in his club activities, and began to take action from there. For Horikita to be this gentle, or perhaps I should say accepting, certainly felt unexpected.

However, there was probably a perfectly good reason for it.

There were only about ten days left until the special exam. Given the high difficulty of the written tests, it would be ideal for Sudō to secure a time and place where he could focus on his studies, even if only a little. But, if he's always worried about Horikita's movements, he wouldn't be able to concentrate. It was clear that Horikita wanted to find Sudō a partner as soon as possible so he could make the time to focus on studying.

Though Horikita had a solid understanding of the man named Sudō Ken, there was one crucial aspect she had yet to understand. Namely, Sudō's feelings for her. She hadn't realized that there was a reason he always wanted to be by her side.

Of course, there was no way I'd point this out to her. After all, it was one of Sudō's most important motivators.

Instead of heading toward the first-year classrooms, Horikita led us in the direction of the Keyaki Mall.

Perhaps it was because the first-year students had caused trouble in the second-year area during lunch today.

She was being considerate so as to ensure that a similar development wouldn't happen again.

Or maybe she had decided against it because of Hōsen, the problem child from Class 1-D?

I'd find out soon enough either way.

“Gotta say, there’s a lot goin’ on here. These first-years are really makin’ a lotta noise.”

As soon as we entered the mall, Sudō crammed his left pinky finger into his ear, seemingly irritated.

He spoke bluntly, sharing his impression of the first-year students spread out before him.

“There are certainly a lot of students hanging around, aren’t there?”

They were all over the place, happily chatting amongst each other about what they’d like to buy or eat.

“And yet I’m out here seriously lookin’ for a partner.”

Dedicating several days to finding a partner wasn’t just a good idea for second-year students, but for first-years as well. However, there was a huge discrepancy between the students of the two grade levels.

That is, the difference in our understanding of special exams.

Very few of the first-year students felt a sense of urgency, just like the students we saw yesterday after school.

This became even more pronounced after we had left the campus.

“It’s understandable isn’t it? It’s no different from how it was back when we were first-years.”

“I suppose that’s true...”

The students had received a large sum of private points just after coming to the school, and they naturally spent their days living in idle amusement as a result.

Even if they were from Class A, it didn’t make very much of a difference.

No matter the method, the degree to which they would indulge themselves was the same.

The most troublesome part of all of this was the difference in punishments for the first and second-year students.

Compared to expulsion, the first-years would only have to suffer through three months without private points.

“Just look at ‘em, messin’ around without a care in the world.”

“You’re one to talk, Sudō-kun. Have you already forgotten what you were like as a first-year?”

“I-I didn’t forget... I’ve reflected on it a lot, okay?”

After all, he had been the first student to be under threat of expulsion.

However, the relief measures we had used to save him back then weren’t available to us anymore.

The privileges that came with being new had long since been used up.

“For the time being, how about we try and reach out to some of them?”

Horikita said, spotting a group of three male first-year students seated together on one of the mall benches, cracking jokes with each other.

Their names were Kaga, Mikami, and Shiratori. The three of them were students of Class 1-D with Academic Ability ratings of B- or higher. Before reaching out to them, Horikita first made sure to look them up on the app, just in case.

It seemed like she was still looking to go after students from Class 1-D after all.

“Could I trouble you guys for a second?”

“...What is it?”

They could probably tell that they were being approached by upperclassmen just by looking at us.

Their cheerful-looking expressions had faded away, replaced instead with vigilance and caution.

“We’re searching for partners for the upcoming special exam. You guys don’t have partners yet, right?”

“Eh, ah, yes. We haven’t paired up with anyone yet.”

“If you don’t mind, could we discuss it on the premise of pairing up with us?”

“We don’t mind at all. Right guys?”

After hearing our proposal, the three of them nodded as if they had discussed this in advance. It was an unexpectedly good response, and it felt like they had lowered their guards a bit.

Sudō was also shocked by their favorable attitude, letting show a slightly surprised expression.

“However, I’m very sorry to say this, but our top priority right now is to find—”

“Partners who can prevent those of you with low Academic Ability ratings from being expelled, right?”

It seemed that this notion had already spread amongst the first-years.

“Yes. If you guys are already aware of that, then our discussion will be much easier.”

“Let’s see... so you’d like for one of us to partner up with... Sudō-senpai?”

They spoke confidently since they had checked our OAA profiles on their cell phones as well.

“That’s right. He’s one of them. There are several others as well, though.”

“Ah, I see. So his Academic Ability rating is an E+...? This could be tricky.”

The words he chose were tactful, but it was clear that he was emphasizing Sudō’s low academic performance.

While everything the first-year had said was true, Sudō still seemed a little ticked off, but somehow he just barely managed to prevent it from showing on his face.

“If it’s you, Shiratori, it should be fine, right?”

Kaga and Mikami turned the focus over to Shiratori, who was seated on the right end of the bench.

“As it stands now, my Academic Ability rating is an A.”

“So it seems. If you’re willing to partner up with him, then I have nothing more to say.”

“Alright then... how about this?”

Shiratori gestured toward Horikita, showing her his hand with all five fingers raised as he made his proposition.

For a moment, Horikita didn’t quite understand what he meant, so she shot a look back over at Sudō and I. This prompted Shiratori to speak up again.

“Oh gosh. You want us to partner up, right? If so, a certain something is absolutely necessary, don’t you think?”

Hearing those words, Horikita finally understood.

“...I suppose you’re referring to private points?”

“Of course. If I partnered up with somebody smart, I could aim for the top spot. Since I’d be giving up the potential rewards that come with coming out on top by partnering up with somebody who has a low Academic Ability rating, it’s only natural that there be compensation, wouldn’t you say?”

“What!? You wanna take points from us? And 50,000 points at that...? That’s way too many!”

For Sudō, who had been leading a life where he was constantly low on funds, this was an outrageous amount of points.

“Senpai, please stop joking around. How could I possibly accept 50,000?”

“Ah?”

“500,000. If you give me 500,000 points, I’ll happily partner up with you right here, right now.”

“F-five hundred thousand!?”

“There will be consequences if somebody gets expelled from your class, right? We’ve done our fair share of looking into this as well.”

It was apparent that there was a vast difference between the first-years now and how we were last year.

They had started to understand the structure of the school’s system, and furthermore, knew the value that they themselves brought to the table.

Between those of us here, it was hard to tell who was an upperclassman and who was an underclassman.

That’s just how the situation could be interpreted.

“You’re not wrong that pairing with somebody who has a lower Academic Ability rating would call for some degree of compensation.”

“O-oi, Suzune, I ain’t even got close to 500,000 points though?”

“I know that, so be quiet for a second.”

The three first-years had strained smiles on their face once they overheard Sudō carelessly leak his poor financial situation.



“It’s natural to desire points, but is chasing after short-sighted greed really worth it?”

“What are you saying?”

Shiratori, as the representative of the three of them, asked Horikita to elaborate.

“What I mean is that, if you were to do us a favor here, we might be able help you out in a similar situation later on down the line.”

Horikita was trying to persuade them that, if they made a loan that didn’t involve private points, they’d be placed at an advantage in the future.

“Aside from Horikita-senpai, who has an A in Academic Ability, I can’t imagine that Sudō-senpai or Ayanokōji-senpai would be very helpful to us, though?”

“That’s not necessarily true. There’s more to this school than just academics. There are also times where athletic ability is required.”

This was particularly applicable to Sudō, as he was the only second-year student who had an A+ rating in Physical Ability.

Horikita was looking to use this as a weapon, but...

“I know that, but at the end of the day you guys are still Class D, right? If I was looking to curry favors, I’d rather reach out to Class A or B.”

Shiratori responded, having come to a calm, objective judgment.

At this point, Horikita probably understood it as well.

“...I see. So that’s how it is, huh?”

Having taken into account the number of private points involved and how smoothly they had handled our offer, it wasn’t necessary to think about it very deeply.

“W-what does that mean?”

“Before you arrived, we were consulted by another class of second-year students.”

“And they told you not to sell your academic ability for cheap, right?”

“Yes. Please know that we won’t be partnering with you if you can’t put up a suitable number of points.”

Despite facing such clear rejection from Shiratori and his friends, Horikita still didn't back down.

"If that's the case, then it's certainly true that you can't sell yourselves cheaply. However, I find myself wondering if they really approached you at all?"

"What do you mean?"

At that, Shiratori's expression seemed somewhat discontent, as if his pride that came with his A-rated Academic Ability had been wounded.

"You guys are in Class D, just the same as us. I don't believe the higher-ranked classes would've approached you so easily."

This was Horikita's bluff. If one had a high Academic Ability rating, they would be useful in this exam, even if they were a student in Class D.

She had said this for the sake of confirming who it was that had reached out to them, and the details of what had been said.

Shiratori objected to her assertion in a slightly rough tone, having seemingly been instigated due to his wounded pride.

"It's true. We were invited by Hashimoto-senpai from Class 2-A. And, we've also been approached by Class 2-C, offering us a fair sum of points to partner up with them. Right guys?"

The two others nodded along in agreement.

"And it's not just us either. Practically all of the smart ones out there have been approached by now."

The ones who were seeking to buy them out were Class 2-A and Class 2-C, just as Horikita had predicted.

"I see... In which case, there's no way for us to respond to your expectations right now."

"Ah, but we won't turn you down if you have the points for it. We'll be observing the situation for the next week or so. If you can offer 500,000 points in that time, we'd be glad to partner up, even with someone like Sudō-senpai."

500,000 private points. The amount it would take to ensure that you wouldn't have to face expulsion.

It was a large sum alright, but from another angle, it was the price that came with buying your own safety.

However, a definite decision couldn't be made right now, nor should it be.

“By the way... How many points did Hashimoto-kun and the others offer you?”

She wanted to know exactly how many points were on the table here, but Shiratori and the others weren't that naive.

“We promised not to share that information. The only thing I'll say is that, if you have 500,000 points, we'll willingly help you out.”

“I understand. I'll take it into consideration. In any case, could I ask you three for a favor? Could you perhaps introduce us to some of your other classmates?”

“Introduce?”

“We've already planned on cooperating with your class, at least to some extent. But it'll take a lot of time and effort to approach each of you one by one and explain the same things from scratch. If possible, I was hoping you guys could gather some people together and we could have a concrete discussion from there.”

She briefly brushed upon the idea of working together, but didn't articulate what exactly that was about.

The three of them exchanged glances with one another, but their facial expressions seemed slightly embarrassed.

“That's... entrusting us with something like that... it'll be kinda difficult, right guys?”

“Yeah. If we went ahead and did that on our own, Hōsen-kun would probably get angry with us.”

The name 'Hōsen' had come up as the three of them discussed the topic.

From their words and behavior, I got a sense of the fear they had for him.

“I'm sorry Senpai, but could you please ask this of someone else...?”

Sure enough, that guy was the one who held the key to Class 1-D.

Having noticed the obvious change in atmosphere, Horikita decided not to pursue the matter any further.

“Thank you. I'll reach out to you if I need anything else.”

“O-okay. We'll be waiting.”

We walked away from the bench and began heading toward the cafe on the second floor of the mall. I discreetly looked behind us as we went, only to see Shiratori hurriedly making a call on his cell phone.

“Although we’ve gotten some information, it’s hard to say we’ve made any real progress. The only thing I’m sure of is that they’ll cooperate as long as we provide them with the absurd sum of 500,000 points.”

“They’re really takin’ advantage of us with these ridiculous requirements and all.”

“It’s a ridiculous sum of points, that’s for sure. But at the end of the day, there’s also no reason for them to sell themselves short.”

Not selling yourself short was even more important for those who had gotten an A rating in Academic Ability.

Compared to aiming for the 100,000 points you’d get from taking a top spot in the exam, this was a far better method.

“So like, the only way I’m gonna save myself is by payin’ somebody with private points?”

“It’s hard to say there’ll be anybody willing to help you for free.”

The notion that points were required to establish relationships had already spread throughout the student mindset. It was best to assume that not only Shiratori and his friends, but the first-year student body as a whole knew about the system of exchanging private points. This was all probably part of Sakayanagi and Ryūen’s strategy. Normally, exchanging points for favors was looked down upon and doing so should, in theory, be done in secret. However, now that large-scale buy-out tactics had taken center stage, they had forced the first-years to acknowledge that providing services without compensation would be equivalent to taking a loss.

Nevertheless, something in our earlier conversation with Shiratori and his friends had caught my attention.

Even though it seems that they had already been approached by the other classes, Shiratori had still said that he’d be willing to wait a week. Even if they had set aside the time to fish for points, it bothered me that the three of them were in agreement on that course of action from the very beginning. There should also be students who’d want the reassurance of locking down a partner as soon as possible.

Was it that those three just happened to be confident, or...?

“If we keep randomly asking around like this, we’ll probably keep getting the same answers, won’t we?”

The fact that we had our eyes on Class 1-D was fine, the problem was what came after that.

I was also caught up on what they had said about Hōsen getting angry if they went and did something on their own.

And from the way they were speaking, it was clear that Hōsen Kazuomi was the one in control of Class 1-D.

“Hōsen probably gave instructions to his classmates. Telling them something like: ‘I don’t care who the fuck you pair up with, but only do so right away if they fork over 500k. Otherwise just put a hold on it and wait, even if they’re from Class A.’”

“But, with somethin’ like that, wouldn’t Class 1-D end up gettin’ left in the dust?”

“It means that he’s already made preparations for that exact situation.”

“Wha? I don’t get it.”

“The second-years are the ones who are afraid of the penalty that comes with not finding a partner by the deadline. He’s looking to use that penalty as a weapon, wringing as many private points out of us as possible.”

If all of the honors students outside of Class 1-D had already been bought out, we’d have no choice but to spend big in order to get Class 1-D’s help. Even with prices of one or two million.

“It’s a reckless strategy, one with complete disregard for anything that’ll happen later on down the line.”

“So can you formally explain your plan for how you’re going to handle it?”

We had already seen through Class 1-D’s principles and strategy. Having taken that into account, I wanted to know what Horikita was thinking, thus my question.

Would she look to drive a wedge in the aggressive buy-out contest Class 2-A and Class 2-C had engaged in? Or perhaps she would go the same route as Ichinose and try to establish a trusting relationship by accepting the more academically inferior students, winning over the help of the honors students along the way?

“I had decided on three goals for us back when I first heard about this special exam.”

“Three goals?”

Sudō seemed to bear an interest in this topic, as he leaned in closer out of curiosity.

“The most important one is to not let anyone get expelled, this one goes without saying.”

At that, Sudō nodded.

“The next is that we try to get third place or higher in the overall class ranking.”

“Third place? Does that mean you gave up on first and second from the get go?”

“Nobody said anything about giving up. I just said third place or higher.”

While it was true that the exact phrasing of her words had included both first and second place, somehow it didn’t feel as though that was the case.

This likely had something to do with her third goal.

“The third is to avoid participating in any monetary exchanges. I intend to take action with these three principles in mind.”

“Eh...? B-but...”

“I understand what you want to say. We won’t win at all if we don’t compete with private points. But, even if we fight using every point that our class has, the risks simply don’t outweigh the returns. Let’s say we managed to get first place overall. In that case we’d only get 50 class points. Spread that out over the course of a year and the class would only end up with just over 2 million points.”

With 5000 points per month multiplied by a total of 39 people, subtracting the points that had already been distributed in April, we’d receive a total of 2,145,000 points over the course of the remaining eleven months.

“Assuming that we’d be spending 500,000 per person, we’d be in the red after five people. You’re not so optimistic that you’d think we can win overall with only four first-years with A-rated Academic Ability, are you?”

Even if we were to carry that forward for the next two years, that is, until graduation, that would only be 4,485,000 private points. We’d only be able to draw in a maximum of eleven people. Moreover, this was based on the prerequisite that we not only recruit them for 500,000 points at the very most, but take first place in the overall class ranking as well. Given the risks, it would most likely be more efficient to wait for a future special exam and make use of our private points then.

“Private points aren’t equal to class points. I’m well aware that there’s more to it than just what we get in return. However, I think that even if we pooled all of our points together, our chances of winning would be slim to none, so we shouldn’t try and force it. Am I wrong, Ayanokōji-kun?”

“No. Your deduction is correct.”

Originally, the difference in academic skill between Class 2-D and Class 2-A was painfully obvious. I didn't think we'd have the advantage needed to win overall, even if we managed to recruit eleven people. Of course, Horikita would probably adapt to the needs of the situation. I could imagine that she'd be willing to provide private points if there was somebody who'd lend a hand for 50,000-100,000. She just didn't want the class to get caught up in a monetary battle.

"In order to meet these three goals, I still think we should look to negotiate with Class 1-D."

"B-but why? With Hōsen calling the shots, they wouldn't be willin' to partner with us if we don't fork over at least half a million, right?"

"That's only the case for honor students. However, there are several students in Class 1-D with ratings in the C range, and even more who are lower than that. What do you think would happen if they were just left like that?"

"What would happen...?"

"Students who should've been able to receive help would instead receive a penalty, and the situation would become unstable."

I responded in Sudō's stead, to which Horikita nodded and continued.

"There's no reason for them to intentionally give up the private points they receive every month. In other words, at some point, Hōsen-kun will have no choice but to change his stance."

Even if all of the honor students managed to sell their skills for 500,000 each, none of the other students would be able to use that method. Whether or not the second-years would have anybody expelled aside, for the first-year's battle, Hōsen would end up falling behind.

"If he has his eyes on victory, there should definitely be an opportunity to take advantage of."

It seemed that Horikita intended to oppose Class 1-D, the class everybody wanted to avoid.

"Although, having all 39 of us try and take on Hōsen-kun's class would be dangerous. We have to do our best to reduce the risk as much as possible."

If our negotiations were to fail, the students with low academic performance would be the ones in trouble.

"With the exam having just begun, it isn't strange that some people have unreasonable conditions you'd have to meet in order to partner up with them."

"Well I hope so... For someone like me, I ain't so sure a partner even exists in the first place."

“In any case, to find a good partner, we have no choice but to start reaching out to a whole bunch of people.”

“Heyo~ If you’re looking for a good partner, there’s one right over here.”

As we were walking up the stairs, headed to the cafe on the second floor, we heard a voice call out from behind us. We turned around to see a schoolgirl, watching us from the first floor with a wide smile on her face. As soon as our eyes met, she casually began to make her way up the stairs.

Horikita was the first person to let suspicion show on her face.

“Were you eavesdropping on us?”

“Don’t be like that, Senpai. I just called out cuz I happened to overhear you is all! Uhm...”

She spoke without looking at Sudō and me at all, her eyes fixed on Horikita the entire time.

“Senpai, what’s your name and Academic Ability rating?”

“...I’m Horikita from Class 2-D. My Academic Ability rating is an A-. Why are you asking?”

“For real? You’re pretty smart.”

“And your name is?”

“I’m Amasawa Ichika from Class 1-A. I’ve gotta A in Academic Ability, kinda same as you, Horikita-senpai.”

She was an intelligent student, contrary to what her gal-like appearance would lead you to believe.

Horikita double checked the app just to be sure.

“If you’re gonna go for the top spot, how ‘bout partnering up with me?”

Amasawa asked without even bothering to ask about Horikita’s background.

If two people with an A rating and an A- rating were to team up together, taking first wouldn’t be outside the realm of possibility. Given that Horikita had intentionally lowered her own scores for Sudō’s sake in the past, it wouldn’t be too much of a stretch to say that her real rating was closer to an A.

Though this was an unexpected development, Horikita might end up deciding on her own partner before Sudō and the others.



After all, an A-rated student had reached out to her, even though it had happened by chance.

If Horikita were to ask her to pair up with a student who had a worse rating now, she may end up scaring Amasawa off.

"I appreciate your offer, but I'm not looking for my own partner right now. Instead of me, could I perhaps ask if you'd be willing to partner with him...?"

Horikita went for it anyway, bearing the risk of introducing Sudō.

Although Sudō was a little perplexed, he lightly bowed his head in greeting.

"Lemme see, and what is this Sudō-senpai's Academic Ability?"

"E+. Not good by any stretch of the imagination."

Not good was an understatement. He was in the running for the lowest rating of the entire school year.

Amasawa had probably already figured this out for herself thanks to the app as well.

"I see~ So basically you're trying to find him a partner in order to prevent him from getting kicked outta here."

Having grasped the situation, Amasawa looked over at Sudō.

"E+? Forget taking the top spot, if we're together, we'd prolly end up placing a lil below average."

"That's right. There's basically nothing in it for you."

At this point, I thought Amasawa would bring up the topic of private points, but that didn't happen.

"Welp, since you're asking, I guess I wouldn't mind helping out."

Compared to the three guys from earlier, this was an undoubtedly better response.

She then shifted her sights in my direction.

"What about this Senpai? Does he need a partner too?"

"His rating is a C, so he's not as much of a priority. Though, if Sudō-kun isn't good enough for you, I'd be grateful if you could at least partner up with him."

“No, that’s—”

Even though Horikita was being generous, I had no choice but to put a stop to the idea.

After all, I couldn’t afford to decide on a partner without thinking it through first.

“Are you dissatisfied with something about her?”

“Not exactly, it’s just—”

“Hey hey wait a sec. I haven’t said that I’ll like, actually pair up with either of them yet, okay?”

Having noticed that the conversation was moving forward without her, Amasawa put a stop to it.

“Do you have any conditions that need to be met for you to partner up with one of them?”

“Conditions, conditions... Yeah, I guess I’ve got the right to make some of those as well, huh?”

Horikita had broached the topic here in order to try and pressure Amasawa into naming her requirements.

Her fundamental goal of not engaging in a financial battle with the other classes probably hadn’t changed, but, if Amasawa’s price was cheap enough, there would be room for consideration. After that, all we could do is pray that she wouldn’t ask for an absurd amount of points like Shiratori and his friends had earlier. However...

“I’d say I like strong, powerful people, ya feel?”

Amasawa smiled devilishly as she brought up something that seemed to have nothing to do with the special exam.

“What on earth are you talking about?”

Horikita furrowed her eyebrows out of suspicion, having expected the conversation to go from academics to private points.

“For me it’s like, I’ve been super worried about what to do for this exam, you know? Should I go for the top spot and study as hard as I can and by pairing up with somebody smart like Horikita-senpai...? That, or should I just try to get through it without having to worry all that much? And, if I were to choose not to worry about it too much, I might as well pair up with someone I’m interested in, right?”

It was certainly a better decision than working together with somebody you hated or somebody who didn’t care at all.

“And I’m particularly interested in strong, powerful guys.”

At this point, she repeated what she had said moments earlier a second time.

Horikita’s head was spinning, trying its best to understand what Amasawa was saying.

“So in other words... you want to know if Sudō-kun is strong or not?”

“Correct. And I’m not talking about being mentally strong, it’s about being physically strong. Well, from his physique, he looks like he does a lot of sports and stuff, so that gives me a solid idea of where he’s at.”

Amasawa turned and pointed at Sudō, a student who should be irrelevant to those who have an A rating in Academic Ability.

Although he was somewhat shy, Sudō was confident in his body, so he nodded and began to pose a bit for her.

“You wanna partner with me?”

Saying that, Amasawa reached out to caress Sudō’s cheek.

“W-well, you’d be better off if I had an A in Academic Ability and all though... Would you really be okay with me?”

“If you’re really as strong as you say.”

With that, she traced her slender finger across Sudō’s chest, mesmerizing him with her bewitching appearance.

“I-I’m strong.”

“You’re a confident guy, huh? I don’t hate that.”

“What exactly do you mean by ‘strong and powerful’?”

As the one in charge of supervising Sudō, Horikita expressed her uncertainty as to what Amasawa was referring to.

“It means what it means. I like strong guys who are good at fighting. That’s why I want to partner up with somebody who’s, like, nice and powerful.”

"If that's the case, then I think Sudō-kun will live up to your expectations. I can attest to his physical strength."

"I won't be convinced with just words alone~ I'll have to make sure of it with my own eyes."

"...With your own eyes?"

"I'm saying like, go gather up all of the strong guys in the second year and have 'em, like, fight each other or something. Then I'll come along and partner up with the one who wins."

"Are you joking? There's no way we could do something like that."

"Why not? I've been like, completely serious this whole time, alright?"

"Let's go, Suzune. We're wasting our time here."

By now, Sudō didn't think Amasawa was being serious either, so he cut in as well.

It was like he was admonishing himself for falling for Amasawa's seductive charms, even if only for a moment.

"I don't particularly mind if you just forget about this entire conversation."

She was saying that, to her, this was nothing more than a bonus game.

There certainly wasn't any dire need for her to go out of her way and partner up with an E+ student.

Given the perfection of her rating and class, she would probably always have someone willing to pay.

To some extent, you could even call us lucky. If we agreed, Sudō would gain the right to partner up with an A-rated student. Even if it didn't end up happening, it's not like there would be any penalty either.

"You're really not just messing around with us? You're being completely serious?"

As she asked this, the look in Horikita's eyes was the true essence of seriousness itself.

"Of course I am."

"I see. In that case, we'll have to hear you out seriously as well then."

"O-oi Suzune?"

“Good~ Good~ I want to pair up with somebody strong.”

“Alright then, Sudō-kun, you should accept her offer.”

“W-wait, Suzune. There’s no way we’ll just like, be allowed to start a fight at school. Things get outta hand real quick. Remember that stuff that happened last year? Or even earlier today at lunch when that Hōsen guy came to stir shit up a little bit?”

Last year, Sudō got into a fight with the guys in Ryūen’s class, which ended up turning into a huge ordeal.

And earlier today, a commotion broke out when Hōsen visited our classroom.

“It’s true that fighting isn’t something to be admired. However, if both sides are willing, then there shouldn’t be a problem. Wouldn’t you agree, Ayanokōji-kun?”

I took a moment to consider Horikita’s intentions behind asking me this.

If you were to ask if there was a problem, then the answer would naturally be yes.

Win or lose, even if both parties decide not to oppose the fight and go at it, there’s no way that the school would tolerate something that essentially boiled down to a duel between students.

However, Horikita’s response made it sound as though she was condoning the fight.

“You’re right. There’s no way the school’s staff would approve of the fight if they caught wind of it. But if it’s mutually agreed upon by the students, then it shouldn’t really be a big deal.”

I answered as though I didn’t have a problem with it.

“O-oi, Ayanokōji!”

“Additionally, out of everyone in the second year, nobody can hope to match Sudō-kun in a fight.”

“Yep.”

While Sudō didn’t quite understand, Horikita and I were taking turns passing the conversation back and forth.

The important thing here wasn’t that we had agreed to fight.

It was to emphasize that we were confident that Sudō was the absolute strongest without even fighting at all.

“To be honest, Sudō-kun, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for you. Normally, it would be extremely difficult for you to pair up with an A-ranked student. However, Amasawa-san is saying that she'd be okay with being your partner. Furthermore, she's doing it based on strength in a fighting contest, something you're better at than anyone else. You shouldn't hesitate to agree to it.”

It was highly unlikely that any of the second-years would agree to participate in a careless fight like this since they were familiar with the rules of the school.

Moreover, since their opponent would be Sudō, the outcome would be as clear as day.

In other words, even if we accepted this offer now, there was a good chance that a fight would never actually happen at all. And, in the off chance that someone stepped up to the challenge, Sudō could simply turn the tables on them.

“Sweet! This is great! I'm like, getting really excited.”

Amasawa, having just enrolled here, naturally didn't understand any of this.

There was no way she could understand that this was different from an ordinary middle or high school.

“However, could you promise us one thing first? If nobody shows up to the fight other than Sudō-kun, you'll have to partner up with him.”

With this, Horikita was looking to put forward an important stipulation.

After all, if Amasawa didn't agree now, the discussion wouldn't be able to move forward any further.

“Sure, I'll promise you that. If nobody shows up to challenge him, I'll treat it as his win by default.”

With Amasawa's verbal promise in place, Horikita was satisfied.

“Are you fine with all of this, Sudō-kun?”

“Ah, yeah. If you're okay with it, Suzune, then I'm okay with it too.”

Sudō clenched his fists and bumped them together in front of him.

For Horikita, Amasawa's proposal must have been a product of chance, and a priceless one at that.

“Welp, I'll advertise it through the general chat of the app. I'll ask anyone who thinks they're confident in their strength to contact me by the end of the day today to participate.”

“Heh. Anybody that shows is gonna get their ass kicked.”

Conveniently, Sudō didn't seem to understand Horikita's intentions here.

He was getting excited about the prospect of genuinely throwing down with someone.

“Would it be alright if we decide on the location? I'd like to avoid letting the school catch onto us.”

“Mhm. You Senpais prolly know better than I do, so I'll leave that to you~”

It seemed that Amasawa had finished typing out her message, so she turned to us for one last confirmation before sending it out.

“Alrighty, with this, the battle should be all set. That fine with you?”

As Horikita nodded in response, Amasawa slowly looked between the three of us.

And then, she turned off the screen of her phone and put it back into her pocket.

“Actually, never~mind.”

At first I thought that she had suddenly changed her mind, but that didn't seem to be the case.

Judging from her facial expression, I could see that she was also trying to sound us out, testing us.

However, both Horikita and Sudō were baffled by Amasawa's sudden change of pace.

“What's wrong?”

“Even if I posted the advertisement, I doubt anyone would show up. Looking at Sudō-senpai's physique and Horikita-senpai and Ayanokōji-senpai's attitude, I can already understand that Sudō-senpai's strength is like, top-class amongst all of the second-years.”

She had managed to reach the conclusion that there was no real need to compare second-years through a fight at all.

It seemed that the charade Horikita and I had put on, combined with Sudō's natural reaction, had been even more effective than we had intended.

If she had noticed we were acting after the advertisement was posted, Horikita probably wouldn't have let her take it back.

In order to prevent Amasawa from realizing that we had been putting on a show this whole time, Horikita expressed her discontent.

“Are you just toying with us?”

“No way, nothing like that. It’s so obvious that nobody’ll show that it ain’t much fun, you feel? I just wanna enjoy confirming that he’s the strongest with my own eyes is all. So please don’t be mad at me, Senpai.”

Amasawa pressed her forefinger to her lips as she thought it over for a moment.

“I’ll still give ya a chance though, so forgive me.”

Although Horikita wanted to maintain control, she had gotten caught up in Amasawa’s unique way of doing things.

She didn’t seem to be very good at dealing with this type of person.

“Other than strong guys, I guess I like a guy who can cook, how’s that?”

“Cook?”

Amasawa’s new suggestion was, once again, completely unrelated to the special exam.

“Sudō-senpai, was it? You think you can make me a home-cooked meal? A suuuper tasty one?”

“A-a home-cooked meal!?”

Sudō, who had been brimming with confidence just moments earlier, was practically floored by her unexpected request.

“Of course, not only does it gotta be scrumptious, but you’ve also gotta make what I ask you to.”

“W-well, I’ve never cooked a meal in my life and—”

“That so? Well I guess I gotta take back my offer, huh?”

Horikita cuts in, not wanting to let that happen.

“Would it perhaps be okay for me to substitute in for Sudō-kun?”

“That’s no good. I told you didn’t I? That I like a guy who can cook? If I’m not partnering with a good cooking man, then what’s the point in partnering at all?”



In other words, it didn't matter how well one could cook. If they were a girl, she wouldn't consider them.

"If Sudō-senpai can't do it, then why not, like, give up and go find one of your classmates who can? Ah! Is it cuz, even if you managed to find someone fast enough, I still wouldn't pair up with Sudō-senpai?"

Amasawa grinned devilishly.

"How 'bout you try and make Sudō-senpai into a cooking pro now? I wonder if you'll have time for that though. I'm a popular girl, so like, if you're too slow I might settle on a partner already."

This wasn't just a mere warning. She was saying that, sometime soon, she would decide on her partner.

There were plenty of excellent second-year students other than Horikita.

There was no need for her to take the risk of partnering up with somebody like Sudō just for the sake of it.

Put into words, this was just a whim, a mere playful impulse shown by the girl named Amasawa.

If she were to change her mind, even slightly, that would be the end of it.

However, a classmate with poor academic skill was one thing, but if they had to be male and also skilled at cooking... Nobody came to mind at this point.

In which case, this request from Amasawa might just be a dead end as far as Class 2-D was concerned.

Giving up and reaching out to other students would probably be a much better use of our time.

Seeing that we were unable to give her an answer, Amasawa spoke up again.

"I get it I get it. Well then, I'll do you guys a special service. Normally I'd wanna pair up with a guy who's real good at cooking, but... if you can satisfy my tongue, I guess I can, like, pair up with Sudō-senpai for you since he's such a strong fighter and all."

With this, Amasawa offered a small concession to her proposal.

Amasawa wanted to pair up with a guy who was either a strong fighter or a skilled cook.

That being the case, her tastes would certainly be satisfied with a compromise like this.

“By doing it like this, it’d be kinda similar to partnering up with a good cook and a strong fighter at the same time.”

Essentially, she’d be willing to partner with Sudō as long as her tastes were satisfied, regardless of whether it was another guy doing the cooking or not.

I found myself wondering just how Horikita was going to respond to Amasawa’s desire...

But, the problem was that no such student would come to mind.

Furthermore, there wasn’t nearly enough time to have somebody train for it now.

“Ayanokōji-kun. If I’m not mistaken, you bragged to me before that you were good at cooking, right?”

What was Horikita thinking, asking me something like this so openly?

I had never once told her that, much less bragged to her about it.

It would’ve been easy to deny it, but it seemed as though we needed to be on the same page here.

There wouldn’t be very many opportunities for Sudō to pair up with someone who had an A in Academic Ability.

“It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that cooking is my only strong point.”

“That’s true, isn’t it? If Amasawa-san is willing to permit it, how about Ayanokōji-kun?”

“As long as it’s a guy, it doesn’t matter to me. But are you really a good cook? You can say whatever you want, but like, I’mma judge you pretty hard, okay?”

“Of course he’ll be fine. Isn’t that right?”

“Well, yeah.”

Just as soon as I affirmed it, Amasawa clapped her hands.

“Alrighty then! How about you show me what you’re really made of? Let’s go now!”

The situation was developing far too rapidly. However, this was essentially Amasawa making an ultimatum.

She didn’t want to give me an opportunity to go and learn cooking by extending this out for longer than it needed to be.

She wanted to find out whether or not I was really a skilled cook.

As things were now, since Horikita had lied to keep Amasawa interested, there was no way she could agree to Amasawa's request.

If I were to cook with my current skills, they still didn't amount to very much.

And even if she wasn't very strict with her judgment, I was certain that I still wouldn't make the cut.

"While I'd love to do that, could you please give us a little time? Ayanokōji-kun and I have been reaching out to first-year students in order to find partners for our classmates. Besides Sudō-kun, there are plenty of other students we have to help. We'll be put in an awfully tough spot if the other classes end up beating us to the punch. Even at this very moment, our rivals are out there searching for partners as well."

Horikita proceeded to explain our situation, prompting to see if Amasawa understood where we were coming from.

"If possible, I'd like to hold off until after school on Friday."

With that, Horikita firmly rejected Amasawa's desire to have her home-cooked meal presented to her today.

What's more is that she tried to postpone the ordeal for several days, that is, until Friday after school.

She also mentioned that we'd be able to make time for it on the weekend as well.

"I see. I certainly don't wanna take up all your time just talking to me."

At that, Amasawa put forward a different offer.

"I'm fine with doing it later tonight though. Would that work for you two?"

"A first-year student visiting the second-year dorm in the dead of night would lead to problems. Moral problems if the meeting place is in a boy's room."

"I see~ But waiting until the weekend is kinda iffy, ya know? I'd lose out on my chance to partner up with another senpai... Right?"

As expected, Horikita's suggestion to wait until the weekend didn't make it very far.

This time, Amasawa rigidly presented us with her terms.

“But since this has been a fated encounter, I’ll give you guys just one day. If you can’t serve me a home-cooked meal after school tomorrow, then let’s just pretend this conversation never happened. That sound good?”

This was probably the very last compromise Amasawa was willing to make.

I got the impression that, if we were any greedier, Amasawa would back out immediately.

If Horikita were to misread her and attempt to haggle any further...

“Okay. There’s certainly no denying that this will place quite a burden on you. Plus, you don’t want to give us the opportunity to practice, isn’t that right?”

“Oh no, I haven’t been thinking about that.”

“...Alright. Can I ask that you hold true to these new conditions?”

We only had one day to prepare. However, if we didn’t do it like this, we wouldn’t be able to hold onto Amasawa.

It may have looked like an act of desperation from Horikita, but she still settled on those conditions anyway.

“It’s decided then.”

Amasawa readily agreed, completely satisfied with meeting up tomorrow after school, as she herself had proposed.

“However, this is provided that you don’t change your mind on us like you did earlier. We’re not playing around here either.”

“Okay~ I promise. If I judge that his cooking skills are the real deal, then I’ll partner up with Sudō-senpai.”

Although it was just a verbal promise, Amasawa nodded along as she responded.

“I’m beggin’ you Ayanokōji! Please, use your cooking skills to somehow secure me a partner!”

I agreed given the circumstances but I hadn’t expected the situation to turn out this way.

“Well then, how about we meet up in front of Keyaki Mall at 4:30 after school tomorrow, Ayanokōji-senpai?”

“Keyaki Mall? Not the dorms?”

“The dish I’m gonna have you make for me is a secret. And you’re naturally gonna have to purchase the ingredients and stuff too, right?”

I see. She was essentially saying that everything from what I purchase to how I cook it was going to be a part of her judgment.

“Could I come along as well?”

Horikita asked, probably looking to offer me advice so that our lie didn’t get exposed.

However, her opponent wasn’t going to let that happen very easily.

“No way~ You might help him out through hidden eye signals or something. I’ll make sure my judgement is strict~”

In other words, tomorrow, I would have to make do on my own.

“You’ll be fine, right Ayanokōji-senpai?”

“Yeah. No problem.”

For the time being, I would honestly do what I could, but this had become quite a big deal.

“Well then, I’ll see you tomorrow. Bye bye~”

Satisfied, Amasawa left, headed back down the staircase.

“Horikita, I think you’re already aware of this, but—”

“Be quiet for now. I’ll come up with a plan.”

While she said she would come up with a plan, she only had one day to come up with one.

With my minimal cooking skills, how much could I actually do?

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Introduction

## Chapter 4: Ichika's Test

TL: D3nj4l and Graze  
ED: PuffyPyjamas and Graze

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It was already Wednesday, the third day of the special exam.

OAA was refreshed for the second time at 8 AM, and naturally, the number of choices had gone down yet again.

"34 new pairs have been formed, huh?"

Combined with Tuesday, that meant 56 pairs had been formed in total.

Considering that the maximum number of pairs was 157, this meant that over thirty percent of students had already decided on their partners.

Class 2-B had driven the partner formation yesterday. Therefore, many of these probably had to do with Ichinose.

It seemed like the first-year students had carefully considered their options after the meet-and-greet and decided to form pairs.

Essentially, I could confirm that most of the first-year students with low Academic Ability ratings had paired up with students in Ichinose's class.

Aside from that, several of the first-year honor students had found partners now along with several students from Class 2-C. From this, I could infer that they had been successful in their negotiations. In our class, starting with Kushida, five people had settled on their partners. I checked the page for Class 1-B and found that Yagami Takuya had found a partner as well. It was possible that he had joined hands with Kushida.

But the strange thing was, not even a single person from Class 1-D had partnered up yet.

This was completely unprecedented when compared to the rest of the first-year and the entirety of the second-year.

If I didn't make my move soon, it seemed like I might not be able to do anything when the time finally arrived.

In the first place, there was no way that somebody would take an objective look at my rating and ask me to join up with them. It's only natural that students would want to pair up with somebody smart, regardless of how good or bad their own rating was. Unlike the second-year students, who had reached the point where they were capable of taking action for the sake of their own class, the first-year students probably wouldn't take the time to worry about their surroundings. They'd probably be more inclined to see their very own classmates as rivals instead.

For them, I would be put on the back burner. That is, at least until everybody with high ratings was taken already.

For that reason, Tsukishiro must've instructed his enforcer to not let this chance slip by.

Naturally, anybody who would reach out to pair up with me, or who would allow me to pair up with them, would be a big red flag.

That said, if I kept hesitating without deciding on a partner forever, the chances of being paired up with Tsukishiro's enforcer would only continue to go up. I needed to be absolutely certain that the student I chose wasn't the enforcer, but that probably wasn't going to be easy.

At the end of the day, I had no idea what kind of performance they were putting on to disguise themselves.

I had memorized the names, faces, and ratings of everyone on the app, but I hadn't been able to glean any hints from that.

If all 160 of the first-years were against me, I would be facing an inescapable, sure-fire checkmate.

But, that would be absurd. That would be impossible for somebody to pull off, even for Tsukishiro, but...

No, that wasn't the right way to be approaching this.

The important thing here was for me to come up with a way to survive, even if everyone was against me.

At any rate, for now, I'd track down somebody safe from the 104 students that were left.

There was no gender bias in the children raised within the White Room. Since their pedagogy treated boys and girls equally, it was impossible for me to narrow down my selection with that in mind.

In which case, how should I go about checking people off the list? One possible way to do so was to check their body type or physique.

The meals provided within the White Room were controlled down to the smallest detail. It was basically impossible for the children growing up in that environment to be obese. Thus, a simple plan came to mind... If I were to choose an overweight student, I'd be able to avoid the White Room student.

However, this plan was not without flaws. It was more than possible that the White Room student began preparing for my expulsion several months ago. Thinking about it that way, it wasn't out of the question for them to have taken the time to gain or lose weight accordingly. Doing something like that would be trivial for those who had endured the relentless curriculum of the White Room.

But, even if I were to put all of that aside, it's doubtful whether or not I'd be able to select a student with a sub-standard body type. I couldn't say for sure since the OAA app doesn't provide a full-body picture, but there were only about two students in the first year who were obviously overweight.

Even so, I still couldn't discount the possibility that both of them had been sent by Tsukishiro. After all, I'm assuming that it's not only the White Room student who had been sent as an enforcer, but ordinary students as well.

They could've been approached with promises of admission to a better college or university if they were to get me expelled.

My next thought was whether or not I could narrow it down based on Academic Ability rating, but that, too, would be difficult.

For a student from the White Room, getting a perfect score on the entrance exam wouldn't be difficult in the slightest. They'd be able to get an A or A+ rating in Academic Ability with ease. Put in other words, that meant that they'd be able to control their rating however they wanted.

They must've been informed about the introduction of the OAA system as well.

It wouldn't be surprising by any stretch of the imagination if they were patiently lying in wait, equipped with an E rating in Academic Ability.

Similarly, it was also impossible to narrow it down based on class affiliation, such as being a member of Class 1-A or Class 1-D.

I had known this from the very start, but there was simply no way I could narrow down my list of suspects right now.

I knew what I needed to do.

I needed to investigate each student with my own eyes and verify their authenticity myself. If I could confirm that someone wasn't an enemy, I'd be able to partner up with them, or perhaps even get them to cooperate with me moving forward.

I proceeded to set a rule for myself.

Today, from when school started, through lunch, and all the way until school was over, I would reach out to each and every first-year student I came across. From there, I'd try and get them to cooperate with me. Since there was no way Tsukishiro had sent in an opponent who'd be identified through mere observation, I had no choice but to fight with the element of luck to minimize any potential interference.

With a C in Academic Ability, my rating was by no means high, so I couldn't exactly use it as a weapon. However, it's not like nobody would be willing to partner up with me. If I searched around long enough, I'd probably find at least a few people.



# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 1

TL: Graze and D3nj4l  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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I left the dorms and started making my way to school.

Soon enough, I spotted two first-year girls chatting with each other as they walked.

Their names were Kurihara Kasuga and Konishi Tetsuko. Both of them from Class 1-A.

Unfortunately, both of them were academically excellent students who had found partners on the first day of the exam. Asking one of them to be my partner wasn't a viable option.

Well, the fact that they had already decided on their partners wasn't that much of a problem.

In fact, you could even say they were the best choice available for me to collaborate with. It's just, how do I put this, it was kinda hard to call out to them...

Even though we had no choice but to find partners due to the special exam, what would a second-year boy approaching two girls look like from an outsider's perspective? I found myself getting caught up thinking about that.

I didn't have the courage to just call out and wish them good morning like Yōsuke would, but having said that, confidently asking them to introduce me to someone who'd pair up with me was out of the question as well.

Be that as it may, I had to at least try. Giving in now wouldn't get me anywhere. I hardened my resolve to reach out to them, but I found myself wondering what I should do about the timing. Instead of interrupting them while they were happily chatting with each other, I felt like I should patiently wait for a lapse in their conversation.

"Good morning to you, Ayanokōji-senpai."

As I was watching them, a voice called out to me from behind.

The third first-year student I ran into today was Nanase Tsubasa, the girl who had been together with Hōsen just a few days ago.

She looked at me with a carefree smile on her face.

"Ah, good morning."

I certainly hadn't expected anyone to call out to me, so there was an awkward pause between the two of us for a moment.



“Do you need something from those two? Would you like me to call out to them for you?”

Despite Nanase’s proposition, as a first-year student herself, the conversation the two girls were having would most likely turn into a conversation between the three of them. That would only serve to increase the burden for me.

“No, it’s alright.”

“Oh, is that so?”

Nanase pondered out loud, walking along at about the same pace as me.

An unexpected conversation with Nanase had begun while I was thinking about when to reach out to the girls. I was quite thankful that she had spared me the trouble of being the one to reach out to somebody, but...

There was no way that a first-year student had called out to me by coincidence. It was quite possible that she had been waiting for me to go to school and timed her approach accordingly. This wasn’t just restricted to Nanase either. This should be the baseline assumption for any and all students who take the initiative to talk to me. Just like Amasawa yesterday, this wasn’t someone I approached, but someone who approached me.

“I do apologise for Hōsen-kun’s rudeness the other day.”

“No, I wasn’t directly affected by it, so you don’t need to apologise to me.”

“But there is no doubting that we caused a nuisance. While I had come along with Hōsen-kun to stop him from acting out like that, I’m now fully aware of just how powerless I truly was.”

Compared to Hōsen’s rough, violent nature, Nanase spoke with a very sociable, polite tone, which gave off a very good impression. And with her B Academic Ability rating, she was essentially the ideal partner. It wouldn’t be strange if somebody other than me had scouted her already either, but as of now, on the third day, she still hadn’t partnered up with anybody yet.

However, that was probably due to Class 1-D’s plan.

In addition to Academic Ability, her ratings were all high and well rounded, as her Physical Ability, Adaptability, and Social Contribution ratings were all at a C+ or better. At a glance, I couldn’t find any problems with her at all. For that reason, I found myself wondering why Nanase Tsubasa had been placed in Class D. At a fundamental level, there was a strong tendency for the students assigned to Class D to have something wrong with them. For example, on the surface, people like Yōsuke and Kushida didn’t seem to have a single flaw. However, once I actually found out more about them, I came to understand that that wasn’t the case.

In other words, I couldn’t reject the possibility that Nanase had some sort of latent problem like that. Then again, as of now, there was no guarantee that this year’s Class 1-D would fall under this same tendency.

In my opinion, I’m perfectly fine with someone having a few problems with their personality or sense of values. Even if I asked her to partner up with me or asked her to collaborate with me, the only thing that mattered was whether or not Nanase Tsubasa was on Tsukishiro’s side. Back when she was together with Hōsen during our

first meeting, she had looked at me with eyes that worried me a little, but... Now, those eyes were nowhere to be seen; Her gaze completely natural.

"Have you decided on your partner for this special exam yet?"

I decided to pick up the conversation in order to learn more about this person known as Nanase.

"Me? No, I haven't decided on anyone yet."

"Then, have people been reaching out to you?"

"Indeed. So far, I have been approached by upperclassmen from Class 2-A and Class 2-C."

As expected for someone with a B in Academic Ability. It seems people have been reaching out to her after all.

"Why haven't you agreed to anyone yet?"

I decided to dig further into it. I honestly didn't know if she would say it had to do with academic performance or points.

"My apologies, but I'm unable to answer that."

With that, Nanase bowed her head in apology.

"You don't have to answer if you don't want to; It's not something you need to apologize for."

At this point, it didn't seem like I'd be able to find out if this was her personal problem or a problem of Class 1-D as a whole.

That being the case, let's try attacking from a slightly different angle.

"If it's okay with you, how about we have our fellow D Classes work together to find suitable partners for each other?"

I offered her a proposal, one that included myself. Horikita thought that Class 1-D was important, and Hōsen seemed to have some sort of feelings for Class 2-D too. It certainly wasn't a bad proposal.

"Cooperation between classes...?"

"Yeah. Many students are trying to pair up with the academically stronger students for the sake of their own ratings. But, as a consequence, the academically weaker students won't be chosen and would therefore be left out. If the academically weaker students were to pair up together, students of both school years, yours and mine, would be exposing themselves to the danger of expulsion."

"Yes. I understand that. If possible, I wish to avoid that as well."

“Of course. For that, an appropriate amount of balance is needed. Although we have to give up on taking one of the top spots, we must find partners who will ensure that nobody fails.”

We’re Class D students. That is, we’re overwhelmingly inferior in the eyes of those around us.

And that is why Class 1-D, placed just the same as us in the social hierarchy, would be likely to accept this proposal.

“So how about it?”

“I am in agreement. As much as possible, I would like to cooperate with you, Ayanokōji-senpai. It’s just...”

“Just?”

“I don’t know how willing my classmates will be to lend a hand. Furthermore, some of the more academically confident students are already on the verge of secretly deciding on a partner.”

Many of the students who had the potential to be the mainstays of this exam were aiming for the top spots after having decided on a solid partner. This was certainly the case for the two Class 1-A girls walking in front of us as well.

The reason why Class 1-D hadn’t finalized their partners was probably because of a completely different issue, such as points.

The most important part of the test is the large point reward given the top 30% of partners. By helping out the academically weaker students, it meant giving up on that reward.

“We don’t need everyone to cooperate. With the right amount of coordination, we should be able to get through the special exam without enlisting the help of too many people.”

As long as we managed to get a portion of the class onboard, it wouldn’t be too much of a problem.

“That’s true. However, it’s not like there aren’t other issues that come with that.”

Nanase expressed her approval for the proposal itself, but her facial expression made her seem hesitant.

I understood the cause for that without even needing to think about it.

“Hōsen... wasn’t it? It seems like that guy’s got a lot of influence over Class 1-D, huh?”

I stuck my nose even further into the internal affairs of Class 1-D.

I brought up a tidbit of information that I was fairly certain of from our discussion with Shiratori the other day.

“Yes. Many of the boys and girls of the class have already started obediently following Hōsen-kun’s orders.”

My feelings of speculation turned into confidence.

Sure enough, Hōsen had already seized control of the class and had apparently made it his own.

Hōsen might have also been the one behind the strategy that made it harder for the class to decide on their partners.

If that was really the case, then Hōsen was not only a student who brandishes his physical prowess, but one who possesses the insight, observational skill, and composure to take an extensive view of his surroundings.

“Are you in a bit of a unique position, Nanase? You didn’t seem to be afraid of Hōsen back then.”

“That’s because I will never yield to violence.”

She responded with an intensity that I couldn’t even imagine given her appearance.

Her words weren’t said casually. Rather, there was something else, something hidden, backing them up.

I felt like I could see that confidence, or something similar to it, peeking out from within the pure color of her eyes.

“Senpai... what do you think of violence?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Are you for it? Or are you against it?”

If she was looking to find out how I felt about Hōsen’s way of doing things, then there was only one answer I could give her.

“If I had to choose from between the two, I guess I’d say I’m for it.”

I spoke definitively.

I was expecting her to give some sort of reaction immediately, but I was met with silence instead. When I turned and looked toward Nanase to gauge her facial expression, her docile visage from earlier had all but disappeared.

Her eyes were the same as they were when she had looked at me just before she left last time we met.

A few moments passed as I waited for her response...

“If I had to choose, I would be for it too.”

Her answer, which could be taken as the truth or a lie, came without so much as a trace of emotion.

Had Hōsen acknowledged her intense desire to not yield to violence and kept her beside him because of it?

No... It wasn't just that.

Back then, Hōsen had shown a strong reaction when Nanase brought up the term 'that'.

There wasn't even a shred of evidence saying that Hōsen had a stronger character than Nanase.

Although that was weighing on my mind, it probably wasn't something I could ask her about here and now.

After all, I didn't see her as someone who would unnecessarily talk about something that shouldn't be said.

I shouldn't do anything foolish that would raise her guard just yet.

At this point, I wondered if I should just pull back for the time being. After all, there would probably be another chance to try again later with Horikita.

"In any case, if Hōsen's the one deciding the course of action for your class, going about implementing this might be difficult."

Giving up, I began thinking about making contact with the other classes while maintaining a good relationship with Nanase, but...

"Uhm, if you're okay with it... Would you like for me to try setting something up for you?"

She responded with that, perhaps because she thought that my proposal for a cooperative relationship was a good idea.

"I appreciate your offer, but are you sure?"

"Yes. However, I don't know how many students will be willing to cooperate, so I cannot make any promises. In the worst case, it might just be me. Would that be alright with you?"

Nanase put that forward, interested to hear my response.

For the sake of our classmates, it was important for Horikita and me to take every opportunity available to us to develop a connection with Class 1-D.

"Of course. I'm sure Horikita will be pleased as well."

"Is Horikita-senpai the leader of Class 2-D?"

“Yeah. She’s the one holding the class together right now.”

I decided that I’d need to inform Horikita that it’d be better to set up a discussion with Class 1-D with Nanase’s help. Though, if I were to tell Horikita this face to face in the classroom, the subject matter would make me stand out a little bit, so I found myself wondering what exactly I should do.

“Ah... I may not be able to get back to you about this immediately. Is that still alright?”

“I understand. I’ll also try to set things up on my end as soon as possible.”

“Okay!”

I then exchanged contact information with Nanase and we agreed to get in touch later.



## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 2

TL: Graze  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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After confirming that Horikita hadn't entered the school building yet, I decided to wait for her at the entryway for a bit.

After all, if we were to have this conversation in the classroom, we would end up attracting undue attention.

Before long, Horikita showed up and looked at me curiously, not having realized yet that I had been waiting for her.

"Good morning. Are you meeting someone?"

"Meeting someone? Well, it's something like that. They've just arrived."

"Is that so?"

She lightly looked over her shoulder only to turn back and face me once she realized that there was nobody behind us that I was acquainted with.

"Me?"

"Yeah. There's something I'd like to run by you really quick."

"Something so important that you'd expressly take the time to wait for me?"

The two of us began walking together.

"Important...? Yeah, I think it has the potential to be important. I had the chance to speak with Nanase Tsubasa from Class 1-D earlier, so I tried offering her and her class a decent proposal."

"Ah, and what did you propose?"

"I brought up the idea of having Class 1-D and Class 2-D collaborate with each other."

"Knowing you, that's quite a momentous decision."

Horikita herself must've been worried about how we were going to form a relationship with Class 1-D.

I steeled my resolve, fully prepared for her to get mad at me for making the proposal without her permission, but...

"Are you aware of Class 1-D's partner situation?"

"Yeah. Not even a single one of them has decided on their partner yet. Sakayanagi and Ryūen are probably putting them off too."

It was only natural that the second-year students would focus their attention on the honor students from the other classes who were willing to cooperate for a reasonable number of points rather than those from Class 1-D who expected an incredibly large number for the same thing.

"I'm certain that there's much more to it than that. It would require a certain amount of effort for them to comply with Hōsen-kun's aggressive strategy. From the perspective of the upper classes, dedicating any time to Class 1-D would only serve to increase the amount of work they'd need to do."

"Maybe."

"Anyway, did you make this proposal to Nanase-san after having understood the difficulties that would come with confronting Hōsen-kun? Or did you reach out to her with the intention of secretly cooperating with her, hoping that Hōsen-kun wouldn't notice?"

"What do you think?"

I intentionally turned the question back on Horikita without giving that much of an answer. If she had given up on the idea of working with Class 1-D at this point, I was okay with calling the proposal off.

"I've taken the time to reevaluate the state of the special exam. Would you be willing to hear me out?"

"I'm not confident that I can give you any meaningful advice."

"I'm not expecting anything."

It seemed like she just wanted to share her thoughts with me.

It probably had to do with what I brought up about Class 1-D just moments earlier.

"To start out, and this is obvious, but when you look at the first-year student body as a whole, the academically gifted students are naturally more popular as partners."

"Yeah. Shiratori mentioned how he had been approached with point-based offers from Class 2-A and Class 2-C already."

"However, between Shiratori-kun and his friends, none of them have made a decision yet. It seems fair to assume that Class A and Class C were unable to reach an agreement on how many points they would offer them. Either way, the 500,000 point offer they presented to us is far too expensive no matter how you look at it."

Even asking for 200,000 points would be unreasonably high, given that the reward was only 100,000 points for the top five pairs and 10,000 points for the top 30%.

"It makes you wonder how many points Hashimoto-kun and the others offered them, doesn't it?"

"Who knows. I'd guess that it was probably nowhere near 500,000."

It was impossible to know unless you were somebody who was actually involved in the negotiations.

"I'd put forward that there wasn't that much of a difference in the number offered by the two classes. No, if anything, I'd say that Class A's offers have probably been smaller."

She had most likely deduced this by keeping tabs on the OAA app up until this morning.

Between the two classes, Class 2-C had more students who had decided on their partners.

"Class A naturally has the advantage over Class C in terms of brand value. Unless there's a noteworthy difference in the number of points they're offering, more people would end up choosing Class A. From all of this, we can conclude that Class A is looking to appeal to first-years by coupling points together with their value as a class. Whereas Class C, on the other hand, is trying to muscle their way through with more points since they lose out in terms of brand value."

I lightly nodded along in agreement.

"Ryūen-kun's thought process here is a bit strange as well, don't you think? In this exam, drawing the top performers over to your side is fundamentally essential if you want to win. However, that means that Class C will have no choice but to compete financially with Class A. If they play that money game with each other, Class C certainly wouldn't stand a chance. If anything, it seems reckless for them to aim for first place overall."

Even though Ryūen had said something about using threats to get the first-years to pair up with his class, there was no doubt that, as of right now, this was a competition that he had slim chances of winning.

"They should go after students who don't overlap with Class A, even if it means lowering the bar a little bit."

It'd be much safer for them to go after second place overall. Going after the students with a B- or C+ rating would be more than enough for that.

"Well, trying to guess what he's thinking is pointless, but... I'll just get on with the main point here. The remaining class, Class 2-B, is trying to build up a trusting relationship with the first-year students, drawing them into their fold regardless of Academic Ability rating as a way of providing salvation to the weak and vulnerable. Class 1-D aside, most of the students with a D rating or lower have been saved already by Ichinose-san."

Horikita paused, looking back to make sure that nobody was eavesdropping on us before continuing.

"I've decided that our current objective is to focus on the average, ordinary students in each class. That is, students with ratings in the C+ to B- range."

The students in that range probably wouldn't be approached with large offers and there were still a lot of them left without partners too.

Reaching out to them while Class A and Class C were still scrambling for the top performers was a smart move.

"Then, does that mean that you're giving up on your plan to focus on Class 1-D?"

"No, that's still happening. In fact, it feels increasingly as though that's our most optimal choice."

"Are you saying you'll abandon the ordinary students from the other classes?"

Doing so would be an overly drastic decision. As Class 2-D, we took a backseat compared to the other classes, so we needed to finalize as many partners as possible as soon as possible.

"They'll play a part in all of this as well. While it may be a bit crude, I intend to set up a fake money game of sorts to help us stall for time. Unlike the honor students, the ordinary students probably aren't expecting to receive any attractive large-point offers. That being the case, we'll give them a taste of the luxury they're missing out on, disillusion them into thinking that they're worth a little something."

"So the goal is to force Sakayanagi and Ryūen to use their points not just for the top performers, but the ordinary students as well?"

"While I'm skeptical about just how effective it will be, it will at least manage to attract some attention. And in the meantime, I'm going to start cutting into Class 1-D. That's why this proposal of yours is just what I've been wanting to hear. After all, I was just thinking of getting in contact with Nanase-san myself."

"But, isn't Hōsen the one that wants to play a money game like this?"

"He certainly does. However, is he really just looking for points? Back when he came marching into the second-year hallway, he told me: 'You wouldn't even be able to find partners without beggin' our class for it. So I'll lend you incompetent retards a hand, aight?' In other words, his goal is our class itself. Would he really say something like that if all he wanted was points?"

Horikita made the assertion that there should be room for negotiation beyond the scope of private points.

"The fact that he tacked on an 'I'll see ya later, Horikita' at the end just before he left hints at it as well."

"That's for sure. It's safe to say that Hōsen only has his eye on Class 2-D."

This time around, Horikita had abandoned the top spot in exchange for three goals: not letting anyone get expelled, getting third place or higher in the overall class rankings, and not participating in any monetary exchanges. It wouldn't be easy, but that was precisely why we were focusing on Class 1-D.

"Nonetheless, it's fair to assume Hōsen-kun won't be easy to deal with. Either way, I have a backup plan."

Apparently, Horikita had made other arrangements that even I didn't know about.

"We're currently in discussion with part of Class 1-B about potentially fostering a cooperative relationship with each other."

"By Class 1-B... are you talking about that Yagami guy from the same middle school as you and Kushida?"

I thought back to the most recent OAA update earlier this morning where I saw that both Yagami and Kushida had already decided on a partner.

"Kushida-san and Yagami-kun partnered up yesterday. Regretfully, I don't remember anything about my underclassmen back then, but he might just be the key to all of this. He seems to trust Kushida-san quite a lot, so we've already begun negotiations behind the scenes. If all goes well, we can increase our number of collaborators."

Though this was definitely good news, there was still something about it that worried me.

"Are you the one giving instruction to Kushida?"

Given that Kushida hated everything about Horikita, it was still unknown to what extent she would really be willing to cooperate.

"I'm well aware that it will be difficult given our current relationship. That's why I'm pushing forward the conversation with Hirata-kun as the middleman."

"I see. If that's the case, Kushida can't afford to cut any corners."

If Kushida's negotiations with Yagami managed to pull even just a couple of students over to our side, then a portion of Class 2-D's partner problem would be solved, allowing the class to start focusing its attention on studying instead.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 3

TL: Graze and D3nj4l  
ED: Josh

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“Good morning Horikita-san. Do you have a moment?”

During the break after first period, Yōsuke went and paid a visit to Horikita at her seat.

For whatever reason, I decided to watch over them from my own seat.

“I went around talking to a bunch of people yesterday, but it’s proving difficult to get anybody to cooperate. A couple people told me they’d be willing to pair up, but...”

Despite being fellow comrades of the soccer club, the recruitment process didn’t seem to be progressing very smoothly. After all, getting the first-year students who had only just joined the club to completely open up to him would be difficult, even for somebody like Yōsuke.

“They asked you for points, didn’t they?”

Upon seeing Yōsuke nod in response, Horikita continued.

“They’ve got the opportunity to sell themselves at a high price. It’s not surprising.”

Private point buyout tactics had spread throughout the entirety of the first year, just as I had imagined.

“I was told that Class 2-A reached out to them, asking them to pair up, but then Class 2-C went and offered points for the same thing. It’s not just the guys I talked to either. Class C has tried to poach nearly everybody that Class A has reached out to as well.”

“It’s only natural since the smart students are so hotly contested.”

Deep down, Horikita had already predicted this.

However, what Yōsuke said next was a little bit different.

“Though, it seems that they’ve even reached out to some students with C or D ratings. I’ve even heard stories that they were willing to pay large sums of points for them as well.”

“So you’re saying that they aren’t necessarily prioritising the academically stronger students?”

“As far as I can tell, at least.”

“Alright. If you can remember anybody’s name in specific, could you perhaps share them with me?”

“Of course.”

Yōsuke listed off the names of the first-year students that he knew Class A had given offers to. Horikita then looked each of those names up in the app and quickly understood what was happening.

Even though those who had been approached had low Academic Ability ratings, they each had something exceptional about them outside of that. They were valued for their excellent Physical Ability, Adaptability, or Social Contribution ratings instead.

“I see... As expected, I should say.”

“Instead of getting caught up on the short-run, they’re probably thinking about the long-run.”

This wouldn’t necessarily be the only exam where we’d have to cooperate with the first-year students. That being the case, non-academic skills would naturally become essential. The thought process is that, by providing a lifeline to the students who are academically insecure now, they would be helpful in their own field of expertise later on down the line. It was a decent plan.

Setting that aside, the interesting thing about this was that Ryūen’s class was doing it as well.

Instead of just aiming for the students with high Academic Ability ratings, they were closely following in Sakayanagi’s footsteps.

“It would be great if we could do that too, but...”

“That would be difficult, wouldn’t it?”

We were students of Class D whereas Sakayanagi was from Class A.

Even those who had only just enrolled here should already know which class had the better image.

Considering their future, it was perfectly understandable that they’d prefer to lean on the more superior class when they need help.

“Thank you. Might I ask that you continue to look into this?”

“Yeah. I’ll report back to you if I find out anything else.”

Yōsuke beamed at Horikita with a bright, refreshing smile and went back to his seat.

Shortly thereafter, I received a text message from Horikita.

[So there you have it.]

I see. It seemed as though she caught on to the fact that I had been eavesdropping on them.

[Hirata-kun is truly reliable, isn't he?]

[I guess.]

He had butt heads with Horikita at one point, but now that was water under the bridge.

As someone who always gave 100% for the sake of the class, he was a very reliable person.

Of course, his intelligence and communication skills were nothing to scoff at, but his biggest strength was his trustworthiness.

He had a strong track record that made people believe that he could handle anything.

That was also why Horikita was willing to freely discuss strategy with him.

[As Class D, we have to bear with the handicap. It's an uphill battle.]

[We don't have any other choice. Good luck.]

[You do know that you need to play your part as well, right?]

[You mean the thing with Nanase?]

[Yes. Can you reply to her as soon as possible? Tell her we're ready at any time.]

She wanted to move forward with it quickly; To strike while the iron is hot, as they say.

After all, if we didn't, the other classes would snatch away all of the talented students from us.

[Well, I'll get to it tomorrow. I've got to take care of that other problem first.]

[Of course I know that.]



## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 4

TL: Graze/Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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By the time school was done for the day, I still hadn't heard back from Nanase.

Even if she were to say that everything was ready to go today, it's not like Horikita and I would be able to take action anyway.

There was still a more pressing issue that needed to be dealt with first.

And that was my arrangement with Amasawa to make her a home-cooked meal. As long as my cooking was up to snuff, it was an exceptional opportunity to get her to partner up with Sudō. That being said, it was by no means an easy task.

When I arrived at the entrance of Keyaki Mall ten minutes before the appointed time, it didn't seem that Amasawa had arrived yet. Instead of fiddling around with my cell phone or something, I just casually observed the students entering the mall from where I stood. The students, ranging from first-years to third-years, were happily chatting about this and that as they steadily flowed into the shopping center. The temperature had felt warmer than usual this morning, but as evening approached, it was beginning to cool down. The temperature would probably drop even further by the time night came around.

Finally, just before the appointed time, Amasawa showed up.

"Perfectly done~ Ayanokōji-senpai~"

As soon as we met up, she smiled broadly and nodded her head several times, as if she was satisfied with something.

"What are you talking about?"

"You waited at the meeting place before the girl showed up. Without doing anything like, excessive either~"

She was surprisingly perceptive. Or, perhaps I should say that she had a solid understanding of my actions, no matter how trivial they might have seemed.

By 'excessive', she was probably referring to the fact that I wasn't messing with my phone or making a call.

Soon, I had to face Amasawa's test. In other words, I had to buckle down and cook something for her by hand. That being the case, the time I spent standing here could've been a good last-minute opportunity to look up recipes and take various other countermeasures. A good analogy is that it would've been no different from staring at the textbook right up until the chime of the bell on the day of a test. Of course, doing so in and of itself wouldn't have violated any of the rules Amasawa had put forth.

However, being on my phone like that might make me seem like somebody who wasn't confident in his cooking.

The same thing went for making a phone call, as it could've given off the impression that I had been discussing the matter with somebody else. Therefore, in order to highlight my composure, I deliberately didn't do anything that would seem excessive. I had planned on instilling this image of me within Amasawa without her realizing it, but it appeared as though she had seen through me from the very beginning.

"Well then Ayanokōji-senpai, shall we go?"

Amasawa spoke as soon as she joined up with me and the two of us entered the mall together.

"To buy ingredients, right?"

"Oh yeah. That too~ You've gotta buy the stuff you'll make for me. Do you have the points~?"

"I should."

In truth, I really didn't have all that many left, but I wouldn't say anything unnecessary like that in front of one of my underclassmen.

"Good! I don't need to hold back then~ Lemme see... I think I heard my classmates say that they sell all the essentials here, but... I wonder where the shopping baskets are~?"

Instead of heading for the supermarket, Amasawa walked straight into 'Hamming', a shop specialized in selling home goods and other daily necessities, and picked up a blue shopping basket that she had found near the entrance.

The words 'That too~' that she had said earlier weighed on my mind.

Although I knew I was supposed to cook her a meal, did this mean that there was something else I had to do other than buying ingredients?

Amasawa stopped by the section where the kitchenware was on display.

This brought back memories of how, when I first enrolled here, I had made several trips to this very store to buy all of the things I needed.

It wasn't just the school's students who made use of these supplies, but also the faculty members and the employees who worked in the cafeteria or the cafes around campus, so the store had a particularly large section set aside for kitchenware. I could remember the first time I came here and how it was difficult to find what I was looking for right away.

From the look of it, they had come out with an assortment of new products since my last visit a long time ago.

Perhaps the fact that Amasawa had stopped by here meant that she was looking to buy some specific specialized equipment or something? After all, the store had peelers, graters, mortars, and countless other

cooking utensils. Given all of the variety, there were naturally several that I didn't own as well. Either way, it was just weird that she hadn't bothered to run any of this by me. It made sense to me that she'd at least check to see which utensils I did or didn't have first. Considering our current time constraints, it would've been easy for her to ask me about it as we walked together, but...

I held back my desire to ask her about it, allowing Amasawa to remain in control for the time being.

I opted to try and bring up a subject that had nothing to do with cooking utensils.

"Have you done any cooking of your own before, Amasawa?"

"Me? Not at all. I'm not the type to just whip up a meal on my own. I'm the kinda girl who'd rather let others cook for me than make things for myself."

She explained such before stopping in her tracks, having apparently arrived at her destination.

The journey so far had gone without a hitch. She looked away from me, fixing her eyes upon the shelf of goods in front of us.

For a couple dozen seconds or so, she stood there, lost in thought with her arms crossed, almost as if she was troubled by something.

Then, as if having made up her mind, she nodded confidently, muttering an 'Alright~' to herself as she did so.

"To start out we'll need a cutting board, right? Then a kitchen knife? Then there's bowls and a whisk, and after that we'll need a pot and a ladle as well, huh~?"

She tossed each item into the basket one after the next as she listed them out loud.

The last item she put in was a big round spoon, which, apparently, was known as a ladle.

"Hold on a second. I have almost all of these things you're getting back in my room already."

I was struck with a bad premonition about this, so I hurriedly began to speak up, but...

"It's fine, it's fine. I'm just having you buy these exclusively for when you cook for me."

She's just having me buy these for what now...? The cutting board she had put in the basket was of an even higher quality than the one I was using in my own room right now. It seemed like it was made out of hinoki cypress and cost just over 4000 points. All of the other items were high-class as well.

At this point, it didn't seem like she was finished yet as she went off once again, setting her sights on the next set of shelves. Her troubled demeanour from earlier was nowhere to be seen, as she proceeded to take hold of a small fruit knife without hesitating in the slightest.

"For someone to claim to be a skilled cook, owning a Petty knife is an absolute must, wouldn't you say~?"

She spoke in a casual, relaxed tone as she tossed the knife into her basket. For a stupid amateur like me who didn't even know that fruit knives were also known as Petty knives, that knife was very expensive, priced at nearly 3000 points. Even though there were numerous cheaper options on display next to the knife she had chosen, she didn't even feign an attempt at acting like she was interested in them. As far as I could tell, the difference in price ultimately boiled down to whether or not it was being sold with a sheath and whether or not it had been manufactured within Japan. But even then, the knife she had chosen was still an excessively luxurious one.

Apparently, a skilled chef was expected to have mastered the use of this kind of tiny cooking knife.

"This is just a question, but the one who's paying..."

"Well, that would be you of course, right Ayanokōji-senpai?"

I already knew I was supposed to be paying here, but the total was easily over 15,000 points by now. Since it has come to this, I might as well throw away the cheap one I had been using up until now. If I thought of the food I'd make for myself using these high-class tools when I cook on my own in the future, then maybe I could come to terms with the purchases somehow...?

"Ah, like I mentioned earlier, you're buying these to cook for me exclusively, so don't go wearing them out with everyday use, got it?"

"Are you some sort of demon?"

I got ahead of myself and vocalized my stingy thoughts, but Amasawa had unnervingly anticipated that.

"You can call it quits now if you want to, you know~?"

She spoke provocatively, her hands still clutching onto the handle of the blue shopping basket.

She had grabbed onto my weakness, fully aware that there was no way I could refuse, dancing in the palm of her hand.

15,000 points was an unbelievably cheap price to pay for getting Sudō partnered up with an A-rated student. I had no choice but to cut my losses and make a decision.

"No, I understand. I'll accept all of your conditions, so feel free to buy whatever you want."

"Do you think I'm a bad girl?"

"I wouldn't say that."

Amasawa fixed her eyes on mine and then, having seemingly come to realize something, smiled broadly.

"Then everything should be A-okay, Senpai."

In the end, it was decided that I would purchase everything, from the pot to the ladle and all sorts of things in between.

Each item, bought under the horrifying condition that I would only use it when cooking for her.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 5

TL: Graze/Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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Afterward, we went to the supermarket to buy the ingredients, the thing we had come to the mall for in the first place.

Altogether I had ended up spending about 20,000 private points. Needless to say, I had never purchased this many things at once before. The plastic bags I was carrying were so heavy that the handles dug into my fingers.

My guess as to what exactly Amasawa was taking into consideration and what she wanted me to make with these ingredients was as good as anybody else's. This was because she had me purchase all sorts of things from vegetables to meat to fruit, and everything else in between.

However, there were a few dishes that came to mind. For example, the presence of nam pla and chili peppers helped to narrow down the options.

Nevertheless, it was still hard to say. It'd be perfectly fine if she planned on having me use all of the ingredients, but it was more than possible that she had mixed in several fakes as well in order to mess with me. After witnessing everything she had said and done throughout the day today, I couldn't help but harbor these suspicions. It was probably safe to assume that it'd be virtually impossible to narrow down the dish she wanted me to make for her at this point.

"Okie dokie~! That should be it! Let's go to your dorm room now, okay Senpai?"

She spoke with a level of enthusiasm one would expect from a girl who was headed over to her boyfriend's room, but I didn't feel even an ounce of excitement about it. If I didn't manage to cook her a dish she was happy with, all negotiations would probably be broken off then and there. Not to mention that the task this time was to cook her something 'delicious', which was an inherently abstract benchmark to base things off of.

If she never had any intention of letting me pass this little test of hers from the very beginning, then all of this had been nothing more than a futile waste of points and time. But for now, it didn't seem like I had any other choice but to come to terms with whatever development took place.

I hadn't realized that Horikita's split-second decision yesterday would've led to something so heavy and troublesome.

Originally, I hadn't said anything to Horikita and Sudō before since I was fine with covering the expenses, but now I had half a mind to discuss the costs with them after I washed my hands of all of this.

It would be best to set that matter aside for the time being though.

In order to confront the current situation as straightforwardly as possible, I decided to pitch Amasawa one of the questions I had been wanting to ask her.

“Wanting to eat a meal made by a guy you don’t even know is a little strange, don’t you think? Wouldn’t somebody usually be fairly opposed to something like that?”

This was just my own self-centered opinion, but I felt like it was something that people would generally be reluctant to do.

Meals weren’t just made for show, they were made to be put into the mouth and swallowed down into the stomach.

One would normally be concerned about who cooked the meal and how it was made, as these factors were directly related to both taste and hygiene.

Then, as you got to know the person cooking for you and began to trust their dishes, that past feeling of reluctance would gradually begin to die down.

“Think so? But, like, it isn’t all that different from eating at a restaurant? With like, some stranger doing their thing in the kitchen to whip you up a meal, there’s no way you can know what’s going on back there.”

It was true that none of us knew exactly how the food was made in the school’s cafeteria, for example.

However, while those two scenarios might appear to be the same on the surface, they were in fact glaringly different.

“Even if a restaurant were to make a simple rice ball, they’d still adhere to sanitation guidelines. That’s completely different from how it is when cooking on our own, isn’t it?”

“So? I feel like it’s fine if the chef is cooking right in front of you. Cuz then you can like, see the look on their face and how they go about making it and all. You’d be able to check and make sure they’re being sanitary too. Conversely, aren’t some kitchens in restaurants like, totally hidden away from you? Some places are also like, super sketchy with bugs and stuff crawling around everywhere, right?”

Amasawa put forward the opinion that, as long as she witnessed it with her own two eyes, it didn’t matter who made the food, even if they were a stranger.

“Besides, I think I’ve got a pretty good idea about how this school works. I’d have to live sparingly if I somehow ended up without any points, yeah? But like, if I get Senpai to cook for me, I wouldn’t have to worry about that.”

There it was. In other words, if the meal I cooked for her this time tasted good enough, she fully intended to come sponge off me again in the future.

She was essentially looking to secure a reliable meal ticket in the event of an emergency.

It would probably be a good opportunity for me to improve my cooking skills, but I was hesitant to say whether or not she’d be willing to pay for the cost of the ingredients.

“You get where I’m coming from?”

“More or less.”

Amasawa flashed a white, toothy smile.

But there was still something that didn’t sit right with me. Was a second-year student, and a male student at that, really the best person to reach out to about it? I’d imagine that asking this of one the classmates you were closer to or somebody of the same sex would make things much easier later on down the road.

Well, I’m not exactly complaining though, since I was looking to gain something out of it.

“Anyway, I’m super picky about taste~ If it’s not yummy enough, the deal’s off, okay?”

“I get it. Just because I make the dish doesn’t mean it’ll be good enough for you.”

In that respect, the hurdle was by no means low, but I had no other choice but to put my head down and do my best.

The cooking skills that Horikita had spent the last night teaching me were all that mattered now.

I wondered just how much I’d be able to leverage her training in the short time it had been since we accepted Amasawa’s proposal yesterday.

But even so, Amasawa probably wasn’t someone I’d be able to deceive very easily.

I could guess from the ingredients she had chosen that she was eager to test my skills.

Before long, we had arrived at the entrance to the dorms.

Amasawa looked up at the building with her hand placed above her brow, shielding her eyes from the rays of the sun.

“The second-year dorms are like, kinda unsettling.”

Despite saying that, she didn’t look very nervous at all.

Rather, she gave off the impression that one would expect from somebody enjoying themselves while they were out having fun.

“Ah, but I guess it’s got the same, like, look to it as the first-year dorms.”

She shared her thoughts after taking a good long look at the exterior of the building and surveying the inside of the lobby.



“That wouldn’t be surprising.”

I just casually went along with what she was saying, even though I had never visited any of the other dormitories before.

We drew the attention of some of the students from the other classes when we passed by them.

I suppose it was only natural though, since I appeared to be bringing a first-year girl back to my room with me—with groceries in hand, at that.

Amasawa casually waved to the onlooking upperclassmen as we passed them by, but it was making us stand out, so I wanted her to stop.

I hurriedly ushered her to my room before any strange rumors had a chance to spread.

“Pardon the intrusion. Wow, you’ve really got it all nice and tidy, huh? It’s like, super clean too~”

“I just cleaned up last night because I knew I’d be having an underclassman over.”

I had done so to ensure there wasn’t anything to insinuate that I had spent the entire night studying how to cook.

Now— The sequence of events from here on out was vitally important.

After setting down the bags of groceries and kitchen utensils on the floor by the kitchen along with my school bag, the first thing I did was go and set the water in my electric kettle to boil. Then, I faced toward the living area and prompted for Amasawa to take a seat.

I could’ve seated her in a spot where she couldn’t see the kitchen, but I made sure not to do that.

It was essential that I have her take a position where she could see what I was doing from the side if she felt like she wanted to.

“I’ll make coffee. Feel free to turn on the TV if you want.”

“Thanks, Senpai.”

Then, I made her coffee after the water began to boil, giving it to her before asking her to hold on for a bit.

Amasawa picked up the remote I had placed on the table and began to flip through the channels.

While it was by no means foolproof, there was a solid, convenient reason for me to have her drown out the sound with the TV.

Instigating her into watching the TV by placing the remote control nearby had been the correct idea after all.

Once I confirmed that she had turned the TV on, I then went back toward the kitchen, moving in such a way that emphasized that I wanted to get started immediately. I needed to make sure I could stop her from watching what I was doing if she actually started watching, but luckily it didn't seem like she wanted to do that.

"Oh, looking up anything on your phone is against the rules, okay~?"

She looked over, warning me.

"How strict. I'm pretty sure that most people nowadays cook and look up recipes at the same time."

"You scaaaared~?"

"No, nothing like that."

"Sounds wonderful then. Cuz in my book, a good cook is somebody who knows the recipe by heart."

While Amasawa hadn't mentioned anything about that being the case yesterday, I just went along with it anyway.

After all, I had already predicted that this would be one of her requirements.

"Well, I'll just leave my phone on the bed then."

I went and plugged my phone into the charger and left it placed on my bed.

Amasawa nodded contentedly and picked up her cup of coffee.

"I'd like to get started before it gets late, so what dish am I making?"

"Alright, I'll tell you~ The dish you're gonna make is... tom yum goong!"

"Tom yum goong... is it?"

This seemed to be the reason for the presence of the chili peppers and nam pla, two indispensable ingredients of Thai cuisine.

"Could you make it for me~? Please, Seeenpai~?"

The dish Amasawa had tasked me with was tom yum goong.

Of course, I had never made this dish in my life.

I had never even really heard of it before, let alone actually tasted it.

It was the kind of food that they had never served to us back in the White Room either.

I had seen enough TV to know that the dish was popular amongst women, but that was the extent of my knowledge.

If I had to make it on my own right now, I probably wouldn't be able to complete the dish properly.

Not only did I have no clue what exact ingredients were in it, but I also didn't have the slightest idea of how to go about making it.

So then, one might ask what in the world had I spent all that time doing last night?

I didn't spend the time doing something reckless like attempting to memorize the recipes for every dish in the history of mankind.

I didn't spend the time mastering basic cooking procedures either.

It would've been utter nonsense to spend time memorizing recipes given that there was a possibility that Amasawa might've allowed me to follow one on my phone.

Once it had been decided that I'd be cooking Amasawa a meal, Horikita went about setting two different plans into motion.

The first had to do with learning the basic usage of things like kitchen knives and the various techniques that came involved with that.

I had spent most of my time practicing things like slicing, shredding, dicing, and chopping. That is, techniques that helped to broadcast a blatant display of culinary skill, even at a glance.

Of course, my skills in this regard were no more than mere child's play when compared to those of a professional chef.

They were just at the level where an average person wouldn't be ashamed to boast about it a little.

It was something impossible for an ordinary person to master in only half a day, but I was confident in my ability to pick up new things quickly.

I had probably managed to reach the skill level of somebody who cooked their own meal at least a couple of times a week.

This was something I had accomplished thanks to the fact that I hadn't even spent one second learning about recipes or how to make something.

However, with that being the case, there was obviously no possible way I could know how to make whatever dish Amasawa ended up tasking me with.

And that was where the second plan came into play: A method for checking recipes in real-time using a cell phone. But, Amasawa had expressly prohibited me from looking at my phone and it was currently being held hostage on my bed.

Even if I had hidden a tablet or something somewhere nearby, I probably wouldn't have any openings to look at it.

In fact, we were expecting that Amasawa would most likely turn a watchful eye over to me from time to time. Working around Amasawa's blind spot, I took out a tiny little device less than 2cm in diameter from my right-hand pocket.

At first glance, the device looked like an ordinary earplug, and I casually inserted it into my right ear, knowing that Amasawa wouldn't be able to see.

I then proceeded to just barely clear my throat as a signal.

And then—

[I've been able to hear everything loud and clear so far. I never would've guessed that she'd ask you to make tom yum goong.]

I could hear Horikita's voice through the miniature wireless earpiece that I had inserted into my right ear.

The strategy was to have Horikita feed me recipe instructions in real-time since she could freely access her computer in her own room. Sudō's cell phone had been stored inside my school bag that I had placed near my feet, which was relaying all of the outgoing noise into the wireless earpiece. I had been on a call with Horikita since before I even arrived at the mall earlier.

In the time Amasawa and I were shopping at the mall, Horikita had already gone back home and finished making all of the necessary preparations.

The wireless earpiece was something the two of us had bought yesterday as well.

If it started to seem like Amasawa was about to get up from her seat and come over to see how I was doing, I could simply pretend to scratch my head as I retrieved the earpiece and put it back into my pocket. After all, since she was keeping an eye on me, I was more than capable of keeping an eye on her in return.

Thanks to this, I could cook without having to worry about the recipe. We had also established several discrete signals in the event Horikita were to give an instruction too quickly or I wanted to hear an explanation over again.

From here on out, however, everything would hinge on how well Horikita and I were able to cooperate.

Even if I knew what ingredients and tools I'd be using, I didn't have any sort of visual reference.

After all, I had to make a dish that I didn't know very much about, and I had to make it perfectly.

The challenge was how to go about giving specific, reproducible instructions through a pretty much one-sided conversation.

[By the way, there's something I'd like you to check with Amasawa-san first.]

I took Horikita's question and put it into my own words before asking.

"Amasawa. There's no need to use a whisk or a Petty knife to make tom yum goong. If there's something else you want me to make for you afterward, just go ahead and tell me now."

It'd be troublesome if she wanted me to cook something else for her later, so I asked for her to bring it up ahead of time as Horikita instructed.

"I was gonna ask for it later, but I was thinking of having you peel me an apple."

It seemed like Amasawa had planned on asking for something else afterward, as suspected.

"You're free to enjoy the leftover ingredients all you want, Senpai. Oh, and I'll have you use the rest of those utensils we bought next time I come over, okay~?"

The Petty knife that I wasn't sure I would actually end up using would actually serve a purpose today, but it seemed like I could put away most of the rest of the stuff for now.

[It's a good thing I had you check. I taught you how to use a fruit knife yesterday, so you can handle the apple, right?]

I didn't know how far I'd get with only a day's worth of training, but that much would probably be fine.

[Our goal is a cooking time of about 15 to 30 minutes. You ready?]

Welp— Let's see how well I can do.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 6

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: Puffypyjamas

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Although it had taken slightly longer than expected, I had managed to make the tom yum goong approximately as instructed.

And now, the time had come to have Amasawa try the completed dish.

I never would've guessed that I'd be serving a home cooked meal to a girl I had only just met.

I placed the tom yum goong on the table before turning around and coming right back with an apple in hand.

It seemed necessary to demonstrate that I was capable of handling the Petty knife in front of Amasawa.

"I usually use a normal kitchen knife to peel apples, so using this might be a little awkward, but—"

I spoke these words as a preface to help cushion the blow and set about peeling the apple.

"Wow~ How amazing! You're doing perfectly! The way you handle that knife gets full marks from me!"

It wasn't professional-looking or anything, but at the very least it didn't look like it was the first time I had ever touched a knife.

I then laid out the freshly cut apple slices before her.

"By the way, when I think of tom yum goong, the first thing that comes to mind is cilantro. Do you not like that or something?"

Cilantro was not one of the ingredients that she had me buy today.

"I do though? It's just like, I thought you might figure out what the dish was if we got cilantro."

She had been on guard, having deliberately chosen to leave out the cilantro; That is, she had taken steps to prevent me from pulling any cheap tricks on her. I could understand that she had done so in order to avoid showing me an opening, but it was pretty excessive for her to go that far.

"Would you mind if I start getting everything cleaned up?"

I asked, taking the opportunity to put the cutting board and Petty knife that I had used for the apple back in the kitchen.

“No no no. You’ve gotta sit down right there and wait for the judge to give her verdict, okay?”

She protested, demanding that I sit down right in front of her.

Unable to go against her, I gave up on cleaning and made my way back into the living room, just as instructed.

“Alrighty then, time to dig in~”

Amasawa slowly carried a spoonful of hot tom yum goong into her mouth.

She didn’t seem to mind having me sit here and stare at her as she ate at all.

Though in that regard I wasn’t one to mind either, so she and I were one and the same.

After she eventually finished eating, Amasawa clasped her hands together, seemingly satisfied.

“Thank you for the meal.”

She didn’t seem to be the type of girl who only ate small portions, as she had eaten every last bite of the dish.

The thing was... I had tasted it before serving it to her, but I had no way to be sure if it tasted right or not.

I hadn’t made any mistakes with the measurements or anything, so I didn’t think there should be any problems.

Even so, if Amasawa were to say that it still wasn’t good enough, then this battle would mark the end of the war.

A war in which we had lost.

“Your tom yum goong—”

She paused for a moment before handing down her judgment.

“Yeah, I guess it was just barely good enough. It wasn’t, like, super delicious or anything, but I think it tasted good enough for me to wanna try it again.”

She had yet to bring up the part that I cared about most: Whether I had passed or failed.

“Well for now, I’ll clean up, kay?”

With that, Amasawa picked up her bowl, spoon, and the other dishes on the table and headed over to the kitchen.

She didn’t just place the dishes in the sink, but instead began tidying up the entire kitchen for some reason.

“I’ll take care of it from here.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine~ I’m the one who forced you to cook for me, so at least lemme do this much. Go sit back and relax, Senpai. I’m terrible at cooking, but I’m pretty good at cleaning up afterward since I always helped out my mom with it.”

“Well, I’ll take you up on that then. By the way, about our deal... what do you think?”

Amasawa grew silent as she proceeded to tidy up the kitchen.

Only the sound of the evening news playing on the TV could be heard.

“Oh that’s right~ I’ve gotta announce the results soon, don’t I? It’s kinda tricky though~.”

As she thought about it, Amasawa didn’t seem to be happy with the position of the ribbon holding up her right ponytail, as she unfastened the ribbon and began to tie it back on, using her reflection on the screen of her phone like a mirror.

Not long after, just as she finished tying back up her hair, she delivered her verdict.

“As I said just a little bit ago, it was just barely good enough. After all, your technique wasn’t terrible, and the taste wasn’t like, bad either.”

“Only just barely? How harsh.”

“Well, I did say I was really picky about taste.”

Amasawa grinned, looking at me as she spoke.

“I suppose I could say that whether or not I’ll come back and eat here next time depends on how hard you work, Senpai.”

This meant that my cooking skills weren’t at the level where she wanted to drop by and ask me to cook her a meal very often.

Though she had said it was just barely good enough, I still didn’t know if this meant I had passed or not.

“So this deal with Sudō was a failure, then?”

I was somewhat hesitant about confirming it with her, but I decided to ask anyway.

“While I can’t exactly say you passed, it’s true that you can cook. I had you buy all sorts of expensive stuff and like, you did let me eat for free, so I guess I’ve gotta repay you for that. I’ll pair up with Sudō-senpai, outta respect for your efforts.”



Although it hadn't been enough to satisfy her, it seemed like, for the time being, I had managed to just barely meet her standards.

She told me the good news just as I started to think that this might be a little difficult, letting out a sigh of relief.

"I'm almost done cleaning up, so just hold tight for a bit, kay?"

I couldn't just stare at her as she diligently fixed up the kitchen, so I decided to just sit back and watch the news on TV as I waited for her.

Before long, Amasawa came back to the living room, content with the state of the kitchen. She then took out her phone and submitted an application to partner up with Sudō, showing me the screen as she did. As long as Sudō responded to her offer by the end of the day today, their partnership would be set in stone.

"Sudō's off doing club activities right now, so I'll have him accept it later. Is that alright with you?"

While this wasn't exactly a lie, the real reason was that I had his cell phone, so he couldn't use it right now.

"Totally okay with me~ Anywho, I don't wanna stay out too late, so I'll be heading back now. See ya later, Ayanokōji-senpai!"

The plan had gone by without a hitch, as Amasawa headed toward the front door to leave.

"Amasawa. Thanks for being willing to pair up with Sudō. You've done a lot for him, and Horikita too."

"Yes yes~ You can shower me with as much appreciation as you want, kay?"

She quipped back with a light-hearted reply as she put on her shoes.

"In the meantime, there's something I'd like to ask you about, but..."

Just as I was about to state what it was, Amasawa finished putting on her shoes and glanced over at me.

"Is it that you want me to act as the intermediary between our classes?"

She responded in my place. Her placement in Class A and her A-rated Academic Ability weren't just for show, after all.

Essentially, she was a quick thinker who spoke without the slightest trace of doubt in her words.

"You're not wrong. There are quite a lot of students in my class who are having trouble finding a partner, just like Sudō. It'd be great if you could introduce us to some people who'd be willing to help us out."

"So~rry, but I don't think that's possible."

Amasawa lightly put both hands together in front of herself to apologize. She had turned down my request without a second thought.

“Ah, it’s not because of you or Horikita-senpai, okay? I totally think that I can trust you guys, but like, I’m not real close with the rest of my classmates. Remember how I was all by myself when I first met you guys yesterday?”

“Now that you mention it, yeah.”

Back then, many students were at the Keyaki Mall together with their friends, but Amasawa had been there alone.

“I guess you could say that I like, lack delicacy or something, but it’s cuz I’m not the type to sugarcoat my words. It’s hard to make friends with people like that, you feel? So I can’t help you Senpai. Sorry?”

“No it’s fine. The fact that you’re willing to partner up with Sudō is already enough for me. If you run into any problems, feel free to rely on me. I might be able to do something to lend a hand.”

“Mhm, thanks~ Anywho, see ya later~ Bye-bye~!”

While I failed to establish a connection with Class 1-A, this was more than enough for the time being.

“I guess that’s that.”

After I hung up the ongoing call on Sudō’s phone, I called Horikita using my own.

[Well done. It looks like everything worked out one way or another.]

Words of appreciation practically flew out of Horikita’s mouth as soon as she picked up the call.

“I get the feeling that we were saved by Amasawa’s merciful judgment, though.”

[Even so, this has gone and solved Sudō’s problem. It’s quite the accomplishment.]

It was wrong of us to have cheated Amasawa, but we made it through in the end nonetheless.

The only thing left to do now was wait for Sudō to come pick up his phone from my room and accept the application.

And given the time, he’d probably show up soon.

[Why did you ask Amasawa-san to act as our intermediary with Class 1-A? Her personality and number of friends aside, you can imagine how difficult it would be for her to negotiate with Class 2-D, right?]

Horikita had never mentioned winning over Class 1-A back when she was laying out her strategy for this special exam.

The sole reason for this was the difficulty that would come with trying to establish a cooperative relationship with each other.

"It was just a formality. It's true that our class is having a hard time finding partners, so it would've seemed unnatural if I didn't try to put that into words."

If we didn't have any other options, we needed to give off the impression that we were grasping at straws when reaching out to others.

Not doing so could be taken as a sign that our class was pushing forward with another strategy.

[In other words... You didn't want Amasawa-san to realize that we've given up on winning over Class 1-A from the very beginning, focusing our attention on Class 1-B and Class 1-D instead?]

In fact, Horikita hadn't even considered winning over Class 1-A through Amasawa since she already had the other two classes in mind. From the very beginning, she had decided that she could make the most of the fortunate scenario and just have her partner up with Sudō.

"Neither of us know what kind of person that Amasawa girl really is. That's why what happened today could leak out to the other first-year classes, or maybe even the rest of the second-year as a whole. I only acted after taking that into account. I might just be worrying too much, though."

Having heard my explanation, Horikita sank into silence for a bit.

"What's wrong?"

[Your way of thinking is... How do I put it...? Extremely calculated, and yet clever.]

"It's no big deal, really."

[No, it is a big deal. It seems quite obvious when you say it after the fact, but it's a completely different thing for you to think so far ahead in the moment. I think I better understand the reason why my elder brother paid so much attention to you now. However, if I was having this conversation with the you from the past, you wouldn't have bothered to tell me anything specific like this. What changed?]

Horikita asked me a question, curious about the seemingly complete change in my behavior.

"I don't have any ulterior motives or anything. Anyway, our next problem is what to do about the remaining students. I'll let you know when I hear back from Nanase."

[Yeah, you're right. I'll be waiting.]

After finishing up my call with Horikita, I went to check on the state of the kitchen.

The kitchen was spick and span. Not only had the dishes been washed, but the sink and countertops had been meticulously polished off. The way it looked now was by no means inferior to how it was when I first came to the room one year ago. The cutting board, plates, kitchen knife, Petty knife, pot, ladle, and everything else I had used had all been neatly put away as well. There was nothing to complain about.

Although it had been spearheaded by Horikita, this was the first time I had interacted so closely with a first-year student. If Amasawa was the one from the White Room, it wouldn't have been strange if she tried to pull something, but I didn't see any evidence of that.

I still plan to err on the side of caution, but...

Given the way she spoke and carried herself, the knowledge Amasawa possessed was nothing out of the ordinary for a normal high school student.

It would probably be difficult for someone who had only just left the White Room to take on the same mannerisms as her.

"Most importantly, the chance of Amasawa being the White Room student disappeared when she paired up with Sudō, right?"

I could also discount the other first-year students who had already decided on a partner. At least, that's what I would say if I had to make a judgement given the information currently at my disposal. However, it still felt far too early to make that assertion, no matter who it was.

While it may be true that partnering up with me would be the fastest way to get me expelled, that was only one of many potential strategies they might have. There was a possibility that the White Room student might be looking for another opening by intentionally passing up on the special exam.

The common knowledge of a high school student wasn't something that could be mastered overnight, but with enough time, that wouldn't be true either.

Besides, there were select parts of Amasawa's speech and conduct that bothered me.

It probably wasn't anything I needed to worry about, but it was probably for the best to completely crush any and all concerns I had first.

This didn't just apply to Amasawa either. The same was true of Hōsen and Nanase, who I would come in contact with in the near future. Out of the many second-year students present when they came to the second-year classrooms, I was the first they had locked eyes with.

I should be suspicious of any and every student who comes into close contact with me, regardless of whether they converse with me or not.

Because from here on out, I'd be stepping into more dangerous territory to find myself a partner. Later that night, I received a message from Nanase.

[May we meet up after school tomorrow?]

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 7

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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That same day, around the time when Ayanokōji was cooking for Amasawa, three students from Class 2-A, Sakayanagi, Kamuro, and Kitō, had gathered at a cafe in the Keyaki Mall to hold a discussion.

“It happened again. It seems that the students we reached out to have all gotten offers from Class C. Moreover, it seems that Class C has been offering students 10,000 points just to turn down any offers they receive from our class, no strings attached.”

Kamuro was on the phone with Hashimoto, relaying his findings to Sakayanagi from across the table.

“10,000 points, just for deciding not to join up with us? Is that stupid or what?”

After quickly expressing her own thoughts on the matter, Kamuro then continued to put forward the rest of the information as she got it from Hashimoto.

Class 2-C was offering 100,000 private points as an advance payment just for agreeing to partner up with them. Then, after it had been confirmed that the pair had scored more than 501 points on the exam, they were apparently offering an additional 100,000 private points, meaning 200,000 points in total.

“Fufu. It seems that Ryūen-kun fully intends to see this match through to the end.”

“What are you gonna do? Should we fight back with private points too?”

“If we fought the financial battle, we simply wouldn’t lose. However, beating him with his own strategy would lack a certain... artistic potency, don’t you think?”

“Artistic potency...? If we need to be dishing out 100,000 or 200,000 points, then shouldn’t we be doing it? The first-years obviously think there’s a lot to gain from going after private points.”

Word had already spread that the first-years held the advantage in this exam. A standard had been set, where the honor students would choose their partners in exchange for private points.

Sakayanagi responded to Kamuro’s advice with a simple, silent smile, prompting Kamuro to speak up again.

“So you’re just fine with losing? To Ryūen?”

“First of all, there’s quite a large difference in the academic prowess of Ryūen-kun’s class and our own. Should he look to overcome this with the strength of the first-year students, he has no choice but to entice a considerable number of them. Furthermore, even if he manages to do so, his victory is by no means absolute.”

"Maybe so. But, that doesn't mean we're absolutely gonna win either, right?"

"Right indeed. Let's assume Ryūen-kun were to gather up a good number of students with Academic Ability ratings in the A range. That would just barely manage to put him on equal footing with us, would it not? Even if we don't do anything, our odds of winning would be at a solid 50%."

However, put the other way around, that meant that there was a 50% chance that they might lose as well.

Kamuro wasn't getting heated because she wanted to win the exam or anything.

It was because it was hard to believe that Sakayanagi, the girl sitting right in front of her, would go down without doing anything about it.

"What do you think would happen if we were to announce that we'd pay the same amount as Ryūen-kun?"

"What would happen? Well, Ryūen would pay even more, yeah?"

"Right you are. His offer would surely swell up to 200,000, maybe even 300,000 points."

"But if we offer them enough, we'd definitely be able to pull the honor students over to our side."

"And we'd pay a truly massive number of points in compensation for that. There's no express need for us to risk losing thousands upon millions of points. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Are you saying we can win over the students even if we offer them less points? I don't think the first-years have a very deep understanding of the power of the Class A brand, though."

Kamuro refused to back down, but it didn't seem like Sakayanagi had the slightest intention of fighting a monetary battle.

"I'm well aware that Ryūen-kun wants to take first place overall. Compared to the cash-oriented deal he struck with Katsuragi-kun last year, it seems that he's completely changed policies."

"He was gonna save up 20 million points for himself and move to Class A, right?"

"He's had quite the change of heart since, I believe. He's finally realized the importance of class points. No, rather, he's changed direction for the sake of winning for his class."

So far, Sakayanagi and Ryūen had yet to exchange a single word with each other during this special exam.

However, it seemed as though the two were striking up a back-and-forth conversation with each other using their strategies.

"So... you're just okay with it? With us not making use of our private points?"

“My my, Masumi-san. When have I ever said I wouldn’t make use of our points?”

“Wha? But weren’t you just saying that competing with points lacked an artistic something or whatever?”

“Please tell Hashimoto to tell the first-years that we’re willing to match Ryūen-kun’s offer.”

Kamuro pursed her lips, having heard Sakayanagi’s puzzling instructions.

“However— Even if the first-year students agree to our offer, don’t finalize the agreement with them.”

“Hah? I seriously don’t understand what the heck you’re getting at here.”

“Fufufu. Ryūen-kun’s strategy is actually rather convenient for me.”

“I don’t even know what’s what anymore…”

[Isn’t it fine? If the princess says it isn’t necessary, then let’s just do as she says.]

Hashimoto, who had been listening in on the conversation over the phone, chimed in.

“...I guess I’m fine either way.”

Even if an agreement was reached with respect to the amount of points, Sakayanagi had deliberately instructed not to finalize the partnerships.

Although Kamuro didn’t understand, she once again relayed the details of Sakayanagi’s plans to Hashimoto.

As she did so, Sakayanagi gazed at Kamuro tenderly, wondering if she had been just a little too mean with her mischief.

So, she began to explain, so as to give a hint to Kamuro about what was happening.

“Ryūen-kun’s grand strategy isn’t an inherently bad one. By going around contacting the first-years like he has, he has succeeded in forcing me to participate in this money game of his. However, he’s been dead set on trying to compete for the exact same students that we are, which is a clear miscalculation on his part. As Class C is the more inferior class overall, he should be focusing his attention on the students with high academic potential first and move forward from there.”

However, Ryūen wasn’t doing that. Amongst all the students Class A was reaching out to, some had potential in areas outside of Academic Ability, yet Ryūen was trying to snatch them up as well.

“Does this mean that guy’s got a ton of private points saved up?”

“Well, who knows? Even if he has the points he needs, he might not actually be able to make use of all of them, does that make sense?”

"No, that'd be crazy. He's only able to make all these aggressive offers because he's got the points for it, right?"

"It's possible to make an offer without even a single point to your name. All you'd have to do is pretend you have the points on hand."

Kamuro couldn't understand what Ryūen would gain by doing something like that.

"If it weren't for Ryūen-kun, we'd be able to win over a lot of talented first-year students with just our Class A reputation. But by offering to buy students with points, he's forced us to play this money game as well. So what comes after that, then? He'll jack up his offer to make us pay as many points as possible."

"I see... So that's how it is?"

As a result, even if Class A managed to get their hands on a talented student, the fact that they would have to pay hundreds upon thousands of private points to the first-year students would only serve to benefit the competition between the second-year classes.

"But we're at the disadvantage then, aren't we? His strategy's been working time and time again."

"There's no need for us to get worked up at this stage. He's only bought off a few students, so let him have his fun for now. He's simply misread a few crucial details. He thinks that our good reputation is nothing more than a label, a status that can go away if people start to see us in a bad light. Additionally, he's mistakenly determined that he can get people to collaborate with him later just by handing over some points."

"I don't quite get it, but we'll be fine as long as we follow your instructions from earlier, yeah?"

"Yes. That should be enough for now."

"I don't like it. It still feels like we're being forced to go along with Ryūen's strategy. If we keep getting dragged along like this, I dunno how things'll turn out for us."

"Please rest assured. It won't turn out that way. We'll win this little game without running into any problems at all."

Unable to keep up with yet another inexplicable explanation from Sakayanagi, Kamuro let out a sigh.

"There's no reason for you to rack your brains at this point in time, so please just don't let yourself be swayed by Ryūen-kun. This special exam is nothing more than a prelude for what's to come next. Right now we're just keeping each other in check as we attempt to sound out the other's next move."

"I'm just about ready to give up trying to understand you at all."

"Although... If possible, I hope he doesn't end this by self-destructing. It wouldn't be very much fun to finish this so easily."



Sakayanagi gazed out of the window beside her, praying that her oncoming opponent was somebody worth facing off against.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 4 Part 8

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas

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On that same day, around two hours after Sakayanagi and Kumuro had finished up their discussion, Ryūen met up with Ishizaki and Ibuki in a Karaoke Room.

“It seems that Class 1-B student we were after for 200,000 asked to put the offer on hold, Ryūen-san.”

After receiving an update on his phone, Ishizaki reported the information to Ryūen. Despite that, Ibuki was the one to respond.

“The hell? Is 200,000 not enough somehow?”

“No, it seems like Sakanyagi went and said Class A would offer the same amount as us...”

“Sounds like they really don’t wanna lose to us. Can we even keep going on like this? It’ll be tough.”

“Class A has a considerable number of private points, right? I’m thinking we’re in pretty hot water here too...”

Despite Ishizaki and Ibuki’s ensuing commentary and the new information, Ryūen simply sat there messing around with his phone, completely unfazed.

“R-Ryūen-san?”

“Chillax. I already know what they’re up to.”

Ryūen sent a glance over to his empty glass, and within seconds, Ishizaki was refilling it with water.

“Tell ‘em we’ll pay 100,000 up front and 200,000 after the exam.”

“S-seriously? That much?”

300,000 in total. The number of points in play had grown even larger.

“Most of the first-years won’t make a decision either way. They’ll all be waiting for Sakayanagi to counter.”

“Wouldn’t we just end up screwin’ ourselves over waiting around for that?”

If they were short on funds, they wouldn’t be able to do anything.

“Seems it’s impossible to compete with Sakayanagi after all... How’s about we look to aim for second place instead...?”

“I agree with Ishizaki. If we offer the same amount, we’d lose out cuz of Class A’s rep.”

Ryūen simply laughed after hearing Ishizaki and Ibuki’s analysis.

“Ha! That little girl’s probably got a triumphant look on her face right about now.”

“She’s just seen through your way of doing things. Even if we can put up a good fight with private points, they’ve just got a better rep than us.”

“Class A’s reputation is nothin’ more than a petty decoration right now. Given how much those guys value their rep, the trust they’ll lose when it all comes tumbling down’ll be immeasurable.”

“Even if that’s true, what’re we gonna do about points? It ain’t the end of the world if the offer goes up to 300,000 or 400,000, but we couldn’t possibly pay that much to everyone!”

“There’s no need to pay. I don’t plan on working with shameless brats who keep asking for points without knowing the limit.”

“...Eh?”

“I’m not lookin’ to try and do somethin’ like that this time. I’m in the process of learnin’ about this new batch of first-years; Findin’ out what kinda people they are. They say money is the key that opens all doors, but a chump who’s down to cooperate for a whole buncha points is the type of chump we can get onto our side whenever we want. All we gotta do is fork over some points when we really need ‘em to help and that’s that. I’m lookin’ for the guys who intuitively understand the bigger picture here.”

“Sorry but, I’ve got no clue what you’re on about...”

“That little girl prolly thinks I’m out here with my sights set on first place, but I never had any intention of goin’ after such a measly number of class points. If we’re gonna fuck over Class A, we’ve just gotta wait for a chance when the class points are gonna fluctuate even more than this.”

“So, you just set this all up to figure out which of the first-years are complete pushovers?”

“It was obvious that we might just keep jacking up our offer from the very beginning, and yet some students chose to partner up with our class already. Why do you think they chose to do that?”

“Eh...? Come to think of it, why did they do that?”

At first, Class C had offered 50,000 points up front and another 50,000 after the exam.

Although this amount wasn’t insanely high or anything, several students had already been willing to join forces with Class C.

"You... Before closing out a deal with somebody, you always went to meet with 'em one-on-one... Did you threaten 'em or something?"

"Well, maybe a little, but you've got the right idea."

They would be lured in with offers of 300,000 or 400,000 points, only to yield after a personal interview with Ryūen.

In the end, the amount settled on was always far lower than what it had appeared to be on the surface.

"I'm just takin' a look at the first-years, seein' if they smart enough to understand that I'm far better than Sakayanagi."

He was cherry picking the students who could instinctively notice the winning class without being caught up with things like points or reputation.

Those were the students Ryūen Kakeru was truly searching for in this special exam.

His real goal for this year was set far in the future, where he would drag down Sakayanagi, taking the rest of Class A down along with her.

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Introduction

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas, o-montoya, silent death

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Thursday; The weekend would soon be upon us. I brought Horikita along with me to the library after classes were done for the day.

This was because we had arranged to hold a discussion with the Class 1-D students that Nanase would be bringing along with her today.

On the way to the library, Horikita and I spoke with each other about the special exam.

“Have you taken a look at today’s OAA update yet?”

“17 more pairs were finalized, bringing the total up to 73.”

While the number of new pairs wasn’t all that unexpected, there was one thing that made this update distinctly different from the previous two.

Two students from Class 1-D had decided on a partner.

Slight traces of activity could be seen within the class that had laid dormant over the past three days.

“I’m a little annoyed. I thought Hōsen-kun would wait and see how the situation developed for a little while longer. I tried to make some light conversations with several Class 1-D students during lunch today, but they all just brushed me off by saying they didn’t know anything about the two students who were involved.”

“There’s a fine line between them actually not knowing anything and them having a gag order in place.”

It wouldn’t be surprising if they had been instructed not to leak any information nor partner up with someone unless they receive a substantial number of points.

“That’s true. Either way, it’s good that we’ve decided to meet with Nanase-san after this. If it’s her, we might be able to ask her about it too.”

Horikita had only ever made contact with Nanase once, and they had never really had a proper conversation with each other.

Nevertheless, Nanase, the girl who had been together with Hōsen, stood out as a student who seemed easy to communicate with.

I had personally felt a strong impression of honesty back when I had spoken with her.

Somehow, she had a straightforward, upright personality that reminded me of Ichinose.

We arrived at the library and set foot inside.

“Oh my. It seems the library has some rare visitors.”

The first person to greet us was not Nanase, but rather, Class 2-C’s Shiina Hiyori.

As expected of a bookworm, it seemed she had made her way here as soon as school was out for the day.

“It might be just a little noisy today. We’re here to have a discussion with some first-year students about the special exam.”

“I see. Well, I think the seats at the far end of the room should be good for that. That way, you won’t be too much of a nuisance to the other library patrons, so it should be alright for you to talk a bit. If someone tries to approach you, you’ll be able to notice right away.”

We opted to take the advice that Hiyori had considerably offered to us.

“Are things going well in Class C?”

“Yes. There’s a lot going on right now.”

Because our classes were direct competitors, it was difficult for her to let us know about the internal affairs of her class.

We parted ways with Hiyori after exchanging a few more simple words and decided to go take a seat since we had arrived before Nanase. Although I was vaguely concerned about Hiyori’s situation, I went along with Horikita to the seats at the far end of the room.

“Nanase-san aside, now that we’re getting involved with Class 1-D, the question is whether or not Hōsen-kun will show up.”

“That’s right. Whether or not he comes with her will make all the difference.”

Since there weren’t any prior restrictions on who could come, there was no guarantee that Hōsen wouldn’t tag along with her.

In which case, we would have to negotiate a big deal under rather turbulent conditions.

“Can I ask you something before we get to the full-blown discussion? Have you been studying?”

“Well, somewhat. Is there something wrong with that?”

“As I’ve got the advantage of choosing the subject we’ll compete in, I’ve just been wondering if you’ve been taking enough time to study.”

“Why? Are you trying to show humanity to your enemy or something?”

“No way. I’m not so kind that I’d give up my own advantage. This is a competition I must win.”

Although she says this, she still seemed to care about whether I was studying properly or not.

In other words, she was worried that I’d end up making excuses if I lost our bet, saying that I had been too busy with the special exam to study.

“I could say the same to you, given that you’ve spent all your time trying to put Class 2-D in order recently.”

“I’m just as diligent with my studies as always, so there are no problems on my end.”

It seemed she was pretty confident in her daily study routine.

“Don’t worry. I’m not going to lose.”

“It’s fine if that’s the case, but…”

She didn’t exactly trust me so she didn’t really think I was taking our bet very seriously.

There was one more thing I wanted to ask her in relation to that. Horikita had many different shoes to fill. On top of working to organize the class, she had to both study for herself, and tutor others. I wasn’t sure if she could keep this pace until the day of the exam. However, just as I was about to ask her about it, Nanase arrived at the library alone. She noticed the two of us immediately, bowing her head before she approached. It seemed that Hōsen wouldn’t be showing up for the initial discussion.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting, Senpai.”

“We only just got here ourselves.”

Greetings were shared as Horikita motioned for Nanase to take the seat on the other side of the table. The discussion had begun.

“I’ll reintroduce myself… I’m Horikita Suzune. Thank you for taking the time to hold this discussion with us today.”

“I— No, that’s not right… I am known as Nanase Tsubasa. I haven’t done anything worthy of your thanks. Rather, I should be the one expressing my thanks to the two of you.” (TLN: The first ‘I’ Nanase uses here is Boku, whereas the second and all future pronouns she uses for herself in this part is Watashi. I have no idea how to translate it so I’m just doing this to explain it as it’s an important detail later.)

They were fellow Class D students, both having started from the very bottom.

As soon as she heard Nanase's polite introduction and response, Horikita cut to the chase.

"This might seem rather intrusive, but could I ask you about something?"

"Of course."

"First of all, as a baseline premise, I'd like to hear about Class 1-D's policy moving forward. Only today did two students in your class finally decide on their partners. However, the direction of the remaining 38 students is still up in the air. You're one of them, aren't you Nanase-san?"

While it wasn't known if it was Hōsen or another Class 1-D student, it was clear that somebody was giving the class instructions.

"You're correct. I thought that you'd inquire about that. You asked Kajiwara-kun this very same question earlier today, right?"

Kajiwara was the name of one of the many students in Class 1-D. Apparently, Nanase had already found out that Horikita had attempted to contact several Class 1-D students during lunch today. In which case, it seemed reasonable to assume that Nanase also knew that we had contacted Shiratori and his friends on the first day of the exam.

"I'm surprised. It seems you guys do a great job reporting, communicating, and discussing things."

"Many students have already begun taking action in accordance with Hōsen-kun's orders."

Instead of being ambiguous, Nanase readily confirmed that Hōsen was the one in charge.

"Is it because of his aggressive attitude? No... I think there's more to it than that. What on earth did he do?"

Nanase pondered for a moment before finally opening her mouth to speak.

"I'm immensely sorry, but I'm afraid I can't provide you with any specifics. It's a strategy that Hōsen-kun has come up with in order to unify the class. Although I don't know if his strategy is correct or not, leaking the information to an outsider would be an act of betrayal."

"Oh well. You've made the correct choice."

In response to Horikita's words, Nanase lightly bowed her head in appreciation. Just because we were her upperclassmen didn't mean she had to tell us everything. Just as she had expressed in her conversation with me yesterday, Nanase possessed the resolution expected of a student devoted to her class.

"Then, let's get down to business. I'd like to know if our class can collaborate with Class 1-D, just like the two people who finalized their partners yesterday."

"I believe you've heard this from Shiratori-kun already, but our doors are always open to you. As long as you present us with at least a fixed number of private points, we'll accept the partnership without the slightest bit of hesitation."



Sure enough, our conversation with Shiratori and his friends had managed to reach Hōsen's ears.

From this, I could hazard a guess that the two Class 1-D students in question had been bought for a large number of private points.

"But what I'm asking for today is completely different from settling an agreement with points."

"I understand that. I heard a little about it from Ayanokōji-senpai before, but you're looking to establish a cooperative relationship where our classes help cover for the more academically incapable students, correct?"

"That's right. The fact that you've come here despite knowing that, already leads me to believe that we have room to negotiate, right?"

"There is— or at least that's what I'd like to think."

With that, Nanase's expression clouded over before she continued.

"Hōsen-kun's way of thinking is thoroughly rooted in the mindset of individualism, and he enforces that on those around him. At this rate, the students with low Academic Ability ratings won't be able to find partners and will end up getting left behind. While it's not a very big problem that they'll lose out on three months of private points, I fear that they'll be branded as losers who weren't able to find themselves a partner. Well, no, that might not be that big of an issue either... What really gets to me is the thought that this individualistic mindset might never go away, preventing us from being able to unite as a class in the future."

After hearing what Nanase had to say, Horikita vocalized her predictions on what she thought might happen to Class 1-D moving forward.

"Yeah. If nobody is ever willing to help the class as a whole, the ongoing individualist battle would naturally accelerate. The weaker students would have no choice but to fend for themselves. And, as soon as that becomes the expected standard, nobody will be willing to help each other, even if somebody asks for it. The class wouldn't be in any position to do something if confronted with an exam that requires cohesion."

That was why, in order to avoid that, Nanase was willing to single-handedly take part in negotiations with Horikita.

"You're not afraid of Hōsen-kun, Nanase-san?"

"Yes."

An immediate, unfazed response. And then, Nanase turned and set her sights on me for the first time since we started the discussion. She had that same look in her eyes that I had seen only twice before. I was reminded of what I had heard yesterday, when she had said 'I will never yield to violence.' Although I wasn't without concerns about her identity, Nanase may very well be the only person capable of bringing Class 1-D over to our side.

If we had truly met through a chance encounter, then I was honestly grateful for her.

"Then, let me ask you more of an in-depth question here. How many students are struggling to find partners right now in Class 1-D? Please tell me to the extent you know you can answer, Academic Ability ratings aside."

While the OAA app would tell you which students hadn't found a partner yet, it didn't say anything about whether or not a given student was likely to find a partner.

For that, you had no choice but to ask somebody personally involved with the class in order to find out.

"At this point, I believe that approximately fifteen students would find it difficult to search for a partner on their own."

"Fifteen... That's more than I expected."

However, many Class 2-D students hadn't decided on a partner yet either.

As long as they coordinated properly, there should be enough room for our classes to work together.

"Nanase-san. If you'll allow for it, I'd like to come to an agreement with you and your class."

"An agreement, is it?"

"I'm hoping that you and I can decide on a combination of fifteen sets of partners and get this over with all at once. It wouldn't matter what Academic Ability rating they might have. And, naturally, there wouldn't be any points involved either. It would be an equal, collaborative relationship based on helping those who need to be helped."

In other words, a relationship based on an understanding of mutual concessions and compromises.

As we would be giving and taking from each other, private points and feelings wouldn't need to get involved.

The chances of somebody being expelled would go down a lot with the establishment of this agreement alone.

However, things weren't that simple, and both Horikita and Nanase were aware of that as well.

"This is on the premise that we can make that agreement in the first place, but there is no guarantee that we will be able to save those in Horikita-senpai's class with Academic Ability in the vicinity of an E rating. The majority of the students in my class who are struggling to find partners have Academic Ability ratings of C or D."

If, for example, the maximum Academic Ability rating they were willing to put forward was a C+, there would still be huge risks associated with pairing them up with someone who has an E rating from our class. It wouldn't be unreasonable to say that, for us, the disadvantages would be far more prevalent.

"That's why I'll need you to do your best to make sure it doesn't turn out like that."

"Yes, I know. Even if that's the case, I still don't believe we will come to an agreement very easily."

Nanase spoke her thoughts without denying anything.

“Hōsen-kun would never allow us to help you out for free. Especially not now.”

Class 2-A had managed to maintain a high number of class points ever since enrollment and had an ample amount of funds saved up as a result. Class 2-C, despite coughing up a large number of points to save Ryūen late last year, had the luxury of a steady supply of funds due to their contract with Katsuragi and Class A. The Class 2-C students probably had a certain amount of points saved up as well.

Given that the two classes were contending for students with such a huge number of points on the table, it was only natural for the first-years to sell themselves to the highest bidder.

You could say that Hōsen's plan, the policy he had put in place, was the best way to handle this exam.

However, while asking prices were high across the board, there was no doubt that Class 1-D was asking for much higher prices than all the other first-year classes.

This was evident by the low number of Class 1-D students who had already finalized their partners.

“Even though it would benefit everyone in his class? There shouldn't be any downsides in it for him.”

The downside was that the students who weren't able to join with a partner wouldn't receive the private points they would've gotten otherwise. Though, this was probably implied by this point.

“I understand what you're trying to say, Horikita-senpai. I can also get behind the vast majority of what you've outlined for me so far.”

It looked like, personally, Nanase was impressed with Horikita's proposition.

However.

“It's just... I still don't think Hōsen-kun will allow it.”

There was a short silence. I could vaguely guess what she happened to be thinking about, so I spoke up.

“The only thing I know for sure is that Hōsen isn't just collecting points for himself.”

“What do you mean?”

“I originally thought Hōsen was demanding a huge number of points for partnerships because he wanted to hoard all of the points for himself. But if that were the case, he'd be actively looking to help his classmates with low Academic Ability ratings. In the most extreme scenario, he'd be reaching out to those students, telling them to just hand over the points they'd get and he'd find them a partner.”

“That's indeed true... Three month's worth of private points is nothing to sneeze at. I'd rather give half of the points to Hōsen-kun and save myself instead of failing the exam and not getting any points at all.”

Judging from his actions so far and what I could gather from conversations with Nanase, that wasn't what he was doing at all.

"It's just as Ayanokōji-senpai has speculated. Hōsen-kun has not received any compensation from our classmates."

He was controlling the class, imposing rules.

And then, when someone breaks those rules, they'd be completely ostracized by Hōsen and the students who followed him.

Therefore, they wouldn't dare find a partner without Hōsen's permission. They couldn't.

The Class 1-D students didn't show up at the meet-and-greet because they knew it'd be useless to attend from the very beginning.

"Couldn't you use your influence to control even a couple of the academically capable students in your class?"

Horikita wasn't asking for anything in return for her proposal. It was merely an act of mutual cooperation between classes.

Compared to the second-year students, the first-year students didn't have as much of an emotional attachment to their class and friends.

It was just too unreasonable to expect them to have bonded within the first week or two after enrollment.

"I've tried asking several of them, but none have said that they'd be willing to consider it."

"So compensation is still an absolute requirement?"

"If we only need a couple of people, couldn't we just make an agreement using points?"

I asked Horikita the question. If our goal was to take first place overall like Class 2-A and 2-C, we'd need an enormous sum of points to recruit such a large number of capable students. However, since our goal is just to prevent expulsions, we only needed to recruit a couple students, so the monetary cost would be reduced accordingly.

"Yes... If we really end up with no other options, that's what we'll have to do. But a relationship built upon private points can only be further maintained with more private points. I want a relationship that goes beyond that."

After responding to me, Horikita turned and looked straight at Nanase.

"What do you mean by that, Horikita-senpai?"

“Right now, the first-years and second-years are on different playing fields. First-years like you are at the advantage because you don’t have to bear the risks of expulsion. However, that dynamic surely won’t last forever. Sooner or later, the day will come when you have to face the risk of expulsion as well. If you’ve never done anything more than establish relationships that revolve around points, what are you going to do when the time comes and Class 1-D doesn’t have enough?”

While some students would probably be saved, chances are that there would also be those who would not.

“That’s why I want to work with you as equals without creating a hierarchical relationship based on points. And, I want to build up trust. A special relationship of trust that comes from being in different school years.”

With this, Horikita was advocating that, when a Class 1-D student was in trouble, they’ll be able to consult with us on an equal footing. In short, it was similar to the trust-focused strategy Ichinose was implementing.

The primary difference being that it didn’t require the entire grade’s cooperation, but just that of a single class.

Horikita wasn’t looking to appeal to everyone. She was just limiting the scope of our cooperative efforts to Class 1-D.

We had already embarked on the fourth day of the special exam. We couldn’t afford to waste too much of our time.

This had probably given Nanase a solid understanding of Horikita’s intentions.

But even so, her strained expression never brightened.

“I completely understand what you’re saying, but I don’t think my peers can understand that yet. Most of the first-year student body is eager to save up as many private points as possible. Given that, partnering up with somebody without any form of compensation would be seen as nothing more than a waste.”

In this respect, the only option was to give them time to understand how the school worked.

“So basically, you’re saying that there are two obstacles to working together with Class 1-D right now. Persuading Hōsen-kun, and persuading the honor students who want points. The latter of which remains the same no matter which class you’re dealing with, but...”

It was true that, at least on the surface, the benefits that would come with working together with Class 1-D seemed small because of the many obstacles, Hōsen in particular, that would need to be overcome. However, the reality was different.

Was Horikita aware of this as well?

“Please let me discuss things with Hōsen-kun.”

Horikita voiced her request, having decided that it was impossible to move discussions forward any further than this without Hōsen.

“You’re right... If we want to push this relationship any further, I suppose there’s no getting around it.”

“I’d be ready to meet with him right now, if that’s alright with you.”

“Okay. I’ll go call him.”

Nanase took out her cell phone and headed toward the entrance of the library.

“It seems that Hōsen-kun’s influence is more widespread than I imagined.”

“Yeah.”

“Trying to work together with Class 1-D like this... I’m not making a mistake, right?”

“Establishing a relationship that looks forward to the future isn’t a bad idea. You could even say that it’ll be essential. Sakayanagi and Ryūen have been trying to build up trusting relationships with the talented first-year students using their reputation and points. Ichinose doesn’t have any points whatsoever, but she’s trying to build up her own trusting relationships by saving the weak. And your strategy is similar to Ichinose, but you’re trying to build up trust with only one class, right? The strategies all take different shapes and sizes, but in the end they’re all the same. You’re already in the process of becoming a leader capable of competing with the three of them.”

Horikita nodded lightly upon hearing my words. With this, it was up to her to make sure that the negotiations ran smoothly.

After waiting for a while, we noticed Nanase poke her head back through the entrance and beckon us over to her.

“I wonder if something happened?”

“Let’s go and find out.”

The two of us left the library and joined back up with Nanase.

“Pardon me, Senpais. Uhm... Hōsen-kun is on the line.”

Nanase held out her muted phone, presenting it to Horikita.

Horikita took the phone, set it to speaker mode, and set about confronting Hōsen.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

[Yo. I’ve heard the gist of it from Nanase.]

“I’d like to meet in person and explain it to you myself, if I could.”

[No need. Meetin' up won't do jack shit.]

After an audible laugh in the background of the call, Hōsen spoke.

“By that... you mean you're not even willing to negotiate?”

[Exactly. I didn't even wanna talk with ya on the phone, but Nanase was bein' stuck up 'bout it.]

“But Hōsen-kun, I think we should consider what Horikita-senpai has to say.”

[Shut up bitch. Who the fuck you think you are? Huh? I'll fucking kill you.]

“I have no interest in being killed, but please meet with Horikita-senpai at least this once.”

[Don't contact me again unless yer willin' to fork over the points.]

Nanase tried to say something else, but Hōsen hung up the call.

She immediately tried to call him back, but no matter how many times she called, he never picked up the phone.

“...I'm very sorry!”

Nanase lowered her head as far as she possibly could, apologizing to the two of us.

But Nanase hadn't done anything wrong.

“Raise your head. My plan is completely different from Hōsen-kun's, so it's not going to be easy to get things right. I'm very grateful that you've been willing to lend us a hand like this.”

“That...”

“Let's leave it at that for today. We'll have to come up with something if we want to discuss things with Hōsen-kun. Either way, I'd like to get this wrapped up by the end of this week.”

Any longer than that and Horikita would probably have to shift her focus to a different class. That said, I really hoped it wouldn't turn out that way. Fighting the other three classes for students after most of them have already been taken would take an almost daunting amount of effort.

“I'm very happy that you haven't given up yet, Horikita-senpai, but...”

Nanase held back the words that were about to leave her mouth. She had probably wanted to say that it was impossible to form an equal, collaborative relationship with Hōsen, but thought it would all be over if she did.

“At least he got a sense for what I want to do. That should be enough for now.”

Though time was running out and patience was wearing thin, Horikita reassured Nanase as she brought the conversation to a close.

Horikita offered that we all return together, but it seemed like Nanase had somewhere she needed to go.

And then, after telling us that she hoped to meet up with us in the library again tomorrow, she left.

Perhaps she went off to go meet up with Hōsen.

“Let’s head out. I still have a lot left to do today.”

It seems that Horikita has plans to hold a study session with Sudō and a few others after she got back to her room.

“Ah, and it’s about time you clarify what your plan is with finding your own partner too. Are you going to figure it out on your own, or do you plan on delegating it to me as well? It might affect how things turn out later on down the line.”

After all, if we managed to start negotiations with Hōsen, we’d have to make adjustments to the exact number of people involved in the agreement.

“There’s already somebody I have in mind for that.”

“So instead of looking for somebody with a certain Academic Ability rating, you’re looking for somebody specific? Who?”

“That’s a secret.”

“A secret...? Do you really need to keep it from me?”

“I only have a surface-level impression of them right now myself.”

“Does it really matter that much? Everybody’s had to do what they can to get help, you do know that right?”

“You’re not wrong. I thought I’d have a better idea today, but... Well, I’ll make my decision by the end of this week at the latest.”

“If you say so, but... I can’t make any promises if you come crying to me at the last minute, alright?”

“I’ll keep that in mind. Anyway, I was meaning to ask earlier, but how are you feeling?”

“...Are you worried about me?”



"While there's no need to worry about your stamina right now, there's still a fair bit of time until the special exam."

If she were to run out of energy right before the end, it could possibly affect her performance on the day of the exam.

She was holding study sessions day after day, coupled with all the time she had spent dealing with Amasawa's cooking challenge yesterday.

It's only natural that fatigue would gradually continue to accumulate.

"It's true that I might be wearing myself out, but I don't have time to rest right now. I'm not going to collapse until the special exam is over."

Rather than a simple show of courage, this was more like she had adopted a mentality fitting of someone looking to lead the class into battle.

Yōsuke and Kushida offering their help was one thing, but students with excellent Academic Ability ratings like Keisei and Mii-chan had also offered to help Horikita ever since the very beginning of the exam. As such, Horikita decided to push forward with her plan to work together with Class 1-D in the future.

After all, if the leader falters, unable to make decisions, it would only serve as a bad influence on the class as a whole.

In a race against time, the most crucial part of all of this was figuring out how to solidify our class's course of action during the early stages of the exam.

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 1

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas, o-montoya, silent death

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It was a bit chilly that night. I stood in my kitchen, cooking with the large quantity of leftover ingredients from yesterday's shopping spree. Of course, this time I was using recipes and videos as references for what I was doing.

I was making the dish that I had made for Amasawa before, wanting to try it for myself.

The name of the dish, tom yum goong, was a combination of three different Thai words, meaning 'boiled', 'mixed', and 'shrimp' respectively.

"It's got a unique taste, but it isn't bad."

The way its spicy yet sour flavor spread through my mouth and its distinct aroma pierced my nose made it seem like it'd be an addictive dish for certain types of people.

After cleaning up, I turned on the ventilation fan above my stove, looking to let out the smell that had filled the room. I eventually noticed my phone vibrating on my bed, the sound drowned out by the noise of the fan. I thought about just calling back later, but it never stopped ringing, so I picked up.

[You took like, forever to pick up.]

This was the first time Kei had been the one to contact me in a few days now. The last time was back when the special exam had just begun.

The first thing out of her mouth was a complaint.

[You're the one who told me to call around this time. Get a grip, would ya?]

"My bad. So, did you find out about that thing I asked you to look into this morning?"

[I'm only calling cuz I did my research properly, so don't you think you aren't, like, being grateful enough?]

"I'm very grateful. So...?"

[It doesn't seem like you're grateful at all... Well, whatever. According to the store person, only one of 'em has been sold since April. They told me that they like, pretty much never sell that model compared to the other similar ones they've got, and that they're lucky to sell even one or two of 'em a year. But the thing is, apparently one of the new students tried buying one too.]

There was no need to tell me about the identity of the person who bought one recently. I was far more interested in the new student who tried to buy one.

“Tried buying one, huh...? So they didn’t buy one, then?”

There was no physical way this new first-year student wouldn’t have been able to buy it unless they had done something absurd like spending all of their points immediately after they first came to the school.

And, given this year’s batch of new students, I didn’t think they’d do something that foolish.

[I tried asking the clerk about that too, just in case. Apparently, just as the first-year was about to pay for it at the register, somebody else showed up and stopped them from going through with the sale. Anywho, the clerk told me the student who tried to buy one looked...]

As Kei described the student’s appearance, I began to sort out the situation in my head.

It was a little... no, considerably different from what I had in mind at first.

I never would’ve expected that ‘that person’ would be involved in all of this.

“Did the clerk say anything about the person who stopped the first-year from buying it?”

[Nope, they didn’t know much about that. They just said they were pretty sure it was a girl.]

Students have to present their student ID card to make purchases, so while the clerk knew the name of the person who tried to buy the item, they didn’t know anything about the person who stopped the sale.

[Is my information useful?]

“Yeah. It might be much more useful than I thought it’d be.”

[Hehe, I’m like, super talented, after all. Make sure you thank me properly, kay? But like, why’d you have me look into something like this? I seriously don’t get it at all.]

“Me neither.”

[Wha?]

I had hoped that having her ask around would help explain the mysterious behavior, but this development was far beyond anything I had imagined.

In fact, because it was so far off from what I had imagined, it made me wonder if any of this was even relevant at all.

“Come to think of it, I heard that you’ve already found a partner for the special exam.”

[Ah, yep. Shimazaki-san from Class 1-B, was it? Feels like I've been saved thanks to Kushida-san.]

Now that our main business had been dealt with, I changed the topic ever so slightly.

"I don't think you've got a bad partner, but Kei, have you been studying properly?"

[Well, uh, how do I put it...? Like, I was thinkin' it'd be fine if I like, just put it off 'til later, you know?]

I knew it. I hadn't heard anything about her attending one of the study sessions yet.

"This exam isn't something you can get through all on your own. Your rating is a D+. If you aren't careful with your grades, you might end up suffering later."

[I know I know, I just can't get myself interested, and like... even if I went to a study group, it's not like you'd be there or anything.]

"So what, you'd study diligently as long as I'm around?"

[...Uh, yeah? I'd work hard in front of my boyfriend.]

I wasn't sure if that was true or not, but since she said so, the solution was obvious.

"Then let's see... How about you come over to my room at around 6:00 tomorrow?"

Considering that we'd be meeting with Nanase after school tomorrow, that seemed like a fair enough time to schedule things.

[I can come hang out at your place!?!]

"You'll be here to study, not to hang out."

[Eh?]

Don't 'eh' me.

"I'll help you study. That should at least get you motivated, right?"

To start out, I'd evaluate the full extent of her abilities.

And if it turns out that she needs to participate in additional study sessions, then I'd urge her to do so.

[You're worried cuz you'd be real sad if your girlfriend were to get expelled, huh~?]

She suddenly asked, noteworthy traces of excitement in her voice, almost as if she thought she had the upper hand now. I was tempted to tease her a little bit in response, but I figured that she'd feel more motivated to study if I just went along with her and agreed.

"Well, naturally? If the girlfriend which I had only just started dating got herself expelled, it'd be no laughing matter."

[I-I see~ That's true isn't it! Well then, I guess I have no other choice. I actually had all sorts of things planned for tomorrow, but I'll make a special appearance, just for you.]

While it wasn't very straightforward, it was a small price to pay to get her to push forward with her studies.

[What should I bring with me?]

"I have everything you'd need in my room already. Just don't be late and that should be fine."

[Okay~!]

"Well then, I'll be hanging up now."

[Wha!? Hold up! Wait! We've, like, only talked about the special exam and studying so far, though!]

Apparently, she wanted to chat about something completely unrelated to any of that.

"I guess you're right about that."

[Hmph, you seriously...]

While we didn't talk about anything related to the exam or studying after that, she continued to chew me out nonetheless.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 2

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas and Silent Death

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On Friday, the fifth day of the special exam, the number of pairs finalized had increased to 81, meaning that a little over half of all students had made their decisions. The number of students in Class 2-D who had found a partner had begun to increase as well.

The same was true of those whom I was close with. I had already known about Kei's decision due to our talk yesterday, but both Airi and Haruka from the Ayanokōji Group made theirs as well. The driving force behind this had been none other than Kushida. She was largely responsible for introducing our classmates to students from Class 1-B thanks to her collaboration with Yagami, an underclassman from the same middle school as her. However, this was by no means a perfect solution for everything. Although Yagami was gradually gaining a positive reputation within his own class, it didn't seem like he had any intention of being a leader. As such, he was simply cooperating with us as an individual. It wasn't reasonable to expect him to be able to provide enough students to cover for everyone who needed a partner in Class 2-D.

Yagami had offered his help under only one condition: That he partner up with Kushida.

And, as indicated by the information provided in the OAA app, that was exactly what had happened yesterday.

We had to use Kushida, one of our more academically capable students, but Horikita didn't seem to be dissatisfied with that in the slightest because the benefits had far outweighed the cost incurred. Besides, we still had several talented students left on the table, such as Yōsuke, Keisei, Mii-chan, Matsushita, and even Horikita herself.

In any case, just because one's partner had been finalized didn't mean that one could just take it easy.

A proper amount of studying was a reality that simply couldn't be avoided.

In fact, you could say that the exam had only truly started once one's partner had been chosen.

Even though I didn't speak with them very much, I could feel a sense of unity in our class as everyone began to help each other out.

It was probably only possible because we were comrades who had stuck together through thick and thin over the course of the past year.

But despite the unified atmosphere—

One student rose up from his seat, seemingly about to return home for the day.

Horikita proceeded to speak up to him, as if she had been waiting for him to attempt to leave.

“It seems you still haven’t found a partner yet, Kōenji-kun.”

“And what’s wrong with that?”

This was an intervention with the only person in the class who wasn’t a part of this sense of unity.

“As your fellow classmate, I just thought I’d ask you about your current situation.”

Even for students that usually did things on their own, they’d normally still talk about it with others so you’d still know what they were up to.

But Kōenji wasn’t one to say anything to anyone, so it was hard to know what he was up to.

“You’re smart. You’ve never even considered the idea that you might get expelled, have you?”

“Of course.”

“Fair enough. Knowing you, even if you were to pair with a student with ratings similar to Ike-kun, you’d get close to 400 points easily. I think you’re pretty safe.”

Generally speaking, one would want to make use of Kōenji as one of the most academically capable students in the class.

That was probably why Horikita had reached out to him, but sure enough...

“Fufufu. I have no intention of doing anything for this special exam. All that matters is that the one who becomes my partner scores at least 150 points. As long as they accomplish the bare minimum, it should be effortless for me to attain a score that exceeds the passing criteria.”

According to Chabashira, everyone should be able to score a total of 150 points on the exam at the very least. Unless you were in my shoes and you ended up partnering with the White Room enforcer, it was unthinkable that one’s partner would intentionally score a zero.

However, the need to rely on your partner was inevitable.

Indeed. You would probably never find somebody that was 100% guaranteed to score at least one point on the exam, no matter how hard you looked. Both first and second-year students had to move forward on the assumption that their partner would score at least 150 points, but this was no more than a 99.9% guarantee. In order to make that guarantee as close to 100% as possible, the school had come up with a rule, stating that students whose scores deviate from what was expected of them, given their Academic Ability ratings, would be expelled. And it was because of this that Kōenji could afford to be confident.

He didn’t need to go to the trouble of attending discussions or building up relationships with the new students.

"In other words, you're saying that it doesn't matter who you end up partnering with, right? If so, would you allow me to find someone for you? I know you think you'll be fine no matter who you end up with, but it'd be safest to avoid incurring the 5% penalty that would come with not finding a partner."

She was offering to just leave everything to her, a proposition that had essentially no visible downsides.

"You're definitely not wrong, but allow me to refuse."

"...Why? Can I ask that you give me a reason?"

"Because I am who I am, naturally."

Simply put, he didn't want to be used at Horikita's convenience.

Kōenji was Kōenji regardless of the situation.

If I were to find myself in a position where I had to make use of Kōenji in order to come out on top, then I probably should've done something different before getting into that position in the first place.

"Satisfied?"

Having been asked this, there was nothing more Horikita could say.

After all, Kōenji wasn't an opponent she could force into action even if she tried. It would be a waste of effort.

"Yes. For now. But, you can't keep going on like this forever. When the time comes and the class really has to work together, you'll have to do your part as well."

She wasn't talking about this particular special exam. Rather, she had her sights set on what would come after that.

Horikita wanted him to keep that in mind.

"I understand why you'd want to rely on somebody as perfect and flawless as me, but I probably won't take part in a~ny of that."

Unwilling to lend his ear to Horikita any further, Kōenji turned and left the classroom, headed off to who-knows-where.

"Kōenji is impossible, isn't he?"

I poked my nose into what had happened and spoke up, albeit somewhat unintentionally.

"I'm just irritated because our class would be so much stronger if he took things seriously."



There was nothing more frustrating than having a secret weapon you couldn't control.

It was the feeling of expectation that made her despair when he didn't perform as she thought he would.

"If it were me, I wouldn't have counted on him from the very start."

For the sake of the future, it would probably be easier for her to think of Kōenji as an exception and leave it at that.

"I won't give up."

"...Is that so?"

Well, while running around in circles accomplishing nothing wasn't the best use of time, at least she was motivated.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 3

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Josh/Silent Death/o-montoya

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From the moment we stepped foot into the library, I noticed that it was shrouded in a completely different atmosphere compared to the other day. Many students, both first and second-years, were gathered inside, notebooks and tablets spread out before them as they participated in what appeared to be various different study groups.

It seemed most students hadn't grown complacent after finding a partner, instead, they had begun taking action right away.

For some reason, I was reminded of back when our class held a study session here a year ago.

"Well this is a bit troubling. There are more people here than before, so we might stand out a bit."

"Let's just try to blend in then."

Fortunately, the seats we used yesterday at the back of the library were still available.

Since it wouldn't have been strange if the seats were occupied, I turned and looked over at a certain someone elsewhere in the library.

It wasn't long before Hiyori noticed my gaze and waved at me with a gentle smile on her face as she approached us.

"I thought that Ayanokōji-kun and Horikita-san would surely visit today as well, so I made a special request and had these seats reserved for you."

"Are you sure that's fine?"

"It would be a different story if the library was close to maximum capacity, but there's no need to worry about that."

Given the size of the library, there was plenty of space for everyone. Nonetheless, I appreciated her consideration.

"Please go ahead, feel free to take all the time you need to discuss."

With that, Hiyori left, not particularly interested in lingering around any further.

"She's awfully kind, isn't she? Do you think she overheard our conversation yesterday?"

"It's hard to say. I think it'd be difficult given the distance though."

We sat in the same seats as yesterday, as they had been expressly left open for us.

And then, we took out all of our study materials from our bags and began acting like we were there to study.

However, no matter how long we waited, Nanase never showed up.

"Nanase-san. She's late."

The meeting time was supposed to be after school at 4:30, but it was already past 5:00.

I had sent her multiple messages by now, but it seemed like she hadn't read any of them yet. At this rate we might have to personally go and check up on her, though that in itself would be tricky since we didn't know her current location.

"Should we go take a look in the first-year classrooms for the time being...?"

Just as we were about to go look for her, Nanase showed up at the entrance to the library, seemingly flustered.

Once she noticed where we were, she approached our table, visibly out of breath.

"I-I apologize. I've kept you waiting for quite some time...!"

"It's fine. I was just worried that something might've happened to you along the way."

"I was busy negotiating with Hōsen-kun, trying to get him to come along with me somehow."

"Is that so... It doesn't look like there's been much progress on that front."

Given that she had come alone, it didn't seem like anybody else would be joining us.

"That said, he didn't stop you from coming to talk with us today?"

"He did not. He probably doesn't think that anything will be finalized without him."

No matter how much Nanase may try on her own, Hōsen had the final say.

Given his confidence, he probably couldn't care less about micromanaging every little thing Nanase wanted to do.

"It seems that we have no choice but to force him to meet up with us after all."

"That's..."

"I already understand that things won't be resolved easily. But unless we discuss this in person, we'll just keep beating around the bush forever."

That seemed like the last thing Horikita wanted to do without further preparation.

"That is certainly so... But..."

Nanase's words trailed off as she seemed somewhat hesitant about something, but she quickly made up her mind and continued.

"Horikita-senpai wants to build an equal, collaborative relationship with Class 1-D no matter what it takes, right? Or am I misunderstanding something?"

"Yes. That's exactly right."

"Then... might I get you to hear out a proposal of mine?"

From the sound of it, Nanase had come here with a few ideas of her own.

"Even if I were to suggest to Hōsen-kun that we enter into an equal, collaborative relationship, it's clear that I would end up being rejected. I think it would be the same even if Horikita-senpai were to meet up with him personally. That being the case, how about you and I proceed with negotiations in secret?"

"Proceed with negotiations in secret? But your classmates wouldn't just obey without Hōsen-kun's permission, would they?"

"Yes. However, that's because I have yet to come forward as a leader."

With that, Nanase presented us with an unexpected proposal.

"I have judged that my class will not survive for much longer if we continue with Hōsen-kun's way of doing things. So, it is my hope that I become the leader of Class-D before his dangerous ideals become instilled in the class's mindset. And, as a stepping stone for that, I'd like to form a relationship with Class 2-D."

Both Horikita and I had never expected that she would propose something like this.

A tale of how Nanase Tsubasa would defeat Hōsen and become the leader of Class 1-D.

If that happened, Horikita's goal of establishing an equal, collaborative relationship suddenly wouldn't be that far off anymore.

"We don't have the basis to judge which one of you is better suited to be leader. Either way, the only thing I can say for sure is that we're running out of time."

With the special exam fast approaching, we simply couldn't afford to get involved in a fight over leadership right now.

“Many of my classmates don’t approve of Hōsen-kun’s way of doing things. In fact, after bringing it up these last few days, I’ve managed to get seven of them to agree to help me.”

“And that’s not just students with low Academic Ability ratings?”

“Yes. Of those seven students who are willing to negotiate, three have Academic Ability ratings of a B- or higher.”

“...I see.”

Horikita pondered over this for a moment. Three people was by no means perfect, but if that number were to increase just a bit further, forming a collaborative relationship with Nanase as the focal point might not be the worst idea after all.

“Wouldn’t it be problematic if Hōsen-kun realizes what we’re doing?”

“Needless to say, that would be a disaster. That’s why we’d have to keep everything secret from now until the deadline for choosing our partners on the day of the exam. If we submit the applications at the very last minute, he won’t notice anything.”

“But then it’d be difficult to win over the students who can study, wouldn’t it?”

There was no changing the fact that the students with high Academic Ability ratings wanted to receive private points as compensation.

“Our class will help compensate you for that. Those of us who aren’t very good at studying will get to avoid the three-month penalty thanks to you and your classmates. In other words, they’ll have three months’ worth of points to help supplement your losses. That way, even if you pay 200,000 points to help win over these students, you’ll ultimately end up getting your money back. Although it would be for far less than the 500,000 points per person that Hōsen-kun is after, it should still be within the scope that my classmates would find acceptable.”

In short, this meant that they would be cleaning up their own mess.

Originally, we were the ones who had to entice the honor students with points, but with this strategy, the less capable Class 1-D students would be the ones using their funds to help entice their peers.

“This way, we won’t cause any problems for you and your class. Of course, Hōsen-kun will get angry once he learns of what we’ve done, but I will take full responsibility so that no harm befalls those who have lent a hand. What do you think?”

“That’s... No matter how much you want to become your class’s leader, wouldn’t this proposal place far too much of a burden on you?”

“It’s fine. You’ve gone through the trouble of extending a helping hand, so I don’t want to lose out on the trust you’ve shown or the opportunity you’ve presented me with.”

Nanase seemed to be saying that it was a cheap price to pay if it meant that her classmates would be saved.

“Besides, even if I’m not recognized as my class’s leader, at least I’ll have helped your class in this exam.”

If you only considered the immediate profits, then Nanase’s proposal was by no means unattractive.

I found myself wondering how Horikita would respond to it.

“Thanks to this, I’m now absolutely certain that I want to have a collaborative relationship with Class 1-D.”

“So, does that mean that you’re okay with my proposal?”

“No. I can’t take you up on your proposal.”

“But there’s no other way...”

“All of Class 1-D’s problems will be solved if you could just get Hōsen-kun onto your side. I don’t think you actually want to be your class’s leader; You just don’t like the way Hōsen-kun is doing things, do you? That being the case, if Hōsen agrees to negotiate, there should be plenty of students willing to pair up, right?”

“That’s... well, yes. I’m sure of it.”

“Plus, if you and Hōsen-kun are in conflict with each other, it’s possible that Class 1-D will be split into two instead of being united as one. There’s no way I’d let that happen. So, how about you let me help you change his mind instead?”

Apparently, this conversation with Nanase had caused Horikita to realize something as well.

That, as long as we can get through Hōsen, the rest of our problems would be solved.

“It’s a risky gamble. If we fail, it may not be possible for Class 1-D and Class 2-D to work together in the future.”

“I’m prepared for that... Well, that’s not true. I think there’s a good chance that our classes can work together. And that’s not just me, I’m sure that Hōsen-kun is thinking the same thing.”

“Even though he was so rude to you over the phone yesterday?”

“I’ll just tell myself that he was being tsundere. At least for now.”

Having understood what Horikita was trying to say, Nanase nodded in agreement.

“I was right to make time to meet with Horikita-senpai and Ayanokōji-senpai again today. It seems my hunch wasn’t incorrect after all.”

“What do you mean by that? I rejected your proposal, didn’t I?”

“No, you didn’t reject anything. You and I have been on the same page since the very beginning.”

“That... Does that mean you were thinking of trying to persuade him this whole time as well?”

“That’s right.”

Apparently, the proposal Nanase had put forward about becoming her class’s leader had been a test of sorts.

She had given Horikita the choice to slight the future of Class 1-D in favor of short-term profit. If Horikita had taken her up on the offer, she wouldn’t have been willing to collaborate with us any further.

“Just as Horikita-senpai said earlier, we’re running out of time. We can’t move forward without getting the two of you in the same room together, even if it means we have to force the matter. Could you give me some time so I can get everything in order for the two of you to meet? I’ll definitely bring Hōsen-kun before you by Sunday, the day after tomorrow.”

It didn’t seem like Nanase was testing us this time, given how earnestly she lowered her head to Horikita.

By waiting until Sunday, the amount of time we had left would naturally decrease by that much more.

Due to this, Horikita turned and looked at me, her eyes hesitantly seeking confirmation.

Thinking that there was nothing wrong with taking a risk, I nodded to her in response, and with that, the hesitation in her eyes vanished.

“I believe you. I’ll look forward to meeting with Hōsen-kun on Sunday, the day after tomorrow.”

“Yes... Absolutely. However, I’d like to avoid meeting in a public place as much as possible. After all, Hōsen-kun may act rather reckless depending on the circumstances.”

“Alright. Then how about we rent a Karaoke room? I’m also fine with meeting up at night sometime if that’s more convenient for him.”

Indeed, meeting in the dead of night on a Sunday would substantially reduce the risk of being seen by others.

“I understand. I’ll make sure he knows.”

Just as the conversation was beginning to come together, Horikita’s cell phone vibrated.

After looking over the message she had received, she let out a sigh.

“What’s up?”

"The study session. It seems like they're short on hands since I'm not there."

Before I realized it, it was already 5:30.

"I think we've just about wrapped up this conversation. Could I ask that you take care of the rest, Ayanokōji-kun?"

"Will do."

After a light bow to Nanase, Horikita quickly gathered up her things and left for the study session.

Horikita was responsible for supporting the entire class, and as such, was always tasked with moving about everywhere.

"Horikita-senpai is quite busy."

"That's what it takes to lead a class."

"I hope I can be an amazing student like her a year from now..."

"Horikita didn't ask about this in detail, but what do you plan on saying to lure Hōsen out?"

"That... Well, while I don't mind answering that for you, why don't you tell me about yourself first, Ayanokōji-senpai?"

"About me?"

The sun was beginning to set for the day, dying the world outside a brilliant shade of orange.

"Horikita-senpai is the leader of your class, but you're different, aren't you?"

I see. Nanase wasn't sure if it was appropriate for me to be here or not.

If I said that Horikita was just forcing me to come along with her, that'd probably be enough to shut her up.

"Senpai... What kind of person are you?"

When I didn't answer, Nanase propped her arm up on the table so as to hide part of her face.

It seemed like somewhat of a defensive posture, done so as to prevent anyone other than me from seeing her mouth and eyes.

"Won't you answer?"



“It doesn’t seem like you’re looking to ask me about my relationship with Horikita, are you?”

It was something different than that. She was looking to ask about what kind of human being I was.

“Yes. I suspect that Ayanokōji-senpai may be a wicked, dirty person. At least, that’s what I think.”

Her words were both intense and direct. Though, despite that, Nanase was looking at me with eyes full of honesty and confidence. I wasn’t sure what I had done to make her look at me that way. Given all of our interactions so far, she couldn’t have been able to find out very much about me. While she and I weren’t the most compatible, I couldn’t remember saying anything that would warrant her calling me ‘wicked’. Nanase Tsubasa may in fact be the enforcer who I’ve been looking for.

There was a reason why I suspected this.

Even though my expulsion was the primary objective for the White Room student, there would probably be more to it for them than that. They would surely look to make contact with me up close, interested in observing the human being known as Ayanokōji Kiyotaka. At least, that’s how I saw it. They weren’t merely interested in my expulsion; They wanted to prove that they were better than me. If they didn’t, ‘that man’ would never approve of them.

This was probably the thought process I would have if I was the one tasked with expelling the person known as Ayanokōji Kiyotaka. However, for someone supposedly from the White Room, her words felt a bit out-of-place.

“When I’m with you like this, Ayanokōji-senpai seems like an ordinary person to me.”

“By that, are you saying that you normally see me as an unordinary person?”

“...No. That’s not it.”

Although Nanase denied it, I found myself wondering if that was what she truly thought.

I had met with Nanase a total of four times now, and I had noticed that strange look of hers each time. It seemed as though I was just about to find out where she had come from, but I could feel my chance to pry deeper slip away from me.

“I’m sorry, please forget I ever asked. The most important thing right now is figuring out how our classes can cooperate with each other.”

Together, we rose up from our seats and turned to leave the library.

As we dispersed, I remembered that there was something I wanted to ask of her.

“Come to think of it, back when we first met, you said that you’d only lose out on 240,000 private points if you lost three months worth of points. Why was that?”

By now, Nanase’s expression had gone back to usual, without even a trace of how it had been only moments earlier.

“Why, you ask? I simply calculated that, as long as our class maintained the 800 class points given to us upon enrollment for three months, one person would end up with 240,000 points...”

Nanase responded as if bewildered that I had even asked.

Apparently, this new batch of first-years had started out with a different sum of class points than we had.

“The number of class points we were given at the beginning of last year was 1000.”

“Eh? So you’re saying that there’s a 200 point difference then?”

“That seems to be the case. I wonder what it’s like for Class 1-A and 1-B?”

“I believe they have 800 points as well. At least, that’s how Shiba-sensei explained it to us.”

Why was there no official notice though? I would think that it would feel somewhat unfair if they found out that they were given fewer class points than in previous years. Was it because 80,000 points a month was still quite a lot, so the school didn’t think it mattered very much? No, if that was the case, the school would have notified them of that from the start. It would’ve made more sense for the school to come clean about it to the students rather than try to hide it and give them a reason to be dissatisfied later.

There were probably several other things different from last year that I still didn’t know about.

“You know that your lifestyle has an influence on your class points, right?”

Back when Shiba-sensei, the homeroom teacher of Class 1-D, broke up the conflict in front of the second-year classrooms, he had mentioned something related to that, saying: ‘I’m sure you’ve been hounded on the school’s rules to the point where your ears hurt.’

“Yes. We’ve been told that tardies, absences, and talking during class can all affect our class points.”

Was it possible that the school had lowered the initial amount of class points as compensation for explaining the rules to them at the start of the year? Even if the school tried to hide it, the first-years would’ve probably realized the importance of following the rules due to the Social Contribution category in the OAA app.

Although I could accept this line of reasoning, Nanase seemed to be lost in thought altogether.

Then, she let show an expression that seemed as though she had thought of something, but that disappeared almost immediately.

It was very subtle. Something that I had only noticed because I had met with her so many times over the past several days.

However, since Nanase didn’t seem to want to say anything, I had no interest in asking her about it.

Together, we left the library and, after a while, we arrived at the school’s entrance.

“Well then, Senpai, I’ll take my leave now.”

“Nanase. This isn’t meant as a way of thanking you for telling me about your class points earlier, but have you ever heard about something called a protection point?”

As we were about to part ways, I called out to her and asked her one last question.

“Protection points? No, this is the first I’ve heard of them.”

“It’s a point system where a student who has one can use it to protect themselves from an expulsion. Although, even amongst all of the second-years, only a select few students have one, so it’s not surprising that you didn’t know.”

“I see. That’s good to know... But why are you telling me this?”

“You gave me information. I just thought I should return the favor.”

Saying no more than that, she and I parted ways.

I had decided to test Nanase. To see if she had the skills to make the best use of the information I had given her.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 4

TL: Graze  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Josh/Silent Death/o-montoya

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Although it had taken some time, thanks to Nanase's everlasting cooperation, it had been decided that we would attempt to hold a discussion with Hōsen, albeit a bit forcefully. There was no way to tell where things would go from here, but it was definitely a step in the right direction.

Shortly before 6:00 PM, my doorbell rang.

Kei arrived, donned in her school uniform instead of casual clothes, perhaps because she had only just gotten back to the dorms.

"You know, there's a lotta people around at this time of day, so I had to be like, super careful. I even used the stairs."

There probably weren't very many girls who would visit a boy's room all by themselves, and even fewer who would stay there for a long period of time.

That type of behavior didn't happen very often unless the boy and girl were in a relationship.

"Well then, how about we get started?"

"Huh? Can't we like, do somethin' else first?"

Instead of taking out her study materials, Kei voiced her desire to chat with me.

However, time was limited. The later in the day it got, the less time there would be left to study.

"If there are no problems with your academics, I'd be glad to chat with you as much as you'd like."

"Hmph..."

"To start out, we need to find out where your strengths and weaknesses lie."

"How do we find out?"

"With these."

I took out five test sheets. Keisei had created them for the Ayanokōji Group to check our strengths and weaknesses. They were extremely convenient, given how much time it would take to go and pick out questions to get everything prepared. Horikita and Yōsuke often made use of them during their study sessions as well.

“Most of our classmates have been tested with these already.”

“Really...”

“There’s a time limit of 10 minutes per sheet. Go ahead and get started.”

“Fiiine.”

Although reluctant, Kei began to work on the first sheet.

And then, 50 minutes later, she collapsed onto the table listlessly.

“I’m soooooo tired of this...!”

“Good work. Though, I’m surprised you actually manage to concentrate on normal tests.”

“It’s cuz I already had a full day of classes. It’s not easy for me to like, switch back into study mode.”

I quickly finished grading the last sheet as I listened to her complain.

“I see. I think I have a grasp at where your abilities lie.”

“H-how did I do?”

She didn’t seem to know what she herself was capable of, as she looked at me with eyes filled with both anticipation and anxiety.

“You’ll definitely be attending Yōsuke’s study sessions starting tomorrow.”

“Eeeh!?”

“It’s nothing worth panicking over. However, if you don’t study, you’ll only be a stone’s throw from being expelled.”

“B-but like, my partner, Shimazaki-san, has a B-. Shouldn’t I be fine?”

“You need to score 501 points to pass this special exam. You haven’t studied enough, but you’re expected to score around 200 points. Shimazaki will get around 350. A total of 550 is hardly enough to put you into the safe

zone. Furthermore, if Shimazaki hates studying just as much as you do, there's a good chance that he might score less than 300 points."

If that were to happen, the two of them would probably fall below the 501 point safety line.

"I think I'm like, gettin' a little scared all of a sudden..."

"That's why it's important that you get yourself into a position where you can score 250 points on the exam as soon as possible."

This test was designed so that even D+ students could score that well. That is, as long as they studied properly.

"Uhm, well, I've got a question for you."

"A question?"

"You're tryin' to tutor me and all, but Kiyotaka, you've got a C rating right now, right? It looks ordinary, but you can actually, like... score way better than that, right?"

"Something like that."

"You're like this with your fighting skills too. Why do you go so far to hide everything?"

"I don't want to stand out, so I don't put in the effort with my grades."

"Well then, like, how many points could you get if you got serious?"

"Who knows."

"Stop avoiding the question and tell me already~!"

She pushed my shoulder and asked me with a smile on her face.

"I'll gladly answer your question as long as you attend the study sessions starting tomorrow."

"I'll go I'll go. I felt like, a sense of danger from what you said earlier anyway."

"Instead of telling you how many points I could get, I'll tell you how many points I've decided to get."

"W-what the heck? You're saying some crazy stuff."

The exam had five subjects in total. Since one subject had to be saved for my competition with Horikita, I had no intention of cutting any corners at all.

However, if I went all out in all five subjects, my reputation among others would change completely.

“400 points.”

“...Seriously? Wait a sec, 400 points is...”

“The equivalent of an A rating in Academic Ability.”

Even amongst our classmates, it was a domain that only a few honor students like Keisei and Horikita could hope to reach.

To be precise, it would’ve been more accurate to say nearly 400 points, but I felt no need to correct myself.

“And you’re sayin’ you think you can score that well?”

“Of course. There hasn’t been a problem I couldn’t solve ever since I enrolled here.”

I didn’t know how many high-difficulty questions this exam would contain, but compared to what I studied back in the White Room, it seemed fair to assume the exam wouldn’t be that difficult.

After noticing that she looked physically incapable of understanding what I was talking about, I decided to call Kei back to reality.

“Now that I’ve seen what you’re working with, I want you to keep that sense of danger of yours in mind and concentrate on your studies.”

“Well... I guess I’ll study with you for a bit and then head back home...”

It was only just past 7:00, so I didn’t think there was an issue with working hard for another hour or so.

It would probably be useful to see more so that I could tell Yōsuke about Kei’s current skill level tomorrow.

“Alright. Ready to get started then?”

“Right here, right here.”

“Hm?”

I had intended to get into it right away, but Kei began patting the floor right next to her with her hand.

“Come sit here and teach me.”

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 5

TL: Graze  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/o-montoya/Josh/Silent Death

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For a little over an hour, the two of us studied together in my room as I casually gave Kei advice.





All in all, I got the impression that she had a good head on her shoulders, but the fact that she hadn't been diligent with her studies up until now had held her back from reaching her full potential. Though, I had no intention of pointing that out to her.

If she had simply made a habit out of neglecting her studies ever since early childhood, then I would probably say something to her. However, in her case, she hadn't been able to receive a normal, proper education due to the bullying she faced back in her middle school days.

She hadn't properly learned some of the fundamentals that came with a middle school education, so she was having a hard time with her lessons in high school.

Taking all of that into consideration, I'd say she was doing surprisingly well.

Gently guiding her, allowing her to pursue the answers on her own was probably the correct way to go about tutoring her.

If she could get to the point where she starts to feel like studying isn't painful anymore, she would probably grow and mature a lot, just like Sudō.

"Hey..."

"What's wrong?"

Kei suddenly began staring at the floor in front of her.

And then, after what seemed like several seconds, she reached out and picked up something.

I wondered if it was just a piece of trash or some dust or something, but...

"The heck is *this*?"

As she spoke, she held out her arm in front of me, showing me what she had found between her index finger and her thumb.

It was a single, long strand of red hair.

"That's a hair, right?"

When I said what I thought it was, Kei's expression instantly twisted in anger.

"A red hair! A freaking *long* hair at that! No matter how you look at it, this is a girl's hair!"  
She was right. Given the length, it was physically impossible for it to be my own hair.

And, of course, the hair type was also completely different. Its owner immediately came to mind. I had no doubt that it had belonged to Amasawa Ichika, who had come over to have a meal just the other day.

"Who did you have over!?"

She asked, probably because nobody came to mind with this type of hair out of all of our classmates.

“Is this that one thing? Jealousy...?”

“Is that a bad thing!? I’m your girlfriend Kiyotaka! I have the right to stick my nose in all sorts of stuff!”

This was my first time hearing of such a right. Either way, I should take this as a lesson.

After inviting a girl over to my room, I would make sure to clean it thoroughly from now on.

I took this knowledge to heart, and yet the disaster continued. As I was deliberating over how I should go about explaining things to Kei, the sound of the doorbell unexpectedly echoed throughout the room. After which, a video feed of the dorm’s lobby was displayed on the monitor near the entryway.

Not only was I, the room’s owner, curious about who it was, but Kei was as well. The two of us went over to take a look at the screen.

Thereupon, we saw none other than Amasawa, waving her hand at the camera with a wide grin on her face.

The first to react was not me, but Kei, the red strand of hair still clutched tightly in her hand.

“A girl I’ve never seen before with red hair...”

She looked like she was trying to solve the riddle on some children’s mystery TV show.

Kei reached out and pressed the call button before I could get the chance to do so myself.

“Who is it!?”

Kei spoke through the speaker, her voice filled with undisguised anger, to which Amasawa naturally jumped back in surprise.

“Huh? Room 401... This is Ayanokōji-senpai’s room... right?”

I forcefully pulled Kei’s arm away and took over.

“Sorry, it’s me. What do you want?”

Although this was an unannounced visitor, there was no way I could let Kei handle it like this. Amasawa aside, given the high-traffic of the lobby, it would be a problem if somebody overheard that Kei and I were together.

“Ah, do you have company? Should I come back later? I’d like to come up and talk with you a bit, but...”

I looked at Kei. Although she was glaring at me, she gestured to have Amasawa come instead of ordering me to send her away.

Apparently, she wanted to make sure that the hair was Amasawa's.

"No, it's fine. Come on up."

I pressed the auto-lock release button and moments later, Amasawa went inside the elevator.

"Are you sure you're fine with this? Letting another student find out that you're here?"

"...Whatever."

It seemed as though Kei was so incredibly mad that she had lost sight of herself.

Kei was the one who said that she wanted to keep our boyfriend-girlfriend relationship a secret from those around us right now.

If we ran into somebody in this situation, it's possible that rumors about it might start to spread.

"Well, it's too late now, right? We've got no choice but to try and trick her somehow."

At any rate, Amasawa had already heard Kei's voice, so driving Kei out before she got here wouldn't accomplish very much.

Rather, we had to consider the possibility that doing so might make Amasawa even more suspicious.

Roughly a minute later, Amasawa reached the fourth floor and rang the doorbell to my room.

"I'll let her in, so just sit here and wait for now."

"I... I get it."

I went to the front door and greeted Amasawa.

"Sorry for the sudden visit~ Ayanokōji-senpai."

She studied my expression for a moment before sending a calculating look at the shoes in the entryway.

How do I put it... Is this what was referred to as 'a woman's intuition'?

"Girlfriend?"

She threw out a straightforward question with a wide grin on her face.

“What can I do for you?”

“How perverse~ Well, to tell you the truth, I think I might’ve left something in your room last time I was here.”

“What is it?”

“My favorite hair tie. I can’t find it anywhere...”

So, after realizing that it had gone missing, she had come here to try and look for it?

“Well, come on in.”

I couldn’t just make her stand and wait in the hallway, so I decided to let her come inside

Instead of making petty excuses about the hair Kei had found, it would probably be faster to have Amasawa explain it herself.

“Pardon the intru~sion.”

Amasawa walked straight in, completely unconcerned about the presence of my other visitor. It seemed that she had only just gotten back from school, as she still had her school bag in hand.

And then, she met face-to-face with Kei, who was waiting further inside.

“Oh, hello~ I’m Amasawa Ichika~”

“Hello.”

Kei looked obviously unhappy, but she seemed to be doing her best to endure it in her own way.

“You’re a senpai, right? I’d lo~ve to hear your name.”

“...Karuizawa Kei.”

“Karuizawa-senpai, is it~? Ah, seems like you guys have been studying together, huh? Are you his girlfriend by any chance? Ayanokōji-senpai dodged the question a lil bit ago, but I’d still love to know.”

Amasawa’s ability to ask what she wanted without the slightest hesitation was a true talent in and of itself.

“That’s got nothin’ to do with you. What about it anyway? What’s your relationship with Kiyotaka?”

Although she undoubtedly noticed that something was up given the way Kei called me by my given name, Amasawa took a look around the room.

“Hold on and I’ll answer that question in a moment. Hmm, I don’t see it at a glance... I’m sure that I took it off back when I was here last time though. Well... maybe it got swept under something somewhere.”

At that, Amasawa knelt down and began taking a look under my bed, completely disregarding the scowl on Kei’s face. As she did, the hem of her skirt went up, naturally drawing focus to the size of her rear.

“Ah... Senpai. This might be a bit too naughty for me to handle.”

Still kneeling next to the bed, Amasawa turned her head and looked at me. She spoke with a voice that seemed to emphasize that she was doing this on purpose.

Kei suddenly looked back toward me, glaring.

“I’ll look for it.”

Trading places with Amasawa, I started off by checking to see if the hair tie had ended up underneath my bed somehow.

“Hey, can you like, not just ignore what I said!? Answer my question!”

“Hmm, Ayanokōji-senpai is my... How should I put it... My exclusive, personal chef?”

“Huh? What the hell?”

Having heard a response she couldn’t make sense of, Kei turned to me again, the look in her eyes even harsher than before.

“She’s Sudō’s partner. We met because of something trivial and I ended up cooking a single meal for her.”

“Sorry, but I don’t understand what you’re getting at. Why were you cooking for Sudō-kun’s partner?”

Given that I had only given her a summary of what had happened, her confusion was certainly understandable.

I proceeded to re-explain it in further detail as I continued to search for the hair tie under the bed.

Shortly after I finished explaining it for a second time, Amasawa spoke up again.

“Could I go check in the kitchen, just in case? I might’ve taken it off when I was washing the dishes. Ah, Senpai, please just continue searching inside the room. Perhaps it’s under the dresser?”

“Alright.”

I didn’t find anything under the bed, so I began searching the area around the dresser instead.

Unsatisfied with my second explanation, Kei came and crouched beside me, whispering to me in a low, hushed voice.

“Hang on... You said there might or might not be a hair tie here... What’s that supposed to mean!?”

“I told you. I invited Amasawa over and cooked her a meal. That’s it.”

“I-is that *really* all?”

“Of course it is.”

“...Really really?”

It didn’t seem like I could get her to believe me with a verbal explanation alone.

“I’m gonna go check with that girl and see if you’re telling the truth.”

With that, Kei tried to stand up, but I forcefully grabbed her arm and stopped her.

And then, I quickly brought my index finger to her lips, subtly instructing her to keep quiet.

Quick on the uptake when it matters most, Kei kept herself from making a fuss.

“You search around here with me as well.”

“I-I understand.”

Even though she didn’t understand my intentions, she managed to recognize that it was important and began to help me with the search.

“Ah! Ayanokōji-senpai, I found it~!”

Amasawa’s voice rang out from inside the kitchen.

Together, Kei and I looked toward the kitchen, only to see Amasawa presenting us the hair tie in the palm of her hand.

“Looks like it fell into the gap between the counter and the fridge.”

Amasawa grinned happily as she put it into her pocket.

“It feels like I’m interrupting something, so I’ll be on my way.”

“Sorry for all the commotion.”

“No it’s fine. I shouldn’t have forgotten it in the first place. Well, sorry to have bothered the two of you~”

Amasawa immediately went to pick up her bag and put on her shoes in the entryway.

“But now that I think of it, Senpai isn’t one to be underestimated either~ I didn’t expect you to have such a cute girlfriend.”

After saying that, Amasawa put her finger up against her cheek, making a show of thinking about something.

“Speaking of which, you know what? It’s prolly not a good idea for it to just be the two of us next time you cook for me, huh?”

“Obviously!”

“In that case— Let’s have Karuizawa-senpai eat together with us the next time~ Anywho, sayonara~!”

Amasawa came and went just like a storm passing through.

“Seems like you’ve met an awfully cute kouhai, huh Kiyotaka?”

“You probably aren’t going to listen to me no matter what I say, are you?”

The studious mood between us had already disappeared, but I still had to keep explaining the truth to her until she was satisfied.



## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 6

TL: Graze  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Silent Death/Josh/o-montoya

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Friday passed by, and Saturday, the first day of the weekend, had arrived.

There had been many opportunities to get involved with the first-year students these past five days, partially thanks to the influence of the special exam. There was our encounter with Amasawa, a student from Class 1-A, that had led to me cooking a homemade meal in order to secure Sudō a partner. And then, not long after, there was a discussion with Nanase to work out an agreement between our class and Class 1-D.

In other news, Kushida had managed to make connections with Yagami, a student from Class 1-B. And thanks to Yagami's help, several students, such as Kei, had managed to find partners for themselves as well. This special exam would be evaluated differently depending on the person looking at it, but it may be particularly meaningful in terms of interaction between the school years.

Many students have already learned the names and faces of the upper and underclassmen, and some even know their ratings.

Furthermore, we've found out about the different inclinations of each of the classes.

Class 1-A doesn't have a clear leader at the moment, giving off the impression that each student was free to take action on their own. One reason as to why this was allowed was the high academic capability of the class as a whole. True to its name, Class 1-A had the highest number of students with Academic Ability ratings of B- or higher. Many of the more academically capable students had taken the initiative to negotiate contracts with Class 2-A and Class 2-C for points. While the class naturally had several students with D-level Academic Ability ratings, these students still excelled in other ways, so Class 2-A had gone out of its way to pick them up as well. Of the 40 students in the class, 34 had already decided on their partner.

Class 1-B was similar to Class 1-A in the sense that no clear leader had emerged yet. Additionally, the academically capable students were also selling themselves off as partners one after the next. The main difference being that many of them had partnered up with students in Class 2-C instead of Class 2-A. This was probably due to the fact that Ryūen had offered more points than Sakayanagi, but the details of the situation were still unclear for the time being. Currently, 33 of the 40 students had decided on their partners.

Class 1-D was currently led by Hōsen, who had taken control of the class with an iron fist. It was essentially no different than what Ryūen had done with his own class last year. The most noteworthy thing about them was that they had decided upon the fewest number of partners out of all the classes. We would probably find out more once we met with them this coming Sunday.

And finally, there was Class 1-C, the one class that I hadn't gotten involved with at all over this past week. I had already memorized the names of each of the students, but I hadn't heard anything about the class, even from Horikita. The primary reason for this is that most of the Class 1-C students had signed partnership contracts with Class 2-B after attending the meet-and-greet Ichinose set up at the start of the week. Of their 40 students, 10 had yet to decide on their partners, but none of those 10 had Academic Ability ratings below a D-. In other words, as a class, they had succeeded in securing a safe position for almost everybody. Given that, Class 1-C

might have some sort of class mediator who had utilized the meet-and-greet to successfully save their classmates.

Later in the afternoon, I launched the OAA app to take a look at all the partners that had been finalized as of today.

“105 pairs. Roughly 70%, huh?”

Considering the number of students who were in the library yesterday, it seems that the majority of students wanted to get this over with by the weekend. There also seemed to be more movement in Class 1-D, as now a total of 8 partners had been decided. I didn’t know if the weekend had made Hōsen feel impatient, or...

Anyway, the number of students who had yet to decide on a partner was 55 for the first-years and 52 for the second-years.

If the White Room enforcer was among those 55 students, the odds of partnering up with them was getting pretty high.

In all honesty, there was no way to 100% guarantee that I’d be able to avoid choosing the White Room student.

Of course, the only reason for that is because they don’t give off any scent at all. I’ve been prolonging the process, holding out hope for some sort of evidence that would allow me to decide that somebody was safe, but that strategy was about to reach its limit. I probably had to make my decision before my options narrowed down even further.

Even though negotiations with Class 1-D would happen soon, I felt as though I should be prepared for other options.

I decided to head to the Keyaki Mall later this afternoon to try and open up my possibilities.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 7

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/o-montoya/Silent Death

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Naturally, the Keyaki Mall on a Saturday evening was practically overflowing with students.

Students who had already decided on their partners for the special exam, in particular. Since they didn't need to worry about finding a partner for themselves, they were free to devote their attention to studying for next week's exam together with their friends or simply hang out and relax.

I hadn't personally made contact with every first-year student yet, but even so, I felt like if there was anybody from the White Room in the area, I would've encountered them by now. However, I didn't get that kind of special impression from anybody I had seen so far.

If I had to give an example of the impression I was looking for, the time when I talked to Nanase in the library was the first thing that came to mind. I suspected that Tsukishiro or someone with close ties to him had taught the White Room enforcer how to behave like a 'student'. Though, the problem didn't have anything to do with whether they had a certain personality or not.

The problem was that they were thoroughly hiding any traces of their true identity.

It was somewhat similar to how I was back when I first came to this school one year ago.

There were certain disadvantages and drawbacks to growing up without knowing anything about the real world.

One such disadvantage was that I didn't know what it meant to be a 'student'.

Such a thing had never been taught to us back in the White Room, as they never intended for us to attend school in the first place.

That was why, in the beginning, I arbitrarily decided to create a character and use it to put on an act.

I tried all sorts of things, like changing the tone of my voice or being more talkative than normally I was.

I took on the role of a slightly impertinent student who looked at the world a little bit differently.

Though... in the end, the acting began to feel tedious and unsustainable, so I eventually reverted back to my true self.

I had come to realize that, even if I didn't hide my true self, I could still live on as a student. However, the person who had been sent to infiltrate the school was different.

They were putting on the appearance of a normal student for the sole purpose of keeping their identity a secret from me. I had no way of knowing if those I met were just ordinary students, or were just acting like one. Either way, they probably wouldn't make their presence known to me very easily.

Anybody capable of surviving in that world absolutely cannot be underestimated, no matter their gender.

Even though I was confident that I would come out on top in terms of individual skill, I was still in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous position since I was being forced to stay on the defensive. My opponent could use any means at their disposal to force my expulsion, while the only thing I could do to protect myself was try and see through their strategy.

On my way back from a quick stop at Hamming, I happened to run into Sakayanagi.

"It seems you've been quite proactive about interacting with the first-year students recently, Ayanokōji-kun."

"That's because the students with low ratings have no choice but to fight for their lives. I've just been helping Horikita find partners for Sudō and Ike."

"I see. Indeed, if one of those two were to draw the short end of the stick and match with a bad partner, I can say with certainty that they'd be faced with expulsion."

Although Sakayanagi seemed at least somewhat convinced with my excuse, she didn't stop there.

"However, is that really all there is to it, Ayanokōji-kun?"

"What do you mean?"

"In order to get you expelled, I would imagine that the White Room might send somebody... an enforcer of sorts to infiltrate the first-year students. Even if you got a perfect score, if your partner gets a zero, the both of you would be expelled from the school. That's why I've been thinking that this exam might be particularly troublesome for you."

I tried to feign ignorance, but given what she had said, it seemed as though this was something she had been aware of since the very beginning instead of something that she had just thought up out of the blue.

"There's no way you can maintain a peaceful school life indefinitely, you know? If your opponent feels like it, they may even be willing to expose your true abilities to everyone. Nevertheless, if you're still able to maintain an enjoyable school life despite that, then I suppose my fears are unfounded."

"Well, you don't need to worry about that."

"And could I get you to tell me your rationale for that?"

"I've decided to abandon my old way of thinking. I don't plan on hiding anything from now on."

For me, right now, continuing with my school life was my top priority.

If I kept being fixated on the wrong things, there was a chance that I might have the rug pulled out from under me.

“So that’s how it is. You’ve already revealed some of your abilities to certain individuals such as Mashima-sensei, so it’d probably be more convenient to just disclose everything altogether, huh?”

Sakayanagi replied, having gladly lent her ear to my explanation.

“Back to the issue at hand; If you still haven’t found a partner yet, how about I help you out and save you some time? There aren’t many left, but I’m familiar with some first-years that don’t have partners yet. They’re not the types to cause you any trouble.”

Thanks to her own investigative efforts, it seemed that Sakayanagi had gone out of her way to leave behind a couple of safe students for me.

“That’s quite generous of you, but I’m afraid I must decline.”

“Is it that you don’t trust my judgment?”

She had already seen through me since long ago, knowing full well that I needed to make my decision soon.

“I acknowledge your abilities, but I’ll decide my own fate for myself.”

If I met a tragic end after entrusting my fate to somebody else, I would probably be filled with regret.

“Besides, I think I’ve already figured out what I need to do.”

“Is that so? Well in that case, I won’t say anything more. I’ll be watching to see what you do from afar, Ayanokōji-kun. I look forward to the day when we can have our rematch.”

With that, Sakayanagi bowed her head and walked away. She had never even entertained the idea that I might get expelled. In a sense, you could say that she had placed a great deal of trust in me.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 8

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: Silent Death/PuffyPyjamas/o-montoya/Josh

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On the way back from the Keyaki Mall...

"Uhm, do you, perhaps, have a minute?"

A somewhat lazy voice of a boy called out to me from behind.

I turned around to find a boy and girl staring straight at me. The girl, repeatedly shifting her gaze between her cell phone and myself, was Tsubaki Sakurako from Class 1-C. The boy beside her was her classmate, Utomiya Riku.



“You’re Class 2-D’s... Ayanokōji-senpai, correct?”

I couldn’t see what was on the screen of her phone from where I was, but she most likely had the OAA app open.

“I’m Utomiya, and her name is Tsubaki. Could we talk with you for a bit about becoming partners for this special exam?”

“Partners?”

“Yes. We’re currently going around searching for upperclassmen with Academic Ability ratings of a C or higher who are willing to cooperate with us.”

Since I had come out today in search of a partner, this development felt far too good to be true. It almost felt as if they had been waiting for me.

I didn’t know whether or not I should trust an undisguised attempt at contacting me.

Well, making my decision based on timing alone would probably be the most dangerous mistake of all.

“I’ve been having some trouble finding a partner myself. Could you give me some more details?”

With the app, you could grasp a student’s face, name, and ratings. However, you’d naturally be left in the dark with respect to their personality. This was why meeting face-to-face and talking with each other was so necessary, as it helped you determine if you could trust the other party.

Incidentally, while Utomiya had already decided on his partner, Tsubaki had yet to find one. Since her Academic Ability rating of a C- was by no means high, she probably wanted to partner up with somebody who had a C rating or higher.

That said, it wasn’t clear if they were searching for Tsubaki’s sake or for one of their classmates.

“Instead of standing here, how about we discuss things at the cafe?”

Spearheading the conversation, Utomiya respectfully proposed a change of location.

This certainly wasn’t a topic that could be decided in only a minute or two, so I accepted his proposition.

Although it was quite crowded, the three of us took up some empty seats in a vacant part of the cafe.

“This may seem sudden, but could you please hear us out?”

Utomiya turned and looked toward Tsubaki, signaling for her to start speaking.



“Thing is, I don’t like owing favors or being in someone’s debt or anything. I wanna one-off kinda deal with no strings attached.”

Tsubaki seemed a little aloof, looking down at her fingernails as she spoke.

Between a C and a C-, the ratings were nearly identical, more or less.

So given the similarity, neither party would really have the upper hand if they were to pair up.

“Can I ask something that’s bothering me?”

“Please, go ahead.”

“Most students have Academic Ability ratings at or around a C. Why didn’t she find a partner earlier?”

Out of everybody in the second year, there should’ve been several students who would’ve been more than happy to team up with Tsubaki.

They wouldn’t get a high score, but they’d at least manage to avoid expulsion.

The fact that she still hadn’t found a partner almost a full week into the exam weighed on my mind.

“That’s—”

Utomiya choked upon his words a bit.

Noticing this, Tsubaki made proper eye contact with me for the first time.

“It’s my fault. I never said anything about it.”

Using Tsubaki’s words as a starting point, Utomiya proceeded to add on his own explanation.

“Initially, Tsubaki didn’t consult anyone about finding a partner. But when Friday came around, I guess she started getting impatient... since she came and told me about what she wanted to do.”

So, in a race against time, Utomiya began doing all he could to help out his classmate.

After all, most of their other classmates had already decided on their partners.

Even though they still had one more week to find somebody, a certain amount of anxiety was nothing out of the ordinary.

“With Tsubaki’s academic ability, the 5% penalty might be a problem.”

This seemed to be the reason why they had approached me, a student with a C rating.

If there were no special circumstances, I would've probably agreed to their proposition without even a moment's hesitation.

However, there was a reason why I couldn't make such a hasty decision. This scenario was extremely similar to the one I had imagined back when the rules of this special exam were first explained to us.

That, the students I was most likely to pair up with were those with a similar Academic Ability rating to my own.

And now, Tsubaki, a student with a C- rating, had come along in search of a partner.

This was my first time meeting both Tsubaki and Utomiya, so I needed to sound them out before I could make my decision.

"I'd like to ask you something. Earlier, you said you've been going around searching for upperclassmen. How many people did you reach out to before me?"

I decided to start by asking something simple, but Utomiya's response was rather unexpected.

"I'm sorry, the words I chose were a bit misleading; You're actually the first person we've approached."

Utomiya offered me an apology before I had the chance to probe any further.

"So, if you aren't willing to partner up with her, we'll have to search for someone who will."

"Oh, so I just happened to be the first person you reached out to."

"Actually, there's a reason why we chose to meet you first. We figured that there might be a private point requirement if we asked somebody from Class 2-A or Class 2-C."

I see. It's certainly true that, as it is now, the first-year students were being bought off by the second-year students.

Given the circumstances, it wouldn't be surprising if somebody demanded that some points be provided in exchange for partnering up with Tsubaki. However, in practice, she wouldn't be making any demands of students with high Academic Ability ratings. There were still plenty of students without partners, so she could simply pair up with somebody without paying anything. It was unlikely that they hadn't already considered this.

That said, it would be a bit strange if I told them it would be fine if they partnered up with someone from Class 2-A or 2-C even though I hadn't decided on a partner myself yet.

Objectively speaking, there wasn't even a single reason for me to reject their offer.

My options here were limited.

“While I haven’t decided on my partner yet, I already have a candidate in mind. In fact, we’ve spoken with each other several times now about working together.”

This was a half-lie, but neither of them had any way of confirming that.

Furthermore, if this was enough to make them back down, then the two of them were most likely innocent.

“So that’s how it is... I see.”

Utomiya glanced over at Tsubaki with a troubled expression on his face.

“Then I guess there’s no use, right? Seems like it’ll be faster to search for somebody else.”

Tsubaki tried to back down the moment she found out I already had a partner candidate in mind.

“I’d like to ask, just for reference... which first-year student are you planning to pair up with?”

While Tsubaki herself tried to pull away, Utomiya kept on going at it.

“I can’t tell you that. The only thing I’ll say for sure is that they aren’t in Class 1-C.”

Though I didn’t give any explanation about why I couldn’t tell him, he should’ve been able to guess the reason well enough.

That, I wouldn’t give information to an enemy, a rival, of the student I was looking to work with.

“Let’s go Utomiya-kun. We shouldn’t waste any more of Ayanokōji-senpai’s time like this.”

“...You’re right.”

I was grateful that they had reached out to me, but I couldn’t make such a hasty decision.

There was far too little data on Tsubaki Sakurako.

“Just in case, here’s my contact information.”

Utomiya handed me a slip of paper with his contact information written on it that he had prepared beforehand.

“It’s a bit self-serving for me to say this, but I might contact you if I’m turned down by the person I’m thinking of working with. In which case, if you’re still willing to partner up with me at the time, then please let me know.”

“Understood. Let’s go Tsubaki.”

At Utomiya’s prompting, Tsubaki uncrossed her arms and stood up from her seat.

And then, she lightly bowed before leaving together with Utomiya, in search of somebody else to partner up with.

“Tsubaki Sakurako and Utomiya Riku, huh? I’ll have to keep them in mind.”

Now that I had thrown away a chance to secure my partner, my actions moving forward would be of the utmost importance.

After all, it wouldn’t be very funny if I partnered up with another first-year student and ended up drawing the short end of the stick.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 5 Part 9

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Silent Death

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That same day, two girls from Class 2-D were walking together side-by-side.

There was me, Karuizawa Kei, and my friend, Satō Maya-san. The two of us used to hang out together all the time. That is, up until a few months ago. Recently, we had started seeing each other much less frequently. It wasn't like we had gotten into a fight with each other or anything. It was just that I unconsciously began to feel guilty, and it was getting difficult for me to stay in touch with her as a result.

"Sorry for calling you up all of a sudden, Karuizawa-san."

"No, it's totally fine. I've been wanting to hang out with you too, Satō-san. Anywho, it's sure been a long time since we've hung out together like this, huh?"

"Yeah, it sure has. We used to hang out together all the time back when we first enrolled here~"

"So, whatta ya wanna do? It's a little early for lunch, isn't it?"

Walking slightly ahead of her, I threw out a question about what our plans were as I lightly tilted my head in contemplation.

It was only a little past 11:00 AM.

Earlier today, Satō-san called and asked if I wanted to walk around the Keyaki Mall together with her.

However, she responded in a hurry just as we approached the entrance to the mall.

"Uhm."

"Hmm?"

"How about... we head over this way instead?"

Satō-san pointed at the path that led to the school buildings, a completely different direction from the mall.

"To school? Is there somethin' you gotta do there? But it's the weekend, and I'm pretty sure you can't go in there without your uniform, right?"

"It's not that I wanna go to the school building or anything, it's just... I wanna go somewhere without a lotta people around right now."

I furrowed my brow, unable to understand what exactly she was trying to say.

Well, I actually had a sneaking suspicion about what this would be about.

But I just pushed it to the back of my mind so as to convince myself that I was wrong.

I simply continued pretending; Acting like I hadn't noticed anything.

"What's the matter Satō-san? It's not like you to say somethin' like that. You not feeling well?"

"...I just wanna talk with you a bit, kay?"

I had a bad feeling about where this was going, but I didn't have the luxury of turning her down here.

So, I happily nodded along and the two of us split off from the Keyaki Mall, headed in the direction of the school.

We came upon a place where there weren't any other people around; A place where nobody should be able to overhear our conversation.

"Go ahead and talk. Don't mince your words either. We're friends, right?"

My words were by no means gentle. Instead, they were extremely cruel.

And even though I knew this, I couldn't hold myself back from saying them.

After all, I'm Karuizawa Kei, the leader of the girls in Class 2-D.

A selfish, self-centered person who doesn't pay much mind to the feelings of others.

If I wasn't, the image I had maintained up until now would crumble.

Satō-san probably had that very same impression of me as well.

That was why she wouldn't feel dejected or angry about how I spoke to her.

Instead, she'd jump to her own conclusions. That I, Karuizawa Kei, was the type of girl who wouldn't take what she had to say seriously. That I'd just glaze over it and stop there.

I was even hoping that, by some chance, she'd be satisfied with that.

That she'd choose to avoid souring our relationship by having this conversation with me in the first place.

However— Satō-san didn't stop.





“Karuzawa-san... Why did you break up with Hirata-kun?”

“Eh? Haven’t I already told you?”

Although her question wasn’t directly related to Kiyotaka, it was enough to make my heart race.

Even so, I managed to prevent it from showing on my face thanks to everything I had experienced up until now.

“I mean, yeah you’ve told me and all it’s just... it didn’t really feel right.”

“Really? Well, I guess it was a bit of a waste. Wait, are you like, trying to become Hirata-kun’s new girlfriend or somethin’?”

I was hoping that she would indicate that she already had lost interest in Kiyotaka.

This was essentially my way of confirming that with her. However, my question fell on deaf ears as she responded with words that came at me like an attack straight out of nowhere.

“For example, maybe you broke up with Hirata-kun ‘cause you actually had some other objective in mind?”

Ah, so she was aware of it after all. About the fact that I had fallen in love with Kiyotaka, and that my relationship with him had changed...

“What the—? I don’t understand what you’re saying at all though?”

To this day, I had been deliberately maintaining the guise of my normal, usual self.

Even if, sooner or later, the day comes when my relationship with Kiyotaka has to be revealed, I had no choice but to turn and run away from her accusation since I had decided to keep it a secret.

No matter what she brought to the table, I was fully prepared to smooth it over before anything got out of hand.

Or, well, I thought I was.

“... Karuzawa-san... Are you dating Ayanokōji-kun or something?”

“Eh...?”

I received an unexpected blow. I didn’t have the time to respond to this attack, a strike from behind.

It may have been different if I was dealing with someone else, but in the face of Satō-san, this moment of hesitation was akin to a fatal wound.

She had, as if it was completely natural, seen through my heart.

If she had only asked whether or not I liked him, I definitely would've been able to cover it up.

But her question had gone a level deeper than that.

"...So I was right after all?"

"Eh!? No no no, hold on! What makes you think that!?"

Of course, I denied it. Regardless of whether it meant anything or not, I denied it.

After all, there was simply no way I could admit to it right here, right now.

"With me, that, why..."

My words of denial trailed off as I saw the look in her eyes.

Eyes that seemed like they were about to cry, and yet contained traces of anger at the same time.

And it made sense. After all, she had trusted me enough to reach out and ask about entering into a relationship with Kiyotaka.

And then, I helped her. All while hiding the fact that I was starting to become attracted to Kiyotaka myself. If I were in her shoes, I'd probably want to slap me across the face for going out with Kiyotaka after everything that had happened.

At this point, it didn't matter what I said. She had already convinced herself that she was right.

"Were you already interested in him back when I asked you to help me get closer to him? Did you like him even before that?"

"W-wait, hold on. I..."

I had no choice but to face the brunt of Satō-san's questions.

"I... I said the same thing to Matsushita-san and the others too. I told them that I wondered if the reason you broke up with Hirata-kun was because you liked Ayanokōji-kun. But I'm not just guessing here either, okay? I'm pretty sure about it, so like, that's why I brought this up."

I had already heard that Matsushita-san was suspicious of my relationship with Kiyotaka.

There was nowhere left for me to run now.

"Please just tell me the truth. Otherwise... I don't think I'll be able to think of you as a friend anymore."

Her words were charged with strong emotion.

If anything, she was trying all she could to be my friend, up until the very end.

“Well...”

I simply couldn't turn a blind eye to that serious, earnest look in her eyes.

I didn't know where to start.

No, it'd surely be futile to try and conceal it.

I would tell her everything. Confiding in her was the very least I could do to apologize.

“I... It's just as you've said. I'm dating Ayano... No, I'm dating Kiyotaka.”

Satō-san naturally had a very strong reaction upon hearing this.

Even though she had confessed to Kiyotaka and gotten rejected before, she still had lingering feelings for him.

It's only because she and I ended up liking the same person that I could understand how she felt.

“You call him Kiyotaka, huh?”

I wanted to run and hide from her cold gaze, but I couldn't.

“We got together right at the end of spring break. It really hasn't been that long.”

“I mostly want to know when you started liking him.”

“...I'm not sure exactly when. But, back when you first reached out to me, I had already started to think of Kiyotaka as a member of the opposite sex.”

“I see...”

It didn't seem like she was satisfied with my answer.

“You're angry, aren't you?”

Up until just a moment ago, her eyes had been locked with mine, but now she couldn't match my gaze at all.

“What did you expect? You knew about my feelings and yet you went and got closer to him behind my back.”

There wasn't anything I could say to refute her.

"Although, he rejected my confession, so... I have no right to be angry or anything. It's just..."

A warm spring breeze gently blew past my face.

Only after a distinct, clear sound rang out did I realize that she had slapped me across my left cheek.

"With that, we're even... alright, Karuizawa-san?"

The fact that she had slapped me went beyond my expectations.

For her, my actions were probably just that unforgivable.

"How about you hit me one more time?"

I decided that I might as well offer her my right cheek too.

After all, even now, the pain she had suffered was still far greater than my own.

"No, That... I don't think I'm brave enough for that... I'm sorry for hitting you..."

"Nope. I'm the one who's sorry. Falling for the same person as you and all..."

"It can't be helped. Ayanokōji-kun's really cool, and he's way better-looking than Hirata-kun."

Before I knew it, I found myself spreading my arms and pulling Satō-san into a tight hug.

"Wha, wait, what are you doing Karuizawa-san!?"

"...I'm so sorry!"

"I-it's fine, really..."

Although I felt overwhelmingly remorseful, I simply couldn't hold back the happiness building within that had compelled me to embrace her.

Two people falling for the same person is difficult. However, it also meant that the both of us understood his charm.

This wasn't the time to decide who won or lost.

After all, I'm sure that the number of people who fall for his charms will only continue to increase moving forward.

And I'll have to fight so that I don't lose to any of them.

If I make light of my position as his girlfriend, I'll surely have the rug swept out from under me.

Satō-san may end up becoming one of my rivals as well.

"Wanna go for some tea together?"

Still locked in my embrace, Satō-san nodded her head, agreeing to my fickle request.

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 6 Introduction

## Chapter 6: The Sound of Expulsion

TL: Graze and D3nj4l  
ED: PuffyPyjamas/Silent Death/o-montoya

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Sunday evening. The time was nearing 8:30 PM; The designated day had finally arrived.

The upcoming discussion would most likely determine whether or not we could join hands with Class 1-D.

Or rather, we needed to make certain that we did.

The majority of students outside of Class 1-D and Class 2-D had already found partners.

If this discussion doesn't bring about the desired results, we might be forced to make multiple large concessions in order to avoid facing any penalties.

Horikita and I would be joined by Sudō, who had strongly insisted on accompanying us.

While it was probably somewhat related to his desire to be together with Horikita, I was pretty sure it was mostly because he was wary of Hōsen. Hōsen was the type of person who, depending on how the discussion went, might very well raise his hand against a girl. Sudō wanted to be there to protect her from that. Of course, Horikita turned him down, saying that his presence was unnecessary, but Sudō refused to back down. However, no matter how much he begged, Horikita maintained her stance and refused to let him join us. She believed that the upcoming discussion would be very serious, and had judged that Sudō's presence would only hold us back. Ultimately, I ended up intervening on Sudō's behalf.

This was because, just in case things went south, I could have Sudō take action instead of me.

Sudō's abilities should probably be more than enough to keep Hōsen in check.

In the end, Horikita allowed him to join us on the condition that he wouldn't interrupt the discussion or make any threats.

Hey man!"

I went down to the dorm's lobby early to meet up with them, only to find that Sudō had already arrived, waiting on one of the couches.

Furthermore, he looked at me with a bright, energetic smile on his face.

It looks like I need to correct what I said earlier.

It wasn't only 'somewhat related' to his desire to be together with Horikita; He *really* wanted to be with her. "Have you been studying for the exam?"

"Of course. Sorry, but I'm gonna get at least 250 points this time."

Given his current Academic Ability rating of an E, if he really were to score more than 250 points, that'd be a huge achievement.

It would be enough to bump his Academic Ability rating all the way up to a C during next month's assessment.

This wasn't just him spouting off empty words. He had apparently worked hard enough to muster up the confidence to back them up.

He was rarely ever late for class anymore, and his attitude during lessons was exceedingly serious and diligent.

"You've changed a lot... Seems like you've started to enjoy studying."

"It ain't like I enjoy it man. But I'll tell ya, it sure feels good to solve those problems. And when Suzune praises me, I get so pumped up that it feels like I can study forever!"

That thorny attitude of his from back when we first came here had gradually started to die down. A rash temper didn't seem like the easiest habit to break, but if Suzune's presence was enough to help him stay on his feet, that was good enough for me.

Unable to contain his excitement, Sudō stood up and went to look at the video feed of the inside of the elevator.

After which, he sat back down and began fiddling with his phone and running his hand through his hair. Before long, he was getting up again.

He seemed somewhat like a young boy who was about to go on his very first date.

"Hey, Ayanokōji."

Realizing that I had been looking at him, Sudō quietly muttered to me, his eyes still locked onto the camera feed on the wall.

"If I confess to her right now, d'ya think Suzune would accept it?"

Before I knew it, the expression peeking out from the profile of his face had completely hardened up.

Given how serious he was, I probably couldn't just dodge the question by giving him a half-baked response.

"Probably not."

While it may have been discouraging, that was my honest, objective opinion from a third party perspective.

I was almost certain that he wouldn't be satisfied with my answer, but...

"Right?"

Sudō agreed without batting an eye, as if to say he had already known the answer deep within.

"I know Suzune's not the kinda girl to go for love and romance and all that. But like, it's not just that... There's no way that'd she be attracted to me as I am right now. How many times has my arrogance caused trouble for her by now? For the whole class?"

As a result, he didn't think there was any way that Horikita would want to date him right now.

"I'm workin' hard these days aight? But I'm not gonna pretend that it cancels out the burden I've put on everyone else. These next two years, I'mma do my best to improve my strengths and make up for my weaknesses, little by little. That way, by the time we graduate, I'll definitely be useful to the class."

"That so? It's definitely possible."

Sudō was quickly becoming a valuable asset due to his unparalleled physical abilities.

He probably had the potential to develop into somebody indispensable, just like Yōsuke or Kushida.

He's also come to be able to take a more objective look at himself.

In the face of his extensive growth, I felt like I wanted to ask him something.

"Say you put in all the effort and become the most distinguished student in our class... and yet, Horikita still doesn't look at you. What would you do then? Would you stop studying?"

There is always the chance that one might regress to their former self upon learning that all their efforts have been for naught.

This was particularly true as Sudō was working hard for Horikita.

"Course I'd wanna stop. Hell, I'd prolly wanna die. There's even a chance I might end up punchin' someone. But the thing is, Suzune would prolly be disappointed in me if I did, right? It'd be super lame if I gave up on my studies or went on a rampage or somethin'. So yeah, I'll pass on that."

A splendid response. And to top that off, I felt certain that his intentions were genuine. That said, there was no way to know for sure until the worst comes to pass. No matter how much one resolves themselves ahead of time, once they experience the pain, that resolve all but crumbles.

At any rate, if he's this confident now, then I guess I don't need to worry for the time being.

"Oh, looks like she's coming."



We could see Horikita board the elevator through the camera. Sudō stood up and turned his back to the elevator, seemingly restless as he began taking deep breaths and stretching out his arms in some show of radio calisthenics to calm himself down.

Before long, the elevator arrived on the first floor as Sudō continued with his breathing exercises.

“Sorry I kept you waiting. What is Sudō-kun doing?”

“Taking deep breaths it seems.”

Horikita looked slightly curious for a moment, but she quickly returned to her usual stiff expression.

We set off to the designated meeting place. That is, the Karaoke parlor in the Keyaki Mall. It was an extremely popular spot for late-night hangouts as it was open until 10:00 PM seven days a week.

This goes without saying, but Karaoke was one of the many recreational facilities on campus. It was a place primarily used to relieve stress and chat with friends, but at this school, it had yet another vitally important draw to it.

And that was its high degree of privacy. It was an ideal place for holding detailed discussions outside of the realm of the public eye.

Out of any place on campus, it was the most convenient location to meet without being noticed by others.

Of course, in terms of privacy alone, there was no place better than one’s own room at the dormitory, but that wasn’t suitable for specific people.

With the special exam coming up next week, it didn’t seem like there were very many people around at this time of day.

Given that, one might say that this was the best time to hold a secret discussion with Hōsen.

“Hey. You guys really think we can get that shitty first-year brat to work with us?”

“If I didn’t think we could cooperate with them, I wouldn’t have spent so much time trying in the first place.”

That’s all there was to it. We had set out today precisely because we believed that it was possible.

“The majority of the academically capable students have already been taken by Sakayanagi-san and Ryūen-kun. On the other hand, Ichinose-san has become a beacon of hope for the weak. At this point, if we want to change tactics, we’d have no choice but to fight with points or with trust.”

“Right... We ain’t beating Sakayanagi and Ryūen in points, and we ain’t no match for Ichinose when it comes to trust...”

“Exactly. That is why Hōsen-kun’s existence provides us with both a crisis and an opportunity.”

Hōsen didn't care about the allure of the Class A brand or some half-baked sum of private points.

Furthermore, he didn't so much as glance at Ichinose's offer of assistance.

And that was why we, Class D, had a chance.

"So we just gotta see just how much we can get 'em to agree to without giving anything up."

"Indeed. As time runs out, the ones at stake will be us second-year students. Since many students have already found a partner, we won't be able to avoid being put at a disadvantage."

If we decline the terms Hōsen presents us with, he would simply let our partners be decided at random without giving it a second thought. He wouldn't care at all about the fact that his own classmates would be penalized as well.

I was interested in seeing how Horikita would confront him.

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 6 Part 1

TL: Graze and Hina  
ED: Silent Death, o-montoya, PuffyPyjamas

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“By the way... The meeting's at 9, right? Aren't we way too early?”

There was still about half an hour until the promised time.

“It's fine. I want to get there early.”

Sudō couldn't quite understand Horikita's reasoning, but he kept his mouth shut and followed along.

Perhaps she wanted to be on the lookout for some sort of foul play, or maybe she just wanted some time to compose herself.

Either way, Sudō only thought of our opponent as a first-year student, whereas Horikita didn't seem to be lowering her guard in the slightest.

It might even seem like she was being excessively cautious, but since our opponent was Hōsen himself, there was no such thing as being too careful.

After receiving a slip of paper with the room number and the receipt from an employee, the three of us headed off to our designated Karaoke room.

“Could you let Nanase-san know we're here for me?”

“Alright.”

I sent a message to Nanase, telling her that we had already arrived, along with our room number.

She replied not long after, saying that they should be here by the scheduled time.

“Let's go ahead and order our own drinks first then.”

“Shouldn't we wait for them?”

“It's fine.”

After we each picked out a drink from the drink menu, she directed our attention to the food menu.

“You can order something if you want. What would you like?”

“Then I’d like me some fries. That alright?”

“That’s fine with me.”

With that, Horikita went to the landline telephone that came furnished in every Karaoke room and placed the order.

Feeling somewhat relieved by the fact that food was on the way, Sudō went and nervously picked up the microphone from the table.

“Ehm, well, we’ve got some spare time and all so how ‘bout singing a song or two? Eh Suzune?”

“I’m not interested.”

“Not interested?”

Horikita made the three of us arrive early, and then asked us if we’d like to order food and drinks.

For Sudō, singing a couple of songs probably felt like the next logical step, and had it been someone else, they most likely would’ve agreed.

The feeling of disappointment was written all over his face, probably because he wanted to hear Horikita’s singing voice.

“Sudō-kun. Just to remind you again, absolutely do not say anything unnecessary, okay?”

“I-I understand, but like, shouldn’t you be tellin’ Ayanokōji that too?”

“He’s not the type of person to talk when it isn’t needed. Rather, he doesn’t even talk when he ought to.”

Instead of praising me, Horikita took this opportunity to vent her complaints.

Sudō pouted his lip, seemingly displeased with Horikita’s answer.

After a while, once the appointed time arrived, Nanase showed up at the room’s entrance.

“Sorry to keep you all waiting.”

“Outta the way Nanase.”

A voice rang out from behind her, forcing her a step further inside as Hōsen Kazuomi finally made his appearance.

“So you came on time. I was nearly certain that you’d be late.”

Horikita was saying that she wouldn't have been surprised if Hōsen had arrived late on purpose just to irritate her, much like how Miyamoto Musashi had arrived late for his duel against Sasaki Kojirō on Ganryūjima.

"I'mma punctual guy when I wanna be. I don't like chumps who try'n make shit difficult just cuz you're a little late. That aside, seems to me like you got here mighty early... Were ya really that afraid of keepin' me waitin' for ya? Don't be such a pussy."

"What a selfish interpretation. We were just taking advantage of this rare opportunity to enjoy ourselves."

With that, Horikita motioned for Hōsen to take a look at the state of the room.

There were several drinks, some empty, on the table along with some half-eaten food.

All of it set up to look as though we had been enjoying a Karaoke session only moments earlier.

"Looks like it."

Albeit informally, the battle between the two of them had already begun.

"Well whatever. We'll find out whether yer lyin' or not soon enough."

Hōsen slouched down on one of the sofas and spread out his legs, taking up about three peoples' worth of space all for himself.

He sat in a way that one would expect from a bigshot, making it difficult to imagine that the man in front of us was actually a first-year student.

"So? From what Nanase's told me, sounds like you lot want *my* class to help ya out."

From the sound of it, he seemed to think that Class 1-D was already completely under his control, his property.

It had only been about two weeks since he came to this school, and yet he spoke without even the slightest hint of uncertainty in his voice.

"It's slightly different from that. We're looking to have our two classes collaborate with each other. There would be no difference in status between us, a relationship of equality so to speak."

"Oh really? So you aren't gonna bring up the fact that you're one grade up on us, eh? Ain't lettin' yer seniority get to yer head. Smart move."

As Hōsen spoke, Nanase quietly observed without expressing any of her own thoughts on the matter.

Given that she had taken up the crucial role of a mediator and that she was the only person that Hōsen had brought with him to the discussion, it was probably safe to assume that Nanase was someone that Hōsen acknowledged.

I found myself wondering if he was impressed with her courageous ability to state that she wouldn't yield to his threats of violence or if it was something else entirely. Either way, there was still a way to force her hand and pull Nanase over to our side.

"I'm well aware that a certain number of first-year students don't care very much about their classmates being in trouble. However, if you take a look at us, at our class, I'm sure you'll understand that sooner or later there will come a time when you'll need the assistance of your peers."

"So, yer sayin' we should work together and avoid havin' anyone flunk out? That right?"

"If you really do possess so much authority over your class that you've come to see your classmates as your own property, then that only makes this whole process that much more convenient. All it should take is one command and you'd have most of your classmates ready to follow, right?"

Instead of answering, Hōsen thrust his left pinky finger into his ear and started twisting it around for a bit.

And then, once he was done, he held it up and blew on it in Horikita's direction.

Sudō's expression hardened immediately, but he kept in line with Horikita's warning and did his best to put up with it.

His clenched fists were shaking, pressed up against his thighs.

However, Horikita simply accepted Hōsen's blatantly vulgar conduct head-on.

"Would you stop?"

"In the first place..."

It wasn't clear if Hōsen completely ignored Horikita's question or not, as he began to speak with what seemed like a different topic in mind.

"You're the leader of Class 2-D, yeah?"

He finally got down to business, verifying that Horikita was somebody worth speaking with.

"You could say that."

"I don't think there's anything out of place about Horikita-senpai being the leader, given her abilities."

For the first time since they arrived, Nanase opened her mouth and directly addressed Hōsen.

"Then I'll give this 'leader' here a warning. I ain't got any intention of cooperating with this retarded 'equality' shit of yours."

It didn't seem like he was going to make this easy for us after all.

It was inevitable that there would be some sort of contrast between us, who wanted to protect our classmates at any cost, and Hōsen, who didn't particularly care about his.

Not to mention, between expulsion and three months without private points, there was far too much of a difference in our respective penalties for failing the exam.

"Is that right? Well I suppose that is the type of person you are."

"If you can figure out that much, then why don'tcha stop being so fuckin' stingy then? I'm all ears."

"All ears? What are you expecting? Do you really think we'll pay you in order to get you to help us?"

Despite the fact that we were in a less than favorable position, Horikita didn't back down, refusing to concede an inch.

"You'll pay. I'm sure you will. There ain't jack shit you can do without spendin' at this point. Nanase. Water."

Hōsen voiced his demands to Nanase as he skimmed over the Karaoke menu.

To this, Nanase nodded and placed an order for some water over the phone.

"I know that I'm repeating myself here, but our proposal for you is based on equality. It has nothing to do with either of us handing over points, goods, or any other form of compensation."

"If you're gonna keep spoutin' off that shit, then I guess I don't gotta stick around waitin' for the water to get here."

There wasn't a shred of hesitation on his face as he began making a show of brushing nonexistent dust off his thighs, implying that he would soon stand up and leave.

"Please hold on a moment, Hōsen-kun. I think you should wait for Horikita-senpai to finish first."

Nanase, who had been quietly listening off to the side, prompted him to stop.

"Let her finish? That shit ain't necessary."

"No, it is. If we continue as things are now, our class will never be able to come together."

Horikita stoically observed as the two first-years made their exchange.

"Who gives a fuck? Disobedient trash should be left to rot. It ain't much of a problem if we lose some nobodies anyway."

"That's not right."

"Nanase, are you an idiot?"

Hōsen exhaled loudly, seemingly more so out of exasperation than anger.

"I don't get anythin' from accepting their conditions like some little bitch. What's in it for me?"

"I understand what you're saying, Hōsen-kun, I do. It's certainly true that Horikita-senpai and the other second-year students are more desperate to protect their classmates than we are. In fact, there's even a reason as to why they have no choice but to protect them. If we don't lend them a hand, their classmates run the risk of being expelled. Even if they're pretending to be tough right now, at some point they'll have to concede, and that's exactly what you're waiting for, isn't it?"

Based on her words, it seemed like Nanase had chosen to speak because she knew exactly what Hōsen was trying to do.

"I don't think there's anything necessarily wrong with your strategy, Hōsen-kun. While the other classes were scrambling to search for partners, you stayed firm, intentionally foregoing the early stages of inter-class negotiations. All of it done for the sake of securing yourself the upper hand later on."

As the deadline inched closer and closer, the remaining second-year students who hadn't found partners would begin to feel more and more impatient.

And as a result, even students who weren't originally worth spending any points on would suddenly find themselves going for a decent rate.

"Since you're so clear on it already, how 'bout you try'n tell me why I should throw this Horikita chick a bone then?"

"A relationship of mutual trust."

Nanase turned and looked toward Horikita for a moment, to which Horikita nodded in response.

"Don't make me laugh. Mutual trust? That's some good-for-nothin' shit right there. Fuckin' useless."

"Are you sure about that?"

Nanase took Hōsen head-on, challenging him as she proceeded to speak once again.

"It's true that we may not need to give up very much for this special exam. However, the same might not be true for future exams, right? If you end up making enemies out of all of the second-years now, then it's possible that you might not be able to find yourself a partner later, regardless of how many points you offer them. While you'd be fine if you just had to deal with taking the 5% penalty, what do you think would happen if the person you end up together with intentionally flunks the exam? You wouldn't be able to avoid being expelled. That's what."



“Ha! You really think some chump has the balls to sacrifice themselves like that?”

“I’ll have you know that I’ve heard that this school has something known as protection points.”

At that, Nanase shifted her gaze away from Hōsen and locked eyes with Horikita for the first time.

Protection points. The very thing that I had mentioned at the end of our conversation in the library on Friday.

Although Horikita was slightly surprised to hear Nanase talk about them, she immediately grasped what Nanase was going for and nodded along in agreement.

“Nanase-san is correct. They are a special type of point that can waive one single instance of an expulsion penalty.”

From the look on Hōsen’s face, there was no doubting that this was also the first time he had heard of them.

“It’s understandable that you’ve never heard of them before, given that you only just enrolled here. That’s why you should keep them in mind. If there happens to be some sort of similar exam to this one in the future, if the person you partner with is in possession of a protection point, then... well, depending on the situation, you might end up being forcibly expelled all by yourself.”

If you’re one to make enemies with others, the more you make, the more likely you are to receive the shorter end of the stick.

It follows that, the more someone hated Hōsen, the more likely they’d be to use whatever means necessary to get him expelled.

“That’s why it’s important to start building up trust with others, wouldn’t you agree?”

“I see. So you two retards had a few stupid tricks up your sleeves to try’n deal with me, eh?”

“I am a first-year student, so naturally my top priority is Class 1-D. Plus, Hōsen-kun, I believe that you’re vital for the wellbeing of our class, so I don’t want you to make the mistake of being shortsighted.”

Horikita had put in the effort to understand Hōsen before turning her focus over to Nanase.

She had managed to get Nanase to cooperate with her, and together, they delivered the final blow.

The tides had started to turn ever so slightly.

All that remained was to wait and see if Hōsen would accept our proposal once he fully understood everything.

To see if he’d still ask for some sort of compensation, resolved to face the disadvantages that would come later.

"I get that the two of ya went through the trouble of comin' up with all this, but— I ain't gonna cooperate on equal footing."

Horikita and Nanase had gone through the effort laying out all of the groundwork to get him to agree.

And yet, Hōsen turned the two of them down without even pretending to think about it.

"Oi Hōsen. You seriously sure you're prepared to make an enemy out of us second-ye—"

Sudō's temper began to flare, but Horikita held him back before he could finish.

"Stop. He still hasn't left the negotiating table just yet."

"The girl's right. Don't go jumpin' to conclusions."

Hōsen was still slouched back on the couch, showing no signs of leaving any time soon, his attitude as bullish and arrogant as ever.

"Then what's next? We have no intention of forming a non-equal relationship."

"No shit. You've made that fuckin' clear already. You've got guts, I'll tell ya that."

He slowly clapped his hands in applause, seemingly praising Horikita for her strenuous efforts.

"That said, this shitty relationship idea of yours ain't even 'equal' in the first place."

"So you're saying that if we can prove that our offer is equal, you'll cooperate with us?"

"Eh, you could say that."

"Well now I'm confused. Why don't you think it'd be equal? We'd both be under the same conditions."

"You've got some nerve to try'n play up this trusting relationship crap, but that shit's gotta go both ways. And that ain't enough for me, either. It's real nice of ya to tell us about how we might end up in a similar situation at some point. Brings fuckin' tears to my eyes. But that's just you comin' up with shit, nothin' you can say for sure, isn't it?"

Hōsen certainly had a point here.

At a fundamental level, Horikita's proposal was based on the premise that our classes would support one another. However, we were the ones who really needed the help right now. The deal would only truly become equal once Class 1-D needed our help at some point in the future.

It was an insurance policy, so to speak, and there was a good chance they wouldn't be able to make use of it.

“So I see. Well, since you’re at it, how about you tell us what exactly it is you want then? Just as a reference.”

“Fork over a million private points as collateral. If we ever come cryin’ to you guys for help, I’ll gladly pay ya back in full.”

The amount was quite reasonable compared to how much it would cost us to strike a deal with the other classes.

However, if they never ended up making use of the insurance policy, they’d essentially just be getting a million points for free.

In short, every last point would end up directly in Hōsen’s pocket.

“If this trusting relationship shit of yours is really all that important, then what’s the big deal?”

If they really ended up needing our help later on down the line, then the deposit would definitely find its way back to us at some point.

“If yer worried, how ‘bout I put it in writing?”

While a written contract would be recognized and enforced by the school, that was based on the premise that Hōsen actually asked for our help in the first place.

There was a chance that he might resort to using it if he found himself at risk of expulsion, but it didn’t seem very likely that he’d give up so many points just to help his classmates.

In other words, it would be far more dangerous than simply handing over some points and signing a contract.

Hōsen wasn’t just some cocksure musclehead. He had made his move with the utmost skill and precision.

A calculating, formidable opponent, just like Ryūen.

“It’s true that what you’re saying isn’t completely unreasonable. That said, I still cannot agree to your terms.”

“That so? What a pity. I went through the effort of showin’ you a way outta this, and yet here you are makin’ shit difficult still.”

“Indeed.”

It didn’t seem like Horikita intended to compromise if it meant letting Hōsen line his own pockets. But with the way things were headed, it seemed like we might end up having to let our partners be decided at random. In which case, we’d have no choice but to have our classmates with low Academic Ability ratings flee to the other classes, even if it meant burning the necessary funds to do so.

“Ha!”

After forcing out a short laugh, Hōsen leaned forward from his slouched position on the couch for the first time since he sat down.

And then, he reached out at Horikita and grabbed the collar of her shirt.

The first one to react to this was Sudō, who had been attentively keeping watch from right beside her.

With a seething glare in his eyes, he grabbed the brawny first-year student's arm.

"Oi, bastard... Don't raise your hand against a girl."

"Oho, so the biggest retard here's finally taken center stage?"

"Cool it Sudō-kun."

"But—!"

"No buts. Negotiations aren't over yet."

While it seemed as though negotiations had broken down, Hōsen hadn't yet explicitly stated so himself.

"You've got eyes fulla confidence there. You really think I won't beat the shit outta a girl? Or maybe you're try'nna abuse the fact that yer a lowly bitch so you can beat me?"

"What an inappropriate thing to say in this day and age. How about dialing back on the misogyny to avoid turning the women of the world against you?"

"Well then how 'bout I give you a better option. If you can beat me in a fight, I'll agree to yer little proposal. How's that?"

At that, Hōsen presented us with a rather childish offer.

"How 'bout I take you up on that then? Got a problem with that?"

"It can be you, that dull-lookin' Ayanokōji guy over there, or even this bitch. Fuck it, why not all three of you at once?"

Hōsen spoke brazenly.

"It's fine, right Suzune? If I win, we'll be done with all this crap. Besides, I'm really, really fuckin' fed up with this bastard already."

Sudō was reaching the limits of his patience with Hōsen, whose hand was still clutched onto Horikita's collar.

“Deciding the outcome of this negotiation with a fight is far too absurd. Even if it’s the only card we have left to play, we still shouldn’t agree to it.”

“Why not? The bastard said he was fine with it, I don’t see a problem.”

Ignoring Sudō’s objections, Horikita calmly put her thoughts into words.

“I really thought you’d be a little smarter than this, Hōsen-kun. Not too long ago, back when you first showed up outside of the second-year classrooms, the things you said gave me the impression that you wanted our classes to work together. I felt the same. I felt like it’d be wonderful if we could cooperate as fellow Class D students.”

“Well, I mighta said somethin’ like that.”

“But— It seems like that was just a misunderstanding on my part. You didn’t actually think that at all.”

Horikita closed her eyes for a moment and calmed herself before continuing.

“This discussion is over.”

In the end, it was not Hōsen who ended up calling off the negotiations, but Horikita herself.

The moment the words crossed her lips, slight traces of anger peeked through Hōsen’s previously untroubled expression.

Then, Hōsen released his grip on Horikita’s shirt, and seeing this, Sudō swallowed his anger, let go of Hōsen’s arm, and began to resituate himself in his seat.

But less than a split second later—

Splash! Droplets of water scattered throughout the Karaoke room.

Hōsen had picked up his cup of water and had splashed it on Horikita’s face.

There was probably no way that Horikita could’ve seen it coming before it happened.

But, before she could make even a single sound, Sudō was already up on the table, moments away from throwing himself at Hōsen.

“You motherfucker!!!”

Sudō had already been doing whatever he could to keep his temper in check before this, but he finally lost all sense of reason due to what had just taken place.

Nobody could blame him for losing his cool, after all, the girl he liked had just been humiliated before his very eyes.

Hōsen, on the other hand, remained as smug and contemptuous as ever.

“Stop!”

As Sudō charged at him, bellowing with rage, Horikita called out with a stern voice, drawing him to a stop.

If she had called out even one second later, Sudō’s fist would’ve smashed directly into Hōsen’s cheek.

“Sudō-kun... Don’t fall into his trap so carelessly.”

“I know dammit, but still!”

Horikita locked eyes with Hōsen without even bothering to dry her wet hair.

“If you’re displeased with the fact that negotiations have broken down, then perhaps you should’ve conducted yourself a little better.”

Horikita had wanted to establish a cooperative relationship with Hōsen no matter the cost.

And yet, at this point, even she understood the futility of any further discussion.

After a short staredown between the two of them, Horikita turned and looked away, as if to say she had seen everything she needed to.

“Let’s go.”

“R-really?”

Although Sudō was frustrated, he asked Horikita again, just to make sure.

“Are you sure, Hōsen-kun?”

Nanase asked Hōsen the same question at nearly the same time.

“Yeah?”

“I personally think we should’ve cooperated with Horikita-senpai.”

“Hah! They’re the ones who called it off. You want me to go over there and stop ‘em?”

And so, the discussion ended without Hōsen saying anything further, and just like that the two parties dissolved.

I discreetly cast a sidelong glance over at Horikita. After all, today's failure would undoubtedly create a lot of problems moving forward.

But from where I stood, Horikita's expression didn't seem discouraged at all.

Judging by the look on her face, it didn't seem like this was over just yet.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 6 Part 2

TL: Graze and D3nj4l and Hina and Heero and Liam  
ED: Silent Death, o-montoya, PuffyPyjamas

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Once Horikita had paid our tab, the three of us left the Karaoke parlor together. While it seemed like this was the end of the entire ordeal, Hōsen and Nanase followed us from behind. As we walked, Sudō occasionally looked over his shoulder to glare at them menacingly, but didn't go so far as to voice his complaints since they had the same route back.

Hōsen, having noticed what Sudō was doing, called out to us somewhat suspiciously.

"Hold it!"

"There's no reason for us to wait for you. We're done talking."

Horikita turned a deaf ear to him, but Hōsen didn't show any signs of backing down.

It seemed that Horikita's all-or-nothing gamble was moving in the right direction.

"Aight, I admit it. You were right Horikita. That day, I went out lookin' to meet up with Class 2-D. After I got here, it didn't take me all that long to realize that Class D was the wimpiest bunch in the school. Instead of bein' treated like a joke by the rest of the classes, I figured it'd be fastest to just go'n work with you guys, bein' fellow D classers an' all."

Looks like Hōsen had indeed been sending signals to Class 2-D back then, just as Horikita had predicted.

That said, whether or not his goal had been to form that same cooperative, equal relationship with Horikita was a different matter altogether.

"So?"

"So? You sure ya don't wanna continue the discussion? You and I are similar, comrades even. Two leaders who thought'a the same thing."

"As long as you intend to keep making ridiculous demands, nothing is going to change."

"What, you really just gonna go in blind? Takin' the penalty and lettin' yer shit get figured out randomly?"

"Yep. I'm fully prepared to take the penalty if we have to."

While it was certainly a painful position to be in, it wasn't anything we wouldn't be able to overcome.



Thanks to the efforts of Kushida and the others, many of those with D and E ratings had already found partners, pretty much guaranteeing their safety.

"I see. Then how 'bout I propose you somethin' like this?"

Horikita hadn't agreed to reopen negotiations, and yet Hōsen began talking all on his own.

"I'll order the chumps from my class to pair up with ya, so fork over the points. Two mill."

Instead of conceding, Hōsen forced the discussion back open and jacked up the price even higher.

"Two million? Seems you've finally gone off the deep end, hmm?"

"You're free to say whatever you want, but this is your only way to guarantee that none of ya flunk out. Most of the guys from the other classes have found partners already. You won't end up with jack shit by bein' stingy. Or perhaps you actually want me to flatten you?"

At this point, we arrived at the junction of the two paths for the first and second-year dormitories.

Horikita came to a stop before turning around to respond to him.

"Flatten? And just how do you plan on doing that? By intentionally tanking your scores? You wouldn't be brave enough to do that. You couldn't. After all, you have to comply with the rules just like everybody else. That being said, all that my classmates and I need to do is focus on securing at least 501 points no matter what random combinations end up happening."

"Ain't no need to go with somethin' so complicated. I'll flatten ya with this thing right here."

With a fearless grin, Hōsen held up his fist.

"Rule by violence, huh? People like you are a dime a dozen, it seems."

"I don't give a fuck what you think 'bout it. This is how I do things."

"How nice. In that case, it doesn't seem like we'll ever see eye-to-eye then."

At that, Horikita began walking once more.

It didn't seem like she had any intention of backing down until the very end.

Or, perhaps I should say that she couldn't afford to show weakness to an opponent like Hōsen.

If she did, she would never be treated as an equal ever again.

“Hold it.”

“What now?”

“I get it. I’ll think about what you’ve said.”

At the last moment possible, Hōsen said something I hadn’t expected him to say.

“What are you trying to say?”

“Try’nna keep the upper hand ‘til the very last minute, shit like that’s only natural in a negotiation, yeah?”

By that, Hōsen was saying that all of this had just been a part of his strategy to try and force a concession out of Horikita.

“Then in other words, you’re agreeing to enter into a completely equal relationship with us?”

“Think of it like our discussion goin’ into overtime. There’s prolly people watchin’ here though, so how ‘bout we go someplace else?”

It was around 10:00 PM on a Sunday night. While most students should be back home by now, if somebody did show up, they’d definitely be able to overhear our conversation.

“Even so, we can’t bring you into the dormitories with us.”

Given the curfew, there was no longer anywhere suitable enough to continue the discussion.

However, time was running short and neither party wanted to drag this out any longer than they had to.

“Wherever is fine. Behind the dorm, someplace else, don’t matter to me. Won’t take long.”

Hōsen was brimming with confidence, so Horikita didn’t have much of a reason to turn him down.

After all, despite having pushed him away at first, having Hōsen chase after her like this was exactly what she had been hoping for.

“...Fine. I’ll give you ten minutes.”

“Over there then.”

Hōsen led us to the first-year dorms which had belonged to the third-year students last year.

And then, we circled around the front of the building and headed over to the back.

It was a dark, quiet area that didn't serve any particular use other than being a place to dispose of trash, so it seemed safe to assume that we wouldn't run into anybody given how late it was.

"Then let's continue this, shall we? Our conditions haven't changed at all. You're fine with that, right?"

"Well..."

As a gesture to highlight his consideration, Hōsen crossed his arms for a moment.

Shortly thereafter, he uncrossed his arms and extended his right hand with three fingers raised into the air.

"Three mill. You fork over that much, an' I'll save all your retarded classmates right away."

Everybody present, myself included, was absolutely stunned at his ridiculous proposal.

"What the heck are you even saying?"

It was wholly, completely dumbfounding. Even Horikita couldn't help but sigh a few times.

Hōsen was supposed to be trying to salvage the discussion, not jacking up the price even further.

It seemed as though he had gone beyond the realm of common sense at this point.

"Are you fuckin' deaf, bitch? I said you fork over three mill, and we'll work shit out."

"What, are you fuckin' with us? Suzune's already told ya that we ain't handin' over a single point!"

"I ain't jokin'. After all, I went through all the effort of givin' you lot another chance here, didn't I?"

He spoke as though he was the one who had arranged all of this in the first place.

"I tried to give you another chance, but it seems like that was a lapse of judgment after all..."

The chance that Hōsen might make a forthright decision had been a lasting glimmer of hope, but in the end, that faith had been misplaced.

"Stop right there! You really think you can just leave?"

Hōsen lightly slammed his fist against the wall beside him, putting his intimidating attitude on full display.

"Oh, so just because we're behind the dorms, you want to solve this with one of your signature violent outbursts, is that it? Do you really think you're going to get away with that?"

"At the very least, I'll get to beat the livin' shit outta you fuckheads. How's that?"

“Fine, do as you please.”

Shaking her head, Horikita began to make her exit.

She probably didn’t think that Hōsen would actually make things physical.

However—

Nanase, who had been standing off to the side, turned and looked away.

Almost as though she had foreseen what was going to happen next.

Hōsen made his move.

“Suzune!!”

Sudō frantically shouted out as he rushed toward her and pulled her back.

Hōsen’s foot swiftly swept through the very same spot where Horikita had been standing only moments before.

And then, just like that, the huge first-year proceeded to charge straight at her.

“?! What the—!”

At this point, Horikita finally realized that Hōsen was serious, but her body was frozen and wouldn’t move as she wanted it to.

To protect her, Sudō forced himself between the two of them, catching the blow with his body.

“Guh!”

“Hahaha! Let’s see just how much you can take!”

“Bring it on! I won’t show any mercy to a bastard who raises his hand against Suzune!”

Laughing happily, Hōsen launched an attack on Sudō.

And, having reached the limit of his patience long ago, Sudō responded in full.

“Wha, what the hell is this guy thinking...!?”

It was understandable that Horikita would feel shaken by the commencement of an all-out brawl before her very eyes.

No matter how unmonitored this location truly was, it would still be quite problematic if they were caught.

It might not be enough for an outright expulsion, but suspension surely wouldn't be off the table.

"Horikita-senpai, could it be that, perhaps this school is a little different from how it was before?"

Nanase, who had been watching this inexplicable turn of events go down with a somewhat cold look on her face, asked Horikita a question.

"Just as you upperclassmen are more familiar with the events of last year, we first-year students have a greater understanding of the current systems in place."

"What do you mean...?"

"Shortly after enrollment, several first-years representatives were called to the student council room to receive a personal explanation from President Nagumo. He said that, from this year onward, the students would be allowed certain freedoms in order to make the school into more of a meritocracy."

"Are you telling me that fighting is one of those freedoms?"

"I wouldn't say that. Although, from what Hōsen-kun has confirmed, the President has stated that a certain amount of in-fighting amongst students is unavoidable, and therefore promised that it wouldn't be judged as harshly as it was in the past."

Compared to Horikita's older brother Manabu, Nagumo had a more tolerant mindset when it came to fighting.

Since the student council acted as an arbitrator in disputes between students, if it were true that they were now tolerant of a certain amount of fighting, then it would certainly be difficult for this to lead to proper recourse.

As the conversation between Horikita and Nanase progressed, the fight between Sudō and Hōsen had already started to tilt in one direction.

"Oraa!"

Even when compared to Sudō's naturally high strength and quick reflexes, Hōsen's were on yet another level as he proceeded to slam Sudō up against the wall.

Hōsen then went on to grab Sudō by the collar with both hands and forced him upward, causing both his legs to lift up into the air.

"B-bastard!"

Having lost his ground in more ways than one, Sudō put forward a desperate show of resistance, but given his position, there wasn't much he could do.

With his target completely immobilized, Hōsen began applying pressure on his hold, as if trying to cram him into the wall itself.

“Kh! S-son of a bitch!”

Sudō latched onto Hōsen’s arms and, despite his limited space, struck a blow with his knee, causing Hōsen to stagger slightly.

He then took advantage of the opportunity to free himself from Hōsen’s grasp, only for Hōsen to land a direct kick moments later. While Sudō had prepared himself to withstand the blow, the sheer force of it sent him smashing into the wall behind.

The two had appeared to be an equal match for one another before the fight began, but after seeing the way it had been progressing, the difference between them was considerable.

Given his tendency to constantly make enemies out of others, Sudō had most likely been involved in several fights before this.

His athletic skill and physique had been honed throughout years of playing basketball, so he had probably never met somebody who could match up to him before.

Hōsen, however, was even more exceptional. Compared to Sudō, Hōsen had probably taken part in an inconceivable number of fights and braved his way through countless other dangerous situations. The difference in experience was as clear as day. His large build and strong arms felt out-of-place given that there was only a one year age gap between them. And yet, despite his massive size, he was still remarkably quick on his feet. His natural talent was certainly a sight to behold.

This was the reason why even Ryūen of all people had restrained himself from fighting him.

Ryūen knew that he simply wasn’t an opponent that could be beaten in straightforward hand-to-hand combat.

But even so, Sudō wouldn’t go down that easily. After all, his sheer strength went nearly unparalleled out of everyone in our school year. However, that simply meant that he’d be Hōsen’s punching bag until he did.

Hōsen proceeded to unleash an unrelenting barrage of punches down on Sudō.

Even though Sudō wanted to seize any opportunity he could to strike back, he already had his hands full with parrying Hōsen’s attacks.

Every time he tried to shift onto the offensive, even if only slightly, another blow would come and instantly pierce through his defenses.

“None of us have anything to gain from doing things like this!”

Horikita shouted out, but Hōsen wasn’t listening. At this point, it’d be impossible to stop Hōsen with words alone.

Her voice did, however, reach Sudō, who glanced in her direction for a split second.

Horikita's voice, the voice of the girl that he had to protect, somehow ignited a flame within him.

"Graaaah!!!"

With the resolve to sacrifice himself if need be, he lunged at Hōsen and pushed him away from the wall, trying what he could to knock over his opponent.

"Oho. So you wanna try'n come at me with raw power, eh?"

Hōsen took the impact of Sudō's large frame head-on, sneering as he grabbed hold of Sudō's body and lifted him up again.

"W-woaah!?"

He then spun around in a half-circle before dropping Sudō back down and pushing him away with his left hand, effectively swapping places with him.

"Was bein' up against the wall too much for ya? This should be enough of a handicap, so fuckin' man up and come at me!"

"Stop fucking with me!"

Sudō roared out, his engine running at full-throttle.

He readied himself to charge at Hōsen, fully committed to taking the upper hand, but before he could—

"Oi Sudō, take a look at Horikita's face. She's glarin' at you somethin' fierce, ah?"

As he spoke, Hōsen unclenched his fists and pointed at Horikita, who was standing behind Sudō.

Just as their fight was reaching its peak, Hōsen dropped his guard. At this point, Sudō suddenly realized that he had lost his cool and had gotten himself wrapped up in a full-on brawl. Worried about how angry Horikita must be with him for breaking his promise, he turned his back on the formidable enemy standing in front of him.

Of course, it wasn't like Horikita was pleased with Sudō fighting like this.

However, her expression was not one of anger, but one of worry and distress over not knowing what she needed to do.

She could only scream out to him, begging for him to turn back around. Only watch as he let show this one fatal moment of carelessness.

By the time he realized that he had screwed up, it was already too late.

With a fiendish grin on his face, Hōsen smashed his fist straight into Sudō's cheek while his back was turned.

A scathing blow that had seemingly come out of nowhere.

Although Sudō was more than capable of taking a punch, he had probably never experienced a blow like this before.

If he had been an ordinary student without any neck training, then this punch might have had very serious consequences.

He flew backward with such force that he slid across the ground after he landed, unable to so much as even attempt to cushion the fall.

"Guh—!?"

Sudō cried out with an almost inaudible voice, nearly fainting from the onset of pain.

Even though he had been winning without the use of underhanded tricks, Hōsen had deliberately chosen to end it by setting up this simple trap instead.

He had wanted to hurt him, not only physically, but mentally as well. It didn't seem like Sudō had lost consciousness though, as he was writhing about on the ground in pure agony.

After witnessing everything I had seen today, I found myself re-evaluating just what kind of person Hōsen Kazuomi truly was.

What was he thinking? What was he feeling? What had driven him to come to today's negotiations in the first place? Horikita was right when she said that he sounded like he wanted to join up with our class back when we first met him. Furthermore, he had even admitted earlier that he saw the value in having the two D Classes work together. Up until just recently, he had been making full use of his advantageous position in order to pressure us, and that hadn't exactly been that bad of an approach to take.

However, once he saw just how unwilling to bend Horikita truly was, he probably figured out that his approach wasn't going to work.

He had realized that, if nothing changed, Horikita would give up on trying to work together. But even then, instead of looking to compromise, he chose to dial up the aggression even further, eventually leading to some insanely belligerent behavior.

He had dumped water on Horikita earlier, and now he had gone so far as to force a serious confrontation with Sudō.

Just how could he maintain such a cocky, violent attitude when there were suspension and expulsion on the line?

I had been wondering this very question for a long time now.



Did he really just think he could decide everything with violence alone?

That didn't seem right either. It didn't seem reasonable to think he was that stupid.

In which case, what was he after? What in the world was Hōsen getting out of forcing a fight like this?

"Aight, seems that your trusty bodyguard's eatin' the dirt. Who's next?"

Hōsen began to approach, alternating his gaze between Horikita and me as he did.

Despite the fact that he had only just been fighting Sudō, his breathing wasn't labored in the slightest.

"Do... Do you really think we will submit to violence?"

"If not, then I'mma beat the shit outta you, get you to cry a bit n' have you write out a couple of them binding agreements. An' if you say no to that, then I'mma keep comin' back, chasin' you fuckheads down 'til you're dead on the floor."

No matter how tolerant the student council may be when it comes to fighting, there would still be problems if it went too far. Besides, if he forced her to sign some sort of written agreement under these circumstances, there was no way that it would hold up later on. It was also possible for us to pretend to obey him in order to get out of this, but Horikita probably wouldn't do that. After all, yielding to Hōsen's way of doing things simply wasn't an option.

"...So be it. I'll be the one to stop you then."

Horikita steeled her resolve and took up a fighting stance.

"Ooh, interesting. If you wanna throw down, then I'd be glad to take ya up on that."

Hōsen probably didn't expect Horikita to have any fighting or martial arts experience whatsoever.

But he wasn't an opponent who would fall for a cheap trick like this either, something that Horikita still hadn't managed to understand just yet.

All of a sudden, without any prior warning, Hōsen lurched out his arm.

Horikita nimbly slipped past his reach and proceeded to go for a knockout blow with a strike aimed at his jaw.

She had bet everything on settling this with a single, instantaneous strike.

"Oh?"

However, before the strike could make contact, Hōsen grabbed hold of her delicate wrist without so much as batting an eye.

“Damn bitch, that was a pretty good move there. But—”

Hōsen lifted his other hand high up into the air and swung down hard, slapping Horikita across the face.

Horikita tried what she could to dodge or protect herself, but in the face of Hōsen’s overwhelming speed and power, there was simply nothing she could do but take a direct hit. Her body was blown away as if she had been struck with a fist instead. She tumbled over onto the ground, cushioning herself as she fell.

“S-Suzune!”

Sudō cried out as he tried his best to get back on his feet, his teeth clenched in pain.

But his legs wouldn’t move how he wanted, so he couldn’t stand up properly.

“Yo Horikita. Let’s make a fuckin’ deal already.”

Horikita looked up at Hōsen from where she was on the ground as the first-year student closed in on her, voicing his demands.

“Five million points. That much, and all your problems’ll go away. How ‘bout it?”

The asking price had skyrocketed even further. So high, in fact, that we couldn’t afford to pay it even if we wanted to.

“W-what kind of sick joke is this...? Ayanokōji-kun... Call someone, call the teachers...”

Adult intervention was probably the only way left to contain the situation at this point.

Alternatively, if a large number of people were to gather, even Hōsen would have no choice but to rein in his fist.

“So this is what you’ve been reduced to...? Well, I guess it makes sense. But are you sure you wanna nark on me? Even though none of you did jack shit, what do you fuckers plan on doin’ ‘bout the fact that you two tried throwin’ punches as well? You really wanna get suspended along with me?”

Even if we appealed that we had only acted out of self-defense, we would inevitably face some kind of repercussions as well.

That being said, we’d still be much better off having a third party intervene than we would letting things continue going like this.

“You son of a bitch!!”

“Stay down retard!”

Back up on his feet, Sudō threw himself at Hōsen once again, only to be mercilessly kicked back down to the ground. Afterwhich, the first-year finally set his sights on me.

“How long you plan on watchin’ there fucker?”

“R-run away... Ayanokōji... Kun...”

“Run away? Don’t even think about it. You pussy out here, an’ I’ll see to it that these two doormats are in for a whole new world of pain!”

Even now, I kept thinking.

What exactly did Hōsen want out of this?

Was he really trying to force us to meet demands that had no chance of ever being accepted?

No, that was just far too unrealistic.

“Horikita. I’ll give ya one last chance.”

“...Last?”

“If you submit to me right here, right now, an’ fork over the points— I’ll let Ayanokōji live.”

With that, Hōsen stuck his hand into his pocket and pulled something out. It had gotten fairly dark outside, so for a moment it was hard to tell what exactly it was, but once he unveiled its pointed edge, a silver shine glimmered in the moonlight.

“W-what are you, that...!?”

“Somethin’ wrong with your eyes? It’s a knife, plain an’ simple!”

From the way the blade sparkled, it was clearly different from one of those retractable toy blades that were often used for party tricks and the like.

“If you turn me down again, I’ll stab Ayanokōji with this.”

“Stop fooling around!”

“I ain’t fuckin’ with you, tho? I’ll gladly stab this punk if it means gettin’ my hands on the points.”

Wielding the knife in his right hand, Hōsen slowly turned to face me.

“Still, even after all this I still can’t wrap my damn head around it. What makes a punk like you so fuckin’ special?”

With his eyes locked on mine, Hōsen spoke, his voice laced with exasperation.

“Fuck it, maybe I didn’t even need to go an’ do all this risky shit in the first place!”

From the way he was talking, it seemed like the ridiculous chain of events that he had orchestrated so far had all been done because he was wary of something. Expecting something.

He drew closer to me, one step at a time.

However, Nanase, his very own classmate, jammed herself in between the two of us, stopping him in his tracks.

“Please don’t go any further! I can’t approve of your methods after all... I can’t!”



She spread out her arms in an attempt to block his path.

“Outta the way, Nanase. Your ass is only here to keep ‘em from escapin’, so know your fuckin’ place.”

“I made the decision to lend you my strength until the very end, telling myself that it was for the good of the class. No matter how deplorable your strategy was, I thought I’d be willing to accept it. But I see now that I was mistaken.”

With her feet firmly planted between Hōsen and I, she shifted her gaze over to Horikita.

“Horikita-senpai, working together with Hōsen-kun has been impossible from the very beginning. You were inspired to cooperate with us after hearing him mention Class 2-D back when we came to meet with you in front of the second-year classrooms, but... That was just a ploy to get things to progress to this point. Even if you pay the outrageous fee he’s been asking of you, you’d still be subjected to this same fate.”

Naturally, Horikita’s distress compiled even further upon hearing Nanase lay out such a shocking revelation.

No matter how hard she tried to negotiate, Hōsen never would’ve accepted anyway. And this wasn’t her fault either. None of us could’ve predicted that things would turn out like this.

All things considered, this incomprehensible series of events probably came down to an imbalance of information. Hōsen and Nanase had been given intel that we hadn’t. That being the case, there was no way we could’ve had a proper negotiation in the first place.

“All your yammering is pissin’ me off. You’re the one who asked me to deal with this shit to begin with. Our class’ll rake in shitloads of money if we take out this Ayanokōji guy. Just think of the advantage it’d give us.”

“That is true. However, I just can’t figure out the reason why we need to target him like this.”

“That shit ain’t got nothing to do with me. If you’re gonna get in my way, then you can fuck off as well!”

Hōsen readied a wide swing and swept Nanase aside with the palm of his hand, just as he had done to Horikita earlier.

As I stood alone, watching this scene play out in front of me, I arrived at one, single conclusion. And with it, everything fit into place.

“Prepare yourself, Ayanokōji!”

He came at me, lethal weapon in hand. Naturally, everybody present was fully expecting him to try and stab me with it.

Laughing, he raised the knife up above his head.

I could feel my mind begin to clear as I lowered my stance.

“Ayanokōji-kun—!”

While most people would’ve tried to escape, I rushed at him instead.

And as I did, everyone watching must’ve thought that I’d gone mad.

After all, running head-first into an opponent with a knife wasn’t really a mark of sanity.

Especially when said opponent was somebody as formidable as Hōsen. Hōsen’s smile widened even further as I did so. He probably thought that I was a fool for jumping at him.

But I wasn’t trying to prevent myself from being stabbed at all.

As I drew closer, Hōsen swung his arm, bringing the knife down, slicing through the air.

The target of that knife, what its blade sought— was not my body.

It was his very own.

I used my left hand to stop the descending blade from reaching its desired target.

I wasn’t trying to grab Hōsen’s hand or avoid it, but instead let the blade pierce through my palm.



“Wha—!?”

This was clearly not what Hōsen had expected of me. It would’ve been nearly impossible to predict my actions beforehand.

After all, who would’ve thought that someone would deliberately let themselves be stabbed?



The arm driving the blade froze to a halt, and with it, Hōsen's smile vanished as well.

"You... Ayanokōji!"

He was confused. Anyone in their right mind would've been after seeing what I had done to myself.

In most cases, my actions here would be seen as hazardous, self-destructive even.

Fresh, bright blood soon began spurting out from the wound on my palm.

"That knife, or to be more accurate, that petty knife, it's the one I bought, isn't it?"

"The fuck are you on about...?"

"You were going to stab yourself in the thigh with my own knife. After that, you'd raise a fuss to the school about your injury, and use that as evidence to get me expelled. That was your plan, wasn't it?"

From the way he gripped the knife in his hand, it was obvious that it wasn't meant to stab an opponent. He had faced the blade upward to make it look like someone else had stabbed him. Furthermore, he had taken hold of the handle in reverse, so as to allow himself to drive the blade into his leg more effectively.

"Ha! So even though you managed to piece it all together, you still came an' got stabbed yourself? You outta your mind?"

Hōsen looked a bit shaken as he let out a dry laugh.

"This was the best way to completely shut you down. Besides, I don't think we're that different. After all, you came here fully prepared to sustain a major wound as well."

Even if they knew that it was the correct course of action, most people wouldn't be willing to follow through with such a dangerous act of self-harm like this. This was the primary reason why he would've been able to stab himself and frame me for it.

"It seems like there's some sort of pseudo-special exam in effect that was only given to a limited number of you first-years. And based on your conversation with Nanase, it sounds like the premise of that exam is to have me expelled. So to that end, you began to spin up a plan. It'd start with you luring us out here and forcing us into a fight. Then, after smacking Sudō and Horikita around a bit, you'd say that I pulled out a knife that I carried with me in case of an emergency and stabbed you with it in a fit of rage, eventually leading to my expulsion. That's the absurd narrative you were trying to build this time."

Even if the student council was going to be more tolerant, wielding a knife in a fight wouldn't be excused with just a suspension.

It would warrant an expulsion, or it could even end up resulting in criminal charges.

"I'd heard you were hot shit, but you seemed pretty fuckin' wimpy to me, so I didn't really think all that much of ya. To think you'd come an' let yourself get stabbed... How'd you know the knife was yours?"

"I've done some investigating of my own. As of yesterday, I was still the only one to have bought that model of Petty knife. So it's only natural that I'd put the pieces together upon seeing you pull out the exact same one."

I could've easily slipped past the knife and grabbed hold of Hōsen's arm. But doing that wouldn't have solved the fundamental issue at hand here. All he would've had to do is create some distance and start his plan all over again. In order to prevent him from doing that, I had no other choice but to get stabbed myself.

Hōsen tried to let go of the knife, but I used my own hand to lock his fist in place.

"...The hell...? Who the fuck are you...?"

Having witnessed my strength firsthand, the composure Hōsen had maintained so far was completely blown away.

"Now then, what's next? Even though I'm the owner of the knife, you're the one who stabbed me with it. Moreover, an investigation will reveal that you tried to buy the same model of knife before. If you can't find a way to talk your way out of this, you'll be expelled, Hōsen."

While my fingerprints were on the knife's handle, Hōsen's were as well. And the fact that the knife was now pierced through my palm wasn't something that could be explained away very easily. His very own strategy had ended up backfiring on him.

"So you thought this far ahead...!?"

After glowering at me for a moment, Hōsen released his grip and took his distance, leaving the knife pierced through my palm.

And with that, the tables had completely turned on him.

Meanwhile, Horikita and Sudō had slowly gotten back on their feet and were now recovering their strength.

"A-are you okay, Ayanokōji-kun?"

"Ayanokōji..."

"Don't worry about me."

It wasn't unreasonable for them to be concerned about my condition, but this wasn't the time to be worrying about that.

The most important thing now was to make sure that Hōsen wasn't given another opening.

"How much info do you bastards even have...? Wait, Nanase, did you fuckin' nark to 'em?"

"I didn't tell them anything."

"I first felt like something was out of place back when Amasawa and I went shopping at the Keyaki Mall together."

Surprised to hear me drop Amasawa's name, Horikita spoke up herself.

"Amasawa-san? Are you saying that she's mixed up in all this...?"

"Yeah. According to the store clerk, just as Hōsen was about to finish paying for the knife, she reached out and stopped him from going through with the purchase."

After responding to Horikita, I turned back to Hōsen.

"You're the one who came up with this ridiculous strategy, but Amasawa is the one who helped refine it to perfection. After all, if you stabbed yourself with your own knife, it would naturally lead to problems once the school investigated what happened. However, if you could somehow get me to buy the knife instead, then that would have the potential to change everything."

The reason why Amasawa and Hōsen had chosen to use this expensive Petty knife because it was the only one that came bundled together with a sheath, making it the most convenient option available.

Of course, while there were a variety of other ways to conceal a naked blade, it would've been faster and easier to just buy one with a sheath given the added portability.

Back when I went shopping with Amasawa, she had managed to locate and pick out this exact knife without searching for it at all, even though that should've been the first time she had been in that store. And this was only the first thing that stuck with me. On Friday, she had shown up at my room saying that she had lost her hair tie, but that had been nothing more than an excuse to recover the knife. It's natural to assume that she had planted it there beforehand or simply lied about leaving it there at all. Furthermore, since there was a possibility that I might notice that it was missing if she recovered it too soon, she waited, delaying her move until the last possible moment. After that, she just needed to get the knife out of my room without getting any fingerprints on it and hand it over to Hōsen.

If she hadn't been able to retrieve the knife, then they probably would've chosen to postpone the plan.

"Tch, I never shouldda trusted that random chick in the first place."

"No, it was thanks to Amasawa that this plan took shape at all. Without her help, everything would've fallen apart."

"Whatever. Seems to me like you've got the upper hand now. Ain't that right Sempai? So what now?"

On top of everything else that had happened, the blood from my hand had stained Hōsen's clothes. There was no way he could talk his way out of this now.

Even if he took back the knife and stabbed himself in the thigh, it simply wasn't possible for him to come out on top anymore.

Of course, even if he tried to do that, I'd just use my full strength to stop him.

Chances were that Hōsen had already discerned that for himself as well.

The important part is what would happen next.

"Horikita, Sudō, and I can all promise to keep quiet about what happened tonight. How's that?"

"What are you sayin'? You really gonna throw away your chance to get me kicked outta here?"

"In exchange for not doing that, I have two conditions."

"Two?"

He probably knew the first without me even having to say it.

"The first is that you agree to form an equal, cooperative relationship between our two classes."

"Well it ain't like I got much of a choice between that an' expulsion. So what's the second?"

"I want you to partner up with me for this special exam."

From the time I first laid eyes on Hōsen, I found myself thinking that if I was in any position to select whoever I wanted, then he'd be my first choice by far. While there were several reasons for this, the biggest was that he didn't care about attracting attention due to his problematic behavior. If I were in Tsukishiro's shoes, I probably would've instructed my enforcer to avoid standing out as much as possible. I had been considering the option of privately reaching out to him to discuss the idea of working together if Horikita's discussion ended up falling through. So in that sense, this series of events had turned out to be quite convenient for me.

"...Are you serious?"

"You've only just enrolled here, so I'm sure there are plenty of things you haven't gotten a chance to do yet. If you get expelled now, it'll all be over before you can enjoy doing any of them. I don't know how things went back when you were in middle school, but the rumors saying that you're an equal match for Ryūen will end up staying that way. And that's all anybody will remember you for. At least, from what I've seen of Ryūen over the past year he's been here, you can't even really compare to him as you are right now."

"You motherfucker...!"

Obviously, the young man known as Hōsen Kazuomi had an unshakable sense of pride.

It came from an egotistical, habitual belief that he was one of the strongest people around.

Even though he was probably a step above Ryūen in terms of physical strength, the fact that I had said that Ryūen was better was unacceptable for him.

But most of all, there was no way he'd manage to tolerate the fact that I had outsmarted him.

He had a B+ Academic Ability rating, so if he were to hold back and flunk the exam, he would definitely get expelled.

That said, it didn't seem reasonable to think that he'd choose to sacrifice himself to take revenge on me. While Hōsen was about as close to innocent as one could get, the fact of the matter was that there was really no way for me to be 100% certain that he wasn't from the White Room. In that respect, no matter how much I tried, I wouldn't be able to clear him from all suspicion. However, after what happened here tonight, things were different. Even if Hōsen held back on the exam, the fact that I had been stabbed would still remain.

As long as I made it painfully clear that something unusual had gone on behind the scenes, even Tsukishiro wouldn't be able to force my expulsion immediately.

The school would set up an investigation to find out exactly what had happened, and Hōsen's decision to take a zero on the exam would be put up for deliberation.

Whatever tricks Tsukishiro might try to pull, I'd stay firm as a rock until expulsion was no longer on the table.

"Fuckin' good shit there, Ayanokōji-senpai! You're the first opponent who's gotten my blood boilin' like this. Just forcin' you to surrender won't be enough for me anymore. I'm gonna beat you to death instead, so I hope you're lookin' forward to it."

The faint traces of shakiness that he had shown earlier were a thing of the past. By now, Hōsen had already shifted his focus to preparing for his next fight.

"I will remain here. There's something I feel I should explain to Ayanokōji-senpai."

"Huh? What're you gonna tell 'em, Nanase?"

"Something that I've decided will be useful to Class 1-D as a whole. Ayanokōji-senpai and Horikita-senpai are already very wary of us. That being the case, wouldn't it be better if we had them stay vigilant of the other classes as well?"

"Suit yourself."

While the details of what she was saying were unclear, Hōsen accepted Nanase's proposal.

In the end, Hōsen was the first person to leave and head back to the dormitory.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Chapter 6 Part 3

TL: Graze and Liam  
ED: Silent Death and o-montoya

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It was now just the three of us and the first-year Nanase.

While there were a couple of things to discuss given what had happened, one matter took precedence over any of that.

And that was calming down Horikita, who had lost her cool upon seeing the knife pierced through my left hand.

“W-what should we do...? Should we, uhm, p-pull the knife out?”

The usually level-headed Horikita had probably never been in a situation like this one before.

“No. I know it isn’t exactly pleasant to look at, but it’s better to leave the knife where it is for now.”

If the knife wasn’t pulled out properly, I’d run a very real risk of hemorrhaging blood.

“More importantly, are you two okay?”

“Compared to you, I’m practically unscathed...”

“Yeah... I’m fine too.”

Sudō came closer to get a better look and grimaced upon seeing the grotesque state of my hand.

“Dude, how can you stay so calm with your hand like that?”

“Hmm, I don’t know.”

I was just doing things as I usually did, there wasn’t really anything special to it.

“But, man... I didn’t know you were like, so strong...”

“I just tried what I could to block the knife.”

“...That’s not what it looked like to me though.”

He voiced his honest impression of my confrontation with Hōsen earlier.

Sudō had braved his way through a fair number of fights in his time, so it didn’t seem like I’d be able to deceive him, or Horikita as well for that matter.

With my right hand, I took out my cell phone and called Chabashira.

“Something’s happened that I need a bit of help with. Could you quickly come meet me behind the first-year dorms? Alone, of course. Also, please bring a bath towel with you.”

Although Chabashira seemed confused by my sudden call, she managed to sense the urgency of the situation and promised to head over immediately. In the meantime, it was for the best that we stay put and wait for her to arrive.

It would be dangerous if other students saw the state of my hand while we changed locations.

At any rate... even after seeing the aftermath up close, Nanase didn’t seem phased in the slightest.

Despite the fact that there was a knife pierced through my palm and blood scattered around, she was perfectly calm and composed.

The visually intense, graphic nature of the scene didn’t affect her at all.

“Could you explain what happened here for us, Nanase?”

“If I don’t, then it seems that Class 1-D will be placed in quite a tough position, so I will.”

“You were aware that the negotiations were going to turn out like this... Is that correct?”

“Correct. The plan was to have Hōsen-kun stab himself in the thigh to get Ayanokōji-senpai expelled.”

She spoke without reserve, explaining their plan in the same polite tone as always.

“Are you saying that the kindness you’ve shown us was all just part of an act meant to fulfill that goal?”

“No, nothing of the sort, Horikita-senpai. I truly did want to join hands with you and establish a supporting relationship between our two classes. It’s just... targeting Ayanokōji-senpai had been our top priority, that’s all.”

The reason why both Hōsen and Nanase had been so fixated on Class 2-D was simply because I was a member of it.

“Why was that your goal? I don’t remember pardoning you for what happened here tonight, those were Ayanokōji-kun’s words, not mine. Depending on your explanation, I might just end up reporting this to the school straight away.”

Horikita pressed Nanase for answers, unable to fathom why I was getting targeted.

“While I do agree that there was a problem with our method, the school actually condones the notion of taking action to get Ayanokōji-senpai expelled. Only a select few first-year students currently know about this, but it’s possible to receive a tremendous number of private points just for forcing his expulsion.”

At last, the reason why Hōsen had gone after me had finally come to light.

“We were told that the student who manages to expel Ayanokōji Kiyotaka of Class 2-D will receive a bulk sum of 20 million private points. That’s the special exam that was given to us.”

“I don’t understand what you’re saying. That doesn’t make any sense. Who on earth would come up with such an outrageous, stupid special exam?”

Nanase held her tongue, unwilling to respond to Horikita’s inquiry.

“...For now, I’ve said everything I needed to say. With this, you should realize just how cautious you need to be of the other first-year classes, right Ayanokōji-senpai?”

She didn’t go into it very deeply, revealing only the bare minimum required to convey the idea. Needless to say, if Hōsen and Nanase knew about this ‘special exam’, then Amasawa probably did as well. Extending that logic, it only made sense that students in Classes 1-B and 1-C were also in on it.

“You don’t really expect me to accept such an answer, do you? The fact of the matter is that Ayanokōji-kun received a grievous injur—”

Horikita began hounding Nanase with questions for my sake, so I cut in to stop her.

“It’s alright Horikita. A general understanding of the situation is more than enough. I appreciate the help, Nanase.”

“For the sake of my class, of Class 1-D, I chose to cooperate with Hōsen-kun knowing full well just how awful his methods truly were. Because, if the 20 million point bounty were to fall into the hands of another class, it would bring about serious ramifications for us moving forward.”

With 20 million points, you would only have enough to buy a single ticket to Class A.



But given the utility during special exams such as this one, the more financial clout your class had, the better off you'd be.

"However, that was not the only reason why I cooperated with Hōsen-kun."

Nanase's tone was soft and calm, and yet there was something about the way she looked at me, a sharp but subtle glint in her eyes.

"I\*... simply didn't believe a person like you would be suitable for this school, Ayanokōji-senpai."  
[TLN: She uses boku here again.]

This was the first time that Nanase had ever directed these apparent feelings of hatred toward me.

Yet, I couldn't figure out why.

Shortly thereafter, Nanase bowed her head and left this place behind.

#### Fairly Important TL Notes:

So I usually don't like writing out notes like this, but in this case I have to make an exception. For those that don't know, Japanese has multiple first-person pronouns. English only uses 'I' or 'me' for this purpose, but Japanese has more than 10, all used for different purposes, ages, and genders. Every character in the series (so far), has only ever used one of these to refer to themselves, and used it consistently thereafter. Apart from one time where she slipped up in a previous chapter, Nanase has exclusively used 私 or watashi. This is a typically gender-neutral, maybe a little feminine, pronoun that Horikita and most serious respectful female characters (and Kouenji) also use. In the last spoken line of this part, Nanase says:

"I\*... simply didn't believe a person like you would be suitable for this school, Ayanokōji-senpai."

The asterisk here is my way of conveying that the first-person pronoun that she uses here is ボク or 'boku', which is a first-person pronoun primarily used by younger males. Now, Hirata and Ike both also use boku, but they use 僕 (the kanji) to say it instead of writing it in the stylized, katakana form (ボク) that Nanase has used it in. The important part about this is that, with this, Nanase is now only the second character in the series to use their first-person pronoun written in katakana. The first character is Kiyotaka, with his use of オレ or 'Ore', which is even more of a masculine pronoun than boku. Hosen, Ryuen, Sudo, and most of the more manly characters all use 'Ore' as well, but they use the kanji to do it, not the katakana, making Kiyotaka a special case. By having Nanase's boku written in katakana as well, the author is highlighting or emphasizing some sort of connection between Kiyotaka and herself. (Which is, unfortunately, untranslatable into the English language.)

Therefore, there are two key things to note here that are hard to convey in an English translation. The first is that she is using a different, more masculine pronoun for some unknown reason, and the second is that she's also using the pronoun in its katakana form instead of its kanji form, just as Kiyotaka uses when referring to himself with his own pronoun.

I hope this information has helped you to understand the sheer impact of this final line of Nanase's on a better level than you would have without knowing this.

# Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Epilogue Introduction

## Epilogue: An Intensifying Mystery

TL: Graze and Hina and Liam and Heero kinda  
ED: Puffypyjamas and Silent Death

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The following Monday, Nanase and Horikita got together and successfully ironed out the details of the agreement between our two classes. By Tuesday, all 157 pairs had been formed, and everyone had shifted their focus over to the upcoming written exams. Although Kōenji remained uncooperative until the very end, he instantly agreed to partner up with Nanase at her request, surprising both myself and Horikita.

While my left hand had sustained quite the injury, I could confidently say that the results were well worth it. Many students were surprised to see my hand wrapped up in bandages, but thanks to Chabashira and Mashima-sensei, the matter was kept confidential. This allowed the special exam to move forward without anyone else finding out about what happened.

Even though there had been many opportunities to interact with the first-year students over these past two weeks, I still wasn't able to discern the identity of the White Room student. Given the lack of action throughout the special exam, it made me question whether or not they even existed in the first place. It was safe to assume that I needed to stay wary of all the first-years I had come into close contact with.

Normally, one might think that they could rule out Hōsen due to the fact that several students knew about him from back in middle school. However, neither Ryūen nor Akito had actually met him in person before. In other words, there was a chance he was an imposter who had contacted the real Hōsen and taken on his identity.

As for Nanase, even though she didn't appear to bear any ill will toward me at first glance, upon delving deeper there were several factors that couldn't be overlooked, such as the method she had used to get close to me, her attitude after we left the karaoke parlor, and the reason she had chosen to contact me in the first place.

And then there was Amasawa, who had joined hands with Hōsen to try and get me expelled. But even then, it was more than possible that she might've just been after the 20 million point bounty on my head.

In any case, I still didn't have a single shred of evidence to connect any of them to the White Room.

If I showed even the slightest hint of weakness, I could be swallowed whole, and it seemed like this would continue to be the case for a while.

REPORT THIS AD

And just like that... May 1st had finally arrived. The day that the results of the special exam were to be announced.

During the 6th and final period of the day, some time was set aside to present our scores.

"I will now present the results of the special exam. While everything will be displayed up here on the blackboard, it will be displayed on your tablets as well so you can check what you want in detail."

Thanks to our tablets, we could zoom in on the scores we wanted to check without even looking at the board.

I could feel Horikita's eyes fixated on me. There was no doubt that this special exam had been the most difficult one yet. It was highly unlikely that the two of us would end up getting the same score.

On the day of the exam, Horikita had chosen math as the subject for the two of us to compete over.

Before long, the screen on the blackboard swapped over and the test results were displayed on our tablets.

Most students didn't care about the scores of others, prioritizing their own scores instead.

I, on the other hand, prioritized checking the performance of our class as a whole.

In terms of expulsions... it seemed like we had successfully managed to avoid losing anyone.

Upon sorting the overall scores in ascending order, the lowest combined score was 579. From the look of it, everyone had gotten through the exam without a hitch. While everyone had undoubtedly tried their best, it wasn't like the school would have hit us with such an unreasonably difficult special exam right at the start of the year. In fact, Ike, Satō, and many others had all easily managed to score more than 250 points. This meant that, back when Chabashira showed us that table of estimated scores at the start of the exam she had probably intentionally lowered the values.

As everyone began to see their scores, sighs of relief and joy-filled shouts could be heard throughout the classroom.

With that out of the way, it was time to check Horikita's score as well. I filtered the results to only show math and had the results displayed in descending order.

As the subject selected for our competition, Horikita had scored an impressive total of 87 points. Given that the next score after hers was Keisei's with an 84, I couldn't even imagine the effort she must've put into studying. The students after Keisei all had high Academic Ability ratings at or around an A. That said, the 80 point threshold seemed like a huge barrier for most students, no matter the subject. After all, roughly 10% of the exam was based on concepts that went completely beyond the scope of the first-year curriculum, not to mention the difficulty of the exam itself.

As the class was brimming with delight over successfully getting through another exam, a commotion gradually began to arise amongst some of the students.

Of course, I was already well aware of what had happened. Chabashira was staring at me from up at the podium, along with several other students who had realized what happened. This reaction was understandable though, given that my name was placed just above Horikita in the results for the math test.

“A p-perfect score...!? This... Seriously?”

Nobody in the class had managed to score above a 90 on any given test, no matter the subject.

That is, except for me and my score in math.

Incidentally, I scored around a 70 in each of the other subjects.

Most students probably couldn't understand why I had scored so phenomenally well on only one of the tests.

These written exams had been several times more difficult than I had anticipated. While there was a relatively high risk of getting a perfect score, I had very deliberately refused to cut any corners with my performance. It would inevitably attract the attention of my classmates and the entire school as a whole, but after considering what Tsukishiro was likely to do in the future, I figured that it wouldn't be a problem to show a glimpse of this side of myself beforehand.

In fact, from a future perspective, making the first move would probably end up saving me a lot of trouble later on.

Under normal circumstances, Sudō would probably be raising a fuss together with Ike. And while he was surprised, he simply remained seated and quietly stared at me.

Given that he already knew about the actions I had taken so far and the incident that had taken place with Hōsen several days ago, it made sense that he would be somewhat less surprised than the other students.

In any case, this past April, things had started to change quite a lot. At this point, the students who were staring at me with strange gazes would probably begin asking questions, and I needed to be prepared to answer them.

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Epilogue Part 1

TL: Graze and D3nj4l  
ED: Silent Death and Puffypyjamas

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Since class was still in session, nobody was able to reach out to talk to me about my scores, but that changed once school was out for the day.

As soon as Chabashira dismissed us, the first person to approach me wasn't Horikita, but Keisei of the Ayanokōji Group.

"Kiyotaka, do you have a moment?"

It would be no exaggeration to say that Keisei boasted the highest grades out of anyone in Class D, so he knew well just how difficult it was to get a perfect score. He undoubtedly had his fair share of questions about what had happened.

"I'm sorry, but could you postpone that for now, Yukimura-kun? I'd like to have a few words with him first."

Before I could respond, Horikita cut in and pushed him away.

"Yeah. Sorry, Keisei. We'll talk later."

"Ah, sure."

As I left the classroom together with Horikita, many of my classmates had their eyes locked on me, not just Keisei, Haruka, and Airi.

After walking together in silence for a bit, Horikita eventually stopped and, upon confirming that we were alone, turned around to face me.

"I won't make any excuses. I did everything I possibly could, and got a score that I'm satisfied with."

"Are you sure you don't want a rematch?"

"I couldn't even understand what those final questions meant, let alone try to solve them. I don't even know when I'm expected to learn those concepts the usual way."

"Theory of measurement, Lebesgue integrals... maybe sometime around college, I think?"

I didn't know very much about that sort of thing, so I couldn't give her an exact answer.

After all, even if I were to tell her that I learned how to do them as a child, it would be of no help at all.

"...Forget it. It was stupid of me to even ask in the first place."

As if she had given up on something, Horikita forced out a sigh and stared at me with a clouded look in her eyes.

"It's frustrating, but I admit defeat. The events of these last couple days have pretty much forced me to recognize your abilities. Dragging my heels any more than this would just be foolishness on my part."

Horikita had fought admirably, but praising her now seemed like it would probably end up backfiring on me.

"About the conditions you set earlier—"

"Ah, there you are, Ayanokōji."

Horikita was interrupted just as she was probably about to start talking about the Student Council.

It was our homeroom teacher, Chabashira, who had apparently come looking for me.

"What do you want from me?"

"How awfully cold. Where would you be if not for my help the other day?"

"Indeed. You were very helpful back then."

"I'm going home for today. We'll talk later."

Naturally, Horikita didn't seem willing to talk in Chabashira's presence, so she proceeded to excuse herself.

Once Horikita was out of sight, Chabashira turned to face me.

"I see I've interrupted you, but it's urgent. Acting Director Tsukishiro is asking for you. Come."

"I see."

It was so important that I absolutely had to be told, even if that meant interrupting someone to do so.

Keeping a few steps ahead of me with her eyes fixed forward, Chabashira began to talk.

“Just so you know... According to Mashima-sensei, it seems like Acting Director Tsukishiro didn't do anything out of the ordinary during the special exam.”

“That makes sense. After all, he took action ahead of time. That is, during the preparatory phase of the exam.”

During the exam itself, he was simply waiting for the results.

“What are the chances that things might get more heavy-handed moving forward?”

“What do you mean?”

“Being stabbed with a knife is no laughing matter, you know. Your father took action, didn't he?”

“My hand has nothing to do with that.”

I hadn't told Chabashira the details of what had happened. Of course, the same went for the 20 million point bounty. I didn't think she had heard about any of it elsewhere either.

“If that's the case, then it's fine. I was thinking he might have tried to restrain you and take you out of the school by force.”

“He'd need a certain amount of manpower for that. It's nothing you need to be worrying about.”

Something like that could work on a small rabbit of sorts, but a human being would be a different story.

“Great. I need you here, I need you to be useful for me. Your perfect score on the math test has made it clear to me just how special you really are after all.”

Getting a perfect score had many downsides and, while few, this was but one of the side effects.

Before long, we arrived at the reception office.

Leaving Chabashira behind, I ventured into the room alone.

“Thank you for coming all the way out here to meet me, Ayanokōji-kun.”

“Sending my homeroom teacher to come and get me like this... What are you planning? She might suspect something.”



I said nothing of the fact that I had already drawn Chabashira over to my side.

I put on an act, pretending that I was surprised about suddenly being called upon by the Acting Director.

“Well, as the Acting Director, it wouldn’t be proper for me to come to your classroom, now would it?”

He kindly motioned for me to take a seat, but I disregarded it, choosing to stand instead.

Upon noting that, he finally began to talk.

“Now that April has come to a close, have you managed to figure out who the student I sent is? I was just thinking I should ask to find out.”

This seemed to be related to his promise that he would back off if I managed to discover the identity of the White Room student by the end of April.

“Unfortunately, I still don’t have any idea of who it might be.”

“What a concise response. Shouldn’t you at least list off the names of the students who you found reasonably suspicious?”

“I won’t speak of things I’m not certain of. At least, not in this situation.”

“I see. So that child has managed to stay hidden quite well, it seems.”

With a satisfied expression, Tsukishiro nodded, almost as if he were impressed with the enforcer’s performance thus far.

“I haven’t been able to sense their presence at all. They’ve managed to cover their tracks quite beautifully.”

“They’ve worked hard these past several months on a specially-built curriculum tailored to make them into a full-fledged high school student.”

So, he had taken such elaborate measures ahead of time, is it? Well, if not, there would be no point in bringing it up.

“It seems that you, on the other hand, had to go through quite a lot of trouble when you first came here. Between your speech, attitude, way of thinking, and even how you chose to spend your time, you were highly unnatural in all respects.”

Tsukishiro grinned in amusement, as if he’d been watching from close by all along.

It seemed like he was merely teasing me, attempting to emphasize the notion that he was in complete control of the situation.

“The image of what an ordinary high school student should be like was something I had to come up with on my own after all.”

“Anyway, at least you didn’t manage to catch onto their identity. I’m satisfied with that. You can leave now.”

With this, Tsukishiro dismissed me, bringing our discussion to a close. He didn’t seem to have any intention of pressing me about the bandage wrapped around my left hand. However, I stood my ground and continued to speak.

“Acting Director Tsukishiro, could it be that you miscalculated something?”

“And whatever do you mean by that?”

“It’s already May. Didn’t you want to have this settled by the end of April?”

“No no. There’s no need to rush things. I’ve been given a surprisingly long extension.”

“Is that so? I was thinking that you must’ve run into some... unexpected trouble.”

“How interesting. And what’s your basis for that?”

“At the very least, I got the impression that you’d been fully prepared to force my expulsion this time around. The only thing that needed to happen was for the White Room student to make contact and partner up with me. However, none of the first-year students ever ended up doing something like that.”

Of course, there were those such as Tsubaki who had wanted to pair up with me, but I wasn’t going to count something as trivial as that.

“In fact, I’m almost tempted to start thinking that there isn’t even a White Room student amongst the first-years at all.”

“But you don’t really think that, do you?”

“It just seemed unconvincing, is all.”

“Well, thanks to the OAA app, I was aware that you were having trouble finding yourself a partner up until about halfway through the exam. However, you are an exceptional person. As such, it was determined that it would be too risky to send in my enforcer only to have you uncover their identity so easily. I thought that it would be wiser to try for another time instead.”

“How easygoing.”

“Maybe so.”

“Or perhaps the White Room student disobeyed your orders and took action of their own accord. When put that way, everything seems to fit together quite nicely.”

“Dear lord. You sure come up with some interesting ideas.”

Amused, Tsukishiro narrowed his eyes; Taking a sip from the cup of tea he had prepared on his desk.

After a brief moment of silence, he put the cup down.

“Very well. It’s a bother to have you seek credibility from my words and the like, but I’ll admit it. It’s true that I had planned on guaranteeing your expulsion this time around. However, that child simply disregarded it.”

While Tsukishiro had denied it at first, he promptly changed his tune and admitted the truth.

“They’re just a child, after all. So if they’re just going through a classic rebellious phase, it’s fairly endearing, but if not... then I might not be able to take this matter so lightly.”

The very student that Tsukishiro had sent to infiltrate the school had gone and disobeyed his orders.

If that really were the case, it would be a heavy situation indeed.

“Do take care, Ayanokōji-kun. I wasn’t the one who chose to send in someone from the White Room this time. Furthermore, seeing that the enforcer is disregarding my instructions and acting of their own discretion, I fear that the higher-ups may very well be thinking of something suspicious.”

“Did they give up on you? Your performance has been fairly terrible.”

“That may be true. However, the fact that I was told to have you expelled hasn’t changed. Even if I’m being used as a pawn, I’ll simply continue to follow the orders I receive. If I fail and end up getting cast aside, well, that’s that. I’ll simply move on to my next posting.”

I had thought of the White Room student and Tsukishiro as one and the same. But now, with this, there was an emerging possibility that the relationship between them wasn’t quite so cut and dry. That said, if what he was saying was true, then why?

If they worked together to expel me, they’d certainly have a better chance of succeeding.

Or, was this all just a bluff meant to deceive me?

Was the White Room student running wild...? Or was 'that man' pulling the strings from behind the scenes?

In terms of probability, I'd say that each of these two options was equally likely.

It was also important for me to keep in mind just how deceptive the man known as Tsukishiro really was.

He didn't seem hurried, nor was he discomposed in the slightest.

"One last thing... If that child is going so far as to ignore your father's intentions, then depending on the circumstances, you might even be better off choosing to get expelled yourself. After all, the more unshakable your position as the White Room's magnum opus may be, the more unfathomable the envy and hatred you'd receive for it. I shudder to even imagine what will become of you before they're satisfied."

In the face of Tsukishiro's serious, and yet comical warning, I simply turned around and walked away, leaving the reception room behind.

Special Exam ▪ Overall Ranking

1st Place ▪ Class 2-A ▪ Average Score: 725

2nd Place ▪ Class 2-C ▪ Average Score: 673

3rd Place ▪ Class 2-D ▪ Average Score: 640

4th Place ▪ Class 2-B ▪ Average Score: 621

Class points as of May 1:

Class 2-A, led by Sakayanagi ▪ 1169 points

Class 2-B, led by Ryūen ▪ 565 points

Class 2-C, led by Ichinose ▪ 539 points

Class 2-D, led by Horikita ▪ 283 points

## Classroom of the Elite Volume 12 Afterword

TL: Graze and Hina

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2020. It looks like I've been able to meet with you again this year as well. It's Kinuko~ You didn't forget, did you?

Alright! To recap, I'm Kinuko... no, that's not right. I'm Kinugasa Shougo.

Happy New Year, everyone! I've managed to release Volume 1 of the Second Year somewhat safely! Whether you're a first-time reader or coming back for more, I look forward to having you here with me this year as well. The release of Volume 2-1 happens to coincide with the release of YouJitsu's second art book. I hope everyone will keep an eye out for that book as well. We will be holding a second-year promotion commemoration event, scheduled to begin at the end of the month, so we're looking forward to having people from all corners of the world turn up at the event venue! I can squeeze in some advertising from time to time, too!

Well, now that we're embarking on a memorable new series, things are really going to start moving more than ever before. Ayanokōji and the others were immature when they first started out, but they're all beginning to show signs of growth here and there, right? From the changes that come with becoming second-years to the arrival of a new wave of students, there has been an awful lot to write about. So much so, in fact, that I managed to use up the maximum number of pages allowed by standard and had to cut down the afterword to just a single page. I only just barely got it done in time. Yikes!

I couldn't say very much this time due to the limited number of lines, but I'll be seeing you again soon, so please come again next time as well! Oh, and be sure to check out the official webpage too! You'll definitely enjoy it!