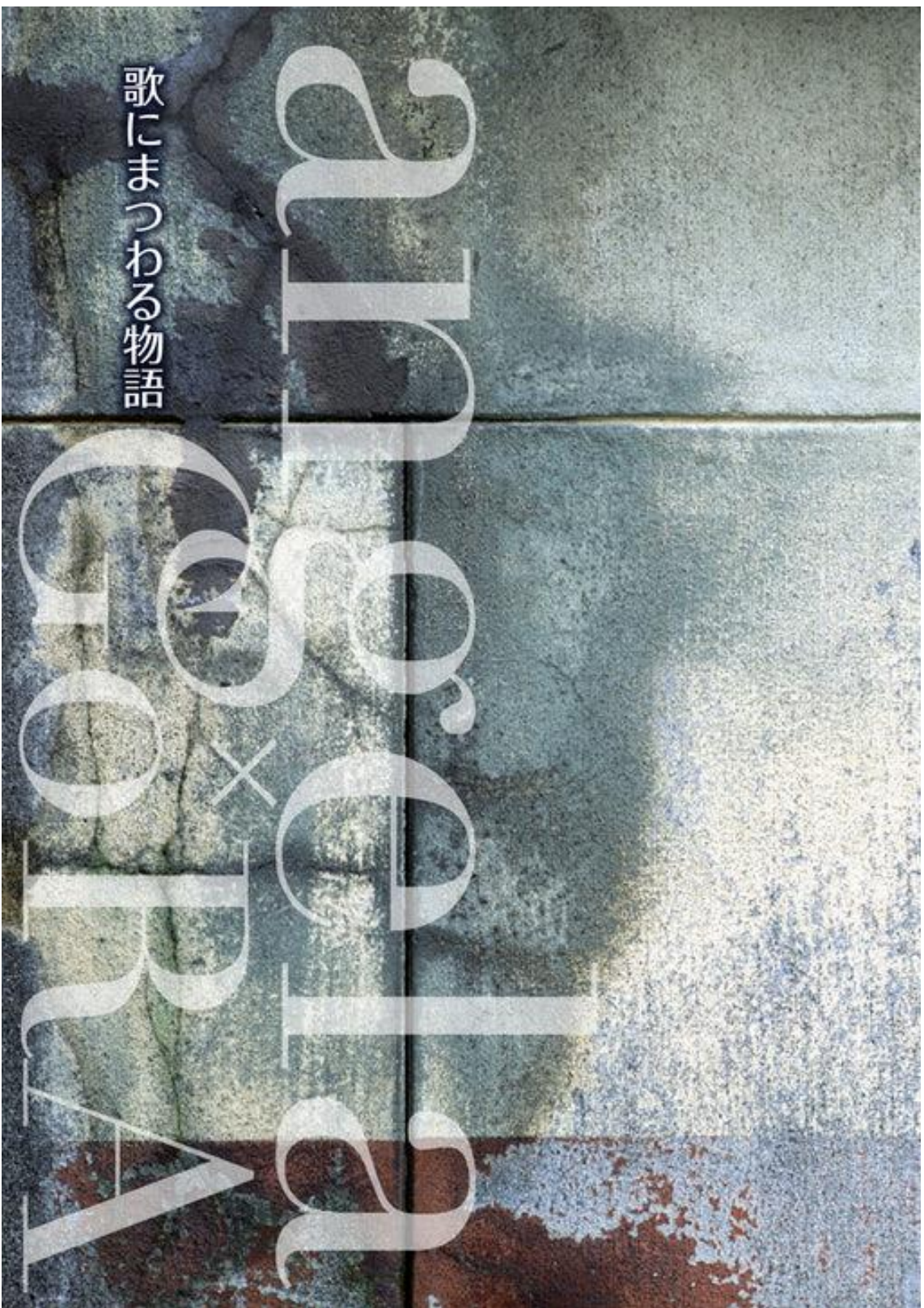


歌にまつわる物語



"ANGELA X GORA"

CHAPTER 1: KINGS (RAIRAKU REI)

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K-PROJECT WORLD

The boy floated in the sky above wintery Gakuen Island.

Hovering at the same height as the four Swords of Damocles, side by side in the snowy sky, the boy, with his pale golden hair blowing in the wind, looked like a small child under ten years old, but in reality he was ageless. He lacked body and substance, and no one could see him.

The boy was the embodiment of the power originating from the Slate that granted the Kings their power.

"Prayers are swirling.", the boy murmured clearly.

Down below, on Academy Island, several Kings were fighting. With the "Colorless King" at the center of the chaos, the "Red King" and the "Blue King" clashed, and the "Silver King" ran back and forth trying to resolve things.

Furthermore, one could feel that the feelings of the absent Kings were also directed strongly toward this land.

"Everyone yearns for something and strives for it. They pursue it, they hoard it, so strongly that they destroy it with their own hands."

The boy's voice conveys no emotion. He doesn't understand human feelings. He simply accepts everything and continues watching.

He simply continues watching as people wield all kinds of feelings (ambition, cause, impulse, dream, or love) with all their might, and they collide with each other.

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The Third King, the "Red King", leaps forward as if running freely through the desert.

Red flames float through the snow.

Suoh Mikoto brandishes his fist, imbued with red-hot power. The fist, hot enough to melt iron, is deflected by Munakata's saber, which emits a cold blue light.

A smile spreads across Suoh's lips.

He had come this far with anger boiling inside him, and even though there was another enemy, he used his power without restraint and faced Munakata, which brought him indescribable joy.

At the same time as he felt the refreshing sensation of using his full strength, he felt something inside him slowly burning away. The cracks on the sword above his head were widening. The time limit was approaching.

"How disgusting."

Munakata replaced his saber and spat it out with a tone of disgust.

"You know how you are, but what a face you're making."

Munakata's tone, usually both polite and rude, cracked. Suoh wasn't aware of the expression on his face, but he sensed it must be an angry expression.

The corners of Suoh's lips curved upward. A mixture of anger and joy reminded him of the first time he fought Munakata.

"Sorry for the annoyed expression. But anyway, this is the end." Munakata's cheeks twitched slightly at Suoh's words.

"Suoh, you're..."

Without letting anyone finish, Suoh kicked the snowy ground. He approached Munakata, releasing the magmatic heat from his body. He had been forced to control and suppress it, but now, in that moment, he was free to run as he pleased.

Munakata's saber caught and deflected Suoh's scorching heat. The sword closed in on Suoh. He raised his leg and kicked the approaching blade. The mounting pressure spilled out of his body, erupting like a pillar of fire. But amidst it all, Munakata remained calm and unfazed. Suoh struck out with his flaming fists. The way Munakata dealt with it without hesitation makes it all the more amusing.

The footsteps of destruction can be heard.

The footsteps grow louder each time Suoh uses his power without reservation.

It's not that he doesn't feel bad, but Suoh has already made his decision.

He will follow that path to the end.

Settling scores, overcoming frustration, and reaching the end.

With Munakata standing in his way, he gives himself one last powerful run.

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The Fourth King, the "Blue King", calmly swung his sword, despite his frustration and impatience.

The blue power of control enveloped the blade and cut through the flames.

Munakata Reisi could clearly feel the disturbance in Suoh's power as they clashed.

Suoh had used too much power, beyond the critical point. The King's power was on the verge of spiraling out of control, and the crimson sword raised above his head was accelerating its collapse.

Suoh himself had a refreshing smile on his face, furious like a beast released from its cage, but he was breathing heavily. He was burning with his own heat. In fact, black burns spread across Suoh's arms.

In truth, this fight should have ended at that moment. If he forced Suoh to use any more of his strength, his sword would fall. However, if Munakata surrendered, Suoh would go and kill the "Colorless King". In his current state, there was no way he could bear the burden of killing a King.

Munakata's frustration and irritation grew.

Why is this man like this? The anger and frustration he had felt many times since meeting him stirred Munakata's heart.

From the beginning, he had thought he was an incomprehensible man.

A man who failed to fulfill his duties as king and only lived as he pleased.

He recognized that it was based on this man's own beliefs. He recognized it, but he couldn't understand it. He had gone so far without understanding him.

But now, Munakata felt so frustrated at not being able to understand Suoh that his head tingled.

"Why, Suoh? Why would you choose ruin? There must be another way!"

Suoh only smiled in response to Munakata's voice.

Munakata's words didn't reach Suoh. Suoh also understood his reasoning, but he showed no understanding.

Dodging Suoh's fists, brandishing his sword, and continuing the fight as if it were a fierce dance, Munakata continued to think.

A way to save that fool.

Although he knew that technique was no longer available, he tried to keep thinking until that moment came without giving up.

Suoh's fist grazed Munakata's jaw. His head jerked, and he lost his balance. Immediately, he precisely calculated the opening he had created, read the trajectory of Suoh's attack, and swung his sword. Their forces collided, throwing their bodies into the air. Suoh landed softly, while Munakata landed a short distance away, kneeling.

"Don't get distracted.", Suoh said, gently reprimanding Munakata, who was still thinking.

Munakata clicked his tongue loudly, revealing his emotions, something he normally doesn't do.

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The Fifth King, the "Green King", watched the foundations of his dream intently.

The Sixth King, the "Gray King", silently watched the profile of the "Green King".

There are green eyes everywhere.

Nagare projected images captured by the eyes observing the outside world from his stationary position (the scattered security cameras, the cameras on people's PDAs, and the eyes of his clansman) on a holographic screen. They were all real-time images of the events unfolding on Gakuen Island. Nagare's large eyes, watching them, shone brightly, reflecting the light from the screen.

Iwafune Tenkei gulped down a bottle of hard liquor to hide his gray feelings.

"...How's everything going?"

"The battle between the "Red King" and the "Blue King" is evenly matched. It's a fierce battle, but it's at a stalemate. It's a confrontation between the "Red King", whose goal is to defeat the "Colorless King", and the "Blue King", who is trying to prevent the Fall of Red Damocles, so it's only natural... The one who will move the situation will be the "Silver King"."

Iwafune stares at Nagare's pale cheek. Another King, a child he himself had raised and taken in, walking a path he'd never imagined.

"Hey, Nagare. Do you think the Red Sword of Damocles will fall?"

"It will."

Nagare said this mercilessly.

Although he knew it, deep in Iwafune's chest, a dull ache, like an old wound, tormented him.

"The "Red King" is now in a place of no return. The sword will fall. However, unlike Kagutsu, the "Blue King" will prevent a catastrophe."

"That's right..."

"Iwa-san."

Nagare called after him, his voice impassive.

"I won't take your feelings into account, Iwa-san. But I understand that this situation with the Slate is likely difficult for you. You don't have to watch from my side."

"No."

Iwafune shook his head with a bitter smile.

"I can't look away."

It was he who raised Nagare and decided to help him on his path.

Unlike him, who was trapped in an unchanging past, Nagare dreams of changing the world even with irreparable wounds, and moves forward without hesitation toward an uncertain future.

The life of Iwafune Tenkei continued to watch over him.

Iwafune placed his hand on Nagare's slender shoulder.

"I'm watching you, all the time."

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The Second King of Kings, the "Golden King", pondered his friend's voice.

Gakuen Island couldn't be seen from the top floor of the Golden Tower.

Kokujoji Daikaku, however, watched from between the Slate toward the island.

He thought of his old friend's voice he had heard on the phone earlier. Although the voice belonged to a boy he didn't know, having entered another person's body, his manner of speaking and the personality he emanated were undoubtedly those of a man Kokujoji knew.

"He was alive and had descended to earth. I see..."

He muttered softly.

Seeing Weissmann's body, he had a premonition that he was somewhere else. Therefore, he preserved it carefully, but he wasn't sure. Speaking with him and confirming his life and will, Kokujoji felt a chill. It was a chill he hadn't felt in a long time.

Kokujoji narrowed his eyes, deepening the wrinkles around them.

Kokujoji can't get involved in the incidents occurring on Gakuen Island. One reason is that his lifespan is nearing its end, and another is that, due to the nature of the Shrine of the "Golden King", which grants strengthening benefits to all supernatural beings, if he goes to a place where kings with opposing ideologies gather, there's a high probability that the situation will escalate and worsen. Therefore, although he's considered the strongest and greatest "King", he can't act easily in crucial situations.

Even now, he hasn't been able to go see his old friend who has returned.

"This is farewell, Lieutenant."

"Are you going to run away, Weissmann?"

He recalled the conversation he'd had that day when he'd seen him off, desperately flying into the sky.

"I will become the ideal "King". So just watch from there."

He remembered the promise from that day, when Weissmann's airship flew over Japan.

"Thank you. But this time it's also goodbye."

He remembered his parting words today as he landed again.

A man who has been on the run for half a century has decided to risk his life to face the situation before him. His wounds may not have healed, but he has no intention of comforting them. He has no intention of letting anyone know of the injuries he has suffered.

He carries with him the dream he shared with Weissmann and the others. He returned to this country, a defeated nation, with the "Slate", and has lived through it all until today. Those days seem long, but also like the blink of an eye.

"Weissmann, show me the miracle you desire."

Kokujoji silently confided his thoughts to his old friend, who is beyond his reach.

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The Seventh King, the "Colorless King", had become a captive soul.

His mind, which had once been colorless and transparent, was now a mixture of all kinds of colors, murky and black.

"Let me go, stop me! I won't let you...!"

"No, no! Help me!"

"Please, Shiro, help me..."

"Remember this, I'm going to kill you!"

The personalities he had absorbed so far were screaming at him.

He had tried to take over the "Silver King". He had been lured by an appearance of vulnerability, and was trapped within his body in a cage created by the "Silver King's" immutable power. He had underestimated him. He was an insignificant man, so it shouldn't be difficult to exploit his mind.

The soul of the "Colorless King" writhes and screams.

The "Silver King" said he felt sorry for the "Colorless King". He said he had absorbed too many personalities and that his ego was on the verge of collapse.

It wasn't pity, the soul of the "Colorless King" screamed. He will absorb more and more people and contain the world within himself. He will absorb all the Kings and become the single strongest King.

The "Silver King" walked away with the soul of the "Colorless King" sealed within him.

"Where are you going?!"

The cry of the soul of the "Colorless King" found an answer.

"To a place where I can defeat you. With my power, I can only keep you captive."

"Weissmann! Why do you stand in my way?!"

"Because there is something I want to protect."

"What can you protect? You left everything and ran away!"

"That's right. I ran away. I abandoned my broken dreams and fled. But I rediscovered something important. Even though I can't make everyone happy... I've decided to fight this time to protect those I care about."

Because he was inside the "Silver King", he could feel his emotions. His warm, unwavering feelings for his loved ones. It was frustrating.

The "Colorless King" struggled with all his might to escape the silver power vessel. With the colorless power that should be able to interfere with the "King", he desperately struggled to destroy the silver's immutability.

The countless voices of the humans he had absorbed echoed, attacking like great waves. The intense reverberations shook him. The "Colorless King" gritted his teeth.

"Why is Weissmann, who only has a few strangers and weak ties, so warm and unwavering, even though there are so many people inside me?"

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The First King, the "Silver King", was heading toward his immutable end.

Decades had passed since he had seen his own silver sword.

Shiro, Yashiro Isana, Adolf K. Weissmann, gazed at the silver Sword of Damocles. The sword was pointed downward, as if trying to assess Shiro's merits and demerits.

Right now, the soul of the "Colorless King" is within Shiro.

He has finally captured the soul of the "King" who has traveled through countless human bodies, wounding, killing, and wreaking havoc in his ambition to become the strongest "King".

But he, too, is a victim of what Weissmann has started.

The "Colorless King" was unleashed within Shiro's body. If he let his guard down, the power sealing him would break and erode. He needed to resolve this as soon as possible.

Resolve it. In other words, he wanted the "Colorless King" to die with him.

If he had been the person he was a while ago, perhaps he wouldn't have been so moved by this situation. Because it was an existence that only continued to stare at the ground, his emotions frozen.

But then he fell to the ground and found himself in the midst of the lives of the people he had only observed from above. He had left everything behind, but now he has forged new connections.

The bonds we form can make us stronger or weaker. Right now, he is afraid of dying and letting others die.

Shiro smiled slightly as he walked through the snowy Gakuen Island. He remembered the peaceful days that seemed fleeting.

Everyone laughed and shared their meals with him.

Kukuri spoke to him cheerfully and was very considerate.

Neko was always by his side and showed him her pure affection.

Kuro helped him and became his clanmate, his friend.

No one on Gakuen Island remembers Shiro anymore. After exhausting all her powers, Neko has been left in the care of the Red Clan. He told Kuro, pointedly and coldly, that everyone except the "King" is a hindrance.

But he wants to stay connected. ...No.

"Fare you well, Weissmann."

He remembered his old friend's voice telling him that in Weissmann's native language.

They were connected. They were connected even when he wandered through the sky with a lonely gaze.

His dear friend carried with him the dream of the "Slate" that he, Weissmann, and Claudia had seen together, and he continued to search for a longed-for miracle.

Never again could he seem alone, nor a mere spectator.

Shiro kicked the ground. Silver power enveloped his body, blocking gravity and lifting him into the air.

He flew to where the "Red King" and the "Blue King" were fighting fiercely, beneath the red and blue Swords of Damocles, and descended with a single blow.

When the fist, which burst into red flames, and the sword controlled by blue crystals collided, Shiro landed.

He stopped the red fist with a hand containing immutable power, and the blue sword with a Japanese umbrella that also contained immutable power.

The "Red King" and the "Blue King" looked somewhat surprised. Shiro called out to the "Red King".

"This is the one you're looking for, right?"

He slightly reduced the power to seal the "Colorless King's" soul and, using Shiro's body, shouted,

"Hey! What are you thinking? Stop! Stop! Stop!"

Once again, he put all his strength into holding the "Colorless King". His breathing was ragged. He began to sweat. He couldn't hold on much longer.

The four Kings gathered in the same place. Those who didn't share the same path would each pursue their own desires.

"Quickly!", Shiro said.

"Only a "King" can kill another "King"."

Now is the time for the Kings to show off their skills.