

Classroom of The Elite

Year 2 Volume 5



The Monologue of Sae Chabashira

Since I became a teacher, or even before I became a teacher, I have a problem that I can't talk about with anyone.

That is, I keep having a certain nightmare over and over again.

The events of that day, which I will never forget, will be repeated in my dreams.

The nightmares change form with each visit, sometimes from my point of view, sometimes from someone else's, sometimes with different conversations and processes.

But there are some things in common that are the same.

It means that no matter how many times the story is repeated, the "ending" is the same.

..... At that time, there was nothing for us B class to fear.

Our momentum was overwhelming the other classes, and we were within reach of Class A.

Of course, it was not a smooth road.

By the time I was promoted to the third year, the number of classmates who had left had increased to six.

Nevertheless, in the third year, no one was missing and we accumulated class points.

I believed that I could graduate with an A class without missing any more students.

Until that day, that time.

It was the end of the third semester, just before the graduation exam, the last chance to turn things around.

The homeroom teacher appeared with a stiff expression on her face and told us about a new special exam.

Initially, we had no fear of that special test.

The rules were simple and straightforward, and we had no doubt that we would be able to clear them without difficulty.

But that optimistic mood lasted until that assignment came up.

The scene switches, and I'm screaming at the class.

My best friend Chie approached me with an angry look and grabbed me up by the chest.

The class, which had been united as one, collapsed in an instant.

It's okay.

He muttered, his face full of resignation and realization.

But I couldn't make up my mind.

There was no way I could be prepared for this.

He had been with me for three years, and his presence was no small thing.

An irreplaceable classmate, an irreplaceable best friend.

An irreplaceable, important person of the opposite sex.

He was a bit on the uptight side, but he was serious, kind, and more dependable than anyone else.

This is a face he has never shown before.

That time when he reached out his hand to me under the evening sky, somewhat shyly.

I fought back the tears that were threatening to come and said, "I'm sorry"

"Thank you for your cooperation." And

The relationship between the two of us will come to an end as soon as it has begun.

Chapter - 1

The Footsteps of Chaos

Intro

After the summer break, the second semester of the second year started today.

If we look at it broadly, it means that we will soon reach the end of our three-year school life.

I tie my tie and slip my arm through the sleeve. Looking in the mirror, I adjust my hair, making sure my appearance is in order, and head for the door.

On the way, I was joined by Sudo, who was yawning loudly, so we exchanged greetings, and headed out of the dorm.

"Suzune threatened me that I might have to take a writing test early in the second semester, so I stayed up all night."

"You were still studying on the last day of summer vacation?"

"Thankfully, I've got a full curriculum to work through. Well, I'd like to get a high score and get my OAA to a B or better."

It's a big deal to get a B or better in academics. But it's not a big statement, is it?

If he had been studying hard during the summer vacation, it would not be surprising if his academic performance had improved further. He has become a man for whom the phrase "both literary and military arts" is quite appropriate.

The number of minor life problems such as tardiness, absenteeism, and falling asleep has also decreased dramatically.

There is still a part of him that gets heated depending on the situation, but that is also a characteristic of Sudo.

"Let me ask you something strange, do you think Kanji has kissed Shinohara yet?"

"What?"

"It's great that he's got a girlfriend, but it's frustrating when people beat you to it. It's been bothering me a lot lately."

"Why don't we just ask him? I think Ike might be able to tell us."

"Listen to If he had not even held hands yet, or if you've heard that it's going further than that, my right fist might roar for the first time in a long time."

Okay, that's a bit of a problem. I'm going to be in a lot of trouble when his fists roar.

"If Ike is happy, he's going to say whatever he wants. If you don't ask him about it, then we haven't made that much progress, have we?"

"That's true. But maybe it's different when it comes to love. I don't know, because I haven't experienced it. I'm not sure if you've ever had a girlfriend, by the way, Ayanokoji? ----- What's it like there?"

The story about the ike unexpectedly turns into a story about me.

I can't help but feel Sudo's passionate (I believe him!) gaze on me, asking, "What's going on?"

"I can't lie to you, so I'll tell you this: I got my first girlfriend the other day."

".... Seriously? Seriously?"

It's not a good idea to fool around with it, given that it will soon spread from kei.

When I answered honestly, Sudo sighed as he held his head.

Right after that, he hurriedly grabbed me by both shoulders.

"No, no, no, no, no, no!"

"Don't worry. It's not who you think it is."

"Are you sure? I can trust that it's not Suzune, right?"

"Oh. No."

"Oh, yeah. Well, that's okay. ----- I thought my heart was going to stop for a second. -----"

He put his left palm to his forehead and wiped it messily, as if sweat had broken out.

Then he showed me the sweat on his palms to show his impatience.

"Who is it then?"

"It's--"

"Ah! I found you!"

Just as Sudo regained his composure, he heard footsteps running up behind him.

When the footsteps caught up with our walking speed, she looked up at me with a slightly angry look on her face.

"I was going to go to school with you, but you never told me you weren't in your room!"

Kei puffs out her cheeks a little and complains like that.

"No, I haven't heard anything about going with you."

"That's I mean, I was nervous and lost until the last minute."

Sudo looked at us suspiciously as we suddenly began a mysterious exchange.

"What's with the sudden interruption, Karuizawa? I was just having an important conversation with Ayanokoji, so don't interrupt me."

Apparently, he hadn't noticed the nature of our conversation.

He seemed unconvinced that she had simply shown up here.

Thinking about it, the two of us hardly ever get involved.

We're not close. ----- No, if anything, we're just bad together.

"Are you going to tell everyone about us today?"

"Huh? Hmm, hmm. I'm looking at the timing a little It's not the same to announce it as soon as you get to school. It's surprisingly difficult to make an announcement. It's not the same as saying, "Listen to me."

"It seems that Yosuke was quick to declare his intentions."

"Well, that's the thing, isn't it? It's a totally different situation."

"Hey, hey, what are you talking about? What?"

Sudo, who had been showing his dullness, stopped and looked stunned, as if his understanding had caught up with the fact that I was using first name and what I was saying.

"Yeah. What? Oh, hey, what do you mean, Ayanokoji?"

Still, he was not sure if he could connect with this combination, or if he was still not sure. In a way, he might be a good classmate to know first.

"We are in a relationship, me and her."

Kei grinned and then elbowed me in the arm, poking me three times.

Maybe she was just happy to hear it from me.

"It's Aaaaaah! No, no, no, no!"

He was taken aback, and shouted out loud, more exaggeratedly than he had imagined.

There were no classmates around by chance, but the students turned their heads to see what was going on.

"Too loud."

"I'm sorry. But, no, what? Why... are you going out with Karuizawa?"

"What do you mean? Is there something wrong with me?

"It's not that it's not about that, but I mean, yeah,?"

He made a bewildered movement that seemed to pull him back a bit, and twisted his head in an unconvincing manner.

"What, you wanted me to go out with Horikita?"

"I'll never accept that! ...No, that's not what I meant..."

He grabbed me by the shoulders and brought his lips to my ear and whispered.

"I'm sorry to say this, but... Karuizawa was dating Hirata, and before that, we don't know what kind of flashy relationships she had in junior high school. Don't you feel dissatisfied or uncomfortable with that? Isn't that too high a bar for your first girlfriend?"

I guess that's the image of Kei Karuizawa that her classmates have of her.

In fact, until I learned about her past, I had always thought of her as that kind of girl.

"What are you whispering about?"

"No, it's nothing."

Sudo was glaring at me and slunk away. He must have felt bad for saying something so close to swearing.

"Ayanokoji and Karuizawa are dating.? No matter how many times I think about it, I can't catch up. I'm not sure if this is a good idea, but... I guess it's a good idea."

I heard Sudo say a few words, and I was sure I heard him.

Part - 1

We arrived at the school. As we arrived at the school, we occasionally passed third-year students who commuted from the dormitory to school, and they looked at us the same way they did when we were on the boat, but Sudo showed no sign of noticing.

I kept seeing the same scene when I went outside during the summer vacation, but I don't think I'll ever really get used to it.

The act of being watched gives a strong sense of oppression and confinement. This is something that will continue unless we erase the existence of the gaze itself.

Kei quickly formed a group of girls to talk about the summer vacation, and Sudo started chatting with his good friends and Hondo. I also chatted with the Ayanokoji group and waited for the bell to ring.

Eventually, Chabashira sensei came and spoke up, looking the same as in the first semester.

"This second semester, there are a few big events coming up for you guys. First of all, there will be a sports festival, which was held last year, and a test of the students' physical abilities in October. There are some rules that are different from last year's, but there are no major differences in the abilities required."

The exam that Chabashira sensei had just mentioned, one that would require a lot of physical ability and might be a problem for students who excel only in their studies, was about to begin. The rules are different from those of the first year.

"In November, a cultural festival will be held for the first time at the Advanced Nurturing High School. We will announce the details of the festival in the same manner as the sports festival, but we will also take time to hold this festival in parallel starting in September."

In September, we mainly prepare for the Sports Festival. The number of PE classes per week increases by a few hours.

It seems that full-scale preparations will begin after the end of the athletic festival in October, and the actual performance will begin in November.

There is also a school trip coming up, although I am not sure if it will be related to the special exam.

"And of course there will be midterms and final exams in between these events."

Anyway, there is no doubt that this is a busy second semester.

"I'll explain more about the sports festival later, but first let's talk about the cultural festival."

In terms of order, the sports festival came first, but then Chabashira sensei began to share details about the cultural festival first.

"The festival will be held with a lot of guests. You will have to compete with all the classes of all the grades in the festival for the total amount of sales. You can apply for as many items as you like, but the budget is limited. For more information, please refer to your tablet."

Cultural Festival Outline

In the second year, each class will be given 5,000 private points per student to be used only in preparation for the festival, and students will be allowed to use them freely within that range (initial cost of 5,500 points for first-year students and 4,500 points for third-year students).

Additional funds will be given for community service, such as student council service, and for contributions made through club activities (details will be announced for each class once finalized).

Initial and additional funds are not reflected in final sales and will be forfeited if unused.

100 Class points will be awarded to the 1st through 4th place classes.

50 class points will be awarded to the 5th to 8th place class.

No change in class points for the 9th to 12th place classes.

As for rewards, a relatively large number of classes are available, and there is no penalty for being low. If we finish in 8th place, we will have achieved something.

The rules were easy to understand and there seemed to be no confusion. The fact that the announcement was made before the details of the sports festival was simple and straightforward.

I guess it's because you can't start preparing until you get an explanation. As for the Sports festival, we can prepare ourselves to some extent by improving our physical abilities for now.

"Yeah, it's kind of like a traditional school festival."

I'm sure she didn't miss a beat, but I can understand why Shinohara would want to say that.

I don't see the risk of losing class points or getting expelled. The fact that I am tempted to suspect that there is more to this school is proof that I have become deeply immersed in its structure.

"It will also be important to determine which areas of the site to secure. For example, if you want to set up your stall near the main gate, where guests will definitely pass by, you will have to pay the school for the space."

The students, including me, looked over the new information that had been sent to the tablet.

List of available stalls on site -

The map of the site, along with the title of the store, and the names of possible locations are listed in a combination of location and number.

The location closest to the main gate that the teacher just mentioned is labeled "Main Gate 1" and has a location fee of 10,000 points.

If the location is far from the main gate and it is difficult for guests to get to, there are some places that are free.

The budget without considering additional funds is about 200,000.

If you think about it, 10,000 points is not cheap at all.

However, there is no doubt that this is a prime location that is expected to attract many visitors.

"It is possible that there will be conflicts with other classes and grades regarding the location of the stalls, but only one class per location will be allowed to use that location. In the event of a

conflict, a bidding war will be held, and the class that offers the school the highest price will get the right."

In other words, if you are forced to use expensive points in order to secure a prime location, the budget that you can allocate to the event will be drastically reduced. We have about two months to figure out how to fight efficiently with a limited budget.

"The school will not disclose what classes will be performing or where the stalls will be until the day of the festival. The school will not divulge this information, but be aware that you cannot cover your students' ears. If the information is leaked, you should expect to be dealt with mercilessly."

Even if you come up with an ideal presentation, there is a risk that other classes will copy it and counteract it.

"There will be things we need from time to time. If there is something we can't get on the premises, we can apply for permission and get it from outside. As long as we stay within the terms of the agreement, we are free to use the budget however we want."

I'll have to look into that and other details.

"This is the description of the festival and its rules. The specific preparations and set-up period will begin after the end of the Sports Festival, but from today onwards you will discuss what to do and how to allocate the budget, using your own time."

The more time we spend on the festival, the more accurate we will be.

Part 2

After school, many of my classmates remained in the classroom, except for those who were going to club activities.

Of course, this was the first discussion for the cultural festival to be held in November.

There are probably a certain number of students who have experienced cultural festivals in their junior high school days.

I didn't have any particular information, so I listened as usual.

"First, I'll give you a short list of events that I can think of."

Yosuke, who had permission to use the classroom monitor, typed the words on his tablet.

"When you think of a cultural festival, the most common things are food, haunted houses etc."

Food-related, haunted houses, mazes, cafes, live music, plays, etc. The most obvious ones are added one by one and listed.

"The event will run from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The food and drink will be available for the people in attendance. However, this may increase the competition."

"It's just a matter of budget. Compared to something like a haunted house or a maze, where the cost can be reduced once it's built, it will inevitably be more expensive."

Some of the music equipment can be rented for a fee, but the number is limited, so the sooner the better.

There is also the question of how many students are skilled enough to make a profit.

"We have 39 students in our class. That means the budget we're looking at is 195,000 points. Honestly, it's not enough. It's not an easy decision to make when it comes to food."

"I have a suggestion, if you don't mind."

"I'm open to suggestions, Horikita-san."

"As Hirata-kun said, the budget for the festival is limited. But no matter how much we argue about it on the table, there are still many things we don't understand. Even if you were to cook takoyaki at a food stall, you would need to know what ingredients to use, your skills, and many other things. If that's the case, maybe we should bring the idea to the class first and test it repeatedly, even if we use private points."

Many of the students nodded their heads in agreement at the suggestion.

Indeed, it is important to actually try cooking, serving, or whatever you do.

Of course, there is a risk of paying out of one's own pocket, but if it comes back as class points later on, it is easy to dismiss it as a necessary upfront investment.

"But... Oh, I don't mean to speak ill of the current idea, but when it comes to paying one's own way, some people are reluctant to do anything about it, aren't they?"

Matsushita fears that some of the students will be left to their own devices and not put any effort into the festival.

"That's fine. I don't want to waste time on a random idea, but I can't ignore people who are trying their best to contribute. If you have an idea for an event that you think would be a good fit, you should actively present it. If the idea is good, how about paying the planner?"

"Yeah, that's a good idea. There's nothing wrong with rewarding people for their hard work and giving back."

"We'll work out the specifics later, but for example, if you get 100 class points for the festival, that's 390,000 private points per month for the whole class. We'll divide this by the number of people who planned the event and give it to them as a reward. I'm sure there will be no complaints if we do it this way."

If we were to do five events, that would be 78,000 points per person. If the number of people who came up with the idea or helped out is too large to divide it, you can divide it by the total amount for two or three months. This way, the students who are actively involved in the festival will benefit, and the students who cut corners will benefit later on. More importantly, if it would increase class points, I wouldn't be opposed to it.

"Then, to prevent anyone from stealing your ideas, you must keep the information to yourself. And be careful what you say, whether at school, in the dorm, or at the Keyaki Mall."

Thorough confidentiality. This is very important for the next two months of preparation. The discussion continued, with Horikita presenting the event to Yosuke. And it was decided that if the possibility of full hiring arose, we would move forward with the conversation.

Part 3

For the next two weeks, our school life went on as usual.

While preparing for the Cultural Festival and the Sports Festival at the same time, she devotes herself to her schoolwork. It was a precious time when I could say that I was repeating the same routine as in a normal school. Surprisingly, the relationship between me and Kei did not spread from Sudo, and there was no sign of anyone new coming to know about us.

It was the third Wednesday in the middle of September, after school. I was seated in the back of the class, and I saw the shadow of an unusual person coming into contact with Horikita, who was seated in the center of the front row.

"Hey, Horikita-san. I was wondering if I could have a moment of your time after this?"

It was Sato who approached her with a bit of reserve. She was one of the girls who never got involved with Horikita.

"I have an errand to run to the student council in an hour, so if it doesn't conflict with that, fine. What is it?"

She didn't look dubious, but I guess she didn't have much experience being approached by Sato. When she asked her curiously, she continued in a slightly whispered voice.

"We've been thinking a lot about what we're going to do for the festival, or so we said on ----. She asked us to let her know if we had any ideas."

"Yes. We're open to presentations, but"

"Hey, hey, let me give a presentation. I've come up with an idea that will really win this festival."

Sato's confidence was evident, but Horikita was not easily impressed.

That's because not a few students had come to Horikita with ideas in the past ten days or so.

Both boys and girls repeatedly make proposals to Horikita, as there is a quid pro quo (Latin word meaning : a favour or advantage granted in return for something.) if the proposal is adopted. The proposals range from the traditional to the bizarre, but one thing they all have in common is that Horikita won't even listen to them if they just say the name of the event.

On the same day that the reward for the idea was announced, Hondo immediately proposed that we sell fried chicken because it was delicious.

But Horikita kicked him off, telling him to go make a proposal.

They didn't even show any willingness to accept it as an idea. The next day, undaunted, Hondo submitted a proposal to make fried chicken, but all he wrote was a recipe for fried chicken that he must have picked up from the Internet and a passionate speech about how much he would sell it for and how delicious it would be.

Seeing the low level proposal, Horikita explained again the importance of a proposal. If you were to open a fried chicken shop, how much would the cost be, where would the store be located, how many human resources would be needed, how much would the fixed price be, how many customers would you expect to buy the food, and what would be the basis for that? She told them that she would only listen to the ideas of those who had put them together properly.

After that, it was thought that the number of people who easily approached Horikita with proposals would decrease, but surprisingly, the number of students who brought in elaborate proposals increased day by day.

Some of the ideas actually made it to Horikita's consideration list. However, none of the proposals have made it to the final stage of adoption.

"I'd like a copy of your proposal, then."

"Of course, I'm prepared, but... not here. Can you give me some time after this if you can?"

"Yeah? Well, okay, where do you want me to go?"

"I'll be in an empty classroom in the special wing in half an hour. I've got the teacher's permission."

"Empty classroom?"

After saying that to Horikita, who curiously asked back, Sato turned away and met my eyes, which were looking at her, and immediately approached me.

"Hey, Ayanokoji-kun. Do you have time after this?"

"Me? I don't have any plans after this."

"You heard what I said earlier, right? I need you to come with me and Horikita-san in half an hour."

"Why me too?"

"That's a secret for now. You'll know when you come."

Just like her attitude toward Horikita earlier, Sato's face was full of confidence.

"I'll be waiting for you then."

After checking the time on her cell phone, Sato hurried out of the classroom.

"What is it about her? She seemed so sure of herself."

"You mean she had thought of something special?"

"Even if she did, I don't know why I bothered."

I don't know what that means, but I'll find out in half an hour.

Horikita and I decided to kill some time in the classroom before heading to the special building.

Part 4

Since we were going to the same place anyway, I went with Horikita to the special building.

When I arrived in front of the classroom designated by Sato, I somehow found Maezono there.

"Oh, I'll be on watch. I don't think anyone will come to the special wing after school, but just in case."

"Watching? ...It's a lot more elaborate than I thought."

She was surprised that they had even set up a security system, although it was a prerequisite to keep secret until the day of the event which grade and class would be doing what.

It's the same for me. Not only did she offer to rent a room in a special wing of the school, but she even set up a guard to prevent third party intervention.

In addition, there was a simple but effective barrier to prevent people from seeing the inside of the classroom through the windows.

"Let's see what's inside, shall we?"

"Oh, wait a minute. From here on, it's all hands-on, so both you and Horikita-san can experience it as customers."

"That's what I meant. Okay, this is much easier to understand than looking at a poorly written proposal."

Seeing how elaborate the process has been, Horikita's expectations are undeniably high.

Whether or not they actually decide to hire her is another matter, but it's clear even at this point that they're making a real effort to win the cultural festival. For Horikita's part, she must be happy. Horikita and I checked again to make sure there was no one around, and then slowly opened the door. The first thing that jumped out at us was an unexpectedly colorful color.

The ornaments were so brightly decorated that it was hard to believe that it was an inorganic and plain classroom.

"This is"

"Welcome! We're Maimai, the maid cafe!"

All at once, three girls greeted us, each wearing a distinctive costume.



Sato, who called us here, and Matsushita next to her are in maid uniforms.

Mi-chan, her eyes swimming with embarrassment, was dressed in a Chinese dress.

By the way, the classrooms are usually equipped with monitors, but the special wing, which is rarely used, still seems to have whiteboards installed. And as if to use that whiteboard, the name of the restaurant was written prettily in pen.

I was shown to my seat and handed a handmade menu list.

"What can I get for you? Master."

"Wait a minute. Can I ask you something before I order?"

"What? What?"

"Didn't it take a lot of time and money just to prepare this?"

It certainly looks like a difficult task if you ask me if I can prepare it on the same day. Even if you can do your best to decorate, what did you do about the costumes?

"Matsushita-san, how long did it take?"

"It took me about four days to prepare, and I think the cost is surprisingly reasonable. All in all, 13,200 private points. The three of us here and Maezono-san planned and split the cost, so it was 3,300 points per person. The breakdown is that we bought three rental outfits and some decorations such as origami and pens at the general store. The tableware was our own, so there was no cost."

I see, that's the reason why the tableware lacks a sense of unity. Of course, since we are still in the planning stage, this will not be a negative factor. In fact, I'm impressed again with how well they prepared for the event while keeping the costs to a minimum.

"The impact was perfect, better than anything I've ever seen. But —"

Horikita praised the performance, saying that it had a perfect grip on the audience, but she was not so naive as to make a decision on what to present.

"Do you have an overall budget in mind? I'd like to see the specifics of the process."

Sato pointed out sharply, but without panicking, she turned her gaze to Miichan.

"Well, I've tried to put as much as I can into a proposal."

Pulling a clear file out, Miichan holds it out to Horikita. There were three pages with detailed information in beautiful letters, probably written by Mi-chan.

"Although we said we were going to rent costumes, we got quotes from three different companies and rented one outfit each. This is a comparison of price, quality, and selection. The difference in cost between the cheapest and most expensive tableware to be used on the day. The number of people to be expected, and the difference in the number of guests to be accommodated."

"It's more complete than any proposal I've ever seen. That's impressive."

When I praised her honestly, Sato and Matsushita taught her that she was being praised as they poked Miichan in the side. The person in question still looked embarrassed, but bowed her head to bail lightly.

So far, Sato and her team have given us a perfect score for their proposal. However—

"It's definitely an interesting show. It may not be an uncommon genre, but it has a lot of potential if you put your mind to it. However, there are some disadvantages.

The cost of costume rental is 4,000 points per outfit. That's 40,000 points for 10 outfits if the proposal is correct. The rest is 50,000 points for the estimated cost of preparing beverages and snacks. That's 90,000 in all. At 5,000 points for classroom decorations, plus the cost of the place, it's That's not a cheap deal."

Even though the manpower does not require wages and can be secured without difficulty, nearly half of the current budget will be used for a single event.

"Yes, but I think we can increase the unit price of"

The menu list that Sato and her colleagues made, for example, shows 800 points for a cup of tea. For example, a cup of tea costs 800 points, which is more expensive than a cup of tea at a café in the Keyaki Mall. Of course, the price could be revised downward depending on future adjustments, but they still think it has a good chance of selling.

Horikita's face was serious as she read over the three separate sheets of the proposal. However, the outfits of the people around her, Sato and the others, seem to be dressed in a fairy tale or unrealistic, which is strange and uncomfortable. Eventually, perhaps having come to a conclusion, Horikita looks up.

"Just so I'm clear, no one's seen this show, have they?"

"Of course."

Matsushita nodded, showing her confidence. Sato and Miichan followed suit.

"Okay. I'll do my best to get this maid cafe to pass. Would you guys be willing to examine the proposal further, including thorough cost reduction?"

"Really? Yeah!"

The three of them exchanged a delighted look.

"It's too early to rejoice. Don't forget that we're still in the process of discussing it."

Although she said that, it was a big gain for them to get Horikita to say that she would take good care of it.

As the two of us walked out into the hallway, Maezono, who had been watching us, waved at us happily.

I'm sure the conversation in the classroom would have reached Maezono's ears.

"You're buying a lot of things, aren't you? I didn't think you'd say you'd do anything about it."

"I'm not going to give it a pass if I don't think it has a chance. In fact, most of the ideas that were brought to us were rejected on the spot, or at best, put on hold. That's how powerful the ideas they came up with were."

A maid café is not that unusual.

However, Horikita was willing to help because she saw the potential for our class to demonstrate its strengths and impress the guests.

"So even if some other class adopts the same maid cafe, we can win?"

"Yeah. Didn't you think so?"

"No, I'm sure."

If you open a store about food, you will have to fight with several rivals. On the other hand, even if one or two maid cafes are covered, you may be able to beat them over with your ability. Aside from the three students who wore the sample costumes, there are still many strong talents lying dormant in the class.

"So that's it. I'm going to need your Cooperation to make sure these girls get their project."

"Cooperation? Don't tell me you want me to wear a costume too?"

"What nonsense are you talking about? I'm going to do it and I'm going to give it my all. If we're going to do this, we have to have the best people, don't we? I think you, as a boy, should be the one to do those things."

[TL Note - Here Horikita is asking Ayanokoji to scout out people (cute girls) from class who would be fit for made cafe]

"No. Well, I don't know if you mean what you say, but I'm sure there are other suitable candidates."

"You're right. If it's something like this, Ike, Hondo and the others may have a better eye for it. But if I tell them about this, it could lead to a leak of information. They seem to be light on their feet."

"..... can't deny that."

These are the students who might inadvertently do something without intending to leak it.

"I don't want more people with inside knowledge. You know that, right?"

"I see."

Maybe it was just my bad luck that Sato called me, and I was destined for this.

"So I'll leave the selection to you first. Of course, you can tell whoever you choose about the project, but remember to keep it a secret. If something goes wrong, the project will disappear."

That's how important it is to protect information.

"Yes... That's why I want to keep the number of people sharing information to a minimum. Can I leave everything to you? We'll come up with a formal budget at a later date, and you'll be responsible for arranging the people, paying for everything, and managing everything."

"Wait a minute. You're taking a big leap at once. Are you just going to leave it to me?"

"There is no single program for this festival. We're definitely going to have more than one stall, considering the balance of men, women and human resources. It's going to be quite a challenge to figure out how to increase sales on a low budget, and I'd rather focus on that."

I wanted to let her concentrate on her work, but I didn't know why I was doing it.

"Are you sure you want to accept my formal offer?"

I don't remember showing any pretense of accepting the job, but the decision was made with or without my consent.

"You got me..."

I wonder if it is possible for me to run an ideal maid cafe. I can't say I'm very confident.

If Sato, Matsushita, and Mi-chan are confirmed, how many more people should be made waitresses at? It's still a long way off, but we'll have to figure it out soon.

"I'm going to head straight to the student council room, I'll see you there."

"Oh, oh,"

On my way to the dorm, after taking care of a case that made me want to hold my head in my hands, I was about to leave the special building when I spotted Chabashira sensei. Given the location, it was unlikely that she was just passing by.



"You've been to see Sato and the others? I heard about the performance. And what they're going to do. Not a bad idea."

"I'm sure you're right. Sato and the others will have to make sure that the application is approved before they can start preparations."

It's no laughing matter to have prepared so much in earnest and not know if you'll get permission.

"I was wondering how you were doing, personally, so I thought I'd go check on you. How'd it go?"

"Horikita was also positive. We're working out the details now."

"I see. Then I guess I don't have to go out of my way to see it."

"We got caught up in it, though, and it got a little messy."

"What do you mean?"

"Under Horikita's direction, I was to be the director of the performance."

"Ayanokoji? That's really."

Chabashira sensei laughed somewhat mirthlessly when she gave me a pitiful look.

"That's good. Horikita makes some pretty interesting suggestions too."

"I think people like Ike and Hondo are many times better suited for this kind of work."

Even though it was called a maid cafe, I couldn't see any of its background.

"When it comes to understanding otaku culture, that may be true. But the most important thing at a cultural festival is sales. They may be able to improve the quality of the performances, but they're not good at calculating and making a profit. That's why it's important for you to be the director. It's a problem that can be solved by asking them for their opinions if necessary."

It's easy for them to say. In order to absorb opinions, we must also acquire a minimum level of knowledge. If we only listen to advice in ignorance, there is no guarantee that we will arrive at the right answer, and on the contrary, it is difficult to point out what is wrong.

"You'll be glad for the opportunity to learn more than just your studies. The manager of the maid cafe."

"... Yes."

I was about to leave, but Chabashira sensei stopped me in my tracks.

"Ayanokouji... Can I have a bit of your time later?"

"Next time? When is it?"

"I'll send you a message about it shortly. Would that be okay?"

"Well, I don't mind. I'll leave it open if you have plans."

I could have refused, but after receiving a serious look from her, I decided to accept.

Chapter - 2

Two teachers and a special exam of destiny

Intro

The next morning I was appointed as the manager of a maid cafe.

Seeing the stiff expression on the face of chabashira sensei as she entered the classroom, many of the students immediately noticed something strange.

However, this time, unlike usual, the word "special exam" probably didn't come to mind first. I think the main reason for this was that I thought the next exam was the sports festival. And after that, there will be a cultural festival.

"Before the sports festival in October, you will have to take a new special exam."

The students seemed a little upset. Last year at this time, they were already working on the sports festival and there were no other special exams, but this year was different.

"Just when we've gotten through the tough desert island exam, the next special exam is already here..."

This is also becoming a regular occurrence, but I can hear Ike's frustration coming out as he opened his mouth before anyone else.

For Ike, who overcame the test on a deserted island and became lovers with Shinohara, it must have been a difficult time ahead.

No matter how much you get to know each other and grow closer, depending on the special exam, sudden expulsion could happen.

There is no doubt that students with low overall performance by OAA are especially at risk.

"Heck, that's what I want. Let's get through the special exam safely before we go all out at the Sports festival."

Sudo, who has absolute confidence in his athleticism, fists said excitedly.

"We shouldn't be getting carried away."

"... Oh."

Instantly, Horikita's advice made Sudo shut up.

What a good master-servant relationship is developing, or rather, a friendship.

"If I admit it honestly, there are few cases of special exams being held at this time of year. In fact, there are no special exams for freshmen or seniors."

"Does that mean we second-year students are the only ones who have to take a special exam before the sports festival?"

Sato, who was leaning her back against the chair, asks as she leans forward.

Chabashira sensei nodded without any denial.

"It's because you second-year students are so good that the school is giving you the recognition you deserve."

"What? Isn't... a special exam because they're evaluating us? Isn't that crazy?"

"Indeed, special exams come with risks that you should be wary of. Some students may lose class points, private points, or even be expelled. However, on the other hand, I can say that it has given me many opportunities to have a more fulfilling school life. The more special exams you take, the more chances you have to get promoted to Class A, which I consider the most important."

It is true that if you want to earn large class points, it is extremely difficult to earn them in your normal daily life. If anything, it's more about how to keep your class points during periods when special exams are not being held. Whether it is a desert island exam or something else, only when a special exam is held will you have a chance to move up to a higher class.

"Happiness and unhappiness are two sides of the same coin. The risk is the benefit, isn't it?"

Horikita calmly takes the position, close to Chabashira sensei.

"That's what I'm talking about."

"There's nothing to be afraid of. We're definitely closing in on Class A now. We have a chance to break out of the three-way tie for B class and below, and we're already there."

The more opportunities you have once, the better. That is the common understanding of all of us as we work our way up.

"That's true, And complaining isn't going to get rid of the special exams."

Horikita's words made Sato and the rest of her classmates look convinced.

Even though it is still a work in progress, Horikita's growth to become a pillar of support seems to be having a definite positive effect on her classmates. Inwardly, I think Chabashira sensei is also happy, but she doesn't show it on her face. She's never been one to show her sweet side, but this time I feel like she is showing it more than ever.

"You'll be taking what we call the 'unanimous special exam'."

The monitor lights up and the explanation begins with the video that is becoming a tradition.

"This special exam is very simple, hence I will be taking questions from you if you are curious about anything at any time. The special exam will be held tomorrow, and as you can probably guess from the name, it will consist of a series of multiple-choice polls that you will have to repeat in class until you reach a unanimous decision."

"Tomorrow?... That's very sudden."

There was no time to prepare. Of course, there is no advantage or disadvantage because it is an equal competition, but the class, which had almost settled down, started to buzz again.

"As I said before, this special exam is simple, there's no need to spend a lot of time discussing it beforehand, and the school doesn't see any problem in holding it tomorrow."

Repeat the vote in class until it is unanimous.

Listening to that alone, I certainly don't see the complexity of the content.

"So you're not fighting another class this time, are you?"

Most importantly, Yosuke demanded an immediate answer on that point.

"Yes. This is a special exam that is completed only within this class, so you will not be competing with rival classes. On the day of the exam, the school will give you five 'tasks' to complete. The content of the tasks is the same for all classes, so there is no differentiation."

If the content of the task is different, the difficulty level will change for each class, so it is natural.

"I'm going to give you an example to help you understand."

Example: You lose 5 class points, but all your classmates gain 10,000 private points.

You can choose to oppose it or accept this.

The task was displayed on the monitor. The content was simple and easy to understand as shown.

"Hmm? What is this? Let's see. You lose 5 class points, but you get 10,000 private points instead. This is a challenge? Is this a gain? Is it a loss?"

Shinohara said aloud, folding her fingers and trying to calculate the loss in her head.

It was no wonder that many unexpected questions came to mind.

Even though it was an example, I was expecting it to be more of a choice that I had to worry about.

You get 100 private points for each class point.

So the value of 5 class points is 500 private points.

If you think about it in an instant, the latter private point is by far the more.

However, the class points themselves will continue to have value.

In a month, five class points is only 500 private points, but over the course of a year, even just five class points can be worth 6,000 private points.

Considering the remaining time until graduation, there are only 18 opportunities left to receive private points, from October of sophomore year to March of junior year. In other words, the value of a class point can be thought of as 9000 private points.

You can either get 10,000 Private Points immediately or you can carve your way to graduation and get a total of 9,000 Private Points. The former is slightly more profitable in terms of private points alone.

But it's not that simple.

If I had lost five class points here and lost A class by that margin, I would have made the worst possible choice, and I would look back on the past that way.

Of course, the odds of five points being the difference between winning and losing would not be that high. If this is the case, it may well be better to get 10,000 private points.

Whichever point of view you take, there are ultimately advantages and disadvantages.

"In response to this challenge, thirty-nine people, completely anonymous, will choose from the options presented to them and vote. So let's give it a try. I'm sure there are many students who have questions, but I'd like them to try it out without any discussion time first. Vote yes or no on your tablets."

When Chabashira sensei started operating the tablet, the screens of the students in the class, including me, switched.

The tablet showed the content of the assignment, and we could push for or against it. It was the most unusual special exam ever. I'll give it some serious thought first.

Private points that have no direct effect on class points. It is simply an advantage that if you vote yes, all your classmates will get 10,000 points. However, if you vote yes, you lose only 5 class points, but still 5 points.

In this case, we need to think about how we think in terms of human nature.

It's not a question of whether it's better to gain 10,000 private points or not lose 5 class points, but the other way around. It's about which choice will save you from regret.

I decided to press "yes" to see what the result would be.

I decided that it was not a good idea to be unanimous the first time.

Soon after, the voting was complete, and Chabashira sensei looked up from the tablet in her hand.

"Okay, now that everyone has voted, I'd like to display the results as soon as possible."

With that said, the results are displayed on the monitor.

Results of the first round of voting: 3 in favor, 36 opposed.

I knew that there would be more opposition, but by a larger margin than I imagined.

"Oh, you know what? You'll get more with 10,000 private points than you would with 5 class points, right? Did I do the math wrong? Why is it so much the other way around?"

Ike, who seems to have voted yes, asks curiously, looking around at his classmates.

"Surely speaking only of the size of private points, it is better to get 10,000 points.However, class points are essential to achieve A class.If the difference is only a thousand points, then why bother reducing those precious class points?"

Here is a theoretical explanation of why Horikita, who seems to have voted against it, voted for it.

"In the unlikely event that a difference of five class points separates the winner from the loser, I won't be able to stop regretting it."

As I thought, many students are naturally worried about the "just in case" risk.

It would also be important to remember that another three classes would be taking on the same challenge. If the three classes choose class points and make them unanimous in their opposition, then only this class will be one step backward.

Of course, it would be a different story if I could make use of the 10,000 private points I gained.

"I know you all have your own opinions, but let's hear them out. The vote was overwhelmingly against, with 36 votes, but it was not unanimous, so this would have to be redone. There will be a fixed ten-minute interval before the next vote. During this time, we are allowed to talk freely, sometimes leaving our seats and exchanging opinions as we do now, but for now we will skip this. Let the voting begin again."

The purpose of this test is to make it unanimous.

If the vote is not unanimous, it will be invalidated and a 10-minute interval will be enforced.

Even if the opinions are quickly agreed upon, that's a lot of time lost.

It is safe to assume that due to the way this special exam is structured, there will probably be a time limit set.

If the disagreement continues, there is a possibility that the time is up...

So, the second vote, the action to be taken is to vote no, not to think too hard.

If we pitch it the other way, we can bring it to unanimity.

That's why I decided to vote for "yes" even in the second vote.

I thought this would give my classmates a better understanding of this special exam.

Results of the second round of voting: 2 in favor, 37 opposed.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa."

"Sorry, that's me, Sudo-kun. I tried to avoid being unanimous. It seems that there were others who had the same idea as me, but..."

He didn't look at me, but I think he might have been referring to me.

"Here are the results of the second round of voting. We're almost deadlocked on opposition, but there are still two more votes in favor. In this case, there will be another interval and voting will resume in 10 minutes. The test is to get a unanimous vote of 39 in favor or 39 against. Of course, whatever is selected in this choice will actually be passed. In this case, if the vote is 39 in favor, you will all receive 10,000 private points, but you will lose 5 class points. On the other hand, if there are 39 votes against, the issue will be null and will have no effect whatsoever."

This means that the challenge will end without anyone gaining or losing any points.

"It's not unanimous, but to save time we'll move on to the next example."

Example - (Text Shown on Screen)

Give 1,000,000 private points to one person in the class.

(If the vote is unanimous in favor, identify and vote on the student who will receive the point.)

Infavour | Oppose

"I know you're probably thinking of the example, but in the exam, private conversations before the first vote are forbidden. That means we need to genuinely face the assignment first and then vote."

So it is before the second vote that we can read the assignment and discuss what we thought about it.

Results of the first round of voting:

39 in favor,

0 opposed.

Even if only one out of 39 people gets private points, there is almost no reason to choose the latter. Even if you are disappointed that you don't get it, it will be difficult to achieve unanimity in opposition.

"The first step is to get a unanimous vote of approval and disapproval, as in the first example. If the vote is against, the issue is closed, but if the vote is unanimous in favor, the issue is not closed but moved one step further. After an interval, You can discuss who you would like to recommend. The tablet will display the names of all the classmates except you."

The tablet's screen was forcibly switched, and sure enough, names other than my own were lined up. However, the order is not even in alphabetical order, but rather in an irregular sequence that includes both boys and girls.

"To ensure anonymity, the student's name will be switched each time they vote, as are the choices for and against, which are also randomly switched. This is to prevent people from snooping on the students next to them and guessing which one they voted for based on the position of their fingers."

Chabashira sensei continues to explain the rules further, telling us that we will never be able to see what others are voting.

"Once the discussion is underway, each of you can vote at your leisure, simply by tapping on the student you wish to nominate. During the interval, you can repeatedly change the student you want to nominate. At the end of the 10 minutes, the student with the majority of votes in this class will be recognized as the specific student. Let's say Ike was chosen by a large number of nominations."

"Oh, me? Yeah."

"Ike will temporarily lose his right to vote, and the other 38 will cast their votes."

A student with a majority is naturally close to unanimous. I guess that's how recommendations work.

A new vote on the issue is taken one step further, and we vote.

Example: Give 1 million private points to Kanji Ike.

In Favour | Oppose

Results of the second round of voting:

0 in favor,

38 opposed.

"What? Why didn't anyone vote for me?"

"No, I'm not gonna give you a million private points."

Sudo spoke for everyone in the class when he said what they were probably thinking.

"If the vote is unanimous in favor of not giving the points to ike, it is passed that 'no points will be awarded to ike,' but that only removes ike from the list of challenges, leaving the whereabouts of the one million points up in the air. However, this only means that ike is removed from the list and the whereabouts of the one million points are up in the air. So, the remaining 38 students are selected again and the assignment is continued. However, if no one could be unanimously selected by the time the time is up, the test would fail. In addition, the one million points will not be given to anyone, so be careful."

"What! Does this mean that my chances of getting one are now zero?"

"That's what I'm talking about, although I wouldn't have been crossed off the list if there had been even one yes vote left. You can also ask for candidates. If you can get votes during the interval, you will be accepted as a specific student on a first-come, first-served basis. However, only one candidate per assignment will be accepted."

"So what happens if we don't get a majority of the votes for a particular student in ten minutes, or if there are no candidates? I'm sure you can think of a few cases like that."

"In that case, you will be randomly selected from within your class to cast your vote."

They don't wait for time or an assignment, they seem to be forced to start voting on someone.

"If we have to choose between individuals, we might as well waste our time."

That's right. It's like having more options for the number of people in your class.

However, I don't think it would be easy to decide on a randomly selected student.

"Let's keep our heads up, people. This special exam may turn out to be harder than we thought..."

It is not always the case that the problems will be solved if we discuss them. There is a good chance that you will be forced to make a choice that you will never be able to compromise on.

No, otherwise it wouldn't make sense as a special exam.

"I'll give you one more example at the end. This time, we'll have you work through it in a real-world setting."

Example: A decision has been made to build an additional facility in a Keyaki mall. Which of the following would you prefer?

(The facility with the most votes will be adopted based on the results of the four classes' voting)

Restaurants
Grocery stores
Entertainment places
Medical facilities

Unlike the previous examples, the method will be changed to choose from four options instead of for and against. I thought it would just be a yes or no vote, but apparently that's not the case.

It seems that the choices made here will actually be carried out, but if this were not an example, would it really mean that the facility will be built?

"When an issue is approved, it is actually approved. However, there is a special way to do this for assignments that affect the whole. When an assignment is presented in this way, the unanimous choice is simply the one chosen by the class. If this class is unanimous in choosing a restaurant, but the other three classes are unanimous in choosing an entertainment facility, then the entertainment facility that received three votes is added to the list and the decision is made."

Perhaps they all understood what Chabashira sensei meant. There are two types of challenges: those that are immediately actionable and those that are presented only as a class vote. Either way, it seems that careful discussion will be required to lead to unanimity.

Since private conversations are not allowed before the first vote, I choose my options intuitively.

Results of the first round of voting
Restaurants 20 votes
Grocery stores 4 votes
Entertainment facilities 15 votes
Medical facilities 0 votes

"Since the vote was not unanimous, we will have a ten-minute interval."

Here comes the first interval time.

A ten-minute countdown began on the monitor behind the podium. This would continue until the time ran out and the next voting time would come forcibly.

The students were free to leave their seats and formulate their opinions as they wished, whether they spoke loudly or whispered to someone in particular. I observed my surroundings and waited to see how things went. Ten minutes passed with no one giving any particular instructions, just chatting as they pleased.

"Just before the end of the interval, you will return to your seats and prepare to vote. The maximum time allowed for voting is 60 seconds. If everyone finishes voting promptly, we will move on to announcing the results without waiting for the time limit."

Unlike the mandatory 10-minute interval, it seems that voting time can be shortened with some ingenuity.

"Students who do not complete their votes within 60 seconds will be penalized for overtime. Individuals will have 90 seconds throughout the exam, and any student who allows a total of 90 seconds to elapse before completing the five tasks will have their time reduced to zero and will be expelled."

This is the school's way of tying you up in order to make sure you vote. If there is a student who does not want to vote, he or she will be expelled from the school.

Even if you did the delay action every time you voted, no student would bother to do that because if you don't finish the vote in 58 or 59 seconds, you will lose precious time that you have.

Here comes the results of the second voting

Second round of voting results:
Restaurants 23 votes
Grocery stores 2 votes
Entertainment facilities 14 votes
Medical facilities 0 votes.

Since there was no talk of a consensus of opinion, the result was the same as the first time.

Unless it's a blatant issue, it's not easy to bring it to unanimity on the first vote.

And after unifying the opinions, it is not so difficult to get 39 votes for a particular option. But that's only if they are all expected issues.

Depending on the content, there will be some things that will require considerable discussion.

"This is the end of the example, but you get the idea. In order to pass this special exam, you must unanimously complete five assignments in five hours. If you are unable to complete all of the tasks within the five hours, a very heavy penalty awaits you. The penalty is minus 300 class points."

"Well, three hundred!"

So it's a special test that's an absolute requirement to clear.

"But if you can finish it in time, you get 50 class points."

The rewards and penalties may seem unbalanced, but they are reasonable in terms of the difficulty of the exam.

"There's no need to panic, we don't have to fight with anyone this time, we just have to be unified in our opinions. We can do the voting over and over again, with an interval, if time permits."

"You should now have a general idea of what this special test is about. This is a summary of the rules. Those of you who feel the need to save it can capture the screen yourself and leave it behind."

Outline of the Special Examination

Rule Description

All classmates vote on the choices provided in response to an assignment given by the school.

(There are a total of 5 tasks and a maximum of 4 choices.)

Unless one of the choices is unanimous, the same issue will be repeated.

If the time runs out in the middle of an assignment, it will not be approved at all, regardless of the progress of the assignment.

Unanimously cleared assignments are actually approved, regardless of the success or failure of the special exam.

If you complete all the tasks, you will get 50 class points.

If you fail to complete all tasks within 5 hours, you will lose 300 class points.

Special Exam Working -

- (1) You will be given an assignment and you will cast your first vote (within 60 seconds).
- (2) If there is unanimous agreement, move on to the next task and go to (1). If not, go to (3).
- (3) 10-minute interval (During this interval, students can move and discuss freely within the classroom only)
- (4) 60-second voting time (Cannot discuss, can only vote)

(Students who do not complete their voting within 60 seconds will receive a cumulative penalty.)

(If the accumulated penalty exceeds 90 seconds, the student will be expelled at that stage.)

- (5) If the results are unanimous, proceed to the next task and go to ①.

If unanimous agreement is not reached, return to (3).

Repeat the process, and the special exam will be cleared when you have completed the five questions. If you fail by any chance, you will be penalized. Losing 300 class points here could mean losing your ticket to Class A. I don't think this is an exaggeration.

If three classes were to clear, that would open up a 350-point gap to all classes.

We can talk about it as many times as we want, but I think the point is that it's a completely anonymous vote where you can't know who voted for whom.

You could vote yes, but claim to have voted no.

"We teachers don't even know what kind of assignments will be given. Some of you may be optimistic, but I advise you to stay alert. In addition, it is strictly forbidden to make any agreements with other students to bind them to vote for a particular option. In addition to that, exchanging money to bind someone's choice is also out of the question. This will have the same effect not only on your class but also on other classes."

Does that mean that forcing people to bind their choices is not acceptable?

Although it is permissible to unite to some extent and consolidate the votes, but the guarantee cannot be backed up.

If there is a contract that says you can only vote for option 1, there is a risk that the test will not be valid because there is only one person who has signed a contract to only vote for option 1.

That alone would allow for a vicious attack against other classes.

"The school will monitor the rules thoroughly. If it is found that a third party outside of the class was involved, and that they are able to continue to make one-sided choices, all parties involved may be expelled without mercy. Be prepared for this. I also promise that if anyone is approached about any wrongdoing, they should immediately report it to the school and we will do our best to resolve it."

If time runs out on the special exam, which is a prerequisite for clearing the exam, then the school will definitely conduct an investigation.

Even if you bring up a made up story, you will probably take a strong penalty, so even Ryuen and the others will not show any clear movement.

Until the start of the special exam, it would be best to refrain from getting involved with students from other classes.

"In addition, this special test will temporarily disable the effectiveness of Protection Points. —

Continuation —

"In addition, in this special exam, the protection points will be temporarily disabled. The reason for this is that it will be impossible to have a fair special exam if there is only one student who is protected. If a student with a Protection Point is expelled in any way, the Protection Point cannot be used to reverse the expulsion. However, the expulsion can be avoided only if the individual or the entire class pays 20 million Private Points."

This class does not have that many private points at the moment.

Which means that any student who is expelled will certainly be Expelled.

Does this mean that the protection points that can override expulsion once are sometimes restricted?

If it was a special test against another class, the temporary invalidation of the protection points could cause dissatisfaction. But in this case, it's only an in-class issue.

In that sense, it's not surprising that this special rule applies.

It was inevitable that there would be some grumbling, but Koenji didn't seem to mind.

"In addition, all communication devices such as cell phones will be collected during the special test. This is because in this exam you are not allowed to talk to anyone outside of class. In the unlikely event that you are found to be carrying a concealed device, we will no longer need to discuss the details."

This also means that expulsion is involved, just like any other rule to follow.

Part 1

When the lunch break came, Yosuke quickly got out of his seat and headed for the podium.

"Before lunch. I think I'd like to hear what everyone has to say. What do you think?"

When he asked this question to all classmates, Kushida raised her hand to answer.

"You know, this special exam means that there will be conflicts over the different options, right?"

"Of course. There's no need to go through the trouble of a special exam if we can come to an agreement without any trouble."

"Well, then, wouldn't it be better to have a clear leader in place in case we can't come to a consensus on our options? I'm sure that if we follow the choices that the leader eventually makes, we'll pass the special exam without any problems."

"That's right. I agree with your opinion, Kushida-san, but the responsibility of the leader becomes more important."

The more options there are, the more criticism there will be from students who support the option that was not chosen. It will take a leader who can organize well.

"If you don't mind, ·····, could it be Horikita-san?"

"Me?"

"Yes. You have been a leader many times in the past, and I thought that you could organize everyone well so that there would be no unfairness. Of course, as Hirata-kun said, it's a big responsibility, and if Horikita-san says it's okay, it will be good ····."

"..... I agree. It's possible that other classes will prepare similar strategies, and it's a measure that will be necessary when there is a difference of opinion. If you're not comfortable following my instructions when the time comes, you can tell me now."

Not many students would run for leader or say anything negative when they heard that they would be responsible. Kushida's proposal was easily approved, and it was agreed that Horikita would be the leader of the group in case of emergency.

For a while after that, we exchanged a lot of opinions, but did not decide on any particular major elements. It was getting somewhat late and it was time for lunch.

"Let's go to lunch. Yukimu and Miyachi are coming, right?"

The two agreed and stood up as Haruka turned around to confirm.

Members of the Ayanokojo group. A small group of five, including me.

Just as the five of us began to gather, a student came running up to us.

As soon as I looked at her, the student shouted.

"Kiyotaka. Let's go have lunch."

Without a pause, but with a nervous look in her eyes, she called out to me.

No one was paying attention to the fact that Kei was coming towards me, nor was anyone intending to listen to the conversation. However, all thirty-six of them, except Koenji, looked at us at once.

"Sorry guys, I think I'll eat with Kei today."

Before anyone else could figure out what was going on, I pulled my chair and stood up.

"... I want to go to a cafe. Okay?"

"Wait... What...? Wait, wait, wait. Why are you interrupting us all of a sudden? Karuizawa-san."

"It's not really a rule to not interrupt, is it? Did you hear Kiyotaka's refusal?"

"I heard you. What do you mean? But, you were coming with us? What, 'Kei'?"

A little later, Haruka begins to understand that we call each other by our first names.

No, she still might not have understood most of it.

"I'm sorry, but I'm his girlfriend and I'm his priority. You know?"

"What?"

"She??"

Haruka and Airi muttered at the same time, though their reactions were completely different.

"That's why, I may not be able to attend our group meetings as often as I'd like."

"Come on, let's go," kei said, tugging on my arm as we left the classroom.

The fact that her face was starting to turn bright red showed that she was feeling quite embarrassed. I didn't expect her to confide like this either...

Haruka, Airi, and the rest of the students were too stunned to follow us.

Part 2

By Kei's bold action, our relationship, which few people knew about until now, became known to the whole class. It will probably spread to the entire school year by the end of the day.

Well, I'm skeptical about how many students would be interested in the relationship between me and kei.

The pair of Ike and Shinohara, who became a couple during the summer vacation, didn't make as much noise as I expected in terms of buzz. Rather, it was a combination that had been expected.

Although some of the boys were defensive and honestly jealous of some of their friends, the fact that they were blessed by so many made no difference, and they are slowly but surely developing a relationship as lovers.

The frequency of seeing them together, going home together, going on dates together, etc., was rapidly increasing.

And the scenes that were fresh at first will someday become commonplace.

I'm sure it's the same for me and kei, but we'll probably be making more noise than the Ike Shinohara pair for a long time. I'm not sure how many of the students could have predicted our relationship.

Anyway, the first day after school lunch arrives and the whole class knows about the relationship.

As They've known since the afternoon class, one girl has been around since noon but She never turned her eyes to me once since lunch.

"Hey, Kiyopon, you wanna come home with me?"

Haruka, a good friend and mentor of Airi, comes up to me and calls out.

I was expecting kei to suggest that we go home together after school, but when I looked at her, I saw that she was still surrounded by girls asking her questions.

"Are you sure?"

With Haruka, I was sure she would do something to help or watch over Airi.

Airi silently and quietly prepares to leave.

"I know, but there's nothing I can say to her now. Well? If there is a reason why Kiyopon can't go home alone with me, that's a different story."

As she said this, Haruka's expression hardened for a moment.

"All right."

Now that our relationship has become more open, the opportunities to get together with the Ayanokoji group will inevitably decrease.

Then the two of us grabbed our bags and headed for the rear exit to the front door.

On the way, Haruka walked along without saying a word.

I stole glimpses of her from time to time, and she looked angry, sad, or something like that.

As I put on my shoes and leave the school, she finally looks at me.

"It's no use asking in a roundabout way, so I'm going to ask you straight out, is it true that you and Karuizawa-san started dating? I still can't believe it."

"As you saw, it's true."

When I told her that, Haruka's lips twitched and then she quickly nodded.

"... I'm sorry. But I was so shocked. It's not that I don't care who Kiyopon goes out with, it's just that I didn't expect it to be Karuizawa-san, of all people. You don't think?"

Kei Karuizawa's reputation from the other side is not very high. Most of them probably have the impression that she was a selfish woman who got together with the popular Yosuke too early and dumped him for her own reasons.

"So this is what you were talking about in the pool before, getting a little mental shock. You know, it's not a little shock at all, right? She was trying her best to hold it together in the classroom, but she was crying all through lunch break."

"Is that so?"

"It's not "okay." ... And you guys started dating over spring break, for real?"

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you. It's just that I have a lot going on. I had circumstances"

"Circumstances, huh? Well, there are a lot of rumors about Karuizawa-san, so I guess I can understand that, but"

She had been dating Yosuke for the time being since she entered the school, and she herself had fabricated her past.

It is inevitable that they would have such a perception.

"This is real, isn't it? It's not like it's a joke or anything."

"It is."

"Ha... I see. That's right. I'm so confused too... No, no, I had it in my imagination that Kiyopon was seeing someone, or that he was in love with someone who wasn't Airi. No, no, I couldn't guess it would be Karuizawa-san."

She lamented as she held her head in her hands that all her predictions were wrong.

"I talked to Yukimu and Miyachi for a bit, and they felt the same way I did. I haven't heard directly from them, but I think Airi's shock was more than ours."

I guess so. I can easily imagine that.

"I mean, what's the story? You didn't seem like you had a lot of connections at all."

It's no wonder.

"I was in the same group as Kei in last year's zodiac exam. From there, we gradually had more and more opportunities to talk, and when Yosuke and Kei decided to split up, our relationship started to take off."

In February of this year, the fact that their relationship had ended reached the ears of some students.

"So you've known each other for a long time? You didn't seem to talk to her much."

"We were mostly communicating on our phones."

"I'm going to ask you a lot of questions, but which one of you confessed?"

As Airi's guardian and spokesperson, She wanted to know more about it.

"It's me."

"... So. If it was at least from Karuizawa, I thought I might still be right, but I didn't expect it to be from Kiyopon. ----- I'm overwhelmed."

She slaps her forehead and raises her hands in surrender.

"It's time. There's so much information, I'm going to lose track of what's going on. I'm sorry, but can I stop by the convenience store?"

Just as we were approaching the convenience store, Haruka suggested that.

"Yeah, I'll wait outside."

Apologizing lightly, Haruka rushed off into the convenience store.

In the meantime, I took out my phone, which had been shaking in my pocket several times.

[I'll meet you at the mall after this. I had a hard time telling the answers.]

There was a message left behind from kei inviting me to join her.

[All right. I'll call you before we get there.]

I replied and put my phone back in my pocket after confirming that it had been read.

After a brief minute or so, Haruka came back with a croquette in her hand.



"This afternoon, Airi and I were talking so much that we couldn't eat any lunch."

"It's a nuisance."

"I'm not trying to be annoying or anything, but . . ."

"I'm not sure if this is the right time to ask you out, but there's actually something I'd like to ask Haruka and, if possible, Airi to help me with. I need your cooperation."

"Cooperation?"

"It's not public information yet, but we've decided on one of the acts for the festival."

"Oh, really?"

"To keep the information from leaking out, only me, Horikita, and the planners know the information. We're going to have a maid cafe as part of the festival."

"Maid cafe? Something like that... I'm not that surprised, but a little surprised. I don't think Horikita-san would approve of a maid cafe."

"In this case, I guess they allowed it because they thought they could compete purely as a maid cafe without any prejudice."

"I see. And why did you make me listen to it?"

"In fact, the way I found out about this project, I had to take care of a lot of things."

When I said that, Haruka nodded in understanding.

"Even if the situation was like that, Horikita-san who entrusted it to Kiyopon is also a master."

"So I'm thinking of asking Haruka and Airi to be the waitresses."

Not being surprised, Haruka listens to it with an indescribable look on her face.

Well, I guess she could have guessed something from the way I was talking.

"If it hadn't been for the incident with Karuizawa-san, I might have agreed to it right now and here, though I have my doubts. I don't like to dress up like a cosplayer in front of a lot of people, but I don't think I could have said no if my important group of friends had asked me to. But it's bad timing."

On the day she found out about her best friend's heartbreak, it would certainly be out of character for me to ask for this.

"The only problem is that I can't blame Kiyopon. I've said similar things before, but you are free to go out with whomever you want, and I don't understand why you can't tell me. Airi is free to fall in love with Kiyopon, and she is also free to reject him."

It's as if they are convinced literally, but their emotions don't accept it.

"I can't make any promises. But when things settle down a bit, I'll talk to Airi."

"Are you sure?"

"Sooner or later, she's going to have to accept the reality. Besides, I don't know how Kiyopon feels about it, but if it's with Karuizawa-san, she might not have to give up. I mean, even if Kiyopon is single-minded, there's always the possibility that he'll be rejected, right?"

"Well, I think there's a great possibility of being affable."

"When that time comes, it means Airi will get another chance. She's a gem that hasn't really stood out yet. Kiyopon's feelings might change as well."

It's true that if Airi were to put on that kind of costume and give it her all, she would be as good as those three. No, if you include her physical characteristics, she might even be able to beat them.

Furthermore, although unrelated to the guests of honor, the school staff would be surprised to see Airi.

If this happened, rumors would quickly circulate around the school and could reach the ears of the guests.

"No, that's true, but I'm sure Airi will change her mind after this incident."

When the person you are in love with has a girlfriend, it is natural to look for the next love.

I thought I had said the obvious, but she gave me the angriest look of the day.

"Aren't you taking Airi's feelings too lightly? I've been watching her for a long time, so I know exactly what you mean. Her feelings for Kiyopon aren't so light that she can change her mind about who she likes because of something like this."

It is strongly denied.

"I'm sure you'll have more dates with Karuizawa-san, but make sure you show up at our group gatherings. I don't want us to drift apart because of this."

"Yeah. I understand. This group has become a part of my life here at school."

"Okay, I feel a little better. I'm going back."

She said this as she finished her croquette lightly.

She didn't say much, but it was clear that she was going to see Airi.

"See you tomorrow."

"Yeah, see you tomorrow."

I watched her go back to the dormitory, and then I turned to go back to the Keyaki Mall.

Part 3

I walked with Kei back to the dormitory from the keyaki mall, chatting with her.

Then, in the lobby of the dormitory, Horikita was sitting on the sofa, waiting for someone.

I pushed the elevator up on the first floor, and when Kei and I got on, Horikita got on as well.

"Ayanokoji-kun, may I have a word with you?"

The elevator stops at the fourth floor where my room is located.

"I'll see you later, Kiyotaka."

Kei is easily jealous, but her ability to grasp the situation is not low.

She knows that Horikita is not subject to these types of differences in the first place, and when she hears about the special exam, she can make a decision before thinking that it would be better not to disturb her.

"Yeah. I'll get back to you."

A year ago, I would have never believed that we would end up spending time together like this.

When I got off, Horikita came down with me.

I turned around to see Kei smiling and waving at me from the elevator as it began to close. The elevator soon closed and went up.

"How long have you been seeing her?"

"Now, when did that happen?"

"Rumor has it that it's spring break, but I'm guessing the relationship really got going earlier."

She said these words to me with a hint of something in her eyes.

"I don't know."

Whether or not there is a rationale behind Horikita's words, I'm not interested in or willing to touch on that point.

"That's not the point. You said you wanted to talk to me?"

"... ... Yes. I have something that I want you to hear about on special exams. Will you?"

"Yeah, no problem."

"Eh?..." Yes."

"What's with the reaction?"

"I was prepared for you to say no. Didn't you look unhappy the other day when you were put in charge of the maid cafe?"

Apparently, she was surprised at how readily I accepted her consultation.

"It's here, please come into the room."

Standing in the hallway, you never know who might hear you.

Room 401, I opened my room and went inside.

"You're not asking me to help you, are you?"

"It's I don't know. In the meantime, if you'll just listen to me, I'll go further."

Perhaps thinking that she would be rejected if she explained it to me badly, Horikita started talking.

"I've been thinking about having a semi-compulsory exam before the exam if I want to make sure I pass this special exam. But even if we were to prepare for it, it would be impossible to reach a consensus unless we knew what the assignment was, wouldn't it?"

"Depending on the situation, we'll inevitably have to use different options."

Even if there were only two choices, yes or no, it would be nothing but reckless to decide to vote only yes or only no before the issue and vote delusionally.

"You've thought of everything, haven't you, Horikita? How to get through this special test?"

"I think the shortest way to pass the special exam is for someone to have the final say. No matter how many options there are, no matter how the vote splits, you have to promise to follow the pre-determined leader's judgment and will."

This is what Kushida suggested during the day.

A strategy that does not take into account whether or not an individual is dissatisfied with the option.

Surely it would be easier if that arrangement could be reached.

"I hope that really brings it together."

"There will always be students who are not satisfied with some assignments. If this had been a dictatorship class like Ryuen's, it might have been quicker."

In terms of coercive power, unlike us who ask for it, Ryuun will be able to exercise it without mercy. But whether it will work in reality is another matter.

"The fact that all voting is anonymous means that students who are dissatisfied with the rule of Ryueen can vote against him. There is no guarantee that a mere order will clear them."

"Students who are unhappy with his methods may rebel against him. But there's nothing to be gained by doing so. After all, if the vote is split and time runs out, the whole class takes the damage, right? I'm sure they'll eventually come together if we just leave them alone."

"I know what you mean, but it's a contradiction in terms. No one wants to fail a special exam. So the votes will always come together. If that basic premise holds, then there's no need for strategy from the start, is there?"

"It's..."

"No student wants to run out of time to the disadvantage of the class, but don't think you can complete the five assignments if left alone. It makes it less meaningful for the school to call it a special exam."

"..... You're right."

"What you can do now is to prepare your mind to be flexible. For example, what would you do if you were faced with an issue with 38 in favor and 1 against?"

"Of course I'll try to get the one against to vote yes."

"Right. So what if the one person who disagreed never gave in?"

"That"

"It's not always the 38 who agree that win. As we try to persuade the opposition, some of the 38 students who were in favor may change their opinions."

"Even if one person's idea is detrimental to the class at large?"

"It all depends on what it is."

I wouldn't be surprised if there was a challenge prepared for me that I could never solve, or something like that.

"It's kind of unsettling, isn't it?"

"What's that?"

"Because you listened to my consultation without hesitation. I don't think that your relationship with Karuizawa has anything to do with it. But What do you think?"

"It's not really consultation. In some small corner of your mind, you must have begun to think of such a development."

"Yes,... Then I'll tell you the main reason I approached you. I have a proposal for a special exam tomorrow. I could ask someone else to do it, but I want someone who understands."

"Do you want us to always vote separately on the first option?"

"Can you please not preempt my thoughts?"

When I saw her getting frustrated, I distanced myself from Horikita.

"It was something I was going to do, in case no one else suggested it. I didn't think we had the same idea."

"....., is that right?"

I could see Horikita's anger dissipate, apparently a little convinced by the appropriate excuse now.

It's true that it was an idea that should have been done at least that much, so it would be similar. It is better to avoid the risk of making unexpected choices as a result of bias caused by the momentum of the situation.

"Coincidences can be a little scary, even if you're 99% sure you agree or disagree, or if you're wondering between two options that both have advantages and disadvantages."

"Oh. If the vote is skewed and passed as a result of a random vote, it can't be undone. However, the strategy of always using an interval at least once is not always a good thing. It's better to keep that in mind. There is a risk that what would have been unanimous if it were a matter of momentum may become inconclusive due to split votes when it is discussed. You have to take that into account."

"Yes. You're right."

To argue is to plunge one's hand into the deepest darkness.

This can consume an enormous amount of time if it results in dragging out an 'unexpected darkness'.

"Due to the rules of this special exam, there is no way to determine with certainty who voted for whom, no matter how much we discuss it. Even if you get a word from everyone, it may not be 100% true."

"You mean they will lie to me?"

"In some cases, yes. Because right now the class isn't quite as unified as it should be."

Speaking of which, several people will probably pop into Horikita's mind.

"You mean the presence of Kushida-san and Koenji-kun."

"In the former case, she will lie without hesitation, and in the latter case, he may dare to vote for a different classmate. That's about it."

"..... Hey, why are you telling me all this stuff? It's still weird. It's not like you've ever given me a warning like this before."

Of course, Horikita could sense the change in me.

"I judged that the current Horikita would be flexible enough to listen to and understand what I was saying."

"Is that a compliment?"

"I suppose,"

"Yeah. I'm feeling a little restless."

In front of me, I heard Horikita's phone vibrate briefly and once.

"I'm sorry. Give me a moment."

After interrupting the conversation, Horikita took out her cell phone, stared at the screen, and started operating.

"Let me return the message. She may not be able to mark it as read if I wait for a long time."

Of course, I have no intention of stopping her, but who is 'she'?

I was a little concerned, but I decided to wait quietly as Horikita took about two minutes to compose a long message. Eventually, she finished sending the message and put her phone away in her pocket.

"Anyway, I got my message across. Good luck with the special exam tomorrow."

Not intending to stay long, Horikita quickly left the room.

Part 4

It's just before 6:00 pm in the evening. The sun will soon set and night will fall.

Today was supposed to be an ordinary day, although there was an explanation of the special exam.

I felt like I had a very hard day with a lot of information.

It would be easier if we could just move on to the end of the day, but that's not going to happen.

This was because the hastily announced unanimous special exam would begin tomorrow.

"Hi."

I went back to my room and waited for Yosuke, who was the first to show up.

"Come on in."

Thinking about it, this is probably the first time I've invited Yosuke into my room like this.

"Yoo-hoo."

Not long after, Kei came to visit me in my room.

"It's kind of refreshing and unusual to get together like this, isn't it?"

"I think you might be right."

I haven't told the two of them why I asked them to get together. Yosuke may have guessed, though.

"I thought I'd better prepare for that special exam tomorrow."

"Preparation? Isn't this just a test to get unanimity?"

"It certainly doesn't sound like a very difficult exam just from the outline, does it? And the special exams that have been held so far have had much more difficult rules."

Yosuke, who showed a slight gesture of thinking, continued while explaining to Kei.

"But I think this special exam will be as difficult as the past ones. If you think about it as the rules do, just making it unanimous would be a test that would give you more class points. Unifying the will of the class itself is not that difficult."

"That's what I think, too."

"I mean, it's not easy, which means there's a good chance you'll be presented with a challenge that will divide opinion."

Yosuke is right. Each student in the class has a different way of thinking, but if it's for the good of the class, they're willing to be flexible to a certain extent and get their votes together.

If we were freshmen, it might be a different story, but we sophomores have already developed a strong bond as friends.

Moreover, there is no penalty for failing to reach unanimous agreement once, and time can be set aside repeatedly for discussion.

It's no wonder that such a well-covered test seems to be as loose as a blessing.

"But what kind of issues are difficult to reach unanimity on?"

"I'm not sure I'll ever get through it all, but yes there are."

What kind of assignment would annoy his classmates? It didn't seem to be something that Yosuke could immediately think of.

I'm going to talk about one obvious issue.

"From now until graduation, you will only be able to eat either rice or bread. Make a choice."

"What's that option?"

"Rice and bread sounds a bit laughable, but it's a tough call."

"If I were you, I would definitely eat bread. I would never be able to live without bread until I graduated."

"I'd probably go with rice. ····· I only need bread once a week or so."

"I'm more of a rice person myself. And, well, even we three have our own opinions, right? It's not so easy when the whole class takes a vote. If there were 30 Americans, could you follow them?"

"I can't do it. Because it's prohibited until graduation right? I will keep voting for my decision."

Some students will resist like Kei, because if they are not willing to be swayed by the majority, students will suffer later on.

"For a more realistic comparison, all future special exams will be based on academic or physical ability alone. Make the choice here. What would be the issue?"

Hearing this, Yosuke and Kei looked at each other.

"For an athletic student like Sudo, he would definitely choose physical ability, and for Keisei, who is not very good at sports, he would need to bring his academic skills to a unanimous decision at all costs."

Of course, Sudo, who is currently putting a lot of effort into his studies, can break the ice, but it would be better for his own reputation if he is evaluated on his physical abilities, and if there is a student who cannot study at all, he will not be able to compromise like Sudo.

"If the issue passes unanimously, it's enforceable, right? Does that mean we have to be prepared to lose 300 class points in penalty if we choose not to?"

"I don't know, Hard choices will obviously be made, but losing 300 class points could mean giving up your ticket to Class A. I think our first priority is to clear the exam"

"I'm starting to think this might be a difficult special exam."

"Is that why you called us here?"

"Ah. The very next special exam requires a strong sense of unity among classmates. One or two unanimous disagreements are fine, but if it goes on for a long time, there are bound to be some disputes. When that happens, Yosuke and Kei, the two main figures in the class, will need to get around and get the vote to go one way or the other."

"That's right. But then, shouldn't Horikita-san be included in this discussion? Horikita-san is the leader of the class in this exam, you know."

Yosuke's point is a natural one. The best way to control the class is for Horikita to lead the two of them, not me. However, at this stage, I can't pull out my support.

"This time, you will support Horikita from the shadows. What we do here will remain confidential."

"Why? Well, as far as I'm concerned, I don't like following Horikita-san's orders."

"Both Kei and Yosuke have the ability to read the atmosphere better than most students. But I want you both to have the ability to respond more flexibly than you do now. If we can get a feel for what Horikita is thinking and what she wants to do, then the class will become much stronger."

"Why don't you just do it, Kiyotaka? That would solve the problem."

"You can't always count on me to move. We have to be prepared for the unexpected."

"What's unexpected?"

"It's... well, it's not like I'm going to be expelled from school, but I suppose it could be a sudden illness."

I can't always follow you forever. If you can't move to anticipate such a situation, you can't expect your class to make a leap forward.

"Anyway, I understand. All we have to do is follow up on Horikita-san and make sure that the special exam goes smoothly."

"Then we'll have some instructions and cues that only Kei and Yosuke will understand."

[Cue : a thing said or done that serves as a signal to an actor or other performer to enter or to begin their speech or performance.]

Since the interval allows for free discussion and movement, there is no problem with the act of talking itself. However, depending on the situation, it may be necessary to give instructions without letting them know that you are trying to communicate. Even in situations where private conversations are prohibited, it will be possible to exchange signs by coughing or lightly tapping on the desk.

After the two of them had memorized the multiple patterns, I looked at Yosuke.

"One last piece of advice to Yosuke. It's not necessary if the five assignments are going to be completed smoothly, but if there's still no clearing of the special exam when there's less than two hours left, we might have to resort to forceful measures."

I decided to tell Yosuke to make his preparations now so that he would not go out of control at that time.

Part 5

It was past 10:00 p.m., and the hectic day before the special exam was coming to an end.

I was in bed, looking at my cell phone, when I received a call.

Although the phone number was not registered, the 11-digit number was familiar.

"Hello?"

"I'm sorry to bother you so late at night, but can I have a moment?"

"It's okay. It's been a while since I've seen you, Chancellor Sakayanagi."

Yes, the owner of this phone number is a person who serves on the board of directors of this Advanced Nurturing High School.

"I know I've given you a lot of anxiety, but it's okay now."

"I'm glad to see you're well."

"It must have been tough for you, too. But I'm amazed that you've managed to stay in this school without any incident in the midst of that very hostile battle."

"It just happened. If he had been serious, I wouldn't be here now."

I didn't need to mention his name to him to know that it was Tsukishiro, who was filling in for Chancellor Sakayanagi.

"When it was all said and done, I had a few questions about his behavior, too. But let's not talk about that today. I'm going to be following up with you very closely from now on, and I thought I'd let you know as soon as possible."

With that said, President Sakayanagi continues talking.

"You've heard that government officials and their families have been invited to this unusual cultural festival, right? I couldn't stop him once he started working on it."

If you've notified the people involved, it's not surprising that it's difficult to retract it.

"It's nothing to apologize for, Chancellor. I'm sure the students are looking forward to it."

The content is a bit like a special exam, but it is within the range of what a student can do.

Whether it will end up being just a cultural festival for me is another story.

"It's actually something that hasn't been announced yet, but I'll let you in on it first."

"What is it?"

"Similar to the cultural festival, the sports festival in October is held as a preliminary step. First of all, it was decided in a hurry to welcome some guests there."

"Guests at the sports festival?"

That's a thing I never thought I'd hear.

"If you trace the origin, the sports festival is something that the parents of the students come to see. In that sense, the stance of welcoming guests is not unique."

"I see."

It is true that when we watch TV, we have footage of families with cameras at the ready and families who come to prepare lunch boxes at events like sports festivals and athletic meets.

"I was worried about the security of suddenly letting guests loose at a festival because it's unheard of."

I guess it's a test, a preparation for welcoming a large number of guests in earnest.

"The selection of people is entirely up to the higher-ups, and I am unable to deny the possibility that your father may be involved. So in case you are in danger, I would like to have a couple of watchmen by your side."

"I appreciate the sentiment, but I'm just one of the students at this school. I don't want that kind of special treatment."

"So what are you going to do when you run into the people that your 'father' will send?"

"I know it's a difficult question."

As a matter of course, there is no way we can get through this by using force. It would be easier for us if they targeted us in a secluded place, but if they showed up as a school official with friends and acquaintances around and instructed me to follow them, there was no way to refuse.

You're a fake and that guy's too, right? I can't ask them this.

"I think I've already figured out that you're that kind of person. However, if you were to be expelled from this school in any way, I'm sure I would regret it. I'm trying to avoid the regret of not doing what I could to prevent it."

"Even if we were to follow Chancellor Sakayanagi's instructions, it would be unnatural to have a supervisor around."

"So I would like to ask you to be absent from the sports festival."

"Absent...?"

That was not what I had in mind.

"Of course I understand that there is unavoidable sick leave in the examination that can only be conducted at sports festivals, cultural festivals and such occasions."

"Yes. Although the class will be at a disadvantage, there's no mandatory action such as expulsion, right?"

Taking care of yourself is your own responsibility, but there are still some unavoidable problems.

If it was a smaller scale special exam, they could take emergency measures such as waiting until all the students in each grade were present, but this was not possible for a sports festival involving the entire school.

"You'll be on sick leave on the assumption that you've had a medical checkup and will be confined to your dorm. Then I can place my trusted observers outside the dormitory."

If I was ordered to rest in the dormitory due to illness, my classmates would agree that I had no choice.

Even if a surveillance person is wandering around the dormitory, the other students will only see him as one of the guards.

"Certainly, that might help you escape from that man's grasp."

"Of course, there is another risk. Like you said, the kids in the classes you're enrolled in will be at a disadvantage because they'll be taking on a missing student."

Even the fact that he said about taking sick leave shows the generous follow-up of Chancellor Sakayanagi.

I am also grateful that they do not always favor me on their own, but rather want me to do it with the least possible means.

I was grateful for the offer, but the moment I heard about this, I assumed I would have to decline.

But at the same time, a new thought occurred to me.

"Could you give me a moment to consider this?"

"Of course, I can't force you to do anything, so I'll leave the final decision up to you. But —"

"I know, I know. I'm seriously considering the option of accepting sick leave."

"Yes. I'll get back to you at least a week before the festival. I have to prepare for it too."

It would take at least that long to arrange the human resources.

After the call, I thought about the possibility of a sports festival without me.

Of course, it is quite possible that there will be sick leave from other classes or grades on the day of the exam. In fact, it's not easy to have all the students in the school for every exam.

"No, I think we should focus on the special exam in front of us first."

This special exam —— This exam may be the most painful special exam I've ever taken.

All the exams I've taken so far have been ones that I can counteract in any way I can.

However, in this special exam, there is no such thing as a "surefire" strategy.

We need to believe in our classmates and work together as one.

Sports festival and cultural festival. There are new things to worry about that I didn't have last year, but it all starts with getting through the special exam tomorrow.

Part 6

"Come in, Kushida-senpai."

A few hours ago. After finishing school, Kushida visited Takuya Yagami's room in the freshman dormitory.

The evening sun was faintly shining through the closed curtains.

Gazing at the steam from the freshly brewed tea on the table, Kushida did not reach out to touch it.

"There's no medicine or anything in it, is there?"

"I don't care about that, can we just get on with it?"

Without trying to hide her frustration, Kushida pulled out her cell phone with a grim look on her face.

"I beg your pardon. Then let me ask you without reservation."

After pressing the play button they hear the voice of chabashira sensei explaining the outline of the unanimous special exam announced to the second-year students, though it is only halfway through the explanation. And after silently listening to everything in the class, including the examples, Yagami returned the phone to Kushida.

"Kushida-senpai wants to crush Horikita Suzune and Ayanokoji Kiyotaka. Isn't that what you meant?"

Not needing to answer now, Kushida kept silent.

"I had been briefed by my seniors beforehand, but it was still a very simple special exam. From the multiple choices, the voting is repeated and adjusted to be unanimous. There are five tasks in total, and we have five hours to complete them. What did you think when you heard this?"

"..... Easy, right?"

"Yes, it is. It is considered to be very easy for being called a special exam. However, only the punishment for running out of time is severe. This must be because the school is making the assumption that it is clear. A consideration that will inevitably bring us closer to unanimity as time nears its end. Whether it's a choice you don't like or not, we all want to avoid heavy penalties."

Yagami reaches for the tea that continues to steam in front of Kushida and picks up the cup.

"Well, here's the thing. I'm already in the middle of my second year. But while I've been wanting to expel those two, I haven't been able to get the perfect opportunity to do so up until this point."

"As far as I'm concerned, you're partly to blame, but not right now."

There is nothing to be gained by lashing out at Yagami here, Kushida thought as she held her ground.

"Did you tell Horikita about this?"

"Yeah, You know, the one where you're supposed to be the leader? Sort of. Well, I'm sure she'd have done it on her own without me telling her."

"It's not good to leave things ambiguous. It's important for Kushida-senpai that Horikita-senpai was entrusted with that role after getting a firm word from her."

"So what? You think you can get Horikita expelled on the next special exam?"

When Kushida asked him back, Yagami laughed and sipped from his cup.

"That's right. I had to listen to the recording just to make sure I didn't miss anything or misinterpret anything, but now it's clear. Next special exam: That's a good possibility."

"..... How could you possibly know that? The only condition for expulsion is to let the accumulated penalty time accumulate in the individual's voting time. Do you think Horikita would make a mistake like that? Not just Horikita. No one makes that kind of mistake."

"Of course, it's unlikely that anyone would be stupid enough to get expelled for a cumulative penalty. But from what I've read, there are other ways to get expelled."

"Huh?"

"Expel Horikita-senpai, or Ayanokouji-senpai, depending on the situation. There may be a possibility that we can crush the one we want to crush. At that point, you shouldn't hesitate to guide the conversation so that we can target both."

Yagami mentioned the task that was supposed to be given in this special exam, an example of what he was talking about.

"——Are you sure about that?"

"Of course, I don't think it's the same word for word. But. But I think there is a good chance that there will be assignments like the one I just mentioned."

Yagami hadn't been told about this special exam by Tsukishiro, but after listening to the teacher's explanation, he had an idea of what kind of task he would be given.

"There is only one way for Kushida-senpai to take on a task like the one I just mentioned."

He then explains how she can corner Horikita and Ayanokoji on the subject.

"What do you think? Doesn't this make you look like you're about to be expelled? Of course, you'll have the whole class crying, but that's a small thing to you, isn't it?"

"You think I can do that ·····?"

"I think Kushida has the ability to do that, am I wrong?"

"You've been buying a lot of stuff."

"I had to test my senior when I first met her to see if she was someone I could use."

"····· What does that mean?"

"It's me. Don't you remember? Do you remember when I said that to you?"

"I was in a hurry at the time. So what?"

"So what? Normally, you would have questions. You and I are complete strangers who have never even met each other. And yet, he was able to match the conversation immediately and improvise his way through the situation. That's how I knew he was capable enough."

"But what if I'd said, "Who are you? I might have simply forgotten."

"I don't think so. As long as we don't know where we met, maybe we were enrolled in the same junior high school. If that's the case, there's a possibility that I know about your past. If I were to say, 'I knew about that incident,' it would be a disaster."

To deny such a possibility, Kushida immediately went to talk to him.

"If they don't go to the same junior high school, they can go to a cram school, for example. Or if you find out later that it was a junior who lived in your neighborhood, that greatly reduces the risk of it being someone you know from the past. We could just laugh it off as a misunderstanding. The first priority was to find out if they were from the same junior high school,

right? And if you bring up any topic related to the past, it will be easier to divert the conversation."

After drinking about a quarter of the tea, he put the cup on the table.

"Who the hell are you? How do you know my past when we didn't even go to the same middle school?"

"I know you're wary, but consider me a guest in a unique position. However, yes. My purpose is to play with Ayanokoji-senpai."

"What do you mean? To play with him?"

"Yeah, well, I don't think he knows me at all. Right now, my plan is to try things without Ayanokoji-senpai noticing."

"What if I get upset when we first meet, or I don't give you the answer you think I should?"

Kushida was curious about what Yagami had said at that moment.

"I thought that would be interesting. I'm sure Ayanokoji-senpai noticed the discomfort and cast a suspicious eye at me. I probably would have been able to greet him earlier."

"..... You mean you went to middle school with Ayanokoji by any chance?"

"Well, what do you think? It's a trivial matter for Kushida-senpai. Shall we turn our attention to the special exam now?"

"I know. If I get the assignment you're after, I'll set it up then."

"I'll set it up. That's weak."

"...Weak? What do you mean, weak?"

Yagami stood up and brought himself closer and grabbed Kushida by the shoulders, who reflexively tried to run away.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

She tried to escape from it, but the power of Yagami, who looked so slender, was much stronger than she imagined and she couldn't move.

"Listen carefully. Kushida-senpai is in a tighter spot than she thinks. In addition to Ayanokoji-senpai and Horikita-senpai surrounding you, people who seem to be a cause for concern, such as me and Amasawa-san's existence, continue to threaten your daily safety and life. Isn't that right?"

"It's Yes, but it's"

Kushida glares at Yagami, who stares straight into her eyes, without fear.

"As a matter of course, it's not easy to kick out your fellow classmates in this school. It takes a lot of effort to push them out of school in their personal lives. If there was an opportunity to expel him through a special exam like this one, it would be an undeniable chance of a lifetime."

"I know that. But if you go too far, you'll put me in danger."

"So you need to be prepared for that. Expel or be expelled."

We are under intense pressure to fight one out of two.

"Of course, it's Kushida-senpai who will make the decision. If I were to say something like, "If you don't want your past of class disruptions to be exposed, make sure to expel either Horikita or Ayanokoji," that would be nothing more than blackmail that violates the rules of the exam."

"That's what I call a threat."

"I'm sorry. I really don't mean to scare you. I just think it's true that Kushida-senpai is not prepared enough. Eliminate them at any cost. If you don't do that much, you won't be able to force them to leave school. Not for long."

Removing his hands from her shoulders, Yagami returned to his sitting position and sat down again.

"Let me ask you again. Kushida senpai wants to expel those two students. Isn't that right?"

When Yagami looked her in the eye again, Kushida lashed out with a mixture of strong anger and frustration.

That is something that does not need to be confirmed.

It's what Kushida have been wishing for every day for the past year and a half.

"..... Yes. I want to expel Horikita, Ayanokoji. I'm definitely going to get them expelled.!"

"I can feel it. I can finally confirm that Kushida's beliefs are genuine."

Kushida makes up her mind. In order to prevent the wound from spreading any further, she must expel Horikita and Ayanokoji as soon as possible, and she must also expel Yagami in front of her who is talking about whatever he wants.

Chapter 3

Dark Clouds

Intro

I am a little nervous.

The alarm clock, which I have known for ten years, rang in my ear.

I reach out my hand quickly and silently, and without regard, I roughly press the button to stop the bell.

Due to the excess momentum, It fell off the mini table and finally.

Rin!

He's been trained by me many times, so he's not a soft companion to break at this level.

" It's already six o'clock."

In the end, I only slept for about two hours and welcomed the morning.

I took off my pajamas, which I had no idea what I had changed into, and walked with heavy steps to the sink in my underwear.

While I was at it, I picked up the alarm clock and found that the cover with the broken claws that had been attached with cellophane tape had come off and one battery had fallen to the floor.

"I think I was a little too rough with him. I'll be more careful tomorrow, so forgive me."

Then, I stepped in front of the mirror.

{You look terrible. · · · · }

It's not very nice, but I can't show my face in front of the students in my current state.

The dark circles under my eyes were even more noticeable today, as I had been sleeping particularly lightly for the past few days.

After washing her face carefully, she laid out her cosmetics, which she usually rarely picked up.

I can't let my students know that I'm in a bad or even unstable state.

As I picked up the bottle of lotion, my eyes suddenly met with my own in the mirror.

{You look like crap.}

I touch my cheek somehow.

The elasticity and tactile sensation coming from my fingertips would be incomparable to what I felt when I was a student.

{You're getting old}

It's only a little more than 10 years, but it's still 10 years.

It was an inevitable reminder that much time had passed.

{Is that a trivial matter?

It wasn't until now that I grasped the flow of time.

I resumed my halted movements, opened the lid and began to apply my makeup silently.

One day it will come.

This was something that I understood from the moment I decided to become a teacher.

I should have known, but I wasn't really prepared.

"Calm down. This is not my fight. The situation is different from that time. I bet the current class would clear it without a hitch. Yes, they should. There's no point in getting nervous."

I felt my heart beating faster and tried to convince myself that this was just another easy task.

Such a shallow idea didn't work, and my heart started to beat faster and faster.

At this rate, I won't be able to hold myself together until the end of the special exam. I can't imagine what the future holds.

{Be prepared.

I pressed both of my palms against the mirror and stared at my reflection, muttering to myself.

Part 1

A teacher's morning is surprisingly busy. At this school, we live in a dormitory, which means we are close to our work place, or school, but we have a lot of work to do.

Preparing for class, checking to see if there is any contact, and sometimes checking the water quality of the pool.

However, the start time of the workday is the same as the start of homeroom, so it's practically like service overtime.

After the morning's individual preparations, we had a meeting with the teachers for the morning assembly.

Especially on days when special exams are held, the rush is doubled or tripled. The school's mistakes are absolutely unacceptable because they affect the students' lives, or part of them.

"The most important thing for us teachers to keep in mind during this special exam is how to intervene in the classroom. Please avoid any situation where you unintentionally help a student in your class in order to protect him/her."

Gathering the homeroom teachers of the four classes, Ikari-sensei, who was auditing this special exam, warned them with a stern look on his face.

"I was wondering if I could talk to you for a second."

"What is it, Hoshinomiya-sensei?"

"I believe the last time this exam was held...11 years ago...there was a shuffling policy to ensure that the class in charge did not help, right? So why is it that this time the homeroom teacher is still looking after her class? In the interest of fairness, though, I think you should change it."

As far as issuing a warning, the school's intention to stop the homeroom teacher's intervention can be felt.

But surely it would be more reliable to leave the other 'class in charge' in other Classes.

Not many teachers would go to the trouble of risking their job to help a rival class.

"Isn't it because you believe it will be fair?"

Professor Sakagami, who was listening to the conversation, calmly analyzes it.

"Is that so?"

"..... I can't tell you why, except that it's the decision."

"It's up to you, isn't it?"

There is nothing that we, as teachers, can do to determine all the special exams.

The decision will be made by Chancellor Sakayanagi and those who are involved in the operation and management of this school.

All we have to do is follow the rules and carry them out.

But it didn't seem to add up, and Chie didn't even try to hide her frustration.

Ikari-sensei, who could not bear to see this, opened his mouth in a low voice.

"This is just my own imagination, but this special exam could give students a glimpse into the inner workings of the mind they hide. It is a mass of information. I think they thought that by leaking it to the teachers of the other classes, it would in turn affect the next special exam."

"That just means they don't believe in us as teachers."

"It can't be helped. This special exam, three of the homeroom teachers seem to have experienced the same thing in the past. Was it related to the fact that you took charge of each class in class voting last year?"

"That's what I thought."

Chie seemed to be convinced once again, as if she had known it all along.

"Hoshinomiya-sensei... May we proceed?"

"Yes, yes. I'm convinced, so please proceed."

He was clearly in a bad mood, but Ikari-sensei resumed his explanation as if he had given up.

"If the supervisor deems it to be advisable, a warning will be given. If it is repeated, there will be a pay cut. And, although it is not a concern of yours, please remember that if you are found to

have intervened in a malicious manner, intentionally leading students to make choices they should not have made, you may be demoted at worst."

The unanimous special exam is all about choices. It is only natural that the nature of the special exam itself will be questioned if the teacher leads with a particular choice.

Of course, the teachers of the other classes have no such intentions, nor do I.

As usual, he doesn't get too emotionally involved with the students and just goes about things in a solemn manner.

Even if it is this special exam full of bitter memories, it is still the same thing.

"That will be all. Please take care of today's special exam."

After that, I tried to do my best to get through the morning classes as usual.

No, I was the only one who thought it was business as usual, when in fact it was probably not.

I had no sense of time, and before I knew it, it was time for lunch.

On the desk in the staff room, there is a half-eaten meal.

When I put the food in my throat, the chopsticks stopped moving at all.

Not wanting to be seen like this, I put the rest of my lunch in a bag and put it away.

And then came the sound of the afternoon class, announcing its start.

As I left the staff room, staring at the floor, I was called out by the sound of footsteps coming from behind me.

"It's finally happening, Sae-chan."

"..... Chie...?"

"You've been like that since this morning, but you couldn't sleep last night because you were thinking about the special exam?"

I tuned out the obvious and cheap provocation.

No, it would be more accurate to say that I could not answer back.

"My current class has nothing to do with me. Whether the students clear it easily or not is of no importance to me."

"Hmm? You don't look like you're that broken up about it."

"Well, that's okay. But don't forget that you do not deserve to be in Class A."

(T/L Note - Chie said this to Sae)

As I walked away, Chie's voice was filled with resentment and she did not hide it.

I couldn't raise my head until the end.



Part 2

September 17th. After lunch break. Less than three weeks after the summer break, the next special exam arrived.

When I came back to the classroom about five minutes before the exam started, there was already one teacher waiting in the classroom.

I was a little surprised to find out that I was instructed to sit not in my seat, but in a designated seat for the duration of the exam. Interestingly enough, I was seated at the very back of the class, near the window, where I had sat in my first year. The rest of the students are randomly assigned to the seats, regardless of their placement last year or this year.

It seemed that I just happened to have similar seats. In the event that you've got a lot of time, you'll be able to take a look at the best way to get the most out of your time.

Sato was seated right next to me, and Onizuka was seated in front of me. The students began to arrive one after another.

The exam we will be taking is the "unanimous special exam."

It's a simple one, nothing more, nothing less, where you have to choose from multiple options five tasks given by the school and repeat them until you get unanimous agreement.

There are not many things worth mentioning about this special exam, but there are also not many ways to prepare for it.

Promise to disperse the vote to avoid unexpected unanimity, as communication is not possible during the first vote, regardless of the nature of the issue. A reminder of the time limit for voting. Decide in advance who to follow in the event of a dispute over which option to choose if the votes are dispersed. That's about all any class can do.

Therefore, it is safe to say that there is almost no such thing as a heavy atmosphere in the class.

The fact that this test is easily achievable for all participants, ultimately "just choose an option and press the vote button," is another reason why it has been taken so loosely.

Of course, it is a special exam, so there is some tension

The tablet had a thin strip of plastic firmly attached to it to prevent prying eyes.

Even if you peeked in from the seat next to me, you wouldn't be able to steal a glance at the screen.

Since you can't stand up while voting, it's impossible to narrow down where others are voting by sight.

Even if by some means or accident you are able to see the results of a third party's vote, whether or not you can put it into words and be believed is another story. In the first place, it is impossible to make a fuss about who voted for whom, since snooping is forbidden.

We have to face this special test head on.

The tablet on the desk seemed to be turned off, and I was not allowed to even turn it on without permission.

"Hey, hey, hey. If we can clear it in an hour or two, let's go to Keyaki Mall."

"Yeah, I'd love to, but I thought you were studying in the dorm. So can we go in the evening?"

Ike and Shinohara, who have become a close couple, discuss what they will do after school.

A special exam that can be easily completed: I'm not sure. However, it is questionable how many students currently understand that it can turn into a difficult task depending on the conditions.

The thing is that the voting is anonymous. It is impossible to know who voted for which option during the test and forever.

'Completely anonymous.'

It's all about how big an impact this factor will have on this particular test.

Anyway, the time limit for the special exam was five hours, from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., a very long time.

If you think about it simply, you are allowed to spend one hour per question.

It would be no surprise if the special exam was completed in an hour or two, as Ike said.

And if you clear it within the time limit, you'll easily get 50 class points.

On the other hand, if you fail to complete the test within five hours, you will lose 300 class points, so getting all five questions unanimous is an absolute must. Considering the content of the test, the small reward and heavy penalty were understandable. I sat down at my seat in the corner of the classroom where half of the students were seated. On the side of the podium, Chabashira sensei, the facilitator of this special exam, and the teacher, who is in charge of monitoring, are stationed at the back of the classroom.

"As I told you in advance, I will collect all communication equipment."

Limiting the amount of luggage you can bring in, and monitoring the tablet from the front and back to prevent prying eyes. They're being more thorough than necessary. That's how much they are trying to prevent people from knowing who voted for whom. It may sound harsh, but it's the right thing to do. In order to reflect the genuine feelings of the students in the multiple choices, anonymity must be 100%.

If there is an opening that can be snooped on, the probability of succumbing to peer pressure increases.

You chose 'a', even though you really wanted to choose B but because everyone else is choosing 'a' you go with the choice 'a'.

That is what they want to avoid.

School emphasize the importance of the "individual student's will," which is the meaning of this special exam.

However, this is not a good thing for the students, because we want everyone to be unanimous, whether it's peer pressure or not.

Anyway, there is no room for injustice at all.

No matter what the issue is, it must be unanimous.

"Come on, Airi. You decided to say it properly, didn't you?"

Hmm? I turned my gaze from outside the window back to the classroom and saw Airi being pushed back by Haruka.

"Oh, that Kiyotaka,! Yo I was wondering if I could have some time after school?"

When she nodded her head, she asked with her eyes how she could respond.

"I was wondering if I could talk to you about the cultural festival."

"So that's it. I think we should talk in person, too."

"Oh, thank you! I'll see you later."

Airi fled away and turned her back to me, taking a seat in the far row.

"She's calmed down somehow. She's not over it, but she's trying to move on."

She didn't even want to mention it in front of me, but tried her best to make eye contact with me.

"But it remains to be seen whether the girl will really take it on or not. It depends on how hard you work."

"I'll try to negotiate as hard as I can."

"Yeah. I'll see you after school."

It's not like they're really taken care of, but those two have been together a lot lately.

Two minutes before the start of the class, the homeroom teacher, Chabashira, began to explain.

"Well -- it's about time. We're going to move on to the special exam, and since it's going to be a long day, we're going to have up to four bathroom breaks. Basically, we can only take a break before we start the next task with unanimous consent. This means that we can't take a break in the middle of the day when we haven't reached unanimous agreement. Also, each break is a maximum of 10 minutes, but the exam time continues to be counted. It would be important to skip breaks if you deem them unnecessary."

Everyone had already used the restroom as announced, so there would be no problem for a while.

There seemed to be no students in the class who had stomachaches or other unexpected health problems.

Now it's time for the special exam.

That's what I thought, but Chabashira sensei kept looking at the students and refused to start the proceedings.

She seemed to be absent-minded, just dazed.

As the students, who at first were unconcerned, slowly began to look at each other, the teacher standing in the back of the classroom also seemed to notice something strange.

"Ms. Chabashira. It's time."

"Ah, ah. I'm sorry. Then, we will start the unanimous special test. From here, we will proceed according to the rules, so you will not be allowed to stand up outside the interval or chat at prohibited timings. Take care. Keep in mind. "

The monitor switches and the countdown starts at 26 seconds.

This was probably due to a slight delay in the start signal, but it would not affect the students.

Eventually, when the count reached zero, the text switched to show the first task.

Task 1: Choose which class you want to face in the final exam in the third semester.

(This choice will take precedence even if there is a change in class rank.)

The numbers in parentheses indicate additional class points earned by winning the match.

Class A

(100)

Class B

(50)

Class D

(0)

"This is the last semester of your sophomore year, and it's your choice to determine your opponent for the special exam at the end of that year. As mentioned, if you unanimously choose Class A at this time, even if your current Class A falls to Class B by the end of the school year, your opponent will be that Class A and additional class points as of this choice. Also, if the desired combination of choices is unanimous, the school will decide randomly."

To put it simply, you have the choice of fighting Sakayanagi, Ichinose, or Ryūen, and the opponent you choose here will not be changed.

It's important to figure out which class we can win against. Of course, we won't always be able to fight the class we want to. But...?

If Horikita and her friends nominate Sakayanagi's A class, and Ichinose also nominates Sakayanagi's class at the same time, does that mean that Sakayanagi's class is left to choose Horikita's class or Ichinose's class? And if Sakayanagi's class nominates neither of them, but Ryueen's class, then the choice of Ryueen's class is to be confirmed. Again, if Ryueen's class avoided Sakayanagi's class, then the result would be a random combination where everything doesn't mesh together. Normally, you would want to choose a lower class with lower strength.

However, as you can see from the choices, the treatment of the upper classes seems to be a little different.

If you are able to defeat a higher class, you will be rewarded with extra class points for doing so. If you fight a lower class, you will not get any additional reward.

Normally, we would want to avoid battles with Class A, but if these advantages exist, there will be enough room for consideration.

"We will now move on to the first round of voting. You have 60 seconds to cast your vote."

If you go past this 60 seconds, you will be in penalty time.

Of course, as Horikita had decided and notified beforehand to avoid such trouble from the very first time, the classmates voted for their favorite option as they saw fit.

Horikita and I agreed that I would always choose the first option on the first vote, so I didn't hesitate to choose the first A class. Horikita will choose class B, the second choice.

At this point, it will never be unanimous, but the other 37 votes will genuinely tell us which class they want to face.

"As all votes have been cast, we will now announce the results of the voting."

Results of the first round of voting

Class A: 5 votes

Class B: 21 votes

Class D: 13 votes

The votes were concentrated on Class B, to which Ichinose belongs, instead of Class D, the lowest class.

"Since the vote was not unanimous, there will now be an interval."

From this point on, you are allowed to leave your seat freely for ten minutes to make contact with the students or have a conversation with them. It doesn't matter if you raise your voice a little, or if you only overhear certain students.

"Let me make a suggestion first so we don't waste time on the first task."

She raised her hand, Horikita, who was sitting in front of chabashira sensei, stood up and then turned around.

Since she has been assigned to be the leader of this special exam as well, she will take the initiative to show her actions.

"As scattered as the votes are, each of us must have our own thoughts. If you have any questions, feel free to ask them, and don't hesitate to express your opinions to the whole class."

After saying this, Horikita took a breath and began to describe her preferred option.

"The ideal opponent for me at the end of the school year would be Class B. There are three reasons why I thought Ichinose was the ideal opponent. First, unlike Sakayanagi-san and Ryūen-kun, Ichinose is likely to be a fair fight, a clash of pure potential. Even if it is an irregular special exam, there is little worry about being outsmarted. Secondly, They're in class B at the moment. You'll get class points on top of your rewards, which will give you an edge in leading the other classes. The third and final point is that the B class title is just a facade. We are already side by side with their class and Ryueen's D class. At one time, she was far behind in class points, but her class is now on a downward slope. I think that makes her an ideal opponent to compete with."

She spoke rather quickly, perhaps because she was concerned about time, but her clear reasoning gave the impression that she had touched the hearts of many students.

"If any student has any objections, please voice them here and now. On the other hand, if you think Class B is okay, then vote for Class B as soon as possible."

We would like to have a unanimous vote on this issue in the second round of voting.



I can feel Horikita's determination. As if in response, Yosuke stands up.

"I agree with what you said, Horikita-san. The additional rewards for defeating Sakayanagi and the others in Class A are great, but there's no doubt that they are stronger enemies than anyone else. Of course, Ichinose and her class's strong ties and solid fighting style can't be ignored, but I think they're the best opponents."

With the two of them pushing for Class B, the classmates begin to decide on their direction.

Then, as if to bring the flow all together, one more person stood, to give an opinion.

"I think it's right too. I don't think it's beneficial to fight Ryuen-kun's class because there is no additional reward for fighting, and Sakayanagi-san's class is not an easy opponent to fight."

Before any opposition could be raised, Yosuke and Kei quickly solidified their opinions by declaring their intention of voting for Class B. It could be said that they followed through as planned, but it is safe to assume that they probably also wanted to fight with Class B. It was easy to see from the fact that Class B received the most votes in the first round of voting.

The interval, which lasted nearly six extra minutes, eventually passed without any opposition.

While checking the time, we resumed the progress.

"Then we will move on to the second round of voting, as the time has expired. As soon as the tablet screen changes, you have 60 seconds to cast your vote. As explained beforehand, if you go past 60 seconds, the penalty time will accumulate. Be careful."

This caution was unnecessary, and in less than ten seconds, everyone had voted the second time.

The results were then immediately reflected and displayed on the monitor.

Results of the second round of voting

Class A: 0 votes

Class B: 39 votes

Class D: 0 votes

There was no way Koenji could joke around and put us in another class vote, so we got off to the best possible start and succeeded in getting unanimous agreement for the first time.

"By unanimous vote, the first assignment is confirmed as Class B's choice. I will inform you of the class you will face in the final exam as soon as it is officially decided, but that will be after tomorrow."

In just ten minutes or so, we had completed one of the five tasks and Horikita and the others also chose to vote for the B class they wanted. As for me personally, if I had to choose a partner to fight, I would have definitely chosen Ichinose class.

The reason for this is - Well, Horikita has said it all and there is nothing to add.

Now we just have to hope that Sakayanagi's and Ryueen's classes will match up, but since Ichinose's class is sometimes an easy target, we might have three classes competing if we're not careful. Let's hope that Ichinose's class will request Horikita's class without any trouble.

"I don't think we need to take a break, but I'll check in just in case. You don't mind if we move on to the next task, do you?"

Of course, no one from the student body objected, so the second task began immediately.

"Now let's move on to the second task."

Task 2: Choose a destination for the school trip scheduled for late November.

Hokkaido

Kyoto

Okinawa

What the hell is this? I heard such a voice from the students.

Because of the no-speaking situation, their voice was immediately drowned out by the look they got from Chabashira sensei.

But it is undeniable that many students thought, "What the heck is this?"

Still, we can't even talk about it without voting first.

The only way to vote is to genuinely think for yourself about which option to choose, and then vote.

"This vote is similar to the previous one, and this one is not final. The outcome may change depending on the status of the remaining three classes, so keep that in mind."

Results of the first round of voting:

Hokkaido 17 votes

Kyoto 3 votes

Okinawa 19 votes

With the exception of Kyoto, the voting results were shown to be much closer than before.

"Since the vote was not unanimous, we will now go into an interval."

"Hey, hey, can we call this a special exam? It's like it's a piece of cake."

When it came to the interval, Hondo chuckled out.

It is true that the first and second issues do not need to be asked in such an ostentatious manner. They can be summarized in the course of homeroom.

Only two questions yet.

When this will be over, two-fifths of the special exam will be over.

Too much easy content. Many of the students may have started to relax more than they were nervous.

However, it is interesting to note that some students become more anxious the more they are in such situations.

Typical of these students are Horikita and Yosuke, who are careful and thoughtful.

While everyone laughs and discusses which way to go, they look at the task seriously.

I suppose that's true. It's hard to believe that such a task, which could be done either way, would continue to the end. In fact, the easier the first part is, the more pressure there will be on the second half.

With this premonition in mind, I quietly watched the flow of the interval.

"I'm sure we all have our own thoughts. But let's focus on this task first."

Wary of being distracted, Yosuke pulled the entire class back together.

The first time, I voted for Option 1, Hokkaido, as promised, but now what to do?

The content of the assignment is the same. This means that there will always be decisions from other Classes for choosing the final outcome. It is definitely an important vote in deciding where to take the school trip.

"Horikita-san, we seem to be at odds with each other, do you have any advice?"

Kushida was worried about Horikita who, unlike before, did not speak up right away, so Kushida called out to her.

But Horikita didn't speak right away, and for a moment there was silence.

"Horikita-san?"

Horikita hurriedly replied when Kushida called her name again with some concern.

"I'm sorry. I've been thinking about this a bit. Hm... It's not a complicated choice, but I thought it might be hard to make it unanimous. The school trip is an important event for us students, and of course I can't sum up the destination in a few words."

We promised to follow the leader if things went wrong, but that still didn't mean Horikita could decide where to go on the school trip by herself. It's a tough choice, considering that it's a matter of preference, not merit or demerit.

"Anyway, we'll just have to start by getting your input on where you'd like to travel."

As if he was waiting for it, Sudo raised his hand.

"I'll go first. I'm going to Okinawa. Okinawa is the most popular school trip because of the ocean, right? It has the most votes, so why don't we just go with it?"

"Wait a minute. I admit that Okinawa is one of the most popular, but so is Hokkaido. The number of votes is even close. Don't you guys want to go skiing or something?"

Maezono, who seemed to be pitching for Hokkaido, disagreed with sudo.

"I want to go to Okinawa. I want to go snorkeling!"

(T/L Note - Snorkeling is an underwater activity that involves a breathing tube. It is sort of like 'Diving' but not exactly the same)

"I've been to Okinawa a couple of times, so Hokkaido..."

Two destinations with close vote counts begin to disagree head-on.

Since they both chose the destination they thought was best for them, it was understandable that they would be critical of other options.

"To begin with, there's only snow in Hokkaido, right? It's definitely boring."

"Well, if that's the case, isn't there nothing but ocean in Okinawa?"

They argued for several minutes without seeming to come to an end, until Yosuke, who could not bear to watch, intervened.

"Hokkaido and Okinawa are both equally popular destinations for school trips, so I guess it's not unreasonable to get into trouble, but... you might want to be a little more considerate of others."

Yosuke appealed to them to stop speaking out of turn.

In the beginning, they were talking about how wonderful their choice of destination was, but then they started to talk down the other person's choice.

"Hirata-kun chose Hokkaido, right?"

"Hey Hirata, you chose Okinawa, didn't you?"

"What? Um,"

Sandwiched between the two groups, Yosuke looked troubled.

"That's a bit of a... secret, isn't it?"

In this situation, it's hard to answer which one he chose. In a way, this is the moment when anonymity comes alive.

"Okinawa is the only place where you can swim in November. Don't you want to go to the beach?"

"I've had enough of the ocean. I've had enough of the desert island test. Hokkaido for sure!"

The discussion, once interrupted, quickly begins to heat up again.

The exchange between Sudo and Maezono can probably be seen as a small-scale version of the opinions of the entire class.

"What should we do, Horikita-san?"

With a troubled look on her face, Kushida asks Horikita for help.

"Yes, this is a tricky subject."

The difficulty of unanimity.

There was no easy way to wrap up the conversation, and the ten-minute interval was coming to an end.

Incidentally, I'm planning to vote for Kyoto this second time around.

Kyoto has a deep history. I had a strong desire to see that scene.

"Now that the second round of voting is complete, we will display the results."

Second round of voting results:

Hokkaido 18 votes

Kyoto 4 votes

Okinawa 17 votes

"Oh, Hokkaido has more votes! " We did it!"

"Who the hell switched from Okinawa to Hokkaido?"

Hokkaido got slightly more votes than the other two, but it was almost a 50-50 split.

However, both the Hokkaido and Okinawa groups started arguing over the votes.

If we were to try to solve this problem at this rate, no matter how many times we vote, we'll never get it done.

The only sad thing is that Kyoto is not being talked about at all. It's just got more votes than before...

Then, Horikita's vote for Kyoto, the first choice, might not have moved. Of course, it is possible that Horikita voted for Hokkaido or Okinawa and someone else voted for Kyoto, so we can't be sure.

There is a way to force the vote to go to the side with the most votes, but that is likely to leave a grudge. Hokkaido won the second round whereas Okinawa won the first round of voting.

"It's no use. I guess we'll have to settle for a winner. We need three people who prefer Hokkaido and three people who prefer Okinawa. We'll choose a representative and have them play rock-paper-scissors. We'll choose a spearhead, a hunter, and a general, and play a winner-take-all game. However, in Kyoto, where the number of votes is low, we will only have one representative. It's a tough battle, but I'm trying to keep it as fair as possible."

(T/L -This is variant of Rock paper scissors in Japanese)

Kyoto, which is a minority, can compete with the other two on an equal footing because it certainly increases the sense of unfairness.

If Kyoto, a minority, can fight equally with the other two, it will surely make the sense of injustice stronger.

If we want to put it together without coercion and time, should we do it this way?

You can't help but be frustrated to some extent, but if you set the rules at the beginning, you have to follow them.

While there was some wrangling over who would be the rock-paper-scissors representative, the contestants soon began to be chosen.

Hokkaido team: Spearhead - Maezono; Midfielder - Ishikura; General - Shinohara. This is women's team.

Okinawa Team Spearhead - Onodera, Midfielder - Hondo, General - Sudo, Mixed Gender

"Also, whoever voted for Kyoto, can you participate in rock-paper-scissors?"

Horikita wishes to have one representative. Then, a man raises his hand with full energy.

"If no one else will, I'll go as the general. I'll make sure I bring everyone to Kyoto."

It was Keisei who expressed his strong will and threw himself into the tough battle.

The first student from the Kyoto voters to speak up. Kyoto is also my preferred school trip destination.

I'm leaving you in charge, Keisei. It's going to be a tough fight, but you'll have to pull through...

In order to make it to the third round of voting, the rock-paper-scissors game was quickly started. In the end, the Okinawa team won easily. The Kyoto team's dream was shattered in an instant, and had to leave the battlefield with a broken heart.

It was a fleeting moment, less than ten seconds after Keisei had announced himself.

I witnessed the moment when Horikita put her hand on her forehead and sighed, and I was convinced that she was one of those who wanted to go to Kyoto.

The game continued as if the Kyoto hopefuls had never existed in the first place. Onodera, who had defeated both of them in the first game, won two games in a row, defeating Ishikura in the middle game to take the lead. However, Shinohara, who appeared as the general, defeated Onodera and then Hondo in succession in an unexpected turn of events.

The two sides stared each other down as they engaged in a battle of generals.

"It's definitely Okinawa! Soki soba! Shisa! Kaijin!"

[Soki (Okinawan: ソーキ sooki) is a specialty of the cuisine of Okinawa Prefecture, Japan. Shisa (シーサー, Shīsā, Okinawan: shiisaa) is a traditional Ryukyuan cultural artifact. The Kaijin (海人, literally meaning "Sea Man") is an alleged sea monster from Japan, mentioned in books of the Edo period.]

"Hokkaido, for sure! Crabs! Hot springs! Skiing!"

Each of them clenches their fists, saying something they don't quite understand.

Both fists were raised and then lowered. It was a tense match.

We're just deciding where to go on a school trip, but it's an unusually tense situation.

"First, Goo! Rock, paper, scissors!"

They clashed for the second time. Sudo delivered a powerful 'goo'.

Shinohara, on the other hand, threw a brilliant for the second time in a row.

"Yes! We're going to Hokkaido!"

All at once, the Hokkaido faction raised their voices in victory.

"What are you doing, Sudo?"

"It's bad.!"

I don't want to put a damper on things, but the only vote in this class was for Hokkaido. If two votes were gathered for Okinawa or Kyoto, from other Classes then it would be that one.

Horikita was somewhat taken aback, as if she understood that this was not the kind of atmosphere where she could say that.

The third vote was taken, and everyone operated their tablets at once.

Results of the third round of voting:

Hokkaido 39 votes

Kyoto 0 votes

Okinawa 0 votes

"The third vote was unanimous, so the second assignment is clear."

While about half of them remain dissatisfied, they succeed in achieving unanimity in the third round of voting through a fair fight according to the established rules.

Although I couldn't make it to Kyoto, which I was really hoping for, I'm really looking forward to Hokkaido, and depending on what happens in the other classes, Kyoto and Okinawa are still possible.

Anyway, it was an assignment that made me look forward to the school trip, wherever it would be.

"Now let's move on to the third task."

Although the appearance of chabashira sensei had not changed since the beginning, there was a slight change in the tone of her voice.

Something might change the tide from the easy task so far.

Task 3) -

Instead of the private points awarded for class points each month being reduced to zero, three random students in the class will be given protection points. Or, you can choose to have your private points halved and give a protection point to a chosen student. If neither of these options is desired, the bottom five students in the next written exam will receive zero private points.

*No matter which option is chosen, the period of private point forfeiture will last for six months.

Unlike the previous two tasks, this one encompassed major advantages and disadvantages within the class. In option 1, the payback is greater as there are many private points to lose, but the fact that they are given to random students cannot be overlooked.

Protection Points is a very powerful system, but depending on your point of view, there are some students who will end up being unnecessary for three years. If such students are given these points, there is a risk that they will end up being a waste of treasure.

Option 2 is also not cheap, as the amount of private points that will be transferred will be halved. In addition, only one student will be awarded. However, being able to choose any student is an important factor.

Option 3 is the choice to minimize the loss of private points as much as possible. This will be the choice you will make if you decide that your protection points are too high, or if you don't need them in the first place. However, remember that even though there are five of you, you still have to bear the disadvantage.

It would be necessary to consider the class situation as well as the profit and loss calculation.

Some students may have a lot to say, but there is no other way but to vote first.

"Before we vote, let's talk about the case when the vote is unanimous on option 2, the option to give to a particular student. If the vote is unanimous on option 2, you will not complete task 3, but will continue on to the next option, which is to choose one student. You remember the example, don't you?"

You will choose one student at the interval and collect votes In Favour or Oppose granting it to that student. If the vote is unanimous in favor, the student will receive a protection point, and if

the vote is unanimous against, the student's chances in the task will be zero. The remaining 38 students will then discuss and select one student. Then the remaining 38 students discuss the issue and select one person, and the issue has to be repeated in such a subdivided manner, taking In Favour and Oppose again.

"With that in mind, we will announce the results of the first round of voting."

Results of the first round of voting:

12 votes to grant 3 random names,

5 votes to select 1 name,

22 votes not to grant.

The results of the first round of voting seemed to indicate that the majority of the respondents were willing to waive the protection points in exchange for some inconvenience. That may be so, as the five people who will lose their private points have already been determined to be the bottom five in the written exam. For students who don't fall into that category, it's a risk-free part of the process.

On the other hand, some may think that it is better to get protection points if they know that they will not get private points for six months anyway.

"Hey, wait a minute! I don't understand something..."

"Me too, me too! If we don't get protection points, we'll lose five people's worth of Private Points!"

Ike and Sato were the first to speak up, as they were the students who seemed to have the lowest grades.

"Well, I guess we don't have a choice. It's a bit of a feeling that private points are not transferred for half a year... And since the odds of random are low, and we're unlikely to get any specific ones, So we will have to sacrifice..."

Sudo talks as if to tell that he is already out of the five lowest-ranked students in my academic class.

"That's not fair! I need some private points right now too!"

"You're not going to tell me you're paying for a date with Shinohara, are you?"

"What? What? Seriously, how did you find out? Oh my god..."

He doesn't seem to be overwhelmed by the revelation of his use of the money, but it seems to be a matter of life and death.

"It's a rule, a rule, It's all as well to say that you don't get it."

"I can't have that!"

"Then go study. That'll help, right?"

"The only thing I can't agree with is what Ken said."

Of course it's important to study and break out of the lower ranks, but no matter how many points you score, you can't change the fact that five people will be sacrificed.

"I know what you mean, but it's too early to be pessimistic. The only thing you can do is minimize the amount of Private Points you lose and make up for it with everyone else. The 5 person's worth of Private Points that will be lost each month will be raised and equalized by the remaining 34 students. This way, all students will be satisfied, right?"

For simplicity, let's say one student gets 50,000 points per month, and five students lose 250,000 points. The remaining 34 students get 1.7 million points, and if you divide this by 39 and round down to the nearest whole number, you get 43589 points.

It is inevitable that we will lose some money, but we will only lose about 6500 points per head.

Even if it lasted for six months, the stress on each student would be minimized.

"Well, that's okay then. ····"

"I have to share, though. Oh well."

He seemed to be dissatisfied, but he was willing to help Ike in any way he could.

As many students wanted to go without the grant, opinions naturally began to converge in the direction of sticking with option 3. But then, Yosuke spoke up.

"Horikita-san, do you think it's best to choose without the grant?"

"It's a tough call. To be honest, it's a pretty difficult choice. Protection points can be a very powerful tool to prevent expulsion. But the same can be said for private points. Do you think differently, Hirata?"

"It's just an opinion, but I think we should get some protection points for this assignment. For three, of course."

"If I don't get any Private Points for six months, it's going to hurt a lot. Not only would it put a lot of stress on your daily life, but it could also affect your special exams if the situation warranted it."

There is no denying that private points can make the difference between victory and defeat.

"If something unforeseen happens, I can protect three people. There's only a very limited number of times you can get protection points, and this is something valuable that can't be simply priced out."

I can't help but understand Yosuke's somewhat heated appeal. The value of protection points that can prevent expulsion is actually up to 20 million private points.

It is not often that you get the chance to get three of them.

Especially for Yosuke, who cares about his friends, it is a value that cannot be replaced by money.

It's a different story than the destination of the school trip, one that is not easily unanimous.

It's hard to influence the course of the class in any travel destination, but this protection point is also a class-wide issue. If you gain it, it may save someone.

"I'm sorry, but I need to have a say in this."

At this point, Keisei stood up and expressed his opinion.

"For the next six months, we're going to increase our class points, right?"

"Of course. There's never a good time to stagnate when you're trying to move up in class."

"50 points for this special exam, 100 points if you place high at the cultural festival. If you get 50 points in this special exam and 100 points if you get a high rank in the cultural festival, and if you get similar points in the sports festival... by the end of the second semester, you might get more than 200 points, or even 300 points depending on the situation. Can I think of it that way?"

"That's right"

If we increase the number of points by 300 by the end of the year, the class points will recover to the point where we will be able to see around 1000 class points. If this is the case, the total amount of private points paid out in six months will increase by 50% from the current level to about 20 million points.

If you think about it, the maximum value of just one protection point is six months of class income. It makes for a neat picture that seems to be calculated. However, if we choose three protect points here, we get it at about 7 million private points per protection point.

It's a fine line, isn't it?

And the least likely, being given to one person instead of half, seems like a good combination of advantages and disadvantages, but it is actually the least cost effective and hard to choose. However, having the advantage of being the only one that can be given to a specific student would be an important factor.

However, if we decide to give it to any one person, what awaits us is of course a vote for unanimity.

If we bypassed this option and let it pass, there would be a possibility of a dispute over who to grant it to.

"The idea of prioritizing private points is an offensive strategy, while the idea of prioritizing protection points is a defensive strategy, right?"

When Kushida asks to sort out the situation, the three people who are now standing nodded almost simultaneously.

"But if you don't use your protection points, you run the risk of it turning out to be an expensive purchase, right? Of course I'm fine with that."

In order to make that fact known, it would be inevitable to talk about it.

"Yes. After all, if you never use it, it's worthless. Of course, there is a sense of security and relief that comes with having protection points."

"It may or may not be worthless. Even if it ends up being unnecessary in its original use, it can be used as a surprise attack or self-destruct by using a strategy that intentionally consumes Protect Points. It could be used not only for protection but also for offensive purposes."

I can understand why Keisei tells us that protection points can be used in many ways.

It's also a great advantage to be able to fight back against being able to prevent expulsion.

But we won't know what the special exam will be until later, unless we get the full picture.

There is no guarantee that we will ever have the opportunity to put it to good use in the future.

But this assignment, or rather the special exam, is deeper than I thought.

Even though the content of the assignment is the same for all classes, the situation of the assignment is changed according to the rank and status of the class.

If the class points are equal to zero, we unanimously agree on the option of getting three protection points without any quarrels. It will be a good opportunity for the other classes to follow suit. On the other hand, for Class A, which is in sole possession of first place, it would have been a more expensive purchase than the other classes.

Each task may seem less meaningful than the next, but the gap can certainly be narrowed.

On the flip side, the first and third options can be seen as somewhat inconvenient choices for Class A.

"Then Yukimura-kun. So you're saying that we should grant protection points to three people?"

Horikita tries to take the word in order to make a final confirmation and narrow down the options.

"No. The second option I would suggest. The one that grants Protect Points to any one student."

Horikita was surprised by the development that he wanted option 2, which was thought to be the most unlikely.

"Does that mean, for lack of a better word, that I should grant it to you?"

"I'd be honestly flattered if you did. But that's not realistic. I'd want you to grant it to yourself, because that's basically what all of us would do."

If you ask for a simple show of hands, it would not be surprising if the entire class raises their hands.

"It's hard to pick out a specific person. But no matter how much of a bargain it is, we don't know how well giving protection points to three random people will work."

"You seem to have a clear idea of who you want to give to. Who do you want to give it to?"

"If we're going to make a strategic decision... Horikita, I think it's going to be none other than you."

Keisei said clearly.

"..... me?"

"Yeah. Now you're a strong leader in this class. I have no complaints about your ability in OAA. In the future, when competing with people like Sakayanagi and Ryuuken, the role of leader is the most dangerous. I'm not surprised that those two would try to expel you without mercy. If that's the case, giving you protection points so that you can strategize against the strongest opponents from other classes without fear. I imagined such a situation."

Normally, there would be some hostility, but naturally, the classmates listened.

Because she had a solid reason, not a random one.

"That's not the only reason. Normally, when you have a protection point, there is a risk of loosening up. You'll be able to get the best out of it. But maybe you're not that kind of person, , I felt that way."

It's not just a matter of giving it to someone who has the ability, but someone who can do more for the class after being given it. That's who Horikita is, Keisei said.

"I know what you're saying, but that's a lot of money."

If it is not granted to you, you will simply lose half of your private points for six months.

It's no wonder some students think like Hondo.

"I feel like I'm losing money because I think I'm just losing private points. This is an upfront investment. Horikita will turn it into more class points than you pay for this option. Wouldn't it be easier to think that way?"

"That's a lot of money... and it maybe doesn't work, you know?"

"I don't believe you can win Class A without taking risks. I've been fighting at this school for a year and a half myself."

"Hmph. Isn't that a good idea? I'm with you on that suggestion, Glasses-kun."

Koenji, who had thought that he would have nothing to do with this special test, suddenly showed his approval with words.

"For the amount of protection points I'm giving, you can have the Horikita girl work harder than anyone else."

"You've got protection points, but you don't seem to be trying very hard."

"Hard work is for ordinary people."

Koenji paid no attention to the wild taunts from Sudo.

Anyway, it's great that we got the support of Koenji, which seemed to be the biggest hurdle.

I was thinking of option 1 or 3, but I agree with Keisei's presentation.

Above all, if you are going to disagree with him further here, you need to have a good reason.

In the atmosphere created by Keisei, the next voting time arrived.

Results of the second round of voting:

0 votes for granting to 3 random people,

39 votes for granting to 1 person,

0 votes for not granting.

It was a brilliant stitch in time, and Keisei's idea was adopted.

However, the only thing that makes it somewhat troublesome is that there is an interval between the choices of the target.

This time, no student appeared to object to Horikita being given a protection point, so the students were free to speak and pass the time during the interval. Without needing to hold a nomination vote, it was decided that Horikita would run for the position herself and become the designated person.

And without any disturbance, the vote was unanimous with 39 votes in favor of Horikita.

This was an issue that I thought would be difficult to deal with, but the fact that it passed more smoothly than I expected was significant.

"This concludes assignment three. For the next six months, all private point transfers will be at half price equally, but protection point for Horikita will be granted at this time."

Of course, She couldn't make use of it in this special test, but this succeeded in giving Horikita, the leader, a valuable protection.

It was not a cheap purchase, but it was not too expensive either.

Task 4 -

The following selected rules will be applied to the class in the written exam at the end of the second semester.

Choices :

Increased difficulty

Increased penalties

Decreased rewards

What a nasty choice!

None of this is a disadvantage to the class.

If it had been a time when private conversation was allowed, there would have been a lot of grumbling.

Results of the first round of voting:

6 votes for increased difficulty,

18 votes for increased penalties,

15 votes for decreased rewards.

All of these are basically options that we don't want to choose, and the vote is split.

The task seemed to be prolonged, as there was then a heated debate between students who were confident in the written test and those who were not, but the next second vote led to a unanimous result with the option of 'increase the penalty'.

Horikita's strong persuasion that it would not be difficult to avoid the penalty if they worked diligently also seemed to have worked.

Part 3

With a time limit of five hours, we reached the final task in about an hour.

Many of the students must have thought that they were sure of clearing the exam from the steady flow. After the last question, the special exam would be cleared and 50 class points would be awarded.

"That brings us to our next and final task."

But if there's one thing that concerns me, it's the state of my homeroom teacher.

As each task progressed, it was obvious that the expressions of Chabashira sensei were changing for the worse. It was clear to the students that she had finally reached her peak and was looking pale.

"Sensei, are you all right?"

Even though the assignment has not been announced yet, private conversation is not something you can do.

However, Yosuke said that he could not overlook it.

"..... what? It's fine."

"No, you're obviously not feeling well."

"..... Really? No, it's not. I am fine."

It doesn't look like it's a bluff.

In other words, she doesn't even realize that something is wrong with her.

Or should I say, subconsciously.

Anyway, once he was told that this was not the case, Yosuke had no choice but to back off.

The teacher watching in the background did not move, so the final task would probably begin at this point.

But one thing is for sure. That the next challenge for the class has a lot to do with Chabashira sensei's current physical condition.

"Now, I will display the final task. Prepare to vote."

She told us so, and then operated the tablet in her hand as she adjusted her breathing.

Then the last task was displayed in front of us.

Task 5:
Instead of one classmate being expelled, you get 100 class points.

(If the vote is unanimous in favor, identify and vote on the student who will be expelled.)

Choices :

Agree

Disagree

The last task is the only task with the fewest options so far.

At first glance, we tend to think that the fewer the number of options, the easier it is to choose between them.

But in reality, the number of choices does not have much influence.

If there are a lot of strangers in the room, or if it's not possible to have a discussion, having a large number of options is a disadvantage, but in our class, we can have a discussion.

The important thing is always the content of the task.

Withdrawal or Class Points

This was one of the worst challenges I had ever expected to have to face.

The students, who are not allowed to speak privately, would have been upset to read the assignment out loud in their minds.

If we vote yes on this issue, it means that one student will be expelled from the class.

Under normal circumstances, the entire class should vote "no" without hesitation.

100 class points is not a small number, but most of us would prefer not to have one of our classmates expelled instead.

If this were a majority vote, it would probably take only one voting round, with a majority against, and that would be the end of it.

However, the past four questions have proven that it doesn't work that way.

That's the unanimous, simple yet difficult point.

"We will now begin a sixty-second count, and everyone, please begin voting."

There was no time to waste, and the 60-second voting period began.

If the vote is unanimous in favor of the proposal, the selection of students to be expelled from this class will begin in a hurry.

Again, of course, almost no student would want to do that.

100 class points, not really something that must be earned.

If this were the last semester of the third grade, with only one or two more special exams left, I wouldn't have been in the same mental state as I am now.

The value of these 100 points jumps up when it's a close battle for a single point. At that time, a battle between the ultimate two choices could be waiting for us.

However, the situation is different now. This is not a situation where almost everyone is unsure about voting 'no'.

Still, it is true that there are a few concerns, including Koenji.

That's why I'm here, with my hands off the tablet, thinking slowly.

The agreement with Horikita is that my role on the first vote, no matter what the issue, is to vote for option 1, but if 38 people, including Horikita, are voting against it now, it would be better to vote against it without an interval and combine them into 39 votes.

This is a task that should be finished quickly, without leaving any unnecessary gaps.

There is no guarantee that a student will not be swayed by 100 points once the discussion is started.

I decided that this was the only task for which I did not need an interval.

After close to 60 seconds, you will see a notification that all votes have been cast.

"I'll pass along the results now that everyone ... has voted."

Despite having a clear change, Chabashira sensei continues to move forward while maintaining her posture.

Results of the first round of voting:

2 in favor,

37 opposed.

Not unanimous, huh?

I took my finger off the button and quietly looked at the results.

"....."

Chabashira sensei, who should be reading out the results, remains motionless, staring at the monitor, just like the students.

The results are surprising: ...the votes were split in a way that did not lead to a "yes" vote.

There is no guarantee that it can be unanimous at once without an interval.

Then again, maybe it's the challenge itself that Chabashira sensei is concerned about.

"Chabashira-sensei. Please proceed."

The teacher cautions from behind to Chabashira sensei, who was stopped for some time, albeit for a few seconds.

"..... Sorry. Uh,, 2 votes in favor, 37 opposed. Since it was not unanimous, we Will go into the interval."

Two votes in favor.

"Who the hell voted for it? Are you fucking kidding me?"

Sudo's strong gaze is one-sidedly directed at Koenji, even though sudo said, "Who voted for it?"

Although Koenji made some remarks about the protection points, he did not stand out much, but the content of the issue was enough for him to get a hit.

Of course, that was a foregone conclusion for Sudo, but I'm sure many of the students agreed.

"Which one did you choose, Koenji?"

"Do I have to answer that?"

"If you can't answer, it means you voted yes, right?"

"Don't be so judgmental, Red Hair-kun. In the first place, according to the Horikita girl, you should be allowed to make an arbitrary choice in the first round of voting. I don't think there's any reason to complain about which one I choose."

After a good argument, Sudo becomes blatantly unhappy.

"If one vote is from Koenji, that means there's another person who voted yes, right?"

Ike focused on the part where one vote remains even if Koenji is excluded.

"That's a problem, too. Who the hell did it?"

Sudo shouted in annoyance, as if he couldn't figure out who the other one was.

"Don't panic. One of the people who voted yes was Ayanokoji-kun."

"What? Ayanokoji agrees? How can you say that, Suzune?"

"I've been keeping it a secret up to this point, but before this special exam started, he and I made a pact about voting. Whatever the subject matter, I've arranged it so that the first vote will not be unanimous."

As we arrived at the last task, Horikita mentioned the contents of the preliminary meeting.

Surely there is no advantage to keeping it hidden when it gets to this stage.

It's obviously more of a waste of time and effort to find out who the one vote is.

"To avoid unanimity on unexpected choices, right?"

Yosuke added a few words to make it easier for the students who were not fully understanding.

"Yeah..."

"Oh, that's what you mean. But you should have told me about it earlier."

"Not so fast. The first round of voting, when you're not allowed to talk, is an important opportunity to get a good idea of what your classmates want. If they knew that we were planning to prevent unanimity from the start, some students might just vote randomly. I wanted to avoid that. It was his role to vote for the first option. I'll vote for the second. That's why one more person voted yes."

Looking around the classroom, Horikita speaks to everyone.

"It's a bit of a radical agenda, but it's up to the individual to decide which way they want to vote. I don't think it's wrong to vote yes in order to gain class points. However, I think we should all come together as a class and vote against it. If you have any objections, I would appreciate it if you could raise them here, as you have in the past."

Normally, this is where the students who voted yes would come forward.

But no matter how long they waited, no one answered Horikita's question.

"How long are you going to keep your mouth shut, Koenji?"

"Huh. I'd like you to not assume that I'm in favor of this, as I said before."

"Shut up. I know you're messing with me anyway."

If it wasn't Koenji, he might have been too amused by Sudo's anger to tell her(Horikita) that it was him.

If the vote is unanimous in favor, the vote to expel one person from the class will begin.

In other words, someone who wants to expel one classmate to gain 100 class points. It would attract attention and criticism in a bad way.The real intention is that no one wants to think that way.

"That's enough."

"Calm down, Sudo-kun. It's only the first round of voting, there's no need to panic."

"Hey, but! I don't like the fact that someone voted for this option."

"It's up to you to interpret it that way. But I have no proof that it was Koenji-kun. And whoever voted in favor of it, I interpreted the fact that they didn't come forward as a sign that they were sorry. Since this is an anonymous vote, let's not pursue it too deeply here; if you vote no on the second vote, it will be unanimous. That should be enough."

The task was clear. Horikita seemed to have decided that there was no need to spend any extra time on it.

As I thought to myself, not pursuing it was one of the best choices we could make right now.

"There's no need for further discussion on this issue. Come on, let's finish it in the next vote."

Seeing Horikita's calmness, Sudo also slapped both cheeks once as if to discipline himself. And with a little unrelated chit-chat, it was time for us to vote for the second time.

"We will now begin a 60-second poll."

The Tablet screen switches to show the approval and disapproval buttons.

Instead of having 60 seconds to vote for everyone, the voting seemed to be completed in about 20 seconds.

"...Voting has ended, we will show the results of the second round of voting."

Results of the second round of voting:

2 in favor,

37 opposed.

Up to this point, the special examinations have not created a strong sense of tension. However, the moment this second result was announced, the atmosphere of the place clearly froze. Once again, the result was two votes in favor.

It means that the votes were not moved even after the explanation given earlier.

This fact was conveyed to me from the monitor.

"Wait a minute. What's this all about?"

Horikita looked at, as she said this, of all people, me.

Why did you vote yes the second time? That's the question she is asking.

Sudo and the other students who understood what she just explained also looked at me.

"I voted against both the first vote and the second vote now."

"What? Oh, hey, what's that? Ayanokoji was supposed to be option one, right?"

"Yeah. But because of the content of the assignment, I decided on my own that it would be better to pitch against it the first time. I didn't tell you that because I didn't want to cause any unnecessary confusion."

If there were two people in favor of the first vote, the motion would increase.

The reason for this is that we can't just say, "This is just a joke from Koenji anyway," and be done with it.

Horikita, who had kept her composure up to this point, was a little distraught.

"SoSo there's at least two people who think it's a good idea."

Horikita puts her hand to her lips and thinks.

You may want to stop and think about it, but the interval is precious.

"If you're going to continue to vote in favor of the motion, I'd like you to tell me exactly why you're in favor of it. As you can see, thirty-seven people voted no, except for two. If you want everyone to vote yes, you'll have to make a reasonable presentation."

The basis for swaying votes is discussion.

As more and more people decide that there are greater advantages in favor of the proposal, the vote will naturally shift.

On the other hand, if you don't have a discussion, it's not easy to sway votes.

However, the answer to that question was silence from everyone.

"Hey, Horikita-san. We're going to be okay, right? No one is going to drop out of our class, right?"

Kushida, who was worried, couldn't stand the silence and asked Horikita the same question.

"My policy is, as I said, no one gets expelled."

Horikita reiterates her decision, but after that the silence begins again.

It's easy to say that, however...

"I don't know who's against it. But I want you to listen carefully."

Yosuke stood up and spoke gently but forcefully.

"You shouldn't choose to cut off your classmates in order to gain class points. I don't think the points gained from such a choice are worth it, even if they were 500 or 1000 points. The most you can get here is 100 Class Points here which is not worth dropping out someone."

The appeal of a man who most hates to sacrifice anyone is a natural one.

Thirty-seven out of the thirty-nine understood that to some extent, as Yosuke had said.

He thinks we can spare 100 class points, but we can't afford to drop out of school.

But whether it is a true intention or not is another matter.

Even before the first vote, the outcome of the vote In favour and oppose this issue was heavily influenced by silent peer pressure.

There must be some students in the class who think that they will never be expelled.

In such a situation, it is not surprising that some of us would not really care about the sacrifices of our classmates.

"It's getting interesting, isn't it, this special exam? It's pretty cool."

Koenji started laughing with amusement and continued.

"I thought you'd vote no on the second voting round, except for me."

Koenji replied without seeming to take offense.

"Except you... so it's you, Koenji!"

"Koenji, is that the truth? If you're going to be a wild man here, it's going to cause a mess, so I'd rather you didn't."

Horikita reaffirms her priority to first clarify whether he was really against it or not.

"Rest assured, I voted yes the first time and the second time."

"Can you tell me why ····?"

"The answer is simple. 100 more class points, right? That means you'll inevitably get more private points every month, and there's no reason to choose the opposite."

"You've got to be kidding me. You think class points are more important than your friends?"

"You have a funny way of saying things. You didn't look like that when you first came here, did you?"

"Shut up!"

"I'm voting yes, so of course I'll take that into account."

"You don't know what you're talking about. ····"

"Friends? I've never considered you my friends."

"You mean you're not going to vote against it next time?"

"Of course, I'll continue to vote yes if things continue as they are. I'm sure the Horikita girl doesn't want to run out of time, does she?"

"What? Don't think things will go as you wish, Koenji. If that's the way you're going to do it, I'll show you no mercy, Suzune. We can all vote yes and have Koenji expelled!"

I'm sure it's an answer that you arrived at out of the blue, but it is also true that this issue has such an aspect for those who agree. It is also possible to unite and expel the bad guys who say that their classmates can drop out.

People subconsciously choose what they want to believe, and then justify the reasons for their choices.

Nobody wants to drop out, but it can't be helped because there are students who agree.

The brain starts to work to justify that the person should be expelled.

It also believes in convenient logic, conspiracies, and misinformation.

"It would be nice if everyone voted yes. But don't think you can get me expelled for it. Isn't that right? Horikita girl."

Of course. If Koenji came forward and said he was one of those who voted in favor of the project, it was only natural that the people around him would make a fuss about expelling him. There was no way that this man did not understand this.

But As he was showing off his spare time, Koenji would never be expelled.

"..... He's right. You can't expel Koenji-kun."

"What do you mean?"

"I made a promise to Koenji-kun before the desert island test started, remember? If he won first place in the desert island test, I would protect him until he graduated."

I'm sure my classmates remember that exchange.

"It was unexpected for him to get first place. But thanks to that first place in the exam, our class is now in line for B class. That's an immense achievement."

"Well, that's true, but... But if you're trying to bring down the class, that's a different story!"

"I'm sorry you feel trapped. I'm just freely choosing the choices that are entrusted to me. You can't assume that voting yes is a bad thing, can you?"

If the content of this task is "You may drop out of class up to one person. And If it says "yes or disagree", it can be said that throwing in favor is just evil. However, in this case, instead of dropping out, you get class points.

While it is difficult to put a concrete figure on the value of a single student, no one has the right to deny that Koenji has the right to calculate that it is more beneficial to agree.

With a good argument and a promise, there was no way Horikita could vote for Koenji's expulsion.

"Yes, yes. You can just go back on your word! If Koenji doesn't consider his classmates to be his friends, no one will be bothered if he gets expelled!"

"I can't. I'm not going to break my promise to him."

"I guess so. No one will trust a class leader who doesn't keep her promises. In that sense, I trust you more than anyone else right now, Horikita girl."

The troublesome parts of Koenji came out.

Now that this has happened, Horikita must first persuade Koenji to do whatever it takes.

But there is still plenty of opportunity for that.

Even if you believe that Horikita will basically never betray you, that doesn't mean that Koenji is 100% protected. The possibility that Horikita will cut Koenji off must be kept in the corner of her mind.

In other words, Koenji will change his attitude if the seeds of such a change appear.

However, it is difficult to move in that direction.

Horikita, who has begun to become aware of herself as a leader, If immediately cuts off Koenji, who gives the results. Then That choice will be a major hindrance in the future.

"If you're not going to cut Koenji out, what are you going to do, Suzune?"

She can't just sit back and say, "Give me some time to think."

Yes, it would have been nice if the only person in favor was Koenji.

The part about there being another proponent who has not come forward should not be overlooked.

"I wonder if anyone who voted in favor of the motion, with the exception of Koenji-kun, can come forward and tell us."

If we don't know that, we can't move forward.

But all that came back was a deep and long silence.

If they come forward here, there is a fear that they will be threatened and even argue that they are unnecessary, just like with Koenji.

In fact, it's probably even more frowned upon than Koenji.

No answer other than silence was returned.

Eventually, time ran out, and the third voting time would come unavoidably.

The unfortunate thing is that there is no limit to the number of times you can vote.

If time permits, the chance to make it unanimous will come every ten minutes.

Results of the third round of voting:

2 in favor,

37 opposed.

As in the past two times, two people, Koenji and someone invisible, voted in favor.

For now, many students still place more emphasis on Koenji, but I wonder if they will eventually notice it.

It won't be long before we'll have to face the reality that there are students who have not come forward and continue to watch vigilantly for their approval. We are about to face the danger of anonymity, a danger that we had hoped to avoid the most. But the first priority is to deal with Koenji.

There will be no solution unless we turn the yes votes here into no votes.

"It's hard to ignore who's voting yes. But it's not absolute. I think there are certain beliefs that only the person in question has because they are so stubbornly in favor of it. If that's the case, I'm going to speak to Koenji-kun and the other person at the same time."

Not wasting any time, Horikita began to collect her thoughts.

"Thirty-seven of us will continue to vote no, and two of you will continue to vote yes. The worst thing that can happen is that we run out of time. As classmates, we lose the same number of class points, so it seems like a painful split for both sides, but we, who are opposing, lose only class points but not our friends. We can get through this special exam without anyone dropping out. But the protesters or who are in favour will lose a lot instead of gaining the only advantage. Am I right?"

She told specific gains and losses, and explained the risk of ending the test in disagreement.

Of course, one who cannot be seen will not answer anything, but what about Koenji?

"If we're running out of time, so be it. So go ahead and vote yes."

Koenji tells Horikita to go along with it as if it were a matter of course.

"..... Sure, if it's unanimous in favor, we'll take a step forward. But then there's the even bigger hurdle of deciding which of your classmates to expel. You don't think it's going to be easy to get a unanimous vote, do you?"

"It's your job to make it work, Horikita girl. Besides, it's not such a bad thing to have someone drop out, is it?"

"That's not true. No one should be expelled."

Before Horikita can argue with him, Yosuke tells Koenji.

"I don't get it. You guys seem to be afraid of having students drop out, but wouldn't it be easier for you mentally to see this as a positive? You can delete any unwanted student you want, and you can even get class points. If you change your mind a little bit, you'll see what a great choice it is to vote yes. The one person besides me who is voting yes knows that."

It's a sharp idea, but it's reason enough to vote yes.

"I don't think that's true, Koenji-kun. It's not a positive thing to lose someone from this class."

As if in response to Yosuke, Kushida also said that classmates should be prioritized.

In response, the opponents, who had not spoken much until now, began to voice their objections at once.

But Koenji didn't soften his attitude, he just smiled.

Koenji, the person I wanted to get the most out of, did not respond to the debate, and it was time to vote for the fourth time.

Results of the fourth round of voting:

2 in favor,

37 opposed.

The third interval began with a signal from Chabashira sensei, after tens of minutes of appeals that had no effect whatsoever.

"What am I supposed to do? I don't know, maybe I could just punch him in the face, knock him out, and vote on my own!"

"I don't think so. ----- Let's try to be objective here for once. If you do that, you may find that your thinking changes as well."

Horikita is forced to try other approaches to avoid a parallel course of events.

"What do you mean, "objective"?"

"It's just a question of which of the three classes, excluding us, will choose."

"That's Definitely Ryuen's class is going to cut off the one student."

Sudo says without hesitation, crossing his arms at the back of his head.

Many of the classmates seemed to agree with him and said, "Indeed."

Looking at the way he has been acting and thinking, there is certainly a good chance of that happening.

"Yes, it may indeed be the class with the highest probability."

"On the contrary, Ichinose's class will never do it. What about Sakayanagi-san's class?"

Ryueen's class is expected to be more in favor of the assignment.

Ichinose class, on the other hand, is expected to oppose.

And Sakayanagi class has the potential to be both.

Coincidentally, the three classes all have different themes, an interesting result shared by the classmates.

In this case, there was almost no discussion about Ichinose's class, which was known to be against the idea. After all, the focus of the discussion would be on Ryuuen's class.

"I don't want to be overtaken by Ryuen. There is momentum right now, so we should step out and be in B class, right?"

"Even so, it won't make much of a difference. Even without the lead we have now, the difference in class points is 100, and one special exam is enough to make up for it."

"I know what you mean. Still, let me just say one thing."

Akito, who had been quietly working on the special exam until now, broke his silence when it came to the last task.

"Unlikely. But it's possible that these 100 points will make you regret one day, isn't it?"

"What the hell, Miyake, does that mean we have to send someone to drop out?"

"Don't get me wrong. I'm explicitly against it."

He looked more annoyed than angry, and countered.

"I think it's best to get to Class A without missing anyone from this class. That's why I think we need to understand the weight of 100 points and not take it lightly."

"What do you mean?"

"It means that we all need to express our opposition to the idea of a future where this special exam is the turning point as we approach graduation."

It was wrong to vote against it without preparation, was Akito's opinion.

"Well, I certainly didn't think anything of it."

You have to be against it without a second thought. The students find themselves in the shadow of such peer pressure.

"Koenji. I'm well aware that you were active in the desert island test. I think it's strange that you should get the vote to expel, even without your promise to Horikita."

In addition to Horikita and Sudo, Akito also turns his thoughts to Koenji.

"But even so, you can't annoy the class as long as you want. Class points aren't the only thing that makes a relationship work. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Huh"

Closing his eyes, Koenji nodded deeply.

Then, whether he was thinking about something or not, he opened his eyes and took a glance at Akito.

"Of course I have no idea."

"....."

"Think about how this school works. Everything is based on points earned. It's not about friendship or affinity. Class points are used to determine the top classes, and private points are used to determine individual assets. It's an inextricably linked evaluation system. I don't see anything wrong with agreeing to make that a priority."

"You're so smart. You haven't contributed to the class in years! Just because you won first place on a deserted island doesn't mean you can act like that all the time!"

"I think you need to look in the mirror, Red Hair-kun. I think it's pretty obvious who's contribution to the class is greater, you or I."

Sudo's reputation is growing now, but when he first entered the school, he was a problem child on par with Koenji. If you take into account the fluctuations in class points, Sudo's share is worse than his.

"Well, it's not the class points that are important to me."

The attitude toward Koenji's approval, had seemed untenable up to this point.

However, Horikita did not miss this comment by Koenji.

"Class points don't matter to you, then these 100 points exist to you for private points, not to move up to A class. So that's why you keep throwing your support behind it?"

"You're right. I want to agree with you for the sake of my private points, because two assignments ago I chose to halve the amount of my private point transfer for six months. I drank in the tears that it was necessary for you to protect me, but that's not going to happen this time."

He wants class points to make up for the private points he will lose.

It turns out that this is the reason why Koenji is in favor of it.

For some students, they may resent the fact that they are trying to expel a student for private points. However, Horikita saw this as an opportunity.

"All right, Kōenji-kun, let's make a deal. It's not a bad deal for you."

"Huh? That sounds interesting. I'd like to hear your presentation."

Koenji welcomed the proposal without disinterest, but rather as if he had been waiting for it.

"If you vote no from now on, and the vote is unanimous, I will pay 10,000 private points on behalf of the school every month from now until you graduate. This would be the equivalent of 100 more class points for you, right?"

"Yes, that would certainly make it pointless for Koenji-kun to vote yes."

"As expected of a Horikita girl, it didn't take you long to come to that conclusion."

"..... You were in favor of bringing this proposal out from the beginning, weren't you?"

"It means my vote is worth it. I could raise the price, but I need the Horikita girl to be a reliable ally. Let's make it work on those terms."

"Don't bother putting it in writing, right? We have Chabashira-sensei here, too."

"Of course, I don't expect you to go back on your promise. The deal is done."

Koenji voted in favor of the proposal, which seemed to be unmovable.

He finally moves and makes you promise to pitch in against it.

The fact that he dared to continue to vote in favor of the proposal and let Horikita bring it to him was a masterstroke.

This was the fifth time we voted.

The fact that Koenji made it clear that he was going to turn against them must have had an effect on the invisible one.

It would not be easy for just one person to continue to speak out against it, even if he or she is anonymous.

In other words, it's a vote that has the potential to go the other way without persuasion.

But...

Results of the fifth round of voting:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

Koenji changed his vote from yes to no, but there was still one vote left in favor.

You may want to take some of the weight off your shoulders, but the real battle seems to be here.

Absolute yes vote by anonymous person.

In order to break through this, we still need to find out who is voting yes.

But it is more difficult than anything else.

The tablet is basically impossible to spy on, but you can see where you touch with your fingertips if you want to. However, the school has anticipated this and the order of the choices is randomized from the beginning. It is impossible to check each other's finger movements because the choices are switched each time the vote is taken. There is no other way.

"Well, it looks like things aren't going to be easy."

"As I was saying, unless there's a unanimous vote to the contrary, the deal you just made is null and void."

"I know, I know. I understand, but if the vote is unanimous in favor of it, or if we run out of time, I'll be forced to give up."

As long as it's anonymous, there's no way to prove that Koenji didn't vote yes, except by unanimous vote of opposition. He doesn't seem to think that he can get private points for any other choice. If he votes as he pleases here, the good deal for him will be lost."

More than anything, making an enemy of Horikita would be inconvenient for Koenji, who wanted to have an easy time.

We had about three hours left.

Despite her struggles, Horikita is making progress toward breaking through with a solid strategy.

However, it is also a fact that we cannot continue to stand by.

We need to get it to unanimity before the remaining time runs out.

Until then, I'm just going to sit back and watch this war unfold, but I can give some support. I coughed a couple of times during the interval.

Amidst the chatter, no one pays any attention to the unconscious coughing.

On the contrary, it's just a coughing fit that you can hear if you are aware of it.

"You know, Horikita-san..."

"..... Yes, Karuizawa-san?"

"This is just me, but maybe you have an idea of who's voting yes?"

"Why do you think that?"

Horikita's face showed her surprise at Kei's unexpected suggestion.

"I just kind of thought so."

The Horikita of the past would have taken it as a mere thoughtful remark. But now that the fact that Kei and I are dating is out in the open, that's when things start to change.

"Yes, yes... You're right, Karuizawa-san. I may have an idea who keeps voting yes."

"Why don't you just say it? Who the hell is it?"

"I can't tell you that. This special exam is an anonymous poll. If you say a name just because you think of it, you can't take it back if you're wrong."

"But...!"

"..... I know. That's why I think I need to prepare myself. We'll have time for a few more votes. When the number of votes in favor still doesn't reach zero, I'll have no choice but to mention your name then."

"I want you to wait, Horikita-san. I don't agree with you. As Horikita-san just said, there's no way to be sure who's voting for whom this time. I don't think it's acceptable to name names just because you have an idea. Of course, I'm not talking nonsense just because I don't want anyone to drop out, you understand that, right?"

"I agree with Hirata-kun. I don't think it's right to say something without absolute certainty."

Kushida also says uneasily that she agrees with Yosuke.

Starting with the two's opinions, the students were filled with anxiety.

If Horikita misunderstood me in some way and mentioned my name, I would be criticized.

If you are asked why you are voting yes when you are voting no, you will be under siege with no way out.

If 38 people vote in favor of the proposal because they are in a hurry to run out of time, it will be inevitable that the named person will be discussed as a target for expulsion.

"I know. I know, that's why I haven't said the name so far. But I can't let my time run out. Isn't that right?"

"I understand my feelings. I'm different than before. I feel like I'm ready if I'm forced to make the choices I really need, but that must be 100%."

"I know how you feel. I'm not the same person I used to be, and if I have to make a really necessary choice, I'm willing to make it. But it has to be 100%."

"..... Yeah."

He tried to make some more changes to the situation, which was starting to get heavy.

"Besides Horikita, can you think of anyone else who keeps voting yes?"

"I don't see anyone. I don't know why anyone other than Koenji would be so stubbornly in favor of this."

Such a question of Sudo's would not be something only one person would have.

The idea is to tolerate such a situation, which will result in expulsions.

"If you know who it is, even if you can't name them, it might change your mind a little. I'd like you to raise your hand if you have any doubts."

She asked again to make sure.

However, none of them had any idea who it might be.

"Yosuke. I don't want to doubt anyone, but if Yosuke has a wide friendship with both men and women, isn't there anyone who comes to mind?"

"No. I'm not lying, I really can't think of any."

"Well, Then how about Kushida?"

Kushida didn't show any unusual emotion when I suddenly asked her to talk.

Rather, Horikita looks back a little and is upset about what I intend to say.

"Who do you think voted yes?"

"Um Um Sorry Ayanokoji-kun, I'm with Hirata-kun, there's no girl that comes to mind."

"Kushida is the one who knows the class best. I thought she might know a bit about students who are dissatisfied with the class. Everyone knows that she cares about the class more than anyone else, and that she's always there to offer friendly advice. I hope you'll remember that often."

Certainly, the class looked at Kushida expectantly.

"Ummm... I don't know if I can think of anything. But I'll be sure to let you know if I get caught up in anything in the future."

"Ah. Please, I have a feeling that the presence of people like Yosuke and Kushida is essential for this last special exam."

Without the combined efforts of all of us, it will be difficult to break through this challenge by opposition.

But such cooperation was not enough, and the result of the sixth round of voting was also posted on

Results of the sixth round of voting:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

Unchanging results.

Repeated discussions.

Results of the seventh round of voting:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

Results of the eight round of voting:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

The results continue to be the same, and the conversation becomes more and more silent. The eighth interval began next. A little over an hour had passed since the start of this challenge.

Chabashira sensei almost collapsed with a loud thud.

She pressed her arms against the podium as if she was going to fall down, and managed to prevent herself from collapsing.

"Huh..., huh..."

As the discussion continued, the breathing of chabashira sensei, who had been standing at the podium the whole time, became ragged.

"Sensei !?"

"It's okay. It's okay."

She said this and adjusted her posture as if she was trying to motivate herself.

Chabashira sensei stares at the students with vacant eyes, wondering what they are thinking.

Eventually, she exhaled heavily with some kind of determination.

"—The teacher is not allowed to guide students to a particular option. Naturally, I, for one, would not do such a thing. But may I tell you an old story? Of course, it will take up a lot of your valuable time. That is, if you don't mind."

"Ms. Chabashira. The teacher's statement itself is not forbidden, but if you violate the rules, you won't get off scot-free either. If we deem it as an inducement to protect the class."

"Yes. If I see any intent to induce choice, I am prepared to be punished."

By answering that she understood, the teacher at the back could only be silenced.

As a matter of course, an unexpected proposal came from Chabashira sensei, who had never intervened in the special exam.

It could be seen as a ray of light in this stalled environment.

"We are now suffering from this situation. As long as it doesn't affect our choices, please tell us what you have to say, sensei."

If we can break the ice in some way, that would be welcome, that's what Horikita said.

Of course, if we're going to be honest, we want to have momentum for the 'oppose option'.

However, under the watchful eyes of the teacher at the back, direct expressions must be avoided.

"I'm from the Advanced Nurturing High School. And I took this special exam when I was a student."

Horikita and the rest of her classmates are surprised to hear her story for the first time.

"Sensei also took this unanimous special exam ...?"

"Yes, there were five tasks, some of which were slightly different, but the final task you are facing right now is the same, word for word. You can either get class points for expelling people or you can protect your friends and not get class points."

The students turned to look at Chabashira's statement that she had experienced the exact same special exam.

"One thing is for sure. It's all about doing everything without regrets. In Favour, oppose, or time out. No matter which choice you make you shouldn't regret the result. Find a way. There is still time left. "

For the first time, everyone listens to Chabashira sensei as she speaks to her students with real emotion.

It does not guide you to choose any option, nor does it offer solutions.

It's a solid piece of advice that is right on the edge of what a teacher can do.

The teacher, who was listening behind me, did not tell us that it was against the rules, and we listened until the end.

I don't know if this will make a difference in the outcome.

However, she certainly provided the students with the words to face this special exam again.

Even with the supportive fire from Chabashira sensei, it was not a good idea to waste the remaining interval time.

"The time is approaching when we must make up our minds.... But before you do, let me talk to you one more time. I'm not your enemy... I'm on your side."

The names of the proponents must have crossed Horikita's mind many times.

Face, voice, eyes, breathing.

Horikita continues to try her best to persuade the person not to realize who the specific person is.

I'm sure she has asked herself this question repeatedly.

I think we should just give them a name.

Still, I don't say it because Horikita really wants to be onto that side.

A plea that resembled a cry of grief.

With that, the ninth vote was taken.

The result —

Results of the 9th round of voting:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

After all, the vote in favor of the proposal did not move.

Only one. There is one student who is forever hanging on to 100 Class points.

No — Some are clinging to the right to be forced to drop out.

This is the real truth that only I, or perhaps only the two of us, including Horikita, are aware of.

It is safe to assume that one person's thorough vote in favor of the assignment continues to linger.

But there is no way to objectively confirm that the person is against it in this situation.

Horikita said that if time ran out, she would be forced to speak the name.

But in reality, no matter how many times the vote is repeated, Horikita never says her name. "Are you against it?" She knows that there is no real point in asking such a question. In fact, once she says her name, she will lose everything for the rest of her life.

Even though there was still some time left, the set time limit of two hours was approaching.

It's the deadline to make a big decision.

Chapter - 4

Ichinose Honami's Decision

Before this special exam started, there was one class that was considered a 'sure thing' to be cleared by every teacher. On the other hand, it was also foreseen that if the class cleared the exam without a struggle, there would be a concern that they would fall back from the future A class competition. That class was Class B, where Ichinose was enrolled.

Task (5) -

Instead of one classmate being expelled, you get 100 class points.

(If the vote is unanimous in favor, identify and vote on the student who will be expelled.)

Choices :

Agree

Disagree

Ichinose and the others, who had reached the last task in the early hours, had finished the first vote and were waiting for the results. There was no sign of any anxiety or agitation anywhere. Except for one person.

Kanzaki prayed as he stared at everyone, excluding himself, who had already voted. He strongly hope that the outcome of the vote will be a bit of a split vote.

"..... I'll announce the results then."

Chie Hoshinomiya operated her tablet with a somewhat disappointed expression on her face.

While everyone was watching, the results were displayed.

Results of the first round of voting:

1 in favor,

39 opposed.

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

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

The reason was that they had no doubt that a unanimous vote in 'Oppose' would be passed as a matter of course. This is symbolized by the fact that they felt nothing unusual about the fact that the vote was in favor.

"Who said yes? You pressed the wrong button!"

Without a sense of danger, Kanzaki turned around to see Shibata sitting in front of him.

Yes, they do not take into account any possibility that this one vote is a yes vote with a clear intention.

Everyone in the class, not just Shibata, has the same perception.

Knowing this, Kanzaki felt an uncontrollable anger welling up inside him.

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

However, they can't continue to fight just to protect our friends in any situation.

Because of his position as a advisor, Kanzaki felt this concern more strongly than anyone else.

"I don't think we'll be discussing this for now, so we'll just go along with it until the next vote —"

Lack of sense. A mindset that assumes that there is no such thing as a student who prioritizes class points over classmates.

Kanzaki could not continue to endure in silence as he saw this.

"Wait a minute, It's true that we could always pass a unanimous vote. But can we really be sure that continuing to choose to protect our classmates is the right thing to do?"

Interrupting Shibata's words, Kanzaki stood up after 'calmly' but forcefully tapping on the desk.



"It seems to me that we're all suffering from normalcy bias if we don't think it's unusual that 39 people voted against it without any hesitation or doubt."

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

"In order for our class to win in the future, we'll have to make new decisions. We're already on the edge of a cliff, and I think you're assuming we're not going to fall off that cliff anytime soon. If we don't chase class points more greedily, going up to class A will be a dream forever. "

'I want you to understand that'. Kanzaki is making an argument, which is not his speciality, but the eyes of his classmates watching him are unusually cold.

"What the hell, Kanzaki? Does that mean you cast the vote in favor of this?"

Looking unconvinced by the affirmative vote, which was not a pushover error, Shibata turned around and asked.

No, it wasn't just Shibata. Hamaguchi, Ando, Kobashi, Amikura, Shiranami, the whole class is looking at him like that.

"Yes. Yes, it is important to protect our classmates. However, our class has been slowly losing points since we entered the school. If the lower classes prioritize class points over classmates, this special exam will drop us back to class D."

The only person who listened and agreed to Kanzaki's complaint was his homeroom teacher, Chie Hoshinomiya.

However, as a teacher, She can't say anything in agreement with that.

"That's true, but there's no one in this class who deserves to be expelled."

There is no room for debate, Shiranami said, instantly showing her opposition to Kanzaki.

"I know — I know that."

"You say we're dropping to D class, but I don't think they're going to expel anyone for just 100 class points. Well, I don't know if that one person would be Ryuuen, but this exam requires unanimous consent of the entire class by anonymity. I don't think the rest of the class is going to choose to expel anyone."

If you foresee that all classes will be unanimous in their opposition, the gap will not widen.

"It's true that it's not easy for any class to make the choice to cut off their friends. But it's the process that I'm focusing on. Isn't it natural for some students, if not half, to think that they should put their class before their friends?"

"You want to have a discussion? We've already decided it's unanimous to vote no?"

"..... It's not a done deal. The discussion is open to unanimous vote in favor."

"No, no, no, that's crazy. It's because we have friends, and because no one is lacking, we work hard and aim for the top. It's never okay if any one person is missing."

Class points and classmates.

Kanzaki has no doubt about which of the two is more important.

However, things have changed a lot since he entered the school.

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

In the first semester of his freshman year, he took a big lead over the bottom two classes. He never complained about preaching the preciousness of fellow students as long as he maintained that status.

"Is there anyone who has anything to say other than 'no'?"

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

However, none of them showed any sign of agreeing with him.

Even if they partly agreed inwardly, there was no student who could put it into words.

Everyone believes, or rather hopes, that the second vote will be unanimous due to opposition.

"I'm sorry, but I'm not going to let you come to a unanimous decision in this choice."

Feeling the pressure, Kanzaki muttered to himself as if fighting against it.

"Does that mean you'll vote yes on the next voting round?"

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

"..... yes."

"But Kanzaki, we're not going to change our minds, are we? We definitely don't want to have a class where people sacrifice their friends to gain class points."

"That's right, Kanzaki. This assignment is a challenge or a trap from the school, no matter how you look at it. Sacrificing classmates for the sake of short-term class points. If you start thinking like that, you'll suffer the same kind of pain in future battles, right?"

"But if I can get class points, even if I have to abandon my friends, I can get closer to Class A. If such a chance comes again and again, so much the better. On the other hand, if only our class chooses to protect our friends, we will be overtaken by other classes."

"I don't think it's easy to sacrifice so many people. I don't think it's easy to sacrifice so many people, and I don't know if a class like that can keep winning. The class that protects its friends and believes in its friends will win in the end. Right?"

Almost in unanimity, all his classmates nodded.

"Look at the reality, Shibata. The situation is very different from last year. We're in a tight spot now. As a result of choosing not to expel anyone, we also lost a lot of private points. On the other hand, the three classes that lacked classmates are steadily improving their performance."

"It's not going to last forever."

"What makes you so sure it won't last forever?"

"If that's the case, I'll ask you the opposite, what's your logic for it going on forever?"

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

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

In the past, Kanzaki had always been held back by the expectations of those around him, but he had tried his best to hold on.

He fought hard to make himself question this crazy idea.

"Kanzaki-kun. I understand that you want to have a variety of options to win. But there are some options that you should never choose. I believe the choice for this assignment is one of them."

It's not because there are not enough class points to get a student to drop out. It's that weighing class points and friends is wrong."

Ichinose's statement solidified the resolve of the classmates.

No. Originally, he was a firm believer in putting his friends first, but now he's changed.

Kanzaki is deeply disappointed.

This class is often envied by others.

They are kind, cheerful, and they are the ideal group of people who can balance their studies and sports.

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

Even if you are told that if you drop someone out of school, you are guaranteed an A class, this class will put their friends first. An obsession that makes you say, "I'd rather have a B class than cut my friends."

Kanzaki was reminded once again that it was the only and greatest flaw.

"Oh yeah. I guess so. Maybe I'm wrong."

In order to overcome these shortcomings, they are willing to take risks and try rough treatment.

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

"What if I still vote yes to the end? One vote has a lot of power in this special exam. I can ignore the will of the 39 of you and keep voting yes."

"There's no way you can do this. If we run out of time and fail, we'll be minus 300 class points, which means we won't be able to beat the other classes."

No one would ever choose to run out of time. This is common sense.

"It's the same thing. If I don't cut myself loose here and grab 100 points, I don't think I'll ever graduate with an A class. In other words, whether you lose 100 or 300 points, it doesn't matter how big or small it is."

"That's enough. Now it's time to vote, so please suspend your discussion."

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

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

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

The air is filled with the feeling that 39 people have finished voting in less than five seconds.

No, they are actually finishing the voting.

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

"Yes. Now that everyone has voted, we'll announce the results."

Results of the second round of voting:

1 in favor,

39 opposed.

Despite desperate attempts to persuade them, the results were the same as the first round of voting.

Of course, the same goes for the fact that the one vote cast in favor of this was Kanzaki's.

"You've got to be kidding me."

"Kanzaki-kun, are you seriously going to vote yes?"

His classmates, including Ichinose, were more dumbfounded than angry and blurted out their words.

However, this carefree atmosphere begins to change little by little due to Kanzaki's firm determination.

"Yeah. I'm really ready for the second one now. I want this issue to be unanimous in favor."

At that comment, the class became quiet even though the interval had just begun.

"If I keep voting yes, after a few hours, you'll have to unpack your stopped thoughts and think. We'll have no choice but to debate whether voting no is really the right thing to do."

Kanzaki tells Everyone that he is prepared to use the remaining three and a half hours of test time to the fullest.

"There are only a few ways out of this situation. We have to change our views and make it unanimous."

"What are you talking about, Kanzaki-kun? That's not true —"

"That would be unrealistic. It's not realistic because, as you say, there's no thought in this class of sacrificing any of my classmates except me."

Interrupting Ichinose's words, Kanzaki still did not stop resisting and continued to speak.

"Then there's really only one way to do this. You choose to agree, and then you expel me."

He wants to change this class even at the cost of self-sacrifice. He will express that will in the form of expulsion.

"If you don't have the courage to take a step forward in this special exam, you won't make it to A class. If that's the case, I'll drop out and seek another path."

It seemed like a strange idea, but it was also the only way Kanzaki could do it.

There's no way this class, which is so close to being weak, could take action to select a dropout.

The vote was then repeated three times, with an interval between the 'oppose' and 'in favour' of the vote.

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

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

"Then, interval again"

Perhaps bored with the situation, Chie Hoshinomiya did not hide her annoyance, but expressed it in her attitude.

The watchers at the back of the classroom have no problem with such a teacher's attitude.

The role they are given is only to maintain fairness.

Whether the students are fooling around or the teacher is not motivated, it is a free action allowed within the rules. But then again, it was another half hour or more.

In other words, even if you repeat three additional rounds of voting, the results that come out are still the same.

Only the fixed voting results, which remain unchanged forever, are reflected and returned to the class.

"It's been over an hour. Just this last assignment."

"But it can't be helped. We have to wait until Kanzaki-kun votes with us."

The hope of the 39 people who are voting in favor is that Kanzaki will lose his patience and vote with them.

At first, they tried to be kind to him, and then they scolded him in a stern tone, but Kanzaki kept repeating his vote in silence.

"Hey guys, I'm getting bored of the silence, can I talk to you for a second? If you're not interested, just ignore me."

Hoshinomiya, who has been keeping an eye on the last task so far, opens her mouth.

"In fact, when I was a student, I had the same experience as everyone else. Why? Because I once took this unanimous special exam. And the content of the fifth task was exactly the same as now."

"It's unusual for a teacher to talk about her school days. Isn't that the first time?"

The relationship between Ichinose's class and Hoshinomiya was good, and it was known early on that she was from this school. In the process, not a few students had tried to ask her about her school days, but it was safe to say that there had never been a serious opportunity to talk about it.

"I remember being stranded for a long time on this assignment as well, although the class situation was completely different."

She smiles somewhat coldly, as if remembering those days.

"It's the ultimate choice between taking class points and taking your friends. So we struggled and struggled. Boys would even grab each other by the collar."

"Well, isn't that a bit too much trouble?"

Guess they can't imagine such a situation in their own class, grabbing each other by the collar.

Shiranami chuckled as she looked at the girls.

"Well, it's a different time. In my case, I was in the last semester of my third year, and it was the time to go all out for one point. If you talk even a little bit about expelling a certain person, your friends will defend that person as a matter of course. But sometimes you have to cut someone off to win, don't you? Would you have made the same decision if you were only a hundred points away from getting into A class?"

Hoshinomiya knew exactly what Kanzaki wanted to ask, and she put it directly into words.

"You can't expel someone. Try to make up for it in the next special exam."

"What if there's no next time? What if this special exam is the last exam before I graduate? Now everyone has reached their dream class A. But the gap with Class B is only a few dozen points. If we prioritize protecting our friends here, we'll end up in B class. What do we do now? Of course, there's no choice for the B class who's chasing after you. They'll cut someone and still get 100 points, right?"

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

If you protect your friends, you are almost certain to fall into the B class.

"Do you want it to be unanimous in opposition as well? You want to bet on a pipe dream where Class B gives up on Class A and chooses the no-dropout option?"

His classmates, who had been constantly arguing against him, finally started to talk less.

"That's a unpleasant question. It's not like I'm in that situation right now, actually. But one thing is for sure, if you have the desire to move up to Class A, there will come a time when you will have to play rock-paper-scissors or whatever and choose in favor of it. Running out of time is not an option."

"Sensei... What choice did you make then?"

"Me? Of course I made the choice to cut off the unnecessary people. Because in the end, it's you who's important, not your friends or a close friend. Isn't it the same with everyone who is around you now? In essence, I'm okay with that as long as it helps me."

We all want to graduate from A class. That's what everyone is thinking.

But many of us also understand in our hearts that this is idealism.

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

"I can't tell you any more than that because I'm being watched very closely back there. I will respect you both no matter which choice you make. But don't make any ambiguous decisions. If you're only friends on the surface, don't worry about it, just prioritize your class points. You've only known each other for a year and a half, right? You'll heal from the loss of your friend soon enough. In fact, the three students who dropped out of the other class are already kind of in the past, right? But if you don't make it to A class, it's going to haunt you for the rest of your life. If you really value your friends more than anything else, you have to put them first."

It's not that she's advocating either, but Hoshinomiya finished the conversation while avoiding the glare of the watcher. As a teacher, she just told them that there are advantages and disadvantages to both. The next vote will come at the same time as they finish listening to this story. Everyone felt a strange sense of discomfort at the button, both for, in favour and oppose. The result of the vote, which took a long time, was 1 vote in favour and 39 opposed.

As in the past, one vote was not shifted.

Hoshinomiya was not particularly surprised, but rather seemed to have been shown the form of this class.

"Hey, Kanzaki-kun. Can we stop this now?"

In the interval immediately after the voting, Himeno called out to me in a dumbfounded manner.

"I understand what Kanzaki-kun is trying to say, and I understand what Hoshinomiya-sensei is trying to say as well. But I don't think that will lead us to vote in favor of it here and now. This is probably not going to change even if the time runs out."

To protect their friends, they will choose to run out of time. That's the perception that Himeno and the rest of the class must have. In response, Ichinose expressed her own thoughts.

"I understand Kanzaki-kun's story and Hoshinomiya-sensei's story, yes. I can understand them. But what you two were talking about is what to do when you are put in such a situation. I understand why people are upset, and I don't think that's a bad thing. But if I were in such a situation, I don't see the point in letting my friends get expelled and grabbing A class. So what should I do for that? In order to avoid such a situation, I think it's important to make sure that I grab A class position so that I don't have to make such an absurd choice."

"That's idealistic. An overwhelming A class where no one has to drop out. I wonder how many class points we'd have to rake in to make that happen."

"We may not be good enough right now. But I want to be that class."

Her classmates listened intently and nodded repeatedly as she told them what could only be a dream.

Kanzaki's resistance would no longer be meaningful.

If he continues to vote in favor here, they will only run out of time, as Himeno said.

"Let's work together, Kanzaki-kun."

"—huh..."

It won't change.

"In my own way, I tried to change this class, even if I had to. But apparently I'm not qualified or capable enough to do that."

This class won't change; Will it end in B class or D class?

[I don't know about them, but I'm pretty sure I'll never reach Class A. It was enough time for me to be convinced of that.]

The look on his face as he accepted to pitch against everyone did not show any vitality, but few students would have noticed that. After that, it was time to vote, as if there had never been any trouble in the first place.

The answer, arrived at by 40 people, is

Results of the 10th voting round:

0 In Favour,

40 opposed.

He chose to give up his class points and protect his classmates.

"With that, we have reached unanimous agreement on the final task, and the special exam is over."

"This is fine, Kanzaki. We'll get 50 points as the reward."

You have about three hours of free time. You will not be allowed to stay on campus, but you will have free time.

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

"Really? Sakayanagi's class is very impressive."

"That means Ryuuuen-kun and Horikita-san's class is still taking exams, right?"

"Okay, everyone. Don't waste your time talking until you get out of school. The other classes are in the middle of a special exam, so please don't disturb them. The teachers will guide you now, so please leave your seats quietly."

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

Chapter - 5

Ryueen's Decision

The unanimous special exam began at 1:00 PM for Class D.

This classroom, another class of 40 students, was also beginning to be filled with a heavy atmosphere.

This was, of course, only because of the intense nature of the final task that they had arrived at.

Task (5) -

Instead of one classmate being expelled, you get 100 class points.

(If the vote is unanimous in favor, identify and vote on the student who will be expelled.)

Choices :

Agree

Disagree

Results of the first round of voting:

14 in favor,

26 opposed.

At this point when the voting results were disclosed. Horikita's class, as well as Ichinose's class, concentrated a large number of votes in 'opposed'. However, compared to the two classes, the number of classmates who were in favor of expelling the students was not very small.

This means that more than a third of the students feel on first impression that class points should be prioritized even if someone have to drop out.

"What are you going to do, Ryueen-san?"

When Ishizaki received the results, the first person he asked for instructions was the class leader, Ryueen Kakeru.

The process that led up to this assignment also all started with this procedure.

Since the probability of getting unanimous agreement on an assignment on the first time is low, listening to the leader's policy in the first interval and aiming for unanimity in the second and subsequent votes is what they are doing.

The sequence of events is similar to that of other classes, but the accuracy is extremely high. The 'choosing which class to face' in assignment 1, the 'distribution of protection points' in assignment 3, and the ', effects on written special exam choice' in assignment 4, all of them are unanimous in the choices Ryueen has indicated in just one interval.

The only thing he let them do as he pleased was to decide on the school trip for assignment 2. He let them all debate for about half an hour as they wished, and in the end, they unanimously decided on the destination with the most votes.

It is obvious to everyone that this assignment 5 is different, but the method is essentially the same.

Any assignment that might require instructions is decided by a single word from Ryueen.

The only thing the students are very conscious of is which way Ryueen voted. If Ryueen is in favor of it, it means that someone will be confirmed to leave the school.

A decision that cannot be resisted. That is the characteristic of a class where the students are held together by a dictatorship.

Looking at the results and smiling, Ryueen stood up from his chair.

"It's a good thing that the school didn't intend for this to be just a game. Otherwise it wouldn't be so interesting."

Muttering to himself so that all his classmates would hear, he made his way to the podium. Sakagami, who was watching over the class he was in charge of, sensed Ryueen approaching and kept his distance.

He knew very well that this was where Ryuusen's act would begin.

As if it were a reserved seat, Ryueen sat. He then took a stance that allowed him to look over all of his classmates and said his first words.

"All those in favor, raise your hands."

There is no such thing as consideration, and Ryueen's order is met with intense tension, whether you agree or not.

The reason is that in previous issues, he did not even ask which option they voted for.

After a few seconds of hesitation, the raising of hands begins. Among them were Nishino and Kaneda, who raised their hands while staring out the window, looking unmotivated.

"—5. Well, I guess that's about right. That's pretty good for a start."

The fact that there are nine students who do not talk about the fact that they did not follow orders and voted yes.

It was students like Ishizaki, Komiya and the others who were the first to be surprised by what they saw.

"Hey, what's the harm in hiding things? It's not like someone going to get mad at you for voting yes once."

Komiya appealed to his silent classmates, saying that now would be a good time to get out of trouble.

"You weren't being told what to do. It was up to the individual to vote yes or no, wasn't it?"

Komiya explained that no couldn't blame them, and he would make sure that Ryueen was okay with it. With that said He looked at Ryueen.

But when Ryuen didn't reply right away, Komiya tensed up for a moment.

If there was a misinterpretation, it could result in a disapproval.

"Get your hands up before I bother you!"

To change the atmosphere of the place, Ishizaki hurriedly spoke.

Then one student raised his hand apologetically after a delay. This brought the total to six, but the remaining eight students still did not raise their hands.

"It's okay, Ishizaki. If they don't want to raise their hand, they don't have to. For now."

"Well... is that okay?"

"As Komiya said, it's up to the individual to agree or disagree. So first of all, each one of you should think about what you want to do. We have just over eight minutes left, and that's plenty of time to do that."

Ryueen checked the time without panicking, and he did not even try to change his posture without losing his smile.

He just vaguely told them to think about it and did nothing else.

And for more than two minutes, everyone remained silent, doing nothing.

"Look, don't waste this time. You need to figure out which way you're going to vote."

From here, silence again.

Ten seconds, thirty seconds, a minute passed by, but he didn't even try to utter anything.

All the assignments so far have forced the choices to be made in the first interval.

That's why all the students were wondering why Ryueen didn't give any orders.

However, few students are able to express their opinions in such a way, and the more time passes, the heavier the atmosphere becomes and the more they stopped talking.

"Please give us some instructions."

At first, Ishizaki and the others seemed to be able to say so, but then they started to turn their heads. The upper and lower lips stick together and don't open as if they were glued together. As time goes by, they almost lose the desire to speak. The more time that passes, the more they almost lose the desire to even speak up anymore.

Eventually, those who want to speak up will fade away and shift to the hope that someone else will do it for them. When even that passes, they begin to hope that it will be time to vote soon, even though the time remaining is longer.

The first interval, which seemed long and drawn out, came to an end with the majority of the time spent in silence. This was not what Sakagami had expected, and he forgot to proceed after few seconds past the scheduled time.

"Sakagami. Isn't it time?"

He was surprised at Ryueen's words as he tried to get off the podium and return to his seat.

"..... Yes. We will now take a second vote. You have 60 seconds to cast your vote."

After everyone had voted for the second time, the results were immediately shown on the monitor.

Results of the second round of voting:

10 in favor,

30 opposed.

Of the 14 yes votes, 4 went to no votes. For the majority of those who did not want to be expelled, this result was generally not a bad thing. One or two more stern words from Ryueen and the number of yes votes would decrease further. The results of the second round of voting were such that a unanimous vote in opposition was likely in the not-too-distant future.

However, Ryuuen was not satisfied with the results.

"Is this the answer you thought?"

"Is it because the number of votes in favor is small?"

Kaneda asks as he adjusts the position of his glasses. But Ryueen immediately denied it.

"Does that mean that Ryueen-kun is voting yes?"

Ryueen denied the point and laughed once as if he was amazed.

"What the hell is bugging you, Ryueen-san? I don't know."

"Did you guys really reflect your intentions in your votes the first and second time? Only this last issue is clearly different and unusual. That's why I want to know your "true intentions". Don't worry about which side I voted for, just make your choice based on your emotions."

With that, Ryuuen got up from his seat and began to walk slowly through the classroom.

"For the next ten minutes, I want a thorough discussion. Do you want to vote 'in favour' or 'opposed' ?"

When instructed to do so, the students are forced to debate frantically. In the hustle and bustle, they start talking about whatever they want.

He listened to them, occasionally whispering into the ears of his classmates.

He didn't seem to be particularly choosy about his students, from Nishino and Shiina to Yoshimoto and Nomura.

And the next time he approached Suzuki, he whispered to him in a similar manner.

"You're free to agree or disagree. Vote for the one you think."

This time, he also said to Tokito, who was sitting two seats behind Suzuki.

He wondered if it was something he should have bothered, but everyone continued the discussion as long as time allowed. Then came the third voting time.

Results of the third round of voting:

9 in favor,

31 opposed.

The monitor showed a situation almost the same as the second result.

Sitting down at his desk at the podium, Ryuuon decides to express his thoughts at the third interval.

"All in favor, raise your hands."

After receiving the results, Ryueen again said to raise hand. Only two people, Nishino and Kaneda, raised their hands.

The remaining seven kept their existence a secret and refused to come forward.

Ishizaki is annoyed by the invisible vote of approval, but Ryueen pays no attention to them but instead started talking to the two.

"Looks like you guys voted yes all three times. Kaneda, what's the reason?"

"To win, I guess. It's never good to have a student drop out, but I think it's important to get 100 class points."

"Didn't it occur to you that raising your hand would make you a target for expulsion?"

"Foolish question, Ryueen-san. You can cut off useless and unnecessary people, but you won't cut off necessary personnel. At least in this class, my value is not less than 100 class points."

He weighed his value and decided that he was in no danger of being cut down.

"Well, you certainly have a lot of uses other than your looks."

"Thank you."

Kaneda nodded his head in satisfaction, not paying attention to the comments about his appearance.

"Nishino, is your reason just like Kaneda?"

"Huh? No way. I was just agreeing to a quick way to get more class points. The only reason I raised my hand is because I don't want to have to sneak around. There's nothing wrong with voting yes."

Ishizaki is more on edge than nishino herself, as she talks in a way that could get her in trouble with Ryueen.

"It's time I told you what you've been wondering, and that's which way I voted."

"Oh, tell us about it!"

They can't start until they hear where Ryueen is voting, that is, the policy of this class.

Ishizaki hoped aloud as he leaned forward.

"I voted "yes" on all three of these challenges."

This means that the current vote, three of the nine votes in favor, was casted by Ryueen, Nishino, and Kaneda.

"So you're saying you're going to expel someone from the class?"

To Ishizaki's question, Ryueen just smiled.

"Don't be so quick to judge, I'm just telling you how I voted. I've decided that it's up to you to figure out what you want to do about this issue."

"Oh, we're going to decide....? Are we?"

"Indeed, and I voted yes all three times without hesitation."

If all three of his votes were in favor, it was safe to assume that the policy was to expel classmates from the school. However, Ishizaki was at a loss for words as he didn't understand the meaning of this.

"The reason I'm in favor of this is simple: if we cut down one person, we get 100 points. In other words, this is a great option to get rid of unwanted 'things' and get class points. It's a great option that can save you, but not hurt you. However, even after three rounds, the vote was still more in favor than against. In other words, more than half of the class voted "no" to this assignment. Then I'll respect their wishes and consolidate my vote in the negative."

The policy is to give up class points and keep classmates.

"It's settled! You guys don't vote yes, you vote no! Ryuusen-san's orders!"

Ishizaki looked relieved at the easy-to-understand policy, and appealed to his classmates.

"Wait a minute. That's not like you."

In the special test so far, Ibuki, who had been bored for a long time, made a dissatisfied voice.

"What do you mean?"

"You're in favour of it, aren't you? Then why don't you just push through with your approval like you always do? Are you going to play the good guy and say you're protecting your friends now?"

It implies that the dragon garden would be the one to pick up the class points in front of you.

She implies that it will be more like Ryueen to pick up the class point in front of him.

"So you're in favour of it, too?"

"I voted against it. But my intentions are none of your business."

"If it weren't for the anonymity, I might have felt free to make it unanimous. But, unfortunately, this is an anonymous test. As long as I can't determine who voted which way, it's quicker to unify with a majority 'opposed'."

"You mean you're not sure you can get the vote to be unanimous?"

"Kuku, it's your choice what you think."

"Hey, don't say unnecessary things, Ibuki. I'm sure you're not the only one. Ryueen said to vote the opposite way so do it. Even if it will reduce class points, it's better because it will clear it up."

"It's nothing. I was just curious because it's a little out of character. Do what you want."

Now that the policy is set, this interval will also have a high percentage of silence.

And the fourth time they voted.

The result—

Results of the fourth round of voting:

7 in favor,

33 opposed.

Even if the vote was not unanimous, the vote was expected to be almost unanimous against the proposal, but surprisingly, many votes in favor of the proposal remained. Only two votes were lost.

"Kaneda, Nishino. Which one did you guys go for?"

"Of course, do the opposite as Ryueen-kun instructed."

"I'm Infavour of it, but I voted 'opposed' because I don't want to upset the peace."

Two people who had raised their hands in favor of the proposal were now opposed.

And considering the fact that Ryuen voted against it in the current vote, it would not be possible to pass without at least three less votes in favor. Moreover, this time the vote was not a free one, but a forced one, with instructions from Ryuen to vote no. In spite of this, there were still seven votes in favor. We can't rule out the possibility that there are new supporters, or that Kaneda and Nishino are lying. Ryueen himself voted 100% against, but those around him had no way of confirming that this was even true, and a new sense of anxiety began to spread little by little. In response to this result, Ryueen calmly thought about it. Instead of just looking at the number of votes, he tries to detect the flow of votes and the anonymity.

"Who's still voting yes?"

Ryueen's order is "to cast an 'opposed' vote".

Ishizaki was unsettled by the fact that there were seven students who did not follow the clear instructions given to them. If Ryueen changed his mind in favor of the program, there would be expulsions.

"Kuku, don't be so rude, Ishizaki. It's getting more interesting, you know. This is completely anonymous, and no one can know who you voted for. That means there are more than a few people who are really voting 'yes'."

"But it's a problem if they don't follow Ryueen-san's instructions!"

"Not really. There's nothing wrong with trying to get class points by cutting off your classmates. It's just that there are seven students who are greedy enough to try to get to Class A, you know?"

As if welcoming the situation, Ryuon clapped his hands in delight.

"But when you allow people to be expelled, there is always the question of 'who' to expel. I'm sure the seven who voted in favor of this have a clear idea of who they need to expel."

"..... Oh, my God, I-is it me!"

Ishizaki begins to panic, wondering if he is the one who will be chosen.

"I can't rule out the possibility that there are people who think you're unnecessary, but who has the courage to come forward? Not anyone else, but someone like that who wants 'me' out of school."

Come forward, Ryueen provoked, as if to say.

However, the air was once again filled with silence, and of course, there were no students to speak up.

"Well, it's not like you're going to come out easily. Kuku, I'll take my time."

Thus comes the fifth voting time.

This meant that they had completed four intervals.

Since this assignment started, they have already spent about 40 minutes on it.

And the result is: · · · · ·

Results of the fifth round of voting:

8 in favor,

32 opposed.

Contrary to Ryuen's goal of reducing the number of votes, the number of votes in favor increased by one more vote.

"What are you going to do, Ryueen? It's been almost an hour."

At this point, Nishino sounded depressed.

"Don't be so hasty. There's still plenty of time, right?"

"Yeah, but there's a lot of people who are voting yes against you. Isn't this a bad thing?"

The number of approvals clearly symbolizes the lack of control and dominance of Ryueen.

"Yeah, I guess so. I can't rule out the possibility that you're voting yes."

"it's"

Nishino was a little surprised, but he looked at him and said, "I'm sorry."

"Well, if you question them, you won't get any evidence unless they confesses."

A difficult test to punish the doubters.

"I have a proposition for you, okay?"

Nanami Yabu, who had been observing the situation up to this point, made a suggestion.

"Say it."

"How about we vote unanimously in favor and let the students decide who can be expelled?"

"Are you sure you want to vote in favour?"

"No, I've always been against it. I've always been in the opposition, but I'm starting to think that if the supporters don't move, I might as well change my mind. For example, how about ······ expelling Ibuki-san?"

Yabu then turned her cold eyes on Ibuki.

"If you're saying Ibuki-san, then I guess I'd have to agree with you. ······ Of course, I've always been against expelling, right?"

Following Yabu's lead, Rika Morofuji also raises her hand in agreement.

"You guys. You guys, since Ryueen-san said to stick to the opposed side, we must go with the opposed side."

"Wait. I welcome the opinions of these two."

"Oh... is that right?"

"I'm sure it's true from the looks of things that you've put so much opposition into it. If we don't get at least two more votes in favor of it on the next voting, there will be a contradiction. You wouldn't be that stupid, would you?"

Both Yabu and Morofuji nodded vigorously in response to the question.

Of course, there is no denying the possibility that the eight anonymous voters who voted in favor of the proposal will vote against it in the next round of voting, but Ryueen understands that this is a different matter.

"I'm prepared to say yes to that, and I've even named names. Unlike the anonymous eight. I'm sure you're not the only one who'd like to get in on the action."

The group of girls who are close to Yabu and the others are at the top of the caste in this class.

Apparently, it's the opinion of two people, but in reality, it could be taken as the opinion of the entire group.

"Can you tell me what you think of what we said, Ryueen-kun?"

"In order to expel someone in particular, it's a prerequisite that there are no votes to back them up. Is there anyone in this class who would be willing to risk their own expulsion to protect Ibuki?"

He ask the class that question. But no one immediately raises their hand.

"I guess that's what this is about, Ibuki. Do you honestly accept being expelled?"

If she accepts or says that he can do as he pleases here, Ryuuen will move to expel Ibuki without hesitation. That kind of atmosphere prevailed in the classroom.

"I'm sorry, but I'm not going to drop out."

Ibuki replied without looking at Yabu or Morofuji, who had pointed to her by name.

"What? Didn't Ibuki-san take the stance that she didn't mind dropping out of school?"

"I don't really care about school, but there are people I want to get my revenge on. Besides, do you really think I'm going to accept this form of expulsion? I'm not going to be conveniently used to line the pockets of people I don't like."

"You just don't want to be expelled for any reason. You're trying to keep a low profile, but you're still scared."

Yabu laughs provocatively.

[T/L Note - This is Nanami Yabu ↗ between shiina and mii chan.



Just in case if you were wondering]

"Haha. You've become big, haven't you? You used to be Manabe's sidekick. Were you so happy to be the leader of the girls as soon as she was gone?"

When Ibuki replies, Ryuu'en's smile disappears and he intimidates her with his eyes.

"Hey, Ibuki, be aware of your position right now. Yabu has a few friends who oppose her expulsion. But you don't have any. And you didn't have any kind of attachment to the school, did you?"

"...What...?"

"I don't hate you, but if you quit gracefully and contribute to the class, that's a different story. Regardless of your intentions, we won't show any mercy."

"That's not so bad, Ibuki-san. You're the only one who thought Ryueen-kun was taking care of you."

"Do you hate me? Ibuki."

"It's nothing. I didn't intend to be friends with you at all. You'd do anything to win. I'm not surprised. But I'm not going to drop out."

She repeated her refusal, but Ryueen's tone also became a little harsher.

"It doesn't matter if you intend to or not. I'm going to ask you one more time, and I'm going to bet on whether or not you'll vote unanimously in favor of it. Raise your hand if you can stand up for Ibuki. But you have one minute to decide."

In the chilly air, Ishizaki shivers slightly. It was not a time to be afraid of Ryueen, but a time to make up his own mind.

"Don't do that, Ishizaki."

It was Nishino, who had been standing next to Ishizaki for some time, who stopped him.

"Oh, hey Nishino,?"

"We're fighting to win. Your half-hearted comradeship will only create confusion."

"But, but... Ibuki is also our..."

"—Time's up."

A minute passed and not a single student showed up to say that they would protect Ibuki in the end.

The cynical stares, the pitying glances, and the relief of the students that they were not the target. A variety of thoughts came together in the silence.

"Oh, yeah. Well, then..."

Ibuki, who was about to answer half desperately, broke off her words once.

She knew that she would be at a disadvantage in this assignment, as she didn't have a single decent friend.

That's why she told people early on that she had voted against it.

But now that this has happened, she has no choice but to protect herself.

"Then what?"

Ryueen maintained his silence as he waited for the next words.

"..... I still have unfinished business with this school."

"Oh?"

"I'm sorry, but I'm not going to live up to your expectations. Even if the whole class votes in favour, I will continue to vote 'opposed'. If you don't get unanimous approval, you'll fail this special exam."

"Huh? Are you going to take the class with yourself?"

"That's what I'm talking about."

Determined, Ibuki declares herself opposed to the idea and stays.

"Well, of course you will. It's not a bad idea to change your mind Yabu, but it's too early to name names. If you really want to get rid of Ibuki, you should have first get a unanimous vote in favor and then mention her name."

"Tsk.....!"

If anyone knew they were going to be expelled, there was no way they would have voted in favor of it.

"You guys should just vote no."

Nishino felt a strange sense of discomfort as Ryueen gave her these instructions.

"Why did you have to go through with this farce? Isn't it a complete waste of time?"

Nishino pointed out that Yabu and Ibuki could have stopped arguing earlier, and that there was no need for a meaningless show, because it was obvious that unanimity in favor of the proposal would become difficult once the names of individuals were mentioned.

"It's just a way to pass the time. We've got plenty of time to kill anyway."

There was no deeper meaning, Ryueen said, but some of the students in the class realized that the true meaning was something else.

They understood that the reason why he agreed to Yabu's proposal, which would never pass, was to get Ibuki to say that she would never vote in favour of it.

This is to indirectly imprint the fact that unanimous approval is difficult to achieve.

This seemed to be both a comfortable and skillful maneuver by Ryueen, and a painful strategy born of his impatience to get out of this situation.

The next vote, the sixth, was seven in favor and 33 opposed.

The seventh vote was six in favour and thirty-four opposed.

It seemed that the number of in favour votes would decrease little by little, but the eighth vote was seven in favour and thirty-three opposed. It was time for the ninth round of voting.

Results of the 9th Voting Round:

7 in favor,

33 opposed.

Still 7 remaining in favour votes.

This was a figure that seemed to represent Ryueen's leadership power at the moment.

From the sixth to the ninth voting round, Ryueen just repeatedly sat on the podium for ten minutes and did not utter a single word. He just continued to observe with a creepy smile on his face.

However, that situation changed in the interval before the tenth round of voting began.

"Oi!"

Ryueen, who had been laughing, suddenly turned to the class and called out sharply.

The students, who had been carrying on a conversation that was more like a chat than a discussion, hurriedly straightened their postures.

"You guys can't even vote against me without me telling you what to do, can you?"

The students all clammed up at the obvious oddity.

"I know you think you won't be scared if you have a certain amount of solid votes in favour, but if you're looking at the vote as meaningless, you're wrong."

Ryueen kicked the back of the podium hard with his heel.

"You look like you're sitting in anonymity, but it's all over your face, guys. I've already got a pretty good idea of what's going on. If you do anything more foolish, you will pay. You know what I mean?"

Results of the 10th voting round:

6 in favor

34 opposed.

With Ryuen's strong words, the vote went to one in favor to one opposed.

However, since the number of votes in favor has already been six once in the seventh voting round, the result is that it can be said that there was practically no effect of the threat.

The time that seemed to be so plentiful was being used carelessly.

"....."

Everyone noticed that the smile had long since disappeared from Ryueen's face and was replaced by a grim expression.

"They're tenacious people, aren't they? I'm starting to get tired of dealing with them."

They had about four hours left in the time limit, but more than an hour and a half had already passed by the last assignment.

Results of the 11th voting round :

7 in favor,

33 opposed.

The number of affirmative votes that he had just reduced came back to seven.

"How do you expect it to go the other way at this rate?"

Nishino, no longer trying to hide her annoyance, asks Ryueen about his policy.

[T/L Note - This is Nishino ↪



Just if you were wondering.]

"Right. I guess we'd better get this over with."

"..... How is that possible?"

"You think I've been sitting here staring at all of you for nothing? You do realize there's a weird vote from sixth through tenth vote, right? I'm talking about the idiot who wanders in and out of favor. Now I'm going to tell you who it is."

There was tension in the classroom.

It is usually impossible to detect complete anonymity.

But...

"It's you, right? Yajima."

"What,? No, no, no!"

Mariko Yajima was the one who was named.

He hurriedly stood up to deny it, but he was clearly upset and his demeanor was restless to everyone.

"Just because you're anonymous doesn't mean you can deny it and expect me to believe you. If I think that, then you're definitely the culprit. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Oh, no. I'm..."

"If I say it's you, it's you. And if I say no, then it's not you . I'll give you only one chance to be the first one. From now on, you have no right to vote in favour without my permission. Do you understand? If I find that you don't abide by that, you're out of school for good."

This is a threat that cannot be denied. Even if he continued to vote against this assignment and failed the special exam, he would be expelled by some heinous means in the not too distant future. He didn't need much time to imagine that.

"Not all of them, but I've got an idea of who's voting yes. We'll see if they're as stupid as Yajima and need to be told directly."

Then came the 12th voting round.

Results of the 12th voting round:

5 in favor,

35 opposed.

Since Yajima was completely determined to oppose the project, there was no increase in support.

However, when it came to the last warning, only two votes shifted to 'opposed' and five votes remained in favour.

It became clear to all the classmates that this was a vote that no longer warranted any kind of threat.

"Five....."

After muttering this, Ryueen checked the remaining time and left his seat again.

"I've got to admit, they've got some balls. But I'm still not satisfied. If you're not going to give up, then come forward. What these five anonymous people want is for me to drop out of school. If that's the case, we'll have to make it a unanimous vote in favor. It would be boring to just run out the clock and call it a day, right? Then make your move. That's how we can fight on equal footing."

Unanimity by either side must be achieved to clear this special exam.

It just drags on and on and on for hours unless you identify the students who are asking for your approval.

It seemed unlikely that anyone would show up in this situation.

"Oh good, Ryueen. Then I'll come forward... I'm the one who's voting yes."

At this point, one of the anonymous people who had been voting in favor of the proposal finally stood up.

"Tokito, you! Do you even know what you're saying?"

As Ishizaki jumps at him, Katsuragi grabs his arm and stops him.

"Stop it, Ishizaki. We're in the middle of a special exam. Are you trying to cause violence here? If you make a bad move, Sakagami-sensei will call off the exam without mercy, right?"

"..."

"Of course. If that happens, this special exam will end with your disqualification."

"Tsk."

"And even though Tokito self-reported, there's still no guarantee that's the case."

Even if you are 99% sure about something, Katsuragi says, there is no way to make it 100% since you are anonymous. It's hard to erase the line of pretending to be in favor of something while voting against it.

"It's true, though. I kept wondering if I'd ever get this special exam. A normal special exam won't help, but the moment this assignment came up, I was freaked out. ····· I knew this was the only time I could get rid of Ryuen."

"Why did you come forward now, Tokito..."

"Because I've seen eye to eye with Ryūen a few times. You could have guessed that I was in favour of it. I could have come forward sooner, but it was painful to see that the number of people in favour of the assignment was changing left and right."

"Fine, Tokito. It's not the first time you've been rebellious. In fact, I'm honestly glad that you were in favor of it."

"How long can you keep this up? You can't afford it."

"Oh. No matter how many times the vote is repeated, the in favour vote will never be lost. So if time runs out, our class will lose 300 points. It would not be an exaggeration to say that we will drop out of the A class competition."

"That's right. You are the leader of this class, even if you are not worthy of it. If you fail the special exam, it's not my fault. It's on you. In the first place, you've freely controlled the choices for this special exam. You didn't even listen to the people who said we should fight Ichinose's class, and you forced us to pick Sakayanagi's class as our opponents. Of course, you can take responsibility for losing, can't you?"

"I see. So that's why you rebelled here and obediently followed through on all previous assignments."

"I'm trying to show the class that they're wrong. I'm not trying to embarrass the class, I'm just frustrated that you're in charge."

"But here comes a chance to expel someone in particular. You've decided to take a chance on it. So? Show me some good defiance, what do you want most?"

"If you want me, or any of us, to vote with you, you'll have to step down as class leader here. If you swear to it in front of everyone, you'll probably get more votes with you."

Even though he dislikes Ryueen, Tokito knows how difficult it is to get a unanimous vote in favor. That's why he proposes a compromise.

"Don't be like that, Tokito. Don't you have the confidence to expel me?"

"Don't make me laugh. If the vote is unanimous in favor, you're the one who'll be expelled, Ryuen."



"May I ask you something, Tokito-kun?"

Kaneda raises his hand as he adjusts the position of his glasses.

"It makes sense that if the special exams fail, part of the blame should be placed on the leader. However, if the selection process begins with a unanimous vote in favor of expelling the student, it will definitely be you who will be expelled. In fact, many students continue to vote 'opposed' as instructed."

Despite Kaneda's calm and composed explanation of what lay ahead, Tokito was calm and composed.

"There's no point in voting against it now. Don't you think that all the opposition votes are giving in to Ryuen? It's true that there are only a few people who can resist outwardly. But right now, besides my vote, there are 4 in favour votes. Even though he repeatedly told everyone to vote no, there are still four votes left. That's how many strong core people want you to drop out of school!"

"Compared to Yabu and Morofuji, you seem to have a lot more sense Tokito."

After admiring, Ryuen continued.

"Then don't be shy. Why don't you and I have a go at it? Tokito."

"What?"

"I'm going to make everyone vote in favour on all 35 votes, including mine. Then, like Kaneda said, they'll start voting on who to expel. Then the rest is easy, you and I will beat each other with our votes."

If the other students are not eligible to vote on, then there is no need to fear unanimity in favor.

"Are you sure? If we eliminate the other option here, it's inevitable that one student will drop out. There's no way for you to survive, Ryueen."

It was Tokito's own mercy that he left open the possibility of unanimity by opposition.

"Everyone wants to avoid running out of time. If that's the case, I'll make it a unanimous decision between you and me. Wouldn't that be more interesting for the class?"

There was no way he was going to accept Tokito's proposal, so Ryuen urged a unanimous vote in favor of it.

"People are selfish. They're not happy to come forward if there's a risk that they'll be expelled, but if either you or I are expelled, they're going to change their minds and they'll be happy to vote in favour of it if you promise them an extra 100 points."

"You think the students who's voting in favour now will agree to expel me?"

"I don't know. Maybe they would."

"Get Lost! It's not me who's getting expelled, it's you, Ryuen!"

"I see. If so, then let's have a quick face-off."

The four remaining anonymous votes, and the students who hate Ryueen would have no choice but to continue to vote against him. Tokito was confident that if he repeated the vote to expel Ryueen several times, the number of votes in favor of him would increase as the remaining time decreased.

"Okay, if you say so —"

Just as Tokito was about to accept the offer under provocation, the sound of tapping on the desk echoed through the air.

"Wait, Ryueen. Can you give Tokito a little time?"

The owner of the sound was Katsuragi. He hurriedly stood up and called out to Ryueen.

"What? What do you mean, Katsuragi, I didn't give you the right to speak?"

"I'm not going to be deprived of my right to speak."

In response to the order to shut up, Katsuragi replied without hesitation and turned to Tokito.

"As you say, it is not wrong to think that as long as the number of those who do not follow Ryueen does not reach zero, we are safe. However, what Ryueen says is also true. If a decisive vote is held with the restriction that it must be held until either Ryueen or Tokito leaves the school, the emotions of the students will be greatly affected with the time remaining. If this happens, the one who can control the majority of votes, that is, Ryuen, will have the overwhelming advantage."

"I told you. Don't assume he's superior just because of that, Katsuragi. The truth is that many in the class don't welcome Ryueen. They're just frustrated because they're being held back by

force. As time runs out, more and more people will surely stop defending him. Even if it's Ishizaki the dog."

"What the hell?"

"You once fought against Ryueen, too. Remember your rebellious spirit."

"Oh, that's—"

Last year, during the incident on the rooftop, Ishizaki defeated Ryueen and temporarily took control of the class when he tried to end the dispute with Ayanokoji. Tokito cites that incident.

"I don't know what you were doing back then, but do you think you'll win in the end?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then let me ask you a question. If Ryueen drops out of school, who will organize this class after that?"

"You can discuss it or whatever you want. But not you, an outsider, Katsuragi."

"It's true that as an outsider, I may not be an option. But it's also true that if we can't show a clear next leader, we won't be able to make a decisive decision. We can't catch up with Sakayanagi and overtake her."

Katsuragi looked at the big picture of the situation and continued to try to persuade him, but Tokito would not stop.

"It's too late. So what? If I wasn't prepared to stab this guy in the back from the beginning, I wouldn't have come forward in the first place."

"Kuku, From the beginning? But you seemed to have had taken a lot of time to come forward."

"..... Shut up!"

"Well, you can't help if there aren't a few like-minded people with you."

It was only when he was able to confirm that there were multiple votes not in accordance with Ryueen that Tokito made his move.

"Please, Ryueen. Give Tokito a chance."

He snaps his fingers once in response to Katsuragi's words, which he sees only as an advantage for Ryueen.

"All right. Tokito, I'm giving you a chance. The next vote depends entirely on your vote. If you vote yes, then you will be expelled."

"You're out of line. You think you can expel me?"

"Yeah. On the next voting round, all votes except yours will be 'opposed'. So it will be 1 in favour and 39 opposed. So if you vote oppose, the issue is unanimously resolved."

"Hey, when did the four in favour votes disappear except for me?"

"Kuku..... I turned in those four votes during this interval."

"Pull it out. You can't do that."

In addition to remaining stubbornly in favor of the idea so far, Ryueen has spent most of this interval talking with Tokito. There was no pretense of turning the votes over.

"Then try it. Put it in favour, just like before, and you'll get your answer."

There was less than a minute left in the interval that was ticking by.

The air-conditioned room was kept at a comfortable temperature, but Tokito's back was starting to sweat. Just a threat, a bluff. It was hard to believe that anything had changed in this interval. But what if the votes in favor of the proposal were really changed into votes oppose it? That would indicate that students other than Tokito were in favor of Ryueen. He could take the same defensive measure as Ibuki by running away to vote oppose before the vote was unanimous in favor, but he couldn't choose that option because it would be disgraceful. In any case, a decisive vote with Ryueen would be inevitable.

If that happens, it will be decisive for Tokito himself to be defeated.

"You're ready to drop out, aren't you? Don't hesitate to vote yes."

"..... I don't need to be told."

Eventually, it was time to vote. Tokito boldly casts his vote in favor.

"Then we will display the results of the vote."

It was shown on the monitor at the same time as Sakagami's announcement.

Results of the 13th voting round:

2 in favor,

38 opposed.

"Ah!"

Tokito's heart must have raced more than anyone else's when he saw this result.

This was because, as Ryueen had said, all but one of the four remaining votes were against it.

"I mean, sure, I'm freaked out. But hey, it means there's another student out there who's just as strong-willed as I am! The one who didn't give in even after being threatened to this extent!"

He shouts as if to declare himself the winner.

But instead of looking at Tokito, Ryueen was looking at a completely different student.

"What the heck are you doing? You voted for it, didn't you? Katsuragi."

"What??"

Tokito was surprised to hear the name of someone he hadn't expected.

"Yes. If I had voted against it, it would have gone to a decisive vote, with one vote in favor and 39 votes oppose, as you declared. If that had happened, it would have been impossible to pass this test except by expelling one of you."

"That's how it was supposed to go. Depending on your answer, you won't get off easily."

"For one reason I think students like Tokito are necessary for the class. No, it's not just Tokito. I'm an outsider who came here from A class. That's why I've been looking at this class with an objective eye. As a result, I've come to understand that there is no such thing as an unnecessary student."

"You think I need a student who doesn't follow orders?"

"Yes, I do. I'd rather consider him a valuable asset. He is someone who can disagree with you without hesitation, just like me, or even more than me. Of course, the way you did it in this special test is wrong, though. I just don't like the way you put the class in jeopardy just to drag Ryueen down."

Katsuragi casts his eyes and words not only on Ryuuen but also on Tokito.

"If you don't like the fact that Ryuuen is the leader, make a fair appeal to him in a way that doesn't involve anyone else. If your claim is correct, I will stand by you without hesitation."

"Katsuragi... You..."

"If you fall for Ryuuen's strategy and drop out, you will end up doing nothing. It means that Ryuuen will end without remembering the existence of a student named Hiroya Tokito."

"But until just before, there were 4 votes"

The unseen reinforcements that have pushed Tokito this far.

It was also a source of comfort.

"There is no such thing from the beginning. It's just an illusion."

"Illusion, you mean?"

"To be precise, I should say that they were eliminated in the repeated voting. There were five votes in favor that remained after Yajima was named. The ones who cast those votes were you, Tokito, and..."

Katsuragi circles around, slowly moving his gaze and pointing.

"It's Shiina, Yamada, me and Ryuuen."

In response to the answer, Tokito and none of his classmates understood.

"..... What the hell are you talking about? Ryuuen was Infavour it, too.?

"When the vote was five in favor, there was only one anonymous voter left. But that all came to a halt when you came forward."

"So during this interval, Ryuuen was mocking me in his mind."

"I don't think so. It's true that the purpose was to find out who was in favour of it, but that was already done when you came forward. You didn't have to go out of your way to make it a contest, you could have just kept your mouth shut and brought it to a unanimous vote. In your way the vote would naturally be unanimous in favor of it, and the next vote would just be to expel you."

"So you were just playing word games to insult me!"

"No, I wasn't. I was giving you the possibility to keep you from being expelled."

"What the...?"

"But you didn't see the potential, and you tried to push forward. In a roundabout way, you probably didn't even think that Ryueen was giving you a chance."

"Oh, I.....!"

"But no matter how much I tell him, if he won't listen to me, that's it. I'm sorry to take up so much of your time, but can you please give Tokito one last chance? I'd like you to give him one last chance to vote no before we all vote yes."

"You think I'll give him another chance? I'm not so naive, am I?"

"You are at fault. You were overly provocative and overlooked the thread of salvation. Now that everything has come to light, we can finally give Tokito a choice."

"If he don't listen to me, you won't object to his expulsion, will you?"

"Oh, I have no objection. You can do whatever you want."

Katsuragi closed his eyes and crossed his arms. He left it to tokito to take care of himself.

If he vote yes, he will be expelled 100% of the time.

On the other hand, if he vote against it, the vote will be unanimous and he can avoid expulsion.

But to vote no means to give in to Ryueen in a way.

That would be a serious blow to the pride Tokito had.

"Then we'll start the 60-second voting period."

With Sakagami's words, the countdown begins.

Thirty-nine people, excluding Tokito, finished voting within the time limit, but the count still did not stop.

Sakagami looked up once and glanced at Tokito.

"As I explained to you beforehand, after 60 seconds, the penalty time accumulates."

Tokito turns his head and stares alternately at the words In favour and opposed on the tablet.

"Damn... Damn..."

He thought he had a good chance to fight back. But halfway through, he found myself alone.

Everything was just a dance in the palm of Ryueen's hand.

Frustration, embarrassment, and shame.

A lot of negative emotions surrounded Tokito's mind and he couldn't let them go.

Pride peeked out of his face, as if he would not give in to Ryuun at such a point.

Dispersing gracefully. No, or he could deliberately vote yes and buy himself some time; if he continue to vote against the 39 people, he might just be able to make this challenge fail.

Do not drop out and end the special exam with a failure.

The thought crossed his mind, and Tokito shook his head from side to side.

There's nothing to be gained by doing such a thing to compete with Ryueen.

He causes a great deal of trouble for his classmates and is even more smoked out than Ryueen.

That's not what Tokito wants.

"Damn it!"

With an exaggerated wave of his arm, Tokito touched the voting button.

"—Everyone has finished voting. I will now announce the results."

Sakagami took a breath and operated the tablet to show the results on the monitor.

Results of the 14th voting round :

0 In Favour,

40 opposed.

"As the vote is unanimous, the subject is rejected. This concludes the special examination."

It seemed that there was a strong possibility that some students would be expelled from Ryueen's class, but it was confirmed that all students would remain.

"Tokito, you..."

Ishizaki turned around and spoke to Tokito, who had his eyes downcast.

"..... Don't get me wrong, Ryueen, I don't approve of your methods. If I find that you've done something to prevent our class from moving up to Class A, I'll eliminate you as soon as I can."

"Come at me any time. I'll deal with you severely."

"Hmm..."

It was complicated for Tokito to remain here, so he left the classroom as quickly as he could.

After witnessing this, Katsuragi walks up to Ryuuken's side.

"That was an unnecessary thing to do, Katsuragi. I was welcoming the dropouts, remember?"

"Half the time, I suppose. But the other half you were exploring the other possibility, weren't you?"

"Pull me out, do I look that naive to you?"

"I don't know if you're being naive, but if your goal was to completely control the vote, it's important to keep loyal students in your ranks. However, after the second vote, you gave instructions to Shiina, while giving an earful to the appropriate students. If you only talk to certain students, they will think you are planning some kind of strategy. Then, through Shiina, you gathered friends who would vote falsely in favor of the plan through repeated discussions. And I was one of them. The reason for this was that you knew I would protect Tokito, right?"

"You're protecting Tokito? Where did you get that information from?"

"Shiina overheard me and Tokito discussing you. I wouldn't be surprised if you knew about it from her report."

"I was just misled by the fake in favour vote and carefully selected the ones who voted yes. Of course, I had to expel him so I could get class points. It's such a shame."

After Ryueen left the classroom, Katsuragi turned to the eyes that had been watching them.

He was honestly impressed when he saw Shiina smiling gently at me.

"So it's possible that it was Shiina's own decision to drew me in."

But either way, it doesn't change the fact that Ryuuen prepared the strings to help Tokito, and gave him a chance. Katsuragi was convinced when he saw the students relieved that no one had been expelled.

Katsuragi thinks This is the class that has the potential to beat Sakayanagi and become Class A. And his own desire is to pursue that path with this class.

Chapter - 6

Arisu Sakayanagi's Decision

A little over an hour has passed since the special exam started. Class A, led by Sakayanagi, was making good progress on their assignments, with a few polls and breaks in between. And then, they arrived at the final task.

Task (5) -

Instead of one classmate being expelled, you get 100 class points.

(If the vote is unanimous in favor, identify and vote on the student who will be expelled.)

Choices :

Agree

Disagree

The key word "expulsion" startles everyone, but they cast their first vote silently as per the rules.

In order to avoid unexpected accidents, Sakayanagi, like Horikita, has been working with 4 people close to her.

Since there were two options, the results of the vote were as follows: two votes in favor and two votes opposed.

Results of the first round of voting:

2 in favor,

36 opposed.

This is the end result.

With the exception of two controlled in favour votes, the results reflected that all students expressed their opposition.

"Well, that's what happens. So what do you say, princess? Are we all going to vote 'opposed' next time?"

Hashimoto, who was in charge of putting the vote in option 1, and therefore would have voted in favor of it, confirmed immediately after the interval.

"What do you think? Hashimoto-kun."

Hashimoto, not expecting to be asked to answer the question, was a little surprised, but read the assignment over again in his mind.

"If I'm going to draw non-stop conclusions, I disagree. But when I think about it seriously, I feel that 100 class points isn't as ridiculous as it seems."

"So you're saying I should go for the 100 class points even if it gets my classmates expelled?"

"No,, I won't go that far. It's just that I'm not sure we should take it lightly."

"If this had been the end of a competitive school year, I would have been forced to adopt a policy of expelling classmates. But right now, this class is on its own. It would be rather nonsensical to choose to drop one student in order to pick up 100 class points."

"Of course. I just don't want to be crying over those 100 points in the future, right?"

"It's also a disadvantage. Simply put, the total amount of private points you can earn each month will decrease, and class morale and distrust will grow. As an interesting move, one can dare to rescue the class by sending out a dropout and raking in 20 million Private Points which is also the option of gaining class points without sacrificing anyone, but this will affect the upcoming sports and cultural festivals, and even though there will be a difference of 100 points, if you factor in the unseen factors, I don't think there will be much of a difference in gain or loss no matter how this assignment turns out. Or is there anyone in this class who would volunteer to drop out?"

Saying this, Sakayanagi looks around the class once. Of course, as Sakayanagi said, there was no way that any of the students in Class A, which was running alone at the top, would voluntarily offer to drop out of school.

"The other classes in this task will be troubled. And when they make the difficult choice and select the retreatants, the class will not necessarily rise. Losing a fellow student isn't as simple as it sounds."

With that word, Class A's policy was set in stone.

If Class A had chosen to expel students, it would have been stupefyingly unanimous.

And nine times out of ten, the student chosen by Sakayanagi will drop out of school.

"You're not like Katsuragi-kun and Totsuka-kun, who are no longer with us, to me. I won't do anything to cut off my friends who are working for me."

That was Sakayanagi's lie.

In the unlikely event that Class A is forced into a tight spot, Sakayanagi will not hesitate to choose to expel the students. However, if she chose to expel the students when the situation was not critical, it would create a sense of distrust. She simply decided that she had more to lose by getting into that situation now.

That was the first interval, with half the time left to make sure your classmates know who to vote for.

Results of the second round of voting:

0 in favor,

38 opposed.

Ryueen's class and Ichinose's class were unanimous in their opposition to the proposal after much deliberation.

"This concludes the entire task of the unanimous special examination. This class has the fastest time to complete the special exam. Other classes are still in the middle of the special exam, so please follow the teacher's instructions to leave the room. The rest of the time will be spent studying on your own in the dormitory as scheduled."

Although students were not allowed to go outside the dormitory, the time they had was practically free.

Chapter - 7

Horikita Suzune's Decision

Intro

And now for the results of the vote.

Results of the 10th voting round:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

The scene that everyone had grown tired of seeing was simply repeated.

Appealing to them to come forward will not change that. No amount of discussion will change that.

The number of Infavour votes will neither increase nor decrease.

The results make me wonder if the voting is actually not fair and the same screen is just being displayed over and over again.

"Since it was not unanimous, we will now begin the interval."

The signs of fatigue could be seen even in Chabashira sensei who announced the standardized Phrase.

Now that she has told her past, all she can do is watch this assignment go by as a teacher.

"Why? Is there really anyone who votes in favour?"

It was understandable that Keisei felt compelled to voice his doubts.

At this point, even if we wanted to continue the conversation, we've already had every form of discussion.

How many times did Horikita and Yosuke try to persuade them?

"If you're opposed to it, please raise your hand"

If calling out to those in favor of the proposal is futile, Yosuke requests that students who are against the proposal raise their hands.

He kept trying hard to find a breakthrough, even if it meant proposing a meaningless reverse pattern.

One hand on either side of me were raised. Of course, I raise my hand, too.

In this way, everyone can see that 38 people, including Yosuke, voted against it without hesitation.

The only one that didn't raise its hand was Koenji, but

"I won't raise my hand, but don't worry, I'm voting in opposition."

Koenji replied to Yosuke, who looked at him anxiously.

"Can I trust you, Koenji? I think you're actually in favor of it."

"How many times have we had this discussion? You never get tired of it."

Even for Sudo, there is no other way but to poke Koenji. It is not unreasonable to believe that there is a person in this class who continues to tell lies.

There is a student who proudly raises their hands to say they are voting oppose, and yet they are still in favor of the motion.

"I don't want to think that any of the people who just raised their hands are lying to me, but I'm going to go over it again, this time looking each of you in the eye and asking you directly. If any of you are voting yes, please tell me honestly: No, I want you to vote 'oppose' in the next round."

With Ten minutes of constant scrambling. Horikita spares no time or effort in dealing with each person individually.

I'm sure they're tired like the rest of the students, but I can't say that I am.

Haruka, Airi, Keisei, and Akito. Ike, Sudo, Mii-chan, and Matsushita. Kushida, Onodera, Okitani, Mori, all of them looked straight into Horikita's eyes and answered.

"I am voting opposed." All of them said the same thing.

Eventually, Horikita reached the end of the class. Her eyes were a mixture of impatience and anxiety, but they were still filled with fire.

"What about you, Ayanokoji-kun?"

"Of course I'm voting no."

"..... Yes."

This meant that we had once again completed our face to face interrogation of each of them. There was no change in the declaration that everyone was casting their votes opposed to it.

The only thing left to do, though, is to appeal to the remaining remnants of conscience in their heart and get them to vote against it...

"It's almost ten minutes. Return to your seats, Horikita, and we will begin voting."

The time for voting comes again. The answer.

Results of the 11th voting round:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

The result was no different. There are no more words to add.

Only the same, same, same results will be displayed.

"Oh, my God! I'm going out of my mind! I don't know what's going on!"

Scratching his head messily, Sudo slammed his elbow down hard on the desk.

"Hey, hey, but what are we really going to do? We're running out of time, aren't we?"

Until now, the students had been stepping on the assumption that even those in favor who persisted would eventually break.

Horikita and the others must have thought that they would never choose to run out of time.

They thought Absolutely, almost, surely, probably, the in favour voter will vote oppose for fear of running out of time. And just in time, but unanimous in opposition, everyone will pass the special exam.

They must have been painting such a picture, moving on to the next sports or cultural festival.

But...

The vote in favor does not move.

Waiting another ten minutes, thirty minutes, or even an hour would not change that answer.

The only thing that awaited us was the worst possible outcome: "Running out of time."

Nine minutes to go until the next vote. These nine minutes are no longer just nine minutes.

After this point, we would be under the two-hour deadline.

For the past three hours, Horikita had fought hard against this final challenge.

It's not that Horikita's strategy was naive. Even if I had done everything in my power to get a unanimous vote against it, it would have been impossible.

Why is that? What is the underlying reason?

The reason is that any kind of persuasion, any kind of negotiation, any kind of action is meaningless.

The person is fighting to avoid a unanimous vote.

What is most frightening is that the person who voted in favor of this does not see running out of time as the biggest negative.

Normally, that would not be possible in this particular test.

When we look at this assignment objectively, the priorities of the three choices are fixed and determined.

Oppose ≥ In Favour > Time out

This is an absolute inequality that is common to all four classes and all students.

This priority is solidified, which is the basic premise, so to speak, on which the special exam is based.

But — what happens when there is only one student with a different inequality?

In Favour > Time out > Oppose

If this kind of distorted priority is given, this task will not be possible.

That's why the school has thorough monitoring and rules to prevent any intervention from other classes. In order to prevent them from signing contracts with people like Sakayanagi and Ryueen, who would invite them into their classes if they let them run out of time, or transfer a large number of private points to them. The special examinations turned into chaos as students who did not have that established became mixed up.

If you continue to be stubborn, the only thing that awaits you is time running out.

Then what should be done?

There was only one thing I had to do in the two hours I had left.

Unanimous in favor

That is the optimal solution. There is no way to pave the way except to make this happen.

It's probably already in Horikita's mind.

However, I am unable to step in.

When it comes to cutting off your classmates, it's not easy.

Picking one person to expel is more difficult than unanimous opposition.

Once you take the first step, there is no turning back.

The reason is that it is not possible to say, "We can't have any more dropouts, so we'll go back to the other options."

Yet, I was still hesitant to carry out my plan when it came time to vote.

Why?

The ideal route was off, and we were already running out of time to do the things we needed to do to carry out our plan.

The extra time will hinder the unanimous vote in favor and the subsequent selection of the dropout.

But still, I would like to try one more time for unanimity by opposition, even if it takes up my precious time.

An irrational feeling I've never had before surfaced in my mind.

I wonder what kind of decision you would have made in such a situation. I asked Horikita Manabu in my mind.

There was no way I could get an answer, but I decided to modify my plan. I'm going to bet on the last chance without changing the exit strategy.

"Now for the results..."

After finishing the tally, Chabashira sensei momentarily choked on her words.

"I'll... announce the results."

Results of the 12th voting round:

2 in favor,

37 opposed.

"Oh, my God. Why? There's more in favor!"

After a long period of time, one person turned from the 38 who had been consistently opposed so far to one who was in favor.

It would have had enough of an impact to crack the opposition, which had been united.

"It seems like I'm having a bad dream ..."

The person who cast this vote was me, of all people.

It's not like it was just one vote. It's not just that. It was a strong vote of 37 people who were firmly united except for Koenji.

Horikita, no longer thinking such thoughts, went into thinking mode again.

What should we do if we can't bring the number of in favour votes to zero?

Horikita immediately understood that it was a vote that had been passed on to avoid running out of time.

Whichever way this last assignment is unanimous, it's the worst option of all.

That's it, time is up. Even without any dropouts, the class points would be minus 300, assuming all the other classes had passed, the difference would be 350, and if there was a class that had passed the last assignment unanimously in favour, then the difference would be up to 450 points.

With such a huge gap, there was no guarantee that we would be able to catch up even if we had more than a year of school left. No, I would say it will be hopeless.

{I avoided expulsion, but I had to give up my A class chance, which is no laughing matter.}

And once this idea becomes widespread, it is inevitable that people will begin to question the point of continuing to vote against it. They begin to think that it is easier to mobilize opposition votes, which have the potential to move them in unanimity, than to mobilize approval votes, which remain unmoved.

Even if the biggest hurdle of who will drop out next is waiting, we can move half a step forward from this rigid situation.

"Hey, man. We have to vote yes, don't we?"

"What are you talking about? If you do that, someone will have to be expelled."

"But you know... if we run out of time, we're all dead."

The gradual erosion of the opposing votes.

The first candidates to start the move are students who are confident that they will not be expelled.

On the other hand, students who continue to vote against it tend to be those who think they might be expelled.

The number of votes in favor will continue to grow internally.

However, not a single student will come forward to say that they voted yes.

Of course. If they found out that I was in favor of it, they might expel me.

Only when the vote is unanimous in favor of the proposal, can we move on to the next selection of drop out on an equal footing.

Results of the 13th voting round:

5 in favor,

34 opposed.

Three more votes went in favor.

There is still a strong voice that says, "Who voted for it?" but that is as far as it goes.

Results of the 14th voting round:

12 in favor,

27 opposed.

The steadily increasing flow of in favour votes did not stop, and the numbers kept growing.

Finally, for the first time, the number of in favour votes reached double digits, swelling to nearly one-third.

In the next round of voting, there will be even more votes in favor.

After reaching this point, the time limit was only about an hour and a half left.

"Well, wait a minute. If you really think it's a good idea to lean in favor here, you're wrong!"

Undeterred by the crisis, Yosuke waits for the students to vote in his favor.

"I know we have to avoid running out of time. But that doesn't mean a unanimous vote in favor will solve the problem, does it?"

"Yes... Going forward, we're going to have to make it unanimous among 39 options for individuals to choose 'drop out'. That's even harder than being unanimous in opposition. We only have an hour and a half left. Do you realize that?"

In order to finish this assignment in favor, we need to decide who will leave the school.

"It's not too late. I think we should vote against it."

"I agree with you. Don't get carried away."

The classmates continue to be emotionally affected.

It was probably time to no longer make normal judgments about whether it was right to agree or disagree.

"You know that you shouldn't vote for it. Twelve people have voted yes, and not one of them has come forward. Isn't that right?"

Even if the vote is repeated in the future and the number of in favour votes increases, it will not be ideally unanimous unless there is a major intervention to enforce it. Originally, I was going to try to make it unanimous in the next vote, but I decided to move up the reserve time and use it here and now.

"—Do you mind if I offer my opinion?"

"Eh,?"

She was a little bewildered by my suggestion, as if Horikita had not expected it.

"Horikita, I voted yes for the 14th time."

This is a lie. I've already voted in favor of it on the 12th voting round.

But no one can prove it.

"How did Ayanokoji-kun.....?"

"I'm not sure what to do, but I'm afraid time is running out if we persist in our opposition. There is no other way but to vote in favour. I think we all know that by now."

In order to increase the number of approvals, this role has to be done by someone. From the seat next to me, Sato was staring at me anxiously.

No, it's not just Sato, but anyone who is concerned about this situation.

"It's not going to solve the root of the problem. We'll end up squabbling over who to expel."

"I know. But we can break out of our rigid situation. Even if we find out who has been voting in favor of the assignment, I don't think that person will vote against it. So we can't expect unanimity in the end. But now, unanimity in favor is possible. And then we can put the only in

favour voter on trial and have 38 people 'Judge' that person. It's a bit aggressive, but it's possible to get unanimity."

There is one person in common between me and Horikita.

Of course, there is no guarantee that it is that person, but you know what I mean.

"It's...—"

" "Judge"? What right do you think we have to judge a student who is just voting yes?"

Yosuke countered, catching me off guard.

"Yes. If we can't make this unanimous, we won't be able to move up to Class A. I don't think anyone thinks that the students who know this and continue to vote in favour are completely innocent."

"And, but, but I'm sure it'll be the other way around when we get closer to the end of our time—."

"More? There are only a few more opportunities to vote. Are we going to involve all of our classmates in that slim possibility? The more times you vote, the less chance you have of even getting out in favor. That would completely snap unanimity in its origin."

I don't have to say it out loud, but Yosuke and everyone knows it. The reason why many students haven't taken the first step even though they know it is because the biggest hurdle appears by agreeing.

"It is true that there are many students who are hesitant to vote in favour. That is why we would like to identify the one who continued to vote in favour of the task from the beginning and arrange for them to be expelled from the school. In other words, we will guarantee the safety of the students who are currently voting against it."

Sato, who was listening to me more than anyone else, raises her hand a little.

"I'm glad to hear that, but it's useless if we don't know who's voting for us. After all, when time is running out, we'll just have to come up with random candidates for expulsion. I'm scared."

"If we can't narrow down the expulsion, we can always choose to run out the clock. What we need to avoid now is staying here when there's a chance we can clear it, and not taking that step."

To help students who are lost, I dropped more encouragement to make decisions.

"As Horikita said, I also know the person who's voting in favour of it."

"Why don't you just say it here and now?" But Horikita wouldn't tell her name for a long time. Doesn't that mean you don't really have any idea? She was bluffing, or she thought that if she threatened them, they would vote 'opposed'."

Miyamoto's guess was not correct, but it was certainly not unreasonable to think so.

"If you really have an idea, let's all try to convince them."

"I can't do that, so here I am. The mention of that person's name will never sway a vote in favor. I'd rather be stubborn and carry it through to the end. I want to avoid that."

"I can't do that, which is why I'm doing this now. The mention of this person's name will never move a vote in unanimity. They'd rather be stubborn and carry it through to the end. I want to avoid that."

This is both a guide to agree and a mercy from me at the very end.

If they've been told this much, it's because I'm definitely aware that they're the one who's voting. If they are afraid of being exposed, only one person may vote against in the next round.

"Make up your mind, Horikita. Your opponent is trying to get you. There is no other way but to hunt or be hunted."

As Horikita remains silent, I turn my attention to the other person.

"And Yosuke. I can understand why you don't want anyone to drop out of our class. If you really didn't want anyone to drop out, then you had to get the results before the time ends. Do you understand?"

The day before this special exam started, I had warned Yosuke about it that in the last two hours I would control the votes.

I could see from the side that he was struggling to keep his footing.

I don't understand why he wants to keep resisting.

"But I..."

"The next vote will decide our fate."

"....., I'm"

It was a painful decision, but Yosuke was still different from before.

He has grown since the desert island exam and last year's in-class vote when he was stuck in between.

"Yes, it is. It's... It's no good annoying the whole class just because of my thoughts."

He hangs his head, but decides to make his move.

"I'll vote yes. And as Ayakoji-kun said, I think we should adjust the direction to expel those who have been voting yes all along."

The decision of Yosuke, the heart of the class, would have changed the situation even more drastically.

"The only one left is you, Horikita. It's time for you to make up your mind to avoid running out of time."

Time was running out before the next round of voting began.

"Please. Please, just one more time, just one more chance to make it unanimous in opposition. If the next vote is not unanimous in opposition, then I'll make up my mind."

There is no next time. I succeeded in creating that situation.

The last vote for unanimity by genuine opposition begins.

All of them took no time at all, completing their votes in a matter of seconds.

However, things sometimes diverge greatly between imagination and reality.

Results of the 15th voting round:

1 in favor,

38 opposed.

"Damn it! I knew it!"

This is a dangerous way of pushing the vote that had begun to flow in favour of the vote back into opposition. With the time limit looming, even that last strategy to make it unanimous was unsuccessful.

But now we all understand.

The student who continue to vote in favor of this is prepared to run out of time.

"Horikita, Yosuke. Is that okay?"

I have succeeded in confirming my decision to both of them and clearly obtained their approval. At any rate, the necessary preparations have been made for the battle to expel the student.

Now that the intentions of Yosuke, Horikita, the two main students have been made clear, a large number of votes will flow in favor. Still, it is easy to imagine that students who are worried that they might be expelled will hesitate to vote in favor.

That's why those who are prepared to vote with the opposition must also be prepared to do so.

"If you vote the 'opposed' in the next vote, you need to be clear about why. You already know how painful it is to spend 10 minutes on a single vote."

If there was plenty of time left, it would not be surprising if some students still complained.

However, with almost an hour to go, the way out was completely cut off.

It's a rough job to force students who don't have the ability to make decisions to do so.

"Now that it's come to this... we'll have to pick and choose who gets expelled."

"Are you for real?"

"I don't want to lose any of my classmates either, but if I don't expel someone here, the damage to the class will be enormous. That's something I absolutely must avoid."

If you look at the class point trends so far, you can see the pain of losing almost 300 class points here.

Intervals are forced for 10 minutes.

You have to resist the urge to run away to vote against it.

Results of the 16th voting round:

39 votes In Favour,

0 votes Opposed.

It was unanimous. Along with this result, the fear and anxiety of everyone was obvious.

"Unanimous in favor..."

Chabashira sensei muttered as if she had prepared for everything and continued to proceed.

When you make this choice, the only way left is to either drop out of school or run out of time.

Of course, the latter could be said to mean that this class will lose the battle to graduation.

That means that out of the 39 students, there was one who will be dropped out in about an hour.

Of course, I know who should be expelled.

"Individuals can be identified either by candidacy, which is allowed only once, or by selecting a student's name on the tablet and casting a recommendation vote. However, if there is no candidate, and if at the end of the interval there are no more than a majority of nominations, the vote will be taken by random selection as previously explained."

Naturally, there were many students who looked at me and Horikita as we decided who would be expelled.

Everyone can't wait to hear the name, the pressure is on me.

An important and precious interval, incomparable to the ones we've had so far.

For the same 10 minutes, you will be asked to additionally choose who you want to nominate for expulsion.

"Unanimity by approval has been decided...at least let me have a policy of waiting for them to confess themselves in this one interval. Depending on the circumstances and the case, I can choose to run out the clock and help that student."

Of course, such a proposal would not be able to suppress criticism.

I would never accept such a choice, losing class points.

But Horikita kept silent from there and began to listen and endure the complaints.

As for me, I need to find the right timing, so I'll go along with that idea and remain silent.

A dark and harsh time passed by, with complaints directed at us and observations from each of us.

Of course, it is not possible to select a specific dropout, and the interval time is approaching.

When you see your name displayed on the monitor, you will feel your heart being grabbed. Especially if it is your first time to vote, you can't deny the unanimity of the momentum.

"Sensei, you don't mind if I nominate myself, do you?"

"Of course."

"Then please vote for me."

With that, Yosuke came forward as a specific student with almost no time left.

Yosuke Hirata will be expelled from school.

In Favour

Oppose

This vote had a different weight than the previous one.

If there are students who vote yes, it's because they are directly telling Yosuke that they don't care if he disappears, and that they want him to disappear.

Results of the 17th voting round:

6 in favor,

32 opposed.

It was so quiet that you could hear the students gasp and exhale.

The relief of a majority against, and the invisible presence of the six people who voted in favor, would normally haunt him for some time to come. Yosuke, however, may be more relieved that he was able to overcome the first tough obstacle with his candidacy.

"What are we going to do... are we really going to expel one of us from here?"

"We're running out of time. Let's hear it, both of you. Who was the student who voted in favour all along?"

Unable to wait, Keisei shouted for an answer.

"Of course I'll give you the name of the student I have in mind. But I know it's not that simple."

"Isn't it simple? We don't have a choice anymore. Now that we've decided to expel someone, we have to find out who it is as soon as possible."

There are still many students who regret and are worried about choosing to agree.

The ten minutes wasted earlier must have been mentally taxing for them.

That's why I want something to make everyone feel like they're not making a mistake by choosing yes.

"Next vote, if this time goes by, someone will be chosen at random.?"

It's no wonder Sudo is restless. Even Yosuke got six votes in favor.

"Don't worry, Ken. I'll vote no., so make sure you protect me too, okay?"

"Of course, Kanji. That's right. If we protect each other, we'll be absolutely fine... right?"

"....."

Classmates are losing their cool. A faint cry leaked out from among them.

She held her mouth and then tried to hide her eyes, but the voice was clear.

"Kikyo-chan,, are you okay?"

Miichan rushed over and put her hand on Kushida's back.

"Hmm, sorry.... I don't know how I got into this mess. When I started thinking about it, I couldn't stop feeling regret."

"That's true for me, too. But someone has to drop out of school."

Most of the students don't have such a feeling.

We're being forced to do something somewhat unrealistic.

"I'm really regretting my choice right now. I should have kept voting against it until the end no matter what."

"That's what we do. But we don't have a choice. If we run out of time, we lose 300 class points."

Keisei said this was inevitable, to justify his vote in favor.

"Even so, it won't erase the regret of having voted yes when I was told to."

Unanimous by approval, she confesses that she regrets having played a part in it.

The signs began to show more strongly in the students who felt the same way, but without words.

"Don't blame yourself, Kushida-chan. We're all the same, right?"

Sudo and Ike also comforted Kushida.

"I'm sorry I'm sorry"

Tears rolling down her cheeks. Wiping them away, Kushida held her trembling body and looked up.

"We had a chance to make the vote unanimous, didn't we? If we had been persistent and persuasive, even those who were voting yes would have understood in the end."

"It's—but the time is"

"I can certainly understand what Horikita-san and Ayanokoji-kun were saying. You have to avoid running out of time, right? Yes, I understand that, but even if we were to be penalized, we should have been a class without anyone missing."

Kushida lets out the feelings that she has been storing up until now.

"No, but it's the fault of those who voted yes. Definitely."

"No one deserves to be expelled. Academic superiority, athletic superiority, and so on are trivial matters. You can't decide who should be expelled just because of that."

Kushida even let slip her true feelings that she wanted to protect the people who were in favor of this situation, that led to all this.

"But, but... If that's the case, how do you decide who to expel?"

"How about a raffle then?"

"You can't do that. If you expel anyone because of that, I'm sure not everyone will be satisfied."

Wiping away the tears with her fingertips, she continued.

"I'm prepared to be criticized."

Putting her hand on her chest, Kushida appealed to her classmates.

"I think — Horikita-san, who was the leader of this special test or ... Ayanokoji-kun, who urged us to vote in favor of it, should take the blame for it."

I knew that would happen. The first move from Kushida.

From Kushida's point of view, there was nothing to be gained if students like Ike and Sudo dropped out of school here.

These words are the intense desire of an anonymous person who undoubtedly continued to cast his vote in favor of the assignment.

"I feel so bad about mentioning their names that I almost hate myself. But I can't let the time run out. Someone has to carry the weight of this So, I'll take the role of the hated one I'm sorry."

I don't want anyone to get expelled.

Still, as long as someone has to be expelled, selection is inevitable.

As with those who are restructured, those who pronounce the change will suffer as much.

Kushida had taken it upon herself to do so.

It takes a lot of determination and a lot of reason to say a name in this situation.

With the right wording, she was able to make her classmates aware of our names, which was the purpose of the meeting, without making them feel that she was the anonymous supporter.

Kushida is much smarter than I thought. Normally in Kushida's position, she would not be expelled even if she remained silent until the end. Because she is trusted and has many friends, there are plenty of students who will vote oppose for her expulsion. However, Horikita and I have already figured out that Kushida is the anonymous supporter. If either of us were to raise our voice and cause damage to Kushida's reputation, it could lead to an unforeseen situation.

Then it would be effective to take a non-fatal wound to yourself as a defense.

By mentioning mine and Horikita's names ahead of time, even if we were to say something disparaging, she could lead them to believe that it was due to resentment over the mention of the names.

"Don't be silly!"

It was Kei, not Horikita or me, who was the first to object to Kushida's idea.

"Why does Kiyotaka have to be expelled? We're about to run out of time, so she just said she'd go along with the same disgusting idea. Where's the blame in that?"

"..... Yeah. That's right. I know exactly what you mean, Karuizawa-san. To be honest, I think it's wrong to say names now. It's -----, but we can't move forward if we don't."

"I'm not voting for Kiyotaka's expulsion. At that point, you know he's never going to be expelled, right?"

"Wait, Karuizawa. That's a little selfish."

"What? Didn't Hondo-kun just secretly promise Onizuka-kun that he would vote oppose for you? It's the same thing."

"Well, but I didn't say we should vote unanimously in favor of..."

"You're so selfish. If I don't declare my intentions, how can I be sure he won't be expelled? I can't go to A class because the time is up? So what? Kiyotaka is everything to me, I don't care if I'm in B class or D class."

Kei was relentless in her anger, but it was time to stop.

"Quit it, Kei. What Kushida is saying is more correct and just."

"But, but!"

I stopped Kei here, who was glaring at Kushida in frustration without hiding her annoyance.

"If you let your emotions get the better of you and continue to argue, the person who should be most responsible for what Kushida said will become unstable, and the target will shift from me and Horikita. You know that much."

"..... Yeah"

If I had lost my cool, I would have tried to go further, but I didn't.

She has enough reason to stop it if I give her a strong enough command.

As a result, it wasn't bad to be forced to speak for what my classmates were carrying around in their minds.

"I'll tell you, I won't support Suzune's expulsion. It may not be ideal with the whole unanimous thing, but it's not Suzune's fault. I blame the bastard who sat on his hands and knees and didn't come forward. Do you think that we can go up to Class A without Suzune in the future? Never."

"Certainly... we decided that Horikita should be given protection. But in the end, if we fail this special test, the action itself will be meaningless; wouldn't it be the same if we lost 350 class points?"

Keisei answered while holding his glasses.

"I'm sure Suzune can get us back on track."

"This school is not so naive. The 300 points Koenji earned in the desert island exam is something of a miracle. If you exclude that, how long did it take us to get to our current class points? It's not very realistic, is it? Horikita is a big hole to fill, but it's not enough to lose 350 points."

Will you fill the 350-point handicap with Horikita, or will you fight on an equal footing without Horikita?

It is difficult to express it as a simple value, but what Keisei is saying is generally correct.

"I can't agree with Kiyopon and Horikita's decision to leave school right now. It's not because I have a personal relationship with them, but because I think we should listen to them first. The worst one is the one who kept voting in favour of it, as Sudo-kun said."

Kushida looked up as if she had been caught off guard by the words of Haruka, who unusually intervened in the conversation.

The explanation was not in the form of protecting us because she was one of us, but in the form of saying that it was too early to tell.

"..... Yes, you're right. I might have lost my cool a little too... But if Ayanokoji-kun is wrong about the name of the person who voted in favor of it, No, even if it's not wrong, if he told you the name, the whole relationship would probably be destroyed."

{Don't say my name by mistake.}

I can't help but feel that kind of pressure.

Anyway, at this point, the baton was passed to me again.

"I'm in the middle of a conversation, but I think that's enough. It's almost ten minutes, and we need you to decide who will be voted out. If you can't do that, we'll have to vote by random."

"..... All right. We don't have much time before the vote. We have to do this. Nominate me."

"Hey, Suzune? What do you think you're doing?"

"If we're going to put one vote between us anyway, I want to make sure it's the right one. Because I want to see how many of my students want me to leave."

As if to test herself, Horikita raises her hand and advises that she will be included in the voting.

If the vote is unanimous in favor, you will be expelled. On the other hand, if the vote is unanimous in Oppose, the student will be never be expelled in this exam. And if neither of the votes are unanimous, we'll have to start all over again, including Horikita.

"We will now begin a 60-second poll for Suzune Horikita."

Voting In Favour or Oppose expulsion begins for Horikita.

I wonder how many students will vote in favor of Horikita's expulsion. It took about 30 seconds for all the votes to be counted, and Chabashira displayed the results on the monitor.

Results of the 18th voting round:

16 in favor,

22 opposed.

Am I the only one who thinks this is an interesting result?

The only person who is likely to vote clearly against Horikita is, objectively speaking, Sudo.

And Koenji, who doesn't want to give up his only ally, Horikita, is probably the next in line.

On the flip side, the rest of the students were asked to vote purely on whether they agreed or disagreed with Horikita's disappearance. To the 16 invisible students, Horikita's presence was not that important.

Or is there a segment of the population that is willing to accept anyone as long as they don't have to drop out of school?

"Are you nuts? Raise your hand if you vote yes or I'll kill you!"

Sudo stood up, annoyed, as if he had expected only a few votes in favor at most.

"Stop it, Sudo-kun."

"I can't stop!"

"You're just wasting time with your fussing. Let's talk more constructively."

"Horikita-san is right, Sudo-kun. Unanimity is the base rule for this special exam. Even if there are thirty-seven votes in favour, as long as you keep opposing it, Horikita-san won't be expelled."

Yosuke convinced him that there was no need to vent his anger anywhere. Exactly as he just said, it only takes one person to stay on your side if you are nominated. It is also the only way to absolutely prevent expulsion from the exam. Only one vote. With an unshakeable defensive vote against, you can avoid the fate of expulsion.

On the flip side, if you lose that last vote, there is nothing you can do to prevent being expelled.

"We really don't have much time left. It's time for you to give us the name of the student you think was voting in favour."

"I know. But before I answer, I just want to make a suggestion."

"A suggestion?"

"Ah. I'm going to give you a name now, because I don't think this is going to be just a statement. Because if I say the wrong person, reputational damage won't be the end of the story."

"That's... for sure."

"That's why it's not a proper statement, and on the flip side, if it turns out that I said the wrong person, then I'll take the blame and I'll be expelled."

"Wait, Kiyotaka!?"

I'll take responsibility. Hearing these words, the class went in an uproar.

"Oh, are you sure you're okay? Ayanokoji-kun... I don't want any of my classmates to be expelled and Ayanokoji is one of them..."

"Thanks for your concern, Kushida. But I'm fine."

"You say you're going to leave school, but Karuizawa-san is against Ayanokoji-kun's vote, right? That would mean..."

"I won't let that happen. Taking responsibility also means stopping those opposing votes. If the time comes, I will make Kei vote yes. Do you understand?"

"Wow, I get it, but I believe it's never going to happen."

"I understand and accept to a certain extent what Kushida said. I was the one who led the vote to the choice of expelling someone, so of course, I should take some of the blame. However, someone has been stubbornly voting in favour since the very start and I feel that person should take the blame in its entirety."

"Let's face it, there's a student in this class who tried to sneak in a good deal of anonymity by having someone drop out, isn't there?"

This is where Kei joined in to protect me.

"Yeah, I agree with you...! That's the person who should take responsibility for..."

"Yes, that's what I mean. It's the student who voted in favour who's at fault."

Airi and Haruka, and even Akito followed this trend to provide support.

"You've prepared yourselves... haven't you?"

A last word of advice: Kushida's anxious eyes stare at me.

"As long as you are saying names, you have to be prepared to pay for it. Above all, I can speak out and risk my own expulsion because I believe I am as close to 100 percent certain as I can be."

"Wow, okay. Then I'll believe Ayanokōji-kun."

With the word "believe", the intense eyes from Kushida kept on looking at me. The timing of the reveal has been pulled back, which has further increased the interest of the students. Apart from the one who actually voted in favour, the rest of the students are inherently less anxious. That is why they are waiting for the name of the person who has been secretly voting in favour to force an expulsion all along.

They want a good reason to slap them, and they are waiting for the right moment to shout abuse down their throat.

"The person's name is..."

Who I am going to expel and who I have decided to expel. I'm going to reveal it all here.

"Kushida. It's you."

Silence. Not even the ringing in your ears can reach you, a world where sound has completely disappeared.

I know, Horikita. While you conclude that you have to go in favour of this, I understand why you can't take the plunge. But Kushida did not back down. She was determined to get Horikita or I kicked out of the school for this task, and she kept voting for it. Whether or not she realizes that this is a bad move is no longer a small matter. I've decided that Kushida can't be rehabilitated, but you wanted to see her through to the end.

The sacrifice of the class, and the possibility of that sacrifice, how could I not have mentioned the name so far? You may not have been able to save Kushida, but you don't have to sacrifice her yourself. I didn't know what Horikita was thinking at this moment, but I could clearly see that she was looking at me more calmly than I expected. If Kushida has chosen to stand in the way of our efforts, then we have to fight. I'm the one who has to beat this person.

"What...?"

A voice leaked out, incomprehensible. This was probably a sentiment shared by almost all the students, not just Kushida.

"W-What?"

She still didn't feel her name had been called and pointed to herself. Or maybe you've already guessed that. That's why I also came prepared for it, setting it up ahead of time. But even so, I

think I couldn't really decide to reveal Kushida. It's even more so because I think I have some weaknesses against her.

"Yes, you did. It was you who, when urged to vote against it, stubbornly continued to vote in favour of it."

Even my classmates, who were ready to attack me, didn't say a word.

"Or, could it be because... I said that Horikita-san and Ayanokoji-kun should take responsibility?"

Seeing Kushida's tears welling up with grief, Hondō hurried to follow up.

"No, I don't care how many times you say it, Ayanokoji, it can't be Kushida-chan..! You're just saying it because of a grudge."

"It has nothing to do with that. I've been thinking about it since before she named me, or even since the first vote on the fifth task."

"An accusation, eh? Well, of course it would seem so in the circumstances."

It's just a random excuse to make up for almost being expelled. It's obvious to everyone that it looks that way.

"There's no evidence anywhere that she kept voting 'opposed' it. Of course not, because this is an anonymous vote. But I'm going to show everyone that you're the one who kept voting in favour. Do you have any objections?"

"I can't tell you how awful it is. I was the first one to name you two... but I was prepared for it. I've decided to sacrifice myself to protect my class, even if I have to face lies and slander."

Whatever she is going to say, they are all lies. By putting up that line of defence, you ensure that your supporters do not leave you.

"First of all, I would like to tell you why I thought that Kushida was the one who kept voting in favour. It is because there is a student in this class that she really wants to expel. Of course, you won't believe me, but hear me out. The person she wants to expel is Horikita and myself, who she herself mentioned by name."

Many people are confused as to what the hell I am talking about. This is a debate in which not a single mistake can be made.

"I gave you those two names, so that's how it's going to be, huh..."

"No, you don't. From the very first day she entered this school, Kushida has always recognized Horikita as a hindrance more than anyone else."

Kushida will understand, even if she doesn't like it. I'm going to disclose all the information I know about Kushida here and now. There is no way to stop her as she continues to play the role of a pretty, pitiful girl.

"Kushida. You have something in common with Horikita that your other classmates don't, don't you?"

"What? You mean, common ground...?"

Even though she knows it, she has to adopt an attitude of not knowing anything. I could interrupt the performance, but I dare not do so. The defensive instinct to protect herself will make her suffer even more in the future.

"Um... Oh! Are you saying that we're from the same middle school?"

No one would have ever heard of such a story before. My classmates were surprised to hear the information at first hand. The only way is to reveal the cards that Kushida has been hiding.

"Yes. I don't think a single one of these students knew about that, did they?"

The person in question, Horikita, is now staring straight at the podium, her face expressionless. But on the other hand, it is easy to see the eyes of her classmates.

"Well, wait? It's true that I never told anyone about it, but I just never had the chance to talk about it. It was a reasonably big school, and we never even had the same class. It took me a long time to confirm with Horikita-san that we went to the same school..."

Kushida claimed there was no way she would have wanted to expel her from the start. At this point, some of the students, unable to see the situation with Kushida, took action.

"Come on, Ayanokoji. You said you could tell who voted in favour, so I just shut up and listened. That's impossible."

It was Ike who denied it. And his voice soon spread.

"That's right. What Ayanokoji-kun is saying is rude and bitterly unfair."

"What's with the thing of leading people to agree with you, and then only mentioning Kushida-san's name when you're pissed off?"

"In the first place, why are we talking about wanting to expel her just because they were in the same middle school? I mean, if that's the case, did Ayanokōji also go to the same junior high school as the two of them?"

The usual questions popped up from everyone. The grievances that erupt multiply from one to two, two to three. One friend after another appears without asking. There can be no doubt that this is a powerful weapon in the hands of Kushida.

"Kushida, are you really that kind of a character? There's something wrong with you, Ayanokoji."

"Yeah, I know, I know. I'd say it's kind of scary. I've always had a quiet image of him..."

Not only do they protect her, but some of them begin to distrust me for my unusual behaviour.

"Don't blame him, guys. I'm sure Ayanokoji-kun doesn't want to talk about it either. I know what it's like to be in a situation like this and want to blame someone else..."

She picked up the words of her classmates exquisitely and pretended to protect me while setting me up.

"You're too kind, Kikyo. You can't let him say whatever he wants."

Automatically, when the spokespersons of Kushida go berserk, I felt that my right to speak was being revoked. But I also have weapons to fight back.

"It's Ayanokoji-kun who is having an important conversation right now. We shouldn't interfere halfway."

So said Yosuke, giving a warning to any student who tries to interfere with my words.

"Yo yo, Hirata. It's no use listening to Ayanokoji's lies anymore."

"We should only comment on truth or falsehood when we have all the information. Of course, if it turns out to be false, I won't condone it either."

"Is it really worth listening to?"

"Yes, it's something you have to listen to. It's not just Kushida-san who's been named, it's Ayanokoji-kun's own future that's at stake. Isn't that right?"

I had told Yosuke that I may control the vote when there is no time left. But there was no way of knowing in advance what the task would be, and of course he hadn't heard about Kushida. As a purely neutral person, he must judge without error.

"I don't have anything to do with where they're from, and it doesn't mean much that they went to the same secondary school. But it's true that Kushida had a big secret in secondary school."

"Stop it, Ayanokoji-kun... Don't pile on any more lies..."

Tears stream down her cheeks and she begins to cry on the spot.

"Hey Kiyopon, I'm on your side... but even Kikyo-chan is with you. What can I say, is this really a story that needs to continue?"

As I said, the Ayanokōji Group is a group of people who have been involved in activities in the past. Although she doesn't have a lot of friends, she gets on well with Kushida outside of the group. If you care about both sides, it is only natural that you should also try to stop this conflict.

"Haruka. You've been waiting for the existence of the anonymous student to come to light, haven't you? Then you need to hear this story out."

"But, because Kikyo-chan is..."

"No. I know you think so, but Kushida is not who you think she is. I'm sorry, but I have to go on. Kushida's secret lies in the true nature she keeps hidden."

"Kikyo-chan's... true nature..?"

"Yes. On surface, Kushida appears to everyone to be a good person. She is kind, caring, good at her studies, good at sports, a perfect student. But what if the truth is that she is more jealous than anyone else, and is only satisfied if she is first? What if, as a result, she has a history of destroying her class when her true nature was revealed in junior high school?"

"I honestly can't believe this story. But even if it was true, it doesn't add up. It is true that the same junior high school student, Horikita, may know about her past. But how does Ayanokoji-kun know about it? I don't think Horikita-san would tell anyone."

"It wasn't long after I started school that I had the accidental opportunity to see Kushida's true nature. She was not the mild-mannered person she usually was, but she was a person who let her negative emotions out."

Even after all this, Kushida doesn't make any attempt to glare at me. She continued to play the role of the sweet girl who looked at the poor student who was telling lies. It is because of the strong pride that she believes she'll be absolutely fine if she does so. Of course, having bad things said about you, whether true or false, was a bad factor that would cast a shadow over the rest of your school life.

However, it was also a sign that she was determined to get Horikita expelled from the school.

“She want to be seen as a kind person, but she don’t want her true nature to become known. On the other hand, she can’t stand the situation in which Horikita and I are holding her weakness. Why, because she always wants to be on top of the caste.”

“One... more minute or so and the interval will be over.”

We were in the middle of a conversation, but just to make sure, Chabashira-sensei informed us of the time.

“So, what are we going to do, next vote?”

“That’s the only way to get a vote on... for now, Ayanokōji.”

In the current situation, I would of course be the next in line.

“Don’t...”

But it was not Kei, nor Haruka, but Kushida who stopped them.

“Enough is enough... I can’t take it anymore, my heart can’t take it anymore...”

“K-Kushida-san?”

“If I only said what I really meant, it would be the same all the time, I don’t want Horikita-san or Ayanokōji-kun to be expelled. I even made Ayanokōji-kun lie about me by mentioning two names... I don’t want to have to go through this bitter, painful argument anymore! So... I’ll drop out... and then we’ll all be back to normal again, right?”

A student who volunteers to be a candidate for expulsion. This special test, one of the criteria for selecting individual names, will be accepted if only one person comes forward voluntarily, without taking a vote, as Horikita and Yōsuke have just shown.

“Are you sure, Kushida? Once you say it, you can’t take it back.”

“Yes, it’s fine... Do you all agree that I should be expelled? Please...”

When Kushida’s name was selected with the word, the task is displayed on the tablet. The class was upset by her unexpected candidacy.

‘Kushida Kikyo’ to be expelled from the school.

Results of the nineteenth round of voting:

5 in favour

33 Opposed

In due time, the vote was cast on Kushida, and while the result wasn't unanimous, it held overwhelming opposition.

"Huh... why?"

"There's no way they're going to expel you for this. See?"

The 33 students who voted 'opposed' responded with a nod of the heads to show their solidarity.

"Ayanokoji. I honestly think it's disgusting that you're attacking Kushida-chan just so you don't get expelled yourself."

Apart from my vote in favour, only four people voted in favour of Kushida's expulsion. I'm tempted to say "only", but I'm rather surprised that there were five votes.

"Next is Ayanokoji-kun's turn, right?"

If things go on as they are, there will be a vote to expel me. That would be the best chance of unanimity in favour in the current situation.

But only if I allow them to make that decision 10 minutes later.

"Ayanokoji-kun, you say that Kushida-san's true nature is something else, but I won't just suddenly believe it."

"That's right. In the first place, has there ever been any attempt by Kushida-san to expel Horikita-san? If she really wanted to expel her, she would have taken action long ago, wouldn't she?"

If you wait for the right opportunity, you will naturally find a voice that demands what you have to say.

"It's not easy to get a classmate expelled from school. However, I have been a target of Kushida at least once before, in a special exam similar to this unanimous special exam."

By avoiding direct expression, I allowed my classmates to dig up their memories.

"Ah, the Class Poll exam... I'm pretty sure that's when Yamauchi-kun and Kushida-san..."

Yes. Last year, for the first time, we had a vote in our class that resulted in a student being expelled from our class. In the end, Yamauchi was expelled from the school, but one of the people who used Yamauchi to try and push the class to expel me was Kushida. I'm sure it was still fresh in everyone's mind.

"Coincidence? We've had two similar exams and both times I've been a target of expulsion, and both times it's Kushida who's involved. It's too good to be true."

If you remember those days, you will understand that it was strange for Kushida.

"It's true that sometimes I think it's just a coincidence. But Ayanokoji, if Kikyo-chan is deliberately trying to get Ayanokoji expelled, would she try it at such a coincidental time?"

It's not as simple as that.

"Kushida thought I was on her side. You didn't think I would expose your whole school life like this, did you?"

"An ally?"

"Oh. Am I saying that wrong? Kushida."

"I'm the one, what should I do, Ayanokoji-kun...? What is the right way to answer?"

Basically, Kushida can only deny or ask back. As long as I can't affirm it, the initiative is always with me.

"Give me proof, Ayanokoji. If you're going to blame Kushida-chan any more, you're going to need it."

It was Hondo who came out in force. It seemed that he had extraordinarily strong feelings for Kushida.

"That's true. It may be pointless to continue this story without evidence. I'll tell you why Kushida was trusting me from now on."

Don't panic, just make sure the water soaks in.

"It was a long time ago. Kushida threatened to expel me from school, and I made a deal with her which involved me giving her half of my monthly private points in exchange for her not expelling me."

No one had ever imagined that such a story would be told, and it came as a slight surprise to Kushida's defenders.

"Isn't that right?"

"What...?"

Maybe she hadn't expected this to come up, or maybe it had been in the back of her mind but she hadn't decided how to respond. Either way, Kushida was at a loss for words. She can't honestly admit that she's been given private points. On the other hand, it is difficult to deny that you have received them. Even if she can falsely claim that she hasn't received any in this moment, the truth will come out when it's confirmed later when we get our phones back. This is because the fact of who transferred how much and to whom will remain in the transaction history.

"How is it? Can you tell me that you haven't received a single point?"

"That's..."

I'm not going to let you take your time.

Just as I was about to turn my gaze to Chabashira-sensei, Kushida's lips quivered as she replied.

"S-sure... I receive private points every month from Ayanokoji-kun..."

Kushida, who has denied most of what I have said, had to admit it. If I were to get a confirmation from Chabashira-sensei, I can say that I know the flow of points at this moment, and she can't avoid that the situation will be bad at once. There is some skepticism as to whether the teacher, Chabashira, is aware of the transfer of points between individuals at any time, and whether she would leak personal information, but Kushida is not willing to take that risk.

"But, but the... reason is totally different! Ayanokoji-kun asked me to keep them for him, so I didn't even use... one point, of course?"

There are only one or two ways to justify the fact that you receive half of your classmates' private points every month: either because they asked you to keep them, as Kushida said, or because they gave them to you for free. If you say that it was given to you unilaterally, as in the case of the latter, you will have to make up for it, so they almost asked you to keep it. That's how it goes.

"I didn't give them to her to hold for me. I was paying the price, the condition that I wouldn't be expelled."

“That’s a lie.”

I offered her half of my private points for the deal. I’m sure Kushida remembers it well. I even took the time to record the day. But such a thing can be sealed off without being used, depending on the circumstances. No, rather the opposite. It is a double-edged sword.

“Lies, huh? But, Kushida, when you signed this contract with me, you said you recorded it for your own insurance, didn’t you? If that recording comes out of your phone or something, you won’t be able to get away with it.”

“R-recording? I don’t know anything about that...”

She denied it once, despite being overwhelmed. The recording is probably saved somewhere, but apparently not on her phone. You don’t carry around a risky recording directly with you, do you? That would have made this quicker, but no matter.

“It’s the same thing if you’re hiding the recordings somewhere unknown. We signed this contract in February this year, and I was also recording the conversations we had. I recorded it so I can use it as a weapon if something goes wrong.”

She looked at me with her eyes opened wide. I don’t think she could have imagined that.

“I’ve listened to the recording several times and I remember every word. “I’m going to give you half of my private points moving forward.” I think that’s how I started.”

“That’s a lie. I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“That’s certainly not a bad offer. But I’m sorry, I’m not in need of private points. I guess more money is better than less, but I have enough.” So you replied Kushida.”

“I don’t know...”

“If you want, I can ask Chabashira-sensei to bring my phone now.”

“I don’t mind. But you can’t do it, we’re in the middle of a special exam, remember?”

“If you use your mobile phone, it can lead to cheating, so it must be confiscated. However, you can leave all the operation of the phone to Chabashira-sensei and just ask her to play back the recorded data. Because this way there is no room for cheating.”

Of course, I do not believe that such exceptions are granted unconditionally during special examinations. However, Kushida’s anxiety was so great that she could not help but look at Chabashira-sensei in front of her.

"You wouldn't like it if I had Chabashira-sensei bring in mobile phones. All the hard work you've done to cover it up will be for naught. But you already know, don't you? I'm not going to stop."

What is Kushida thinking now, with fewer and fewer voices in the room?
She turned her back to me and stopped moving, as if she had gone rigid, and kept her eyes focused on the front. Kushida, of course, remembers that day and, being a cautious person, she would have made sure that the recording was in working order. In other words, she heard it repeatedly. By saying the whole exchange, some words must have matched the audio data in her memory.

"You may have enough to spend as pocket money, but you can never have too much in the case of an emergency."

There has definitely been a big change in Kushida, who used to be all about being a victim. She has reached the point where it is impossible for her to continue pretending to be an angel in this class.

"Oh, shut up already..."

A classmate gulped. They'd heard a voice that they couldn't understand, wondering who had just said that. The only way to stop her from saying any more is to show her true colours. But if she reveals her true nature, everything will be destroyed.

"You know what Chabashira-sensei said. Private points are for your own protection—"

"Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

The words of rejection and obstruction reach me, but I do not care, I will continue to the end.

"That proposal. No matter how you look at it, Ayanokoji-kun is at a disadvantage. If you're saying that this is a crisis where Ayanokoji-kun is going to drop out of school, I can still understand that, can't you?" This was the conversation between me and Kushida before the deal. If you can listen to the same audio that I just said here in front of everyone, it should solve everything."

It doesn't matter if I really have the recording or not, it's not important. The only thing that is necessary and important is the fact that the lines match the actual exchange.

"That's enough!!!"

Kushida shouted to silence me.

The whole thing started in the first-year, when Ichinose Honami had become vulnerable, and I knew Kushida would have plenty of dirt on her classmates. When I'd asked her for help, I'd

offered to give up my private points. No doubt the conversation that preceded the offer, wherein Horikita and I were demanded to drop out of the school, will remain intact. You'd thought you'd have a convenient hand, but you were wrong. You've left yourself a trail of evidence that will lead to your own downfall.

"Please tell me exactly where in the conversation you want me to leave it. So that myself and the whole class can understand."

The others, hoping that there was a mistake, just watched Kushida anxiously.

"Sorry..." Briefly, Kushida muttered an apology.

"To what?"

"Indeed, I promised not to fight with Ayanokoji-kun in exchange for half of his private points. That's true, so..."

Not an apology to me, but an apology to my classmates for lying to them.

"And now I don't think about it anymore! I really want to be friends with Horikita-san and Ayanokoji-kun. I've never voted in favour of expelling someone...!"

Kushida stopped and raised her voice in an attempt to hang onto the complete anonymity of the name. The way her classmates looked at her was very different from the warmth they had shown her in the past.

Even if I didn't have all the students completely in my favour, it was no longer possible for her to go about her daily life as before. She seems to understand that completely.

"I wonder if the truth is that Ayanokoji-kun kept voting in favour?"

"What does that mean?"

"Ayanokoji-kun wanted to expel me from school. So he took action to force the vote to be unanimous in favour of it. Because it's strange... that he's always quiet and unassertive, but spontaneously moves to expel people from school now."

Kushida, who is as close to being the culprit as it gets, tries to shift the blame from herself to me.

I'm sorry, but I've already predicted that you were going to use that strategy.

"Hey, Karuizawa-san."

Brushing her hair, she turns her gaze towards Kei.

“What?”

“It seems like you’re dating Ayanokoji, but did you know that when we first started school, Ayanokoji was desperately trying to get me to go out with him?”

“What is that, what are you talking about?”

Kei is more calm and objective than most people, but even she has her weaknesses. It’s when love is involved that uncontrollable emotions explode. When it was mentioned that I was a candidate for expulsion earlier, she aggressively defended me at her own risk. This is why Kushida must have been able to see the flaws in Kei’s heart.

“He even touched my breasts in the dark when I didn’t want him to, didn’t you Ayanokoji-kun?”

“Ha... breasts! What do you mean, “breasts”?

“I knew you didn’t know. He did such a terrible thing to me as soon as we started school.”

A feeling of disgust begins to spread among the girls, including the boys who have taken a liking to Kushida.

“I tried to gently tell him to stop right then and there, but I was... too scared to do anything about it...”

“I know it sounds self-serving, but there is no such thing as a fact that I touched her breasts.”

“Well, that’s what Kiyotaka says!”

“That’s true, you have to say that. But really, Ayanokoji-kun touched my breasts.”

“Kushida. I hate to say this, but isn’t that unsightly?”

“It’s not the same as the recording you made, but I have proof too. I have a uniform with Ayanokoji-kun’s fingerprints all over it, and I’ve kept it as it was at the time. You know what will happen if I submit it to...?”

Just as I said I had a recording on my phone, she pulled the same stunt on me. If this proves to be true later, it will be me who will be in trouble.

“Explain to me what you mean by that.”

From the point of view of a woman who is being told the story objectively, it is understandable that she would want to ask for an explanation.

"There is no such fact at all. It's more a matter of whether it's true or false. You speak of clothes with fingerprints on them, but how well preserved are they? If it was just after she entered the school, it has been a year and a half. It's not easy to get a print from a piece of clothing, and if it's not preserved well, it's not in good condition. I don't think it would be possible to get fingerprints."

Even the surface of clothing is bumpy due to knitting, making it difficult to see fingerprint lines. Considering factors such as UV rays, moisture and dryness, we can say that it is 100% impossible.

"..."

Just like the recording data, none of the cards you have are usable. It doesn't matter how many other cards you have in your hand. There is no excuse that anyone can think of. I won't allow it.

"If there had really been such damage in the first place, I should have been pursued immediately."

"Why... why... why... why..!"

Kushida stormed over to me, grabbed me by the collar and glared at me intensely.



In the face of a furious Kushida, I proceeded to talk to her in an amicable manner.

"At one time, you were working with Ryueen to get me and Horikita expelled. Isn't that right?"

One after the other, Kushida's secrets were exposed for everybody to witness. At this point, it won't have much of an effect on me if I provide new information that is partly wrong.

"Why, why, why!!!"

The hand that grasped my uniform became stronger.

"Why are you betraying me?! You promised not to be hostile, remember?"

"Of course, I didn't want to antagonise you. I wasn't interested in the fact that you have two sides to your face. That's why I wanted to make it a unanimous decision without naming myself or Horikita until the end. But when someone's expulsion is at stake, there's no choice. I have to protect my classmates."

For the past year and a half, Kushida has been steadily building up bonds with her friends. And now it all came crashing down.

With no words coming from anyone, Kushida began to slow down.

"Ah... ah... no, hey. Not anymore."

Kushida's face distorted in disgust at her own disgrace, and she looked resigned, as if she had realised everything. But she soon regained her composure and, with a smile on her face, released her hand from me.

"Fufu... I've been a fool, haven't I? That deal was a mistake..."

The angry demeanour disappeared at once, and words of indifference came out of Kushida.

"I thought I knew that Ayanokoji-kun was a tough opponent, but I still didn't think he would betray me here. It's unexpected."

"Wait it's, lies Kikyo-chan... what Ayanokoji-kun just told us... he's lying, right?"

"Lies? I'm sorry, but it's all true."

"Such a... Why...?"

"Some things have to be protected at all costs. Don't you understand? How could you possibly know? Oh, my God, I'm done with everything."

She shrugged her shoulders, unconcerned with her own predicament.

"Yes. I couldn't stand Horikita-san and Ayanokoji-kun. I just couldn't forgive the two of them for knowing my secret that I kept hidden. I've been trying to get the chance to expel them for a long time."

"I'm certainly surprised at the last task, but still, you knew you couldn't push it too much, didn't you? You knew what would happen if you tried to force it."

Even if she hated us, there were plenty of times when she could have stepped aside. Nevertheless, Kushida continued to vote in favour of the proposal and repeatedly acted in a manner that could be described as halfcrazy.

This is something I always felt was out of character with Kushida during the exam. For a moment her eyes wavered, and she looked perturbed, but this soon faded away. Before the special exam, she had asked Horikita to be our leader. It seems that she was expecting this kind of task...

“Apart from that I couldn’t stand the situation where people kept knowing about my past. I knew it would be extremely difficult to get Horikita to drop out of school, but I couldn’t resist the urge.”

The students who had been protecting her would have been at a loss for words. The fact that she was planning to expel Horikita does not mean that her friends are to blame. Of course, she was guilty of forcing the class to choose the route of expulsion by continuously voting in favour of it, but it is still difficult to say that we could win a unanimous vote in favour of Kushida’s expulsion. We need more damage to be done to this class in order to make sure she is expelled.

“You can’t make Horikita or me leave school. That’s too bad.”

“In the next vote I will be expelled. This class will get class points because of my sacrifice, huh? Good for you guys. I think you can move up to Class B now.”

It’s hard to believe that those words were spoken to a group of people who had been friends up until this afternoon.

“There’s nothing left for you to turn around.”

“Fufu, you’re probably right. But...”

Bringing her face close to my neck, she whispered coldly, “I’m sorry.”

“You can at least show a little resistance, can’t you?”

It was a whisper, but more than enough for the class to pick up on. It’s safe to say that Kushida had been preparing for this in private, without the need for us to rile her up.

“You can’t. You don’t have any more friends who will vote against your expulsion.”

“No, I don’t. If I’m going to be expelled anyway, I’m going to have to destroy the whole...”

The true nature that led to the collapse of her class in middle school begins to show its face.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Don’t you know? The secret of this class that only I have. I still have time until the end of the interval, so I’ll tell you everything.”

“There’s nothing in it for you is there?”

“And there’s no loss. Ayanokoji-kun is going to get in trouble, so it’s time to get started.”

Yes, that's it. Let out the truth and the stress you've been accumulating for so long. That way, everyone will be amazed and awed by your twistedness. Only then does any room for sympathy disappear and unanimity is achieved.

"Other than Karuizawa-san just now - yes, Shinohara Satsuki consulted me about various things, right?"

Shinohara Satsuki was the first target of the myriad of spears aimed at the large number of girls.

"What, what, what!"

"Shinohara-san is not particularly cute or pretty, or rather a bit ugly, isn't she? Maybe that's why it's so amusing that only ugly boys like Ike-kun and Komiya-kun come on to her. Did you know that Karuizawa, Matsushita, Mori and others laughed at such a thing?"

A single pike instantly fractured into countless pieces, and one by one the names were called, and the targets were distributed.

"No, don't do that! I didn't say that! Don't you lie to her!"

Mori immediately denied this, but Kushida had no intention of letting the matter rest.

"Huh? You laughed at them, saying they were the most perfect match for each other. Don't worry, I laughed and said, "Don't do that!" but I felt the same way. Is that right... Nene...?"

"No, no... I was just, you know..."

"Shinohara, it seems that Ike-kun confessed to you on the boat and you went out with him, but it was a pretty easy choice, even though you were wavering between him and Komiya-kun until just before that. Or are you planning to go out with Ike-kun on a trial basis and then go with Komiya-kun, who was closer to your true love?"

"Oh, hey, Satsuki!"

For Kushida, there was flammable material lying around all over the class. As soon as a fire started in one place starts to spread, the words fly to new material.

"Speaking of romantic connections, Wang-san has been asking me for advice."

"No, please don't!"

"Don't? By don't, do you mean stop talking about Wang-san's love for Hirata-kun?"

“Huh!”

Mii-chan was forced to suddenly look at the person she has a crush on in the middle of the classroom. In an instant, her face turned red and she started to cry when she saw Yosuke looking at her.

“Stop for a second. It’s only the beginning. That’s not the only secret I’ve heard from everyone. Do you want to try something a bit more serious for the next time? Let’s see, for a start, we could try Hasebe-san.”

“Kikyo-chan...”

“Oh, stop calling me by that familiar name. You can’t even make friends, and you call people by their nicknames just so you can feel closer to them. I’m sure it’s annoying to people who hear you call them that.”

In the meantime, Shinohara and Mori and Ike and others continued to force each other to lie about what they had said or didn’t say, while Kushida shifted her focus to Haruka. The interval will soon be over, but the unanimous decision to expel Kushida will be imminent. If we drag our feet here, Kushida will continue to reveal more and more secrets.

Part 1

After only a few minutes of listening to Ayanokoji-kun's story, the people around her have made a 180 degree change in their opinion of Kushida-san.

Her friends used to be as strong and united as Ayanokoji-kun's group. But now, for some reason, they seem to have a very fragile relationship. Even I, who knew Kushida-san's background before anyone else, would have recommended Kushida-san if I had been asked to nominate someone in favour of expulsion.

I may have seen the power of Ayanokoji-kun before anyone else in the school, and I'm not sure I'll ever forget it.

The class was like a picture of hell. At the end of the interval, the voting begins for Kushida-san, who will have the votes of the majority. That's probably the end of this special exam. Our class will get 100 class points while making sacrifices. This will be a valuable asset for us in our quest for Class A.

But... Yes, I need to sort out my situation first.

I am sure that I am in the same flow of time as everyone else, but for me, every second ticks by slowly but surely. The second hand of the analogue clock, which doesn't look like a classroom clock, is slowing down, as if it is about to stop. On the contrary, my senses were getting sharper and sharper.

What is my purpose? I asked myself.

The answer, of course, is to graduate as Class A. So class points are very important. It's obvious. So how much is Kushida-san worth?



It is difficult to assign a clear value to each student. But if you ask me whether it would be worth at least 100 class points to expel her, I would say no.

Then I'll change my thinking. If you fail the special test, you will lose 350 class points. If I were to save Kushida-san instead, could I be sure that she would be powerful enough to be worth it? I don't think it's absolutely impossible, but it's difficult.

It's not just about her, it's about me too. We expel Kushida-san because she is not worth 350 points. This is a normal thought.

Then what will happen to me, Horikita Suzune? What will happen to the student known as Kushida Kikyo? Do you just want to help? Or do you just want to cut them down?

By concentrating my attention, I transcended time and erased any notion of extraneous sound.

Can I just leave it all to Ayanokoji-kun? No.

Then think about it. What is right, what is wrong, and is there anything that only I can do? I recognise, respect and think again about Ayanokoji-kun's abilities.

A ray of light shone through the darkness behind my eyelids.

Oh, yes, I see.

Eventually, I arrived at one definite answer. That Kushida-san will be expelled from school here and now... It is not the right answer. And that I am the only person who could save her now. The frozen clock thawed, and the second hand started to move once more.

Part 2

One by one, students began to support Kushida's expulsion from the school, but one student stood up for her.

"Don't go any further, Kushida-san. You won't be able to turn back."

"Huh? It's just starting to get interesting, isn't it? Don't interrupt me, Horikita-san."

"Not so fast. I can't listen to any more ugly stories."

"Is the truth about me so ugly?"

I think she took it as a compliment and looked at Horikita with the most cheerful smile of the day.

"Yes. At least I don't think these revelations are beautiful. But it's not only you that I find ugly, but also the people who are now calling for you to be expelled from the school for leaking their secrets."

The unexpected scolding and reprimanding of the classmates was unbearable.

"Why us? We've done nothing wrong!"

"You guys told Kushida-san a secret you didn't want anyone to know. Why is that?"

"Well, that's because I thought I could trust Kushida-san! And yet..."

"Yes. Kushida-san was trusted more than anyone else in the class. Usually, it's not easy to gain the trust of people. And there are probably only a few people in your life with whom you can share a secret that you can't even tell anyone. Of course, I don't admire Kushida-san for leaking your secrets. It's understandable that you're surprised that there's more to her than meets the eye. But we all have two sides to our story, don't we?"

It would be a rare person who lives a life of honesty and truth.

"Hey, but it doesn't matter; she kept voting in favour. That's unacceptable, isn't it?"

"Right. As for what you did to get myself and Ayanokoji-kun expelled, you made a choice that was too selfish. You must bear a heavy weight of responsibility. But instead of making her pay for it with expulsion, you can use her skills to pay us back many times over in the future."

Here, Horikita's point would have been understood by her classmates.

"Are you saying that you won't expel Kushida-san?"

"Yes, you're right. I think... I think I want to keep Kushida-san in this class."

"Huh? What selfish thing are you saying when you thought I dropped the conversation?"

The choice was not to expel Kushida. It was Kushida herself who was the first to object to this.

"Why are you defending me? You're not going to vote for another girl from here, are you? Or are you just going to have fun beating me to death? You've got good taste, you know that?"

"I don't like to make jokes, unfortunately. I'm serious."

"If you're serious, I'll make you change your mind. Let's resume the continuation of hell."

"I didn't think it looked much like 'hell' when I saw it."

"Heh. Then what would you say it looked like? Tell me."

"It wasn't dumb, it wasn't funny, it was just plain ugly. I saw nothing but a mere foolish idiot."

"What?"

"Sure, you can study better than most people. But you are fundamentally stupid to the point of being fatal. In the first place, when you were in junior high school, your classmates found out who you really are, and you broke the class by revealing all their secrets. You came to this school to make amends for that, but unfortunately you met me again, who attended the same junior high school as you. And as soon as you started school, Ayanokoji-kun saw your true face? That makes me laugh. Not only that, he wasn't even interested in your past, but you couldn't stand his existence on your own and kept insisting on expelling him from school by telling us every detail. After all, you thought you were being clever by making a deal with Ayanokoji-kun, but you just ended up being taken advantage of. And this is the end result? You were so focused on the fact that we were in favour of expelling a student that you lost your control."

Horikita sighed insultingly.

Kushida, who had been smiling and laughing with a sly smile on her face, was now transformed into an angry young girl.

"You don't know how I feel, and you don't know how I like it! I want to be the best! I want to be happy, even when I'm stressed as shit! What's wrong with trying to get rid of you when you're in the way?"

Kushida clasps her hands together. Her hands are so tightly clenched that the blood vessels seem to bulge out of them.

"You have some personality problems, but that's the same for me. But you're a much harder worker than I am."

"Don't lie, you're making me laugh. You always have to say things that make me mad, don't you?"

"I'm not lying, I'm just telling you the truth, which you love. I am honestly amazed and envious of your effort and talent to get to know so many people, both boys and girls."

When told this, the people, enraged by Kushida, retorted.

"What's so great about us being harassed by Kushida-san now?"

"Be kind with lies. Faking kindness. That's terrible? That's just frivolous. Think again how difficult it is to be kind. Do you have the talent to smile at everyone, to reach out to everyone, to help everyone?"

How stressful it must have been for her to deal with all her friends on a daily basis. Many of us would like to be like Kushida, but we know we can't be. Listening to other people's unimportant stories, cutting through all this, cannot be continued by an ordinary person. She has done this with a gentle smile and has supported many people from the shadows.

"Stop. I don't want to hear any more of this bullshit from you."

"Why? You're good at looking into people's minds, don't you know? I don't mean to make fun of you, I don't mean to insult you, but I really appreciate you." Horikita blocked the students who tried to refute this story as if she were ahead of them.

"She has a talent that no one else has, and to expel her is a huge loss to the class."

"Shut the hell up!"

"Therefore I cannot agree with Kushida-san's withdrawal from the school. I'm going to put my own money on it and do everything I can to make sure we make the best of her. No, I will definitely make the most of her."

"I told you to stop!!!"

"You never know. It's only when I knew everything about you that I developed a great liking for you."

For some reason, Kushida did not hide the details of her past, which she wanted to keep to herself. Maybe it wasn't an act to get me expelled, but because deep down she wanted me to know everything and really wanted to share it.

Kushida's face was covered with large tears. And then, like a child, she cried, unable to connect her words and unable to hide her frustration. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. These words were repeated sparingly.



It's no wonder. Anyone who knows Kushida's true nature will stay away. I have. Yet, for some reason, Horikita, who had been keeping her distance, closed that distance to Kushida. Kushida had no such idea. Horikita, whom she hated so much, was the first person who could understand her. It is still too early to tell whether this will be accepted, but it has certainly brought about a change in Kushida. I had decided that it would be impossible to win Kushida over and had devised a strategy to get rid of her. Horikita, on the other hand, decided not to exclude but to protect. But then it is inevitable that the next problem will erupt.

"We're in the middle of a conversation, but it's almost the end of the interval. What do we do?"

What to do, of course, is to volunteer as the specific student, or to nominate a candidate, for who gets the vote.

"We're running out of time. The people who are voting for Kushida-san, please vote for me. I'll explain later."

She appealed to her classmates to nominate her, as she could not use her already used one-time candidacy.

"Jeez, don't be silly! I'm the one who's going to get expelled! Just nominate me and vote me out!"

"I'm not joking. I'm telling you, you're the one who created this situation and you're going to be held accountable until the very end. And I'm not going to expel you as a penalty. If you do, I will make fun of you for the rest of your life. I will make you a laughing stock forever."

I know that some students were not sure who to nominate in the end, but that is not the point.

"It's time. Voting will now begin for Horikita, who had the majority of the votes for the nomination."

Even if Kushida were to be chosen by recommendation, it would be meaningless as long as Horikita votes against her expulsion. There was a vote in favour and oppose Horikita's expulsion, but of course it was not unanimous. The cheap provocation must have worked well enough for Kushida. Everyone has less than 60 seconds to complete their votes.

'Horikita Suzune' to be expelled from the school.

1 in favour

37 opposed

"Now that we are in the interval, I will say it again. I'm going to express my opposition to Kushida-san's expulsion."

Kushida was ranting and raving in inarticulate language, but Horikita was no longer paying attention. This hurt Kushida's pride again, but also succeeded in silencing her. If she were to be expelled from the school here, she would have no way to fight Horikita. But it was unexpected. I was planning to screw them over, whoever they were. The inside of my head gets hot. It's not just a joke that she wanted to protect Kushida. She said she was confident that she could use her strengths to overcome her major weaknesses.

So, Horikita has taken her foot off the gas a stage earlier than I'd expected. Of course, this is not to say that there is no material to refute from here. Many students are still determined to expel Kushida, who has now been reduced to absolute evil.

It's not that they can't force their way through, but now that Horikita has raised her voice, it's hard to assume that she will simply quit. There is no denying the possibility that, if time runs out, the school may choose to keep the number of students who drop out to zero. I'm sorry, but that is unacceptable.

"But, Horikita-san. I wonder if protecting Kushida-san means choosing to run out of time."

Yosuke asked about the points that need to be checked right now.

"I know that protecting Kushida-san is not the end of the story. I've got my own answers."

I don't think so - no, that's not what you mean, Horikita.

"We must avoid failing this special exam. It's an absolute must that someone is expelled."

It meant that she was not only prepared to rescue Kushida, but also to cut someone else at the same time. Even though I could feel Horikita's growth, I took action before she could speak. There is no need for Horikita to take on the cruel role of announcing the expulsion of a student.

"Wait a minute."

I forcefully interrupted Horikita's attempt to continue. The 'judges' here are mentally overloaded, no matter how much justification they may have for their actions.

It is easy to say that it is also an important experience, but it is too much for Horikita at the moment. Above all, if you make even a single mistake, you are bound to run out of time.

I am the only person who can create a unanimous decision to expel somebody from the school.

Wait, no. She's looking at me like that. And I understand. It's obvious that the person that Horikita and I have in mind is the same person.

"Kushida, the only student who kept voting in favour of expelling a student, deserves to be expelled. But she's also a capable student, as Horikita says. Then we'll have to think of a different approach."

"Well, wait a minute, Ayanokoji. The people in the class voted in favour of you because you're not a traitor. Now you're telling me you're going to go away with that and choose someone else to expel? I'm not convinced!"

"It's not just Ike who is unhappy, I'm sure it's all of us. But we still have to make a decision. We have to lead in a way that is as fair as possible."

"Fairness is... There's no way to do that."

"The option of gaining class points by expelling someone. The expulsion part is often seen as a negative, but if certain conditions are met, it can be a positive, as in the case of the traitor who voted in favour of the expulsion and was supported by many. If the class points gained are worth more than the student being expelled, then it is a decision well worth choosing. In other words, the only people who should be expelled are those who are currently unwanted in the class. So what is the criteria for this? It is the sum of all their parts. Someone who has academic ability, physical ability, or any ability that doesn't fall into those two categories. To put it simply, students who have the ability to lead, such as Horikita, or the ability to organize a group, such as Yosuke and Kei. Those are the ones you can exclude. Of course, if you think I'm being patronizing, you're free to argue."

As the time is about to expire, the classmates were silent, not wanting to interfere.

"And this story should not include the future, or their prospects. It is difficult and speculative to objectively assess who will actually grow and by how much. In the final analysis, the OAA is the impartial arbiter."

It is the school's quantification of the student's ability, without the student's emotions.

As of September 1st, the lowest score in this class was 36 points overall. Many students check their rank and score, but not many know who is at the bottom each time.

"The student in this class who currently has the lowest OAA is... Sakura Airi."

I replied, not looking at Airi in particular, but looking around at the whole scene.

"What about... What are you talking about? Don't joke around at a time like this."

Haruka stood up and glared at me with a furious glare.

“I’m just giving an objective opinion. It’s up to the class to decide if they agree.”
I’m not going to listen to personal opinions and continue talking.

“Objective”? What’s objective? The OAA rankings are what? Does that make it OKAY to expel Airi? And why would... Kiyopon say that!”

“Then who do you think should be expelled?”

“Well, that’s...!”

“People who are not prepared to say names directly have no right or entitlement to choose who to expel.”

“Oh, Ike-kun! He’s not that different from Airi in terms of academic and physical ability!”

It is true that on the OAA, he was once tied for last place with Airi. But now he has added one point to his tally to 37. He’s one step ahead.

“Then let’s simply ask here. All those opposed to Airi leaving the school, please raise your hands.”

Haruka immediately raised her hand. Almost at the same time. Akito and Keisei also raise their hands. Of course, this would be natural for the Ayanokoji Group.

“Three, huh? Next, which students are opposed to Ike leaving school?”

A number of boys, including Sudō, and girls, including Shinohara and Mori, who owed a debt of gratitude to Shinohara, put their hands up, and there were 11 clear objections.

“Why are you...”

“Building friendships is also a fine skill. I must say that Airi is inferior to Ike in that respect.”

“Can you look Airi in the eye and say that?”

“Is that what you want?”

“Huh? Stop it!”

When I was about to look into Airi’s frightened eyes, Haruka stopped me.

“We can have hand-raise votes for Hondō, Okitani, or another student, but it will not be less than three votes for Airi.”

“What is that... you’re seriously kidding. We don’t have many friends, that’s for sure. But that doesn’t mean you can expel Airi in this way!”

If I had any other choice, I would do it. But we’re past that stage now.

“If we’re being... honest... losing 300 class points is critical.”

One of the Ayanokoji Group, Airi’s friend Keisei, quietly lets that slip.

“Yukimu, you can’t be serious! Don’t tell me you agree with Airi’s expulsion too!?”

“No, no! I’m not in favour of it yet!”

“Not yet? You mean you’re going to agree to it? Huh? You’ve got to be kidding me!”

“Well, no but...!”

As if realising everything, Haruka bit her lip and made a decision.

“It’s disgusting. It can’t be. What is this... I thought we were friends?”

The cold voice is directed at me, and also at Keisei, whose true feelings have leaked out.

“And so are the others. No one wants to protect her. That’s right, you guys don’t care what happens to Airi, or who you don’t get along with, as long as you save yourselves. You put Kushida-chan first just because you have a little use for her? You’re going to abandon a girl who’s trying her best to keep up with the class and not cause trouble? Oh yeah, oh yeah, this is the best class ever.”

Keisei’s unintentional comment proved to be an offence to Haruka. No one wanted to make eye contact and they delegitimised themselves so as not to get involved.

“Enough. I’m not going to expel Airi. If you want, you can vote for me. I’ll happily be expelled from the school.”

Haruka tries to protect Airi by bringing up her voluntary withdrawal from school. It’s all part of the plan. In fact, that statement only strangles itself.

“Wait, wait, Haruka-chan! I can’t expel Haruka-chan either!”

“It’s okay, Airi. You have to stay in this school. I didn’t like this class in the first place. But after I got to know you, and Kiyopon, Yukimu and Miyacchi, every day was fun. Even though

Yamauchi-kun left the school, I thought that it wouldn't happen again, and I thought that I can do well with everyone here..."

Staring at Chabashira-sensei, Haruka makes a formal statement.

"I'm the candidate for expulsion. It's almost time, isn't it?"

As I predicted, the declaration would take precedence, and Haruka would step up to the guillotine.

"OK? Airi, you must definitely vote in favour. The others don't have any problem with it, right? You can protect yourselves, so there's no reason to vote against it."

"That's not... I can't vote in favour of that..!"

Airi shouts that she can't vote in favour of Haruka's expulsion.

"It's okay, I have nothing to regret if I have to leave school to protect you."

"But...!"

"That's enough discussion. We will now start the voting."

On the basis of Haruka's strong will, a vote is taken in favour and against. The results are shown on the monitor...

'Hasebe Haruka' to be expelled from the school.

35 in favour

3 opposed

Almost all the students voted in favour of the proposal, but three voted against it. The three of them must have been an easy guess for Haruka.

"Airi!"

Of course, it is clear from the vote that Airi definitely voted against.

"I can't do it, I can't! I can't let Haruka be expelled!"

"I said I was trying to protect you! And don't even get me started on Miyacchi and Yukimū!"

Haruka was ready to be expelled from the school, but it turns out that some students don't want her to be expelled.

"I don't want you to be expelled from school... I can't vote yes."

While showing a bitter and agonizing expression, Akito and I look each other in the eye and answer clearly.

"Then why Airi?"

"I wouldn't say that... but if you're asking me to take one or the other I'm..."

"I'm so sorry!"

Suddenly, Keisei shouted and interrupted the two boys. He stood up and bowed his head.

"I voted in favour of... and if we don't, the class won't be able to reach Class A..."

He answered, confessing the whereabouts of a vote that would not be revealed if he'd kept quiet.

"What? Then who is the other one? The one who put the other against in this situation!"

"That vote was mine."

"Ah! Kiyopon, what's wrong with you?! You don't have to defend me!"

"I told you. I have a new policy that I will cut the least able students in this class. Whether it's you who wants to drop out, or Kushida who tried to drop out, I'm not going to change this policy, no matter what new students come forward. I can't change it."

If we take a step back here, there will be no unanimity in favour.

"It is a fact that Sakura is the lowest ranked in OAA, and cutting the students who have not contributed much to the class is not so bad. It's not that bad, is it..?"

I am prepared to take the risk of speaking out in this situation and I will give my opinion.

"Don't be silly. Think about it in your own surroundings. If one of your dearest friends were to drop out of school, would you be able to laugh about it afterwards? I wouldn't. I would never!"

"It is Airi who should be expelled. There is no other choice anymore."

"No no, Kiyopon! No matter who agrees with you, only Kiyopon has to be on Airi's side!"

I know. And because I know that, I'm going to speak.

"I'm not going to change my mind. If Haruka continues to disagree with Airi's expulsion, then this class will have to end here."

"Then why don't you do what you want? I will continue to oppose Airi's expulsion from school until the very end!"

Only one. If you continue to oppose us until the end, she will not be expelled. That law is absolute. The most efficient way to break that law is to...

"Thank you, Haruka... It's all right now."

In a trembling voice, Airi laughs as if she has realised everything.

"Ai...ri...?"

"If there is one student in the class who deserve it... maybe it's me. There's nothing wrong with what Kiyotaka-kun is saying, Haruka."

"Airi!"

"You're right about everything. If someone has to drop out, then I, the biggest drag on the class, should disappear."

Directly stop the person who is voting against it using the person who's going to be expelled from the school.

"I can't! I would never let Airi be expelled from school! Never!!! I don't care if this class doesn't move up to Class A, I'm going to make sure that we all graduate together with Airi!"

"No, you can't. Even if I do, I'm sure I'll regret it a lot. I'm sure I'll regret it for a long, long time, that it was my fault we didn't make it to Class A."

"It's all right! There's nothing wrong with you! I'm just protecting you because I'm selfish!"

"Thank you... But there's no way I can put that kind of responsibility on Haruka-chan."

"What, what's that... There's no such thing as..!"

Preventing students from dropping out is not always in their best interests. If this happens, a vote against will only make Airi suffer.

“Self-sacrifice sounds good. I’m sure the people in our class are deeply relieved to have someone like Haruka in their lives. If the class is really running smoothly, it might be a good choice to make. So, Sudō, are you willing to sacrifice yourself for the sake of the class?”

“No, no... I’m that-”

“Satō, what about you?”

“Wow, me? I’m not really like that-”

“How about you, Onodera?”

“Probably can’t.”

“If you ask anyone else any more, the answer would be the same. Basically, no one wants to sacrifice themselves.”

“I’d really like to be expelled. Then you wouldn’t have any problems.”

“We rely on students who are willing to sacrifice themselves. Once they learn that easy way, when they are put in a similar situation in the future, they will repeatedly ask for volunteers voluntarily. It’s too late to try to make a fair decision.”

“I don’t know... I don’t understand that logic! I want to protect Airi! That’s all I want!”

“Even if Haruka defended her by expelling herself from school, Airi could get expelled the very next day.”

“Don’t talk to me in terms of an indeterminate future.”

“There is no definite future anywhere. So, you have to make the best of it.”

No matter how many words I put in front of her, she doesn’t seem to be able to hear me. But Airi’s ears have definitely heard. That’s the important thing.

“It’s okay, it’s okay, Airi. I’ll keep voting against. No matter who else votes in favour...!”

“Everyone... me... please vote for me...”

In a muffled voice, but one that everyone could hear, Airi said. Haruka grabbed both of Airi’s arms and resisted desperately.

“I hate it. Absolutely not... I had such, such a good time yesterday... This morning was just like any other morning. I met up with Airi before coming to school. We chatted and chatted and

chatted about the cultural festival and talked about... Even today, you were going to call Kiyopon after school and surprise him! You can't just take that away from me!"

There are less than ten minutes left. This means that this is practically the last vote. Whoever is going to leave the school, there is no one who can easily vote against it. That is the weight of the final vote.

Shaking her head from side to side, Airi does not accept the helping hand extended by Haruka.

"I don't like it, I don't like it, I don't like it!"

Like a child, she refused, denied and screamed. Each time, Airi expresses her gratitude to

Haruka, but still persuades her to accept it. It can no longer be changed.

Realising everything, Haruka sat there as if collapsing.

"A person with no ability has accepted it and stepped forward. We owe it to them to respond. It's easy for you to vote against on the next and final round. But even if you vote against, Airi will not be able to stay in this school. She will leave the school with a strong sense of responsibility for what she has done to her classmates and will not be able to look forward. The only way to save your best friend Airi is for you to vote in favour of her expulsion."

"I-I... agree..."

Airi embraced Haruka from the front as she was collapsing.

"Thank you, Haruka... Thank you for all the help you've given me. I couldn't give anything back to you, but... listen to my last selfish request."

"I don't like it, Airi... this kind of..."

"Vote in favour of me."

She thanked her, gently stroked the hair of a weeping Haruka, and raised her voice towards Chabashira-sensei.

"I'm volunteering as candidate. Please vote for me. "

She asked Haruka to stand up and take a seat, and Airi returned to her seat to take it all in. But even after the vote has been declared, voting time is not over. Voting continued past 60 seconds and past 70 seconds.

The students have 90 seconds. In the next 70 seconds or so, Haruka will be expelled from the school.

{If my best friend Airi disappears, I will disappear too.}

It's not hard to see why this thought crossed her mind.

If you choose to make that weak choice here, so be it. As the 100 second mark ticked by, the clock was ticking down to 40 seconds. She just kept crying and showed no sign of reaching for her tablet.

"HARUKA-CHAN!"

It was anger from Airi like I had never heard before. The loudest voice I had ever heard. As if slapped in the face, she looked up in surprise, and at Haruka's crying face, Airi smiled and nodded.

If we don't make a decision and vote here, it will be a denial of everything Airi is.

"The voting is now closed. I will announce the results."

'Sakura Airi' to be expelled from the school.

38 in favour

0 against

Chabashira-sensei, who had been watching the fierce exchange, forgot to report the end of the exam and just looked at Airi and Haruka.

After being expelled from school, Airi stared straight ahead, as if she had accepted everything. On the other hand, Haruka, who couldn't protect her, tried her best to hold back her sobs, but she couldn't hide them from the speechless class.

"Ah, ah, Chabashira-sensei. Please proceed."

The invigilator, who had so far been silent and calm, except for the minimum of cautions and warnings, seemed to have forgotten to remind us about the signal for the end of the special examination.

"With regard to the expulsion of Sakura Airi from the school by a unanimous vote in favour, the last task is completed. The choice is accepted and 100 class points will be awarded. Just to be clear, there is only one way to undo this expulsion.

Only if you have 20 million private points at this moment and use them..."

It was Chabashira-sensei who tried to continue the explanation, as obligated, but stopped halfway.

"I don't think I need to explain any further."

Even if we collected all the private points of all the students in our class, we would never reach 20 million points.

"The other three classes have already finished their special exams, but I'm going to ask you to go home right away today. As for Sakura, you will have to come with me to the staff room afterwards, so stay in the classroom."

"Yes."

Airi replies to Chabashira-sensei in a quiet voice, but without hesitation.

"That's all. Everyone please leave your seats. Follow the instructions and leave the room."

We were informed and we all left our seats, although at different times. Airi was told to stay where she was. And Haruka, who can't even stand up, tried her best to stand on her trembling knees, but she couldn't seem to get her legs up. Her breathing had become ragged and she was beginning to experience symptoms similar to hyperventilation.

Akito and I, unable to see this, rushed over to her and forced her to stand up so that Haruka could hug her.

Because nothing good will come from leaving it here. As soon as we stepped into the corridor, our phones were returned to us.

And Keisei followed soon after.

"You're something else, aren't you? I'm not going to tell you that you did anything wrong. It's just that I'm still not sure if I can say you did the right thing. No, there's no point in talking about this. Just... forget it."

While having a desire to spit it out, Keisei turned his back on me and started walking down the corridor.

It would be pointless to wait here for Haruka or Akito. Legitimacy is irrelevant. It's not like I don't think about the fact that I've taken the initiative to cut off an important member of my group.

Kei approached me. I noticed that she was upset, but I stopped her with my eyes.

For today, it is better to let Kei be quiet, as if she is also in mourning. There is no need to buy hate with unnecessary things.

As I recall, Chabashira-sensei wanted to meet me after the special examination was over. When I looked at my phone I saw that I had received a message and the meeting was at 6pm. I've got some time.

Deciding that it was best not to stay, I decided to leave. If I headed straight for the front door, I would bump into Keisei and the other students.

I've got an appointment with Chabashira-sensei, so I think I'll just wander around the school, where there's not a lot of people around.

"Ayanokoji-kun."

I knew she was following me, and when I couldn't see anyone anymore, she called out to me.

"What's the matter? Didn't you say something to Kushida?"

"No. She's not going to answer any questions now. I just warned her not to get desperate."

She had many friends around her, but at the end of the exam no one said anything to her. Immediately after showing her true nature, it is understandable that she is difficult to get close to.

"Sorry."

As her hair, which was a little longer than before, swayed, Horikita bowed deeply.

"This special exam... I was not good enough..."

"Not enough? You did the best you could, didn't you? This was a much tougher competition than last year's Class Poll exam."

"No matter how tough the fight was, I put a big shackle on you... and you had to take all the responsibility that should have been spread out."

It was inevitable that a student would be expelled. That's why Horikita wanted to show her intentions.

"I'm the one who told you to keep quiet. That's fine."

"It's not good. It's left a big scar on your precious group. It doesn't seem very... like it can be repaired in the future."

"It's okay. In fact, there may come a day when this is more convenient."

If she had been involved, the blame could certainly have been divided equally between the two of us. But that's not what I wanted.

"Convenient..? What do you mean?"

"No, don't worry about it, it's a small thing."

Of course, I don't think I'll be able to change my mind and convince myself of that any time soon, but I don't want this special exam to be the way I carry on next time.

"Look on the bright side. We've gained 100 valuable class points to move closer to Class A. These points are not to be scoffed at."

"But we've lost... Sakura-san."

"As a result, the class average was raised to a higher level, which is a positive thing. It's a perfect end point."

"Don't. You don't have to force yourself to act so ruthless."

"Ruthless?"

I was going to deny it, but I decided to go along with it.

"Yes, you're right. Maybe I'm just trying to push away the painful feelings."

"Kiyotaka-kun!"

From the end of the corridor came a familiar, gentle voice. At the sound of her voice, Horikita turns around and is surprised to see her.

"You... Sakura-san...?"

The physically weak Airi walked towards us, out of breath.

"I'm going..."

"Yeah."

Horikita hesitated to speak to Airi when they passed each other, but was unable to do so. She couldn't think of any words to say to those who were leaving.

"I really wanted to show you, Kiyotaka-kun, at the end. How about...?"

On the verge of voting, Haruka was saying Airi was going to surprise me, was this what she meant?

"You look different. No wonder Horikita didn't recognize you for a moment."

"It's a bit... late to be brave, though... hehe."

Airi, who had taken off her glasses and dressed up her hair, smiles wryly.

"It's not for me to say, but please take care of... Haruka-chan."

"I understand."

"Bye-bye, Kiyotaka-kun."



She smiled the biggest smile I've ever seen on her face and turned away. She started to walk, but then her steps slowed down and she almost stopped. Still, she put her best foot forward and never looked back. I can hear her voice in the empty corridor. Sniffling noises and stifled crying.

Such a scene reminds me of one I used to see myself.

The losers always look back on their inability, and regret it when it is far too late. Whether it's in the White Room or this school, that fact remains the same.

Epilogue : Farewell to The Past

The unanimous special exam which lasted for 5 hours had come to an end. Not long after, we heard that we were the only ones out of the four classes to have an expulsion. More than a few of the students must have regretted it.

However, the fact that we gained 150 class points in this special exam, where three classes gained only 50 class points, will definitely help us in our future battles. If we finished September like this, we would finally be able to move up to Class B.

After school, I was waiting for someone on the stairs leading to the rooftop as promised. About 10 minutes later than I had planned, a person showed up.

“I’m sorry to keep you waiting. It took me a while to finish up.”

“No problem. By the way, did it end the way you wanted it to? Or was it the other way around?”

“Don’t ask me a hard question, there is no real right answer in that test. I believe that. There’s a chance that someone will see us here. Shall we change places?”

“That would be wise.”

With a faint raise of the corners of her mouth, Chabashira-sensei began to climb the stairs to the roof. She took out a key with a simple blue name holder.

“Every year, the school’s attitude toward rooftop use is getting tougher. Maybe in the near future it will be more difficult to get on the roof here as well.”

Even with the fence in place, there was still a risk of falling off. In addition, the rooftop is also a disadvantage because it can be used for minor abuses, as Ryueen once did. Chabashira-sensei quietly walked out onto the roof, leaned against the railing and exhaled.

“It’s been a long day... really,”

Chabashira-sensei said to herself, genuinely stressed by the special exam.

“As I mentioned during the exam...I took the same exam in my senior year of high school.”

“It seems so.”

I don't know where she's staring, but Chabashira-sensei just stares straight ahead at the sunset.



"If you forgive me, you can listen to my confession..."

"It's called the Sacrament of Forgiveness. I'm not much of a religious person, but it's fine."

The unanimous special exam she is said to have attempted when she was a student. She said that she had the same question, but the situation of the class would change the expression she would show.

"I remember that day as if it was yesterday. We, the 3rd year Class B, were on the verge of catching up with Class A before the graduation exam. The difference in class points was only 73 points. Even if we couldn't upset them with the little time we had left in our daily lives, we were in a position to turn the tables with just one special exam.

That was a close call, and I'm sure Class A didn't think they had the advantage by that margin.

"In the meantime, the unanimous special exam began. There were five questions. Like you, we were able to make it through the fourth question, despite our differences of opinion."

"You said the last question was the same."

"Well... it was. It seems that my memory is a little fuzzy on today's exam."

I'm not sure if it's because she's confused about the timeline or her mind is distracted.

"Of course, the first time we voted, there were only a few in favour and a majority against. But as the debate continued, the situation began to change dramatically. If Class A voted unanimously in favour, the margin would have grown to 173 points."

"You didn't know what the graduation exam would be at that point, did you?

"No. In the event that Class B takes first place, Class A's second place may not make a big difference in class points. The difference in rewards between first and second place is 100 or 150 points. Of course, it could be more than 200 points, but there was no guarantee of that, you know. The debate heated up as time went on; there was no way that Class A would choose to drop out, so they all voted against it as well, and unanimously survived the special exam. There were those who argued that we should win the graduation exam and become Class A students, and those who argued that if Class A would not choose to drop out, then that would be our chance to turn the tables. We talked about all kinds of scenarios."

Even though it was the same question , the topics that came up were still completely different depending on the situation of the class. Only two options. But the only way to get there is to go through many, many twists and turns.

"After a great deal of time and discussion, the right answer never came. Whether to take Class A even at the cost of sacrifice, or to choose your friends and throw yourself into a tough battle..."

Chabashira-sensei's moist eyes didn't move from the sunset.

"Eventually, my classmates slowly began to lean towards the idea that Class A would make the sacrifice to get the 100 class points. As the conversation started to progress on that assumption, the opposition slowly began to shift in favour of the idea."

"It's not easy to come to a consensus when someone is missing, is it? As usual, there are students with low abilities and poor communication skills. It is inevitable that students with one or two habits will be the first to be expelled."

"I agree. Once the vote is unanimous in favour, it is impossible to withdraw it. It's not easy to get everyone to vote in favour of it, you're right. Something happened to change that situation. In the case of this special exam, I promised that only traitors would be expelled, and I was able to convince them to vote in favour."

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

"Yosuke and Ike?"

"I'm not sure how to put it together, but it's hard to imagine. He was both a leader and a mood maker for the class."

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

"We had been struggling on the last question until he finally decided to speak up. He decided that he would have himself expelled as it fell under his job as leader."

I guess he decided that he couldn't abandon his friends who had fought with him for three years.

"The only special exam left is the final graduation exam. It must be painful to be without a leader, and that's one option... but not the only one."

Of course, it is difficult to say that it is a wise choice. But if all the classmates were on equal footing, it would be extremely difficult to choose one. There is also the option of letting luck take its course, but I'm sure there are many students who are not convinced.

"But then again, it was never unanimous."

"Why? It was agreed that the leader would leave the school, wasn't it?"

"No. One person voted against the student's expulsion until the very end. The one vote against never turned into a vote in favour, and the remaining time was whittled away. I, of all people, was the one who kept voting against it."

From the flow of the story, I thought it might be so, but that means...

"So, to Chabashira-sensei, the student who was the leader was not just any leader?"

Closing her eyes, Chabashira-sensei lightly chuckled and slowly opened her eyes again. Then she looked up at the sunset sky and affirmed deeply.

"I'm not sure what to say. For me, that student was a leader, a friend, and a... and a lover more important than anyone else."

The two of them overcame many hardships and came to understand each other. The future was supposed to be about grabbing the most happiness out of the remaining school life and aiming for Class A. So Chabashira-sensei couldn't let go of that.

"If I continued to vote against it, my classmates will naturally be confused and angry. Some of them turned their opposition to me. Well, it's a natural process."

"But if Chabashira-sensei didn't drop out of school, that means..."

"That's right. I protected him, he protected me. Such a stalemate went on and on. We couldn't finish the special exam on time, so our class was down 300 class points, and Class A had chosen to expel a student, so the difference was 450 points. In total, the difference was 523 points. In an instant, the distance between us and Class A, which was within striking distance, opened up to a desperate extent."

It's a gap that no amount of big-opportunity graduation exams will be able to turn around.

"If it's any consolation, your boyfriend didn't drop out of school, did he?"

"I don't know what I was protecting him for, but when the unanimous special exams ended, our relationship naturally ended as well. It was only for a day... or even less than 24 hours. After that, we lost the final exam, and our three years amounted to nothing."

"What happened to him after that?"

"I never saw him again. I don't even know where he is now. He was everything to me when I was in high school. Now that I think about it, it's so dumb. If you think about it over the course of a long life, three years of high school is only a small part of it. Even if we didn't make it to Class A, we should have fought to the end with no regrets."

Does this mean that the Chabashira-sensei has been regretting her choice for 11 years? In this case, rather than a mistake, it would be better to say that she continues to worry about whether her choice was the right one or not.

"I was not qualified to graduate from Class A. But what was I supposed to do? Should I have strongly convinced him to drop out? Or should I have cut myself off when he told me he was leaving?"

"There's no real right answer to this particular test. It's probably impossible to get a perfect unanimity from the heart. That is, unless you have a student who is thoroughly unskilled and no one needs him or her..."

"The failure to see this is the cause of defeat...?"

"The first time he convinced everyone to give up unanimously, the student decided to drop out of school in order to keep his chances of going to Class A. What he took was to first get a unanimous vote in favour and then think about it."

Chabashira-sensei nodded.

"If I had cut him out..."

"Were the graduation exams so easy that you could win without a good leader? Your class lost the unanimous exam even though you didn't have any dropouts, right?"

"Yes. If we had been able to fight as a united team and in perfect condition, we might have been evenly matched."

"I mean, you can't choose to be leaderless. But even if someone else was missing, we still couldn't win the Class A. If that was the case, the only way was to stay with the options of for and against. You had to refuse all temptations and inducements to agree and stay the course."

"Even if I had stayed, I would not have been in a position to be persuaded to vote against, which is what you're saying."

"There is no need for persuasion. The sensei's class was divided on the opinion of winning. If the votes don't coalesce, eventual defeat by running out of time is inevitable. When that happens, the proponents will absolutely move to consolidate the votes against. Even if they resist with their mouths, what if it is the final vote with less than a minute left? If you vote in favour, there is no time to expel the next particular student. The interval time is a fixed 10 minutes, but the voting time is a maximum of 60 seconds. If you adjust the time by deliberately delaying the vote, you can bring it to a final vote without a minute's gap."

If you choose in favour, you lose 300 class points for failing to clear, and if you choose against, you gain 50 class points for clearing.

"There is no way you can choose the former with only one choice. You can either run out of time and lose 300 class points, or you can make sure to clear the exam and get 50 class points, even if you don't get the extra 100 class points, to take the graduation exam with Class A. There was only one conclusion. Of course, I'm not sure if I could have made up the 173 class points."

The students were not ready to give up the idea of winning, and were caught up in the immediate 100 class points. The leader was able to take advantage of this psychology and succeeded in getting them to agree. However, the strategy itself was a mistake. He failed to see the heart of Chabashira-sensei, and the stubbornness of the opposite sex who became his lover.

"I'm... If I had a student like you back then, I would have..."

She was about to say something, but then she stopped.

“No, it doesn’t make sense now. You can’t go back in time. But let me ask you this, Ayanokoji. Sakura must have been a member of your close group. And moreover, that girl had special feelings for you.”

“You know very well.”

“I’m a homeroom teacher and I can often tell by the way my students look at me.”

I wasn’t particularly fond of her special skill.

“Wasn’t there a way to save Sakura and blame the sacrifice on others?”

“I don’t know. Horikita had the power to make change. It wouldn’t have been enough time for a serious challenge.”

“Didn’t it hurt your... heart?”

“Of course, it would have been best if we could have avoided expelling Airi. As for me, I tried to bring the matter to a unanimous vote by any means possible, but Kushida couldn’t stop me. I decided that there would be no solution unless we chose to expel the students and then cut off their path and hunt them down. However, if we were willing to be consequential, there might have been a possibility of unanimity through opposition. At that time, Kushida was so disturbed by Horikita’s presence that she accepted the choice to stay at this school. That was not in my assumptions at all. I’m not the only one who wants to help students who are close to me. Now that it’s happened, the only thing left to do is elimination. At this point, there is no choice but to give superiority to classmates. Whether they can study or not, whether they can play sports or not. Communication skills. Insight and observation skills. We can only look at objective data, the OAA rankings.”

If we look at the system the school has created, we can see who should be expelled even if we don’t want to.

“Of course, there are a few students who are not so different from Airi. But if a quarrel starts between students who are on the same side, their friends will naturally take the side of protection. However, with Airi, the only major obstacle was Haruka. In the end, there wasn’t much of a loss.”

“So you’re saying that you intentionally sacrificed your own happiness for the class...?”

“Personality is also one of the deciding factors. Because of Airi’s personality, she’s not good at imitating people who don’t want to quit or appeal to them not to vote for her. A good friend of hers, in this case Haruka, will not vote in favour of it. However, the only exception to this is the self-report from Airi. There’s no way Airi could choose to stay in school after annoying the class by making them sacrifice 300 class points.”

"You even knew Sakura's state of mind."

"Overall strength, familiarity, personality. And as a final push, I need to be informed by someone important that Airi is the one who should be expelled. If I told her, she will have no choice but to understand her fate."

"Ayanokoji... you're..."

"People may call me a monster. No one wants to be the one who made the "evil" choice. In the end, someone needs to make these decisions. It's the only way to succeed in this world."

"In this school, expulsion is a constant companion in every possible situation. As a teacher of this school, I'm prepared to accept it and do my best. Still, I will never be able to make a decision like yours without hesitation."

Admitting the weakness of his own heart, Chabashira-sensei said so.

"I don't know you very well, but how many people have you 'cut down'? I'm sure it's something I'll never understand."

How many people have I "cut down?" I hadn't thought about it. Just as we don't remember the colour and shape of each stone that falls by the roadside, those who learn with us and those who teach us will disappear if they are incompetent. That's just artificial selection.

"Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today, Ayanokoji. I regretted the choices I made in the past and stood still for a very long time. But it turns out that I didn't have time for that. I will fulfill my role as a teacher to guide the students in my class to continue fighting without regret."

"It seems that through this special exam, you were able to make a deal with the past."

The profile of Chabashira-sensei who spoke was somewhat radiant, unlike before.

"It's not that I haven't dreamed of Class A before. Even when I try not to think about it, I end up hoping for it. That I might be able to fulfill the dream that I never could. And every time I do, I ridicule myself for being so stupid and erase it from my memory. That's how it went on and on."

Chabashira-sensei turned to me and gave me a smile I'd never seen before.

"I've decided, Ayanokoji. I'm going to make sure our class graduates from Class A, anyway I can."

"It's fine to be enthusiastic, but make sure you don't deviate from your position as a teacher."

“No, of course I know my position. I’m not sure how much I can do, but I’m ready to do it. Actually Ayanokoji... You say things that are uncharacteristic of a normal student.”

“What type of things would a “normal” student say?”

“Well... I can’t answer that question, because I’m not a student.”

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

“Right. I’m sorry to take up so much of your time.”

“No problem. Then, I’ll leave now. Chabashira-sensei.”.

I’ve been calling her that lately, but I said it with emphasis. She will be fine now. Through this special exam, she has grown as much as the students. Her mind, which had been stuck in the third year of high school, had quickly begun to catch up to her current age.

These Short Stories are taken from Cinnamontls. After reading make sure to head over to their website [here](#) and give a thumbs up.

Short Stories

Hasebe Haruka SS - Facing Tomorrow

School had ended and the shocking revelation was revealed to us all.

While heading home with Kiyopon, I hurriedly entered the convenience store and went for the fried food displayed by the cashier. I usually didn't eat anything this fatty, but the convenience and the calories made me give in. There were no other students here so paying went smoothly.

I returned outside where Kiyopon had been standing and waited.

He looked a bit surprised by croquette in my hand, I think. Feeling embarrassed by it, I tried to cover it up with an excuse.

"You know, I got so into talking with Airi during lunch today, so I never got the chance to eat."

This was, well, an excuse, but also the truth.

I really did receive a shock today.

To think Kiyopon was dating that Karuizawa-san of all people.

It felt like someone had pulled the carpet from under my feet as he'd never shown any hints of dating anyone ever.

Of course, my reaction can't hold up a candle to Airi's.

"Sorry for troubling you."

I knew what my best friend, Airi, felt about him, and so did he obviously.

"No, that's not it..."

People are free to love whoever they liked, and I already know that cases of mutual love were in the minority.

But still, I'd hoped Airi and Kiyopon one day would come to love one another.

... Or so I think. But there was one part of me that felt something was off, but that's all tightly sealed up.

Eventually, I'd finished the list of things I wanted to ask him about.

Are you really dating for real? Who confessed first? When did you start dating? Confirming each and everyone of those points was my goal today.

"Trying to ask something of you now feels like bad timing on my part, but there is something I'd like you, and if possible Airi, to help me with."

"Help you?"

I'd still only eaten half of my croquette, before he switched to a topic that surprised even me.

"It's currently being kept under wraps for the time being, but one of the attractions we're going to do during the school festival has been decided on already."

"Oh, is that so?"

I'd heard nothing had been decided just yesterday so this was a bit surprising.

"Since we want to avoid any leaks, only Horikita, I and the ones planning it are in the know. So, we're going to make a maid café."

"M-maid café? Well, heh...? Why am I not surprised? It's a bit unexpected though. I never thought a person like Horikita-san would ever acknowledge such an event, you know?"

"She's probably indifferent towards all proposals, I think. From her unbiased point of view, we simply may have a chance if we go for a maid café and so she accepted it, I guess."

Well, there are a lot of cute girls in our class, I must admit. We could probably earn a lot from those adults coming to visit the school during the festival but still, something feels a bit... but I can see why it could work.

"I see, I see. So, what's the reason you are telling me about this?"

"Truth is, after I came to know about this, I was asked to take care of various stuff."

Kiyopon is going to manage a maid café?

While his very image doesn't suit at all, I could see the reasoning behind letting him take care of it.

I bet Horikita managed to string him up and pushed the task to him by force.

"She's quite the girl since she's able to put you into this situation."

But since he's telling me this, it can only mean only thing...

"And so, I was hoping you and Airi could help out in the café?"

Of course, it would boil down to this, I guess.

As for me, the first thing that popped up inside my head when I heard about the maid café was Airi.

She was shy and had no confidence to speak of, but this was a perfect chance for her.

"If you had asked me this before this thing with Karuizawa-san happened, I would have said yes even though I have some qualms about it. I don't like to wear something like cosplay in front of many people, but I wouldn't have refused if a friend asked me. Your timing is pretty bad, you know?"

There were no guarantees that Airi would have been able to smile while participating in this festival while being heartbroken.

"It's a bit troubling that I can't blame you for it, Kiyopon. I said it before but, I think people are free to love whoever they want and that I can understand there are things you can't speak about. Airi was also free to fall for you, and you were also free to reject her..."

To tell the truth, I need courage in order to talk to her about this later.

But... yes, this may be something necessary. This was perhaps a steppingstone, a large step towards making her able to smile and move forward.

"I can't promise you anything. But once she's calmed down, I will talk to her."

In fact, if this could become a chance to make her stand up again, I would try talking to her at once.

"You're okay with it?"

He seemed a bit surprised by my answer, perhaps since he never thought I would accept.

"That girl needs to accept reality sooner or later anyway. And although I don't know about you, having Karuizawa-san as her opponent doesn't mean she has to give up, you know? Even though you may be geeked about her, there is a chance she can reject you. Right?"

Yes, that's right. Airi still has a chance.

There is still a year and a half left.

If she can hit a home run with loaded bases at the very end, it would be Airi's victory.

Karuizawa Kei SS - Reading the Mood

It was noon and another special exam had begun.

I was, as usual, focused on acting out my character while scanning my surroundings.

I was especially looking at Horikita-san, everything she said and did.

It was something Kiyotaka had instructed me to do, my one important task.

"This is what I think. Our most ideal opponent for the last exam of the year is class B. In other words, Ichinose's class. There are 3 reasons why that is. First, unlike Sakayanagi-san or Ryuuen-kun, there is a good chance our fight with them will be fair, a battle between our potentials. Even if the special exam itself turns out to be an irregular one, there is no need for us to worry about getting outwitted by some hidden schemes. Next, they are currently Class B. We would get additional bonus class points due to that and mean we can take the lead and take the initiative. And lastly, their strong stance is just for pretense. Our class C and Ryuuen's class D are already right behind them. They had a lead over us for some time, but their trajectory has been going downhill. Which is why I think they are the ideal opponent for us, don't you think?"

Had I been the same as before, I'd never have listened to her seriously, I guess.

I'd never been confident, and it was also a pain to listen to her babbling on and on.

But I was different now.

Kiyotaka believed in me and he expected something from me.

Just by knowing this, my ability to concentrate flew through the roofs.

"If anyone is opposed to this, let me hear what you think. If not, if you all don't mind selecting class B, vote for them so we can get this done quickly."

Horikita-san finished her speech swiftly without any dead time.

I knew this was the time to interject, but I had to be patient.

At a time like this, it was standard procedure for Hirata-kun to back her up.

"I agree to this as well, Horikita-san. The bonus points we could get from defeating Sakayanagi's class A are huge, but it's hard to think of a more difficult opponent. While we shouldn't underestimate the bonds and the solid fighting style from Ichinose's class, her class is in my opinion, the best opponent we can hope for."

He supported her proposal as if he could read the future one step in advance.

I Immediately, and with a clear purpose in mind, raised my voice without any hesitation.

“Me too, me too. We don’t get any bonus points from Ryuuuen-kun’s class so it’s not that beneficial, and we can’t just laugh it off if we lost to Sakayanagi-san, I guess.”

I said sounding like an idiot while trying to instill the idea that any class other than class B wouldn’t be tempting enough.

This was something even I could understand, so everyone must have realised what I’d tried to convey.

I saw several students nodding and was relieved.

I got shivers as I felt the whole class getting united.

Horikita-san must have understood this as well as it looked like she had nothing more to say.

There were still a lot of time, so we were free to talk for the rest of it.

Truth is, while I’d have wanted to talk to Kiyotaka, I can’t be a bother to him now.

Reading the mood is a rather important skill. Yes, an important skill.

I stood up from my seat and went to talk to the girls sitting nearby to waste time.

Yes, I only need to repeat this as necessary.

I want to finish this special exam quickly so I can return to the dorms.

And then I can go on a date with Kiyotaka.

Chabashira Sae SS - A Restless Mind

I was preparing for the special exam tomorrow.

I went to the staff room do the final checks on the equipment I'd use tomorrow.

But no matter what I did, I couldn't stop thinking and this worry wouldn't quite disappear.

I stood up from my desk in order to calm myself down.

I remembered Satou who visited me yesterday asking for permission to rent a classroom in the special section of the school for the sake of the cultural festival.

A maid café, was it?

Since this was the very first cultural festival of this school, there were many things we still didn't know.

The teachers were still investigating the most correct attractions to employ.

While heading for the special section, I happened to meet a student heading away from the direction I had planned to visit.

He had this unmotivated expression, but it could be said this was his usual look anyway.

"Did you check up on Satou and the others?"

I asked and Ayanokouji nodded lightly.

"I listened to the program and what they were planning on doing. It's not a bad idea."

"That's for sure. They can't start to prepare for it unless their proposal has been accepted in the first place."

"I was going to check up on them since I'm personally a bit curious how it's going. How are they?"

That was a lie, but also the truth.

If this could serve to distract my thoughts, anything goes.

"Horikita looks like she's optimistic on their behalf. Seems she thinks they have a winning chance. They are finalizing the last details now."

No problems on their side. That was relieving to hear, and I had no more reason to visit them.

"I see. Then there's no reason for me to check up on them anymore."

"I got caught by them, so it seems trouble is heading my way."

"In other words?"

"I've become their manager as per Horikita's instructions."

"You? Oh, that sounds..."

I tried to imagine it in my head, but no matter how many times I tried to picture it, he and maid cafés had no compatibility whatsoever.

By the look he had, I could see that even he agreed with me.

"It will be good for you. Horikita sure do have some interesting ideas."

I surprisingly began to look forward to how this cultural festival would go.

He looked like he was going to vocalize even more complaints to me.

I tried to guide him a bit as I really hope this festival will become a good memory to him.

"This is a chance to learn about things other than studying so accept your fate, Mr. Maid Café Manager."

I somehow got more relaxed and did something I usually would never do.

"Ayanokouji... could I have some of your time later?"

Am I ready to confront this special exam?

Or was I confronting it already?

I began imagining it.

Satou Maya & Matsushita Chiaki SS - During Standby

“Eh? Did you really invite Ayanokouji-kun too?”

School had ended and Satou had walked to a classroom in the special section of the school building in order to meet up with Matsushita, Mii-chan and Maezono.

There she reported to the others about how she had called out to Horikita and Ayanokouji.

“Yes, I remained in the classroom for a bit and since he was there with Horikita-san, I thought, why not just invite him as well, so I just did.”

“You still haven’t given up on him yet? After what you said about just being friends? Lend me some of that courage~”

“N-no, that’s not it. I just thought it would be nice to hear a boy’s opinion, that’s all. I mean...”

“But the truth is?”

Her true feelings were seen right through by Matsushita who made a hand gesture mimicking that of a reporter holding a microphone during an interview.

“S-since... we’re going to show the boys later anyway, I wanted to... show him first, I think.”

Satou embarrassedly blushed while Matsushita grinned like a cat.

“Uuuuu, this is so embarrassing... I can’t do cosplay in front of the boys...”

“Hey, Mii-chan! If you’re going to take this attitude, you won’t be able to hold up during the real deal, you know? If you don’t do your best, Horikita-san may cut you down without hesitation.”

“Uuuu... But you said only Satou needed to talk...”

She hugged her own chest along with the Chinese maid uniform as she trembled like a jelly.

“Your cuteness is to blame, Mii-chan! Oh, it’s almost time so you should go change now. I’ll stand guard in the hallway so rest assured!”, Maezono said before she exited the classroom.

While the three remaining girls had lots of thoughts about this, they began to change into these unfamiliar costumes.

"But oh well, this is good practice for Mii-chan as well since showing yourself to the boys will be important, you know. We could get advice on like, how they see us which is going to be important for sure."

"Right, right? Ayanokouji-kun won't look at us in a weird way. And he is dependable too."

"I guess. If we had to choose a boy from our class, it would have to be Ayanokouji-kun or Hirata-kun anyway."

Mii-chan's hands stopped for a second when she heard Hirata's name.

"Oh my, oh my, who is't didst thee bethink of? Hold not back and just bid us, shall thee?"

"I-m n-not s-saying!"

"Lots of girls are vying for his attention, you know~? Ah, but you've been hanging out with Kouenji-kun lately, haven't you? I saw you guys during summer vacation from time to time. I was so sure you've switched targets."

Maybe she was trying to steer the conversation away from Hirata, but she grabbed onto this topic as she looked a bit too restless talking about Hirata.

"Ehh!? There is nothing between me and Kouenji-kun at all... it's just that it's surprisingly easy to talk to him."

"That's— surprising, yeah. So there really is someone on the same wavelength as him."

"How should I say it, he's very knowledgeable, and he's seeing things I can't see..."

Wang began to talk about the treasure hunt game they participated in on the boat during summer vacation and how Kouenji's unique way of looking at things had won them a huge reward.

But despite hearing all of this, Matsushita and Satou's evaluation of Kouenji did not change whatsoever.

"Hey you three! Stop talking and change will you!"

Maezono warned through the door and the three girls made some flustered voices as they resumed changing clothes.

Afterword

The year 2021 is coming to an end. When I was cleaning up my house, I found my graduation books from elementary and junior high school, and I was reading them again. In my graduation essay from junior high school, I wrote that I wanted to work as a writer because I had no talent for drawing (I wanted to say that, but I was too embarrassed to specify it). I was moved to tears when I found it. There are some things that are better left unnoticed, aren't there?

Joking aside, the second semester of the second-year version has started, and there are a lot of big events coming up in the second semester, especially the cultural festival and the school trip, which will be a new story not seen in the first-year version. so please look forward to them. Looking back on volume 5, there are almost no students from other grades in this volume. The story with the first and third graders will continue to unfold, but this is a book that reminds us that the main focus of this story is the second-years..

Now, I have a little announcement to make! One of the things that I've been waiting for for a long time, but couldn't quite make it happen, was to make a manga version of the second year. One of the things I've been waiting for a long time is a manga adaptation of the second-year story, and now that it's finally ready, I'd like to announce it here. Starting with the December issue of Monthly Comic Alive, the manga of "Welcome to the Classroom of The Elite" will be serialized by Sasasa Sane Neshia. Thank you very much for your support. I'd also like to express my deepest gratitude to Yuyu Ichiihino for continuing to draw the first-grade version of the manga, and thank you for your continued support of my inadequate Yomi.

Lastly, in the afterward for the next volume, I have a thought that I've been keeping in my mind for the past two years, and I hope I'll be able to touch on it.

The next time I'll see you will be at the beginning of 2022, see you next year!

Year 2 Volume 5 End

Thanks for reading.

If you wanna see my thoughts then you can see them [right here](#) in the future.
Future Volumes will Also be available here when they gets released.

YouTube - ANIMEANYWAY

See you later~