



"THE EVE OF A SPECIAL WEDDING"

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

## CHAPTER 2: VISIT

A young man was flying through the sky.

He jumped into the air and ran with a stride that literally made him feel like he was flying. The wind blew, swaying the hem of his robe and making his long hair flutter. However, the eyebrows and beautiful features that appeared here and there were filled with an unusual sense of tension.

His name is Haruaki Kurama. He is the priest of the Kaizumi Shrine in Minoshima and one of the connectors.

On Ayaka Island, situated above the life line, there are many Mitama, the spirits of life, floating around. Mitamas, which simply exist in nature, sometimes become a source of problems in human society. It was Kurama's job to calm them down and return them to their rightful place.

However, this time the problem seems to be on a large scale.

Kurama looked down and thought that.

It was an almost unprecedented phenomenon. After completing his research, he must immediately return it and examine the literature. He needs to get other connections by contacting through Momoko. Of course, Jingi, Ando-san, Kado-san, Yang-san and the rest...

Thinking up to that point, Kurama consciously stopped his thoughts.

Ninoshima was coming into view. Narrowing his eyes, Kurama accelerated even more.

When they disembarked at the fishing port of Ninoshima, the crowd that had gathered there was packed.

"Oh, Kurama-sensei! Thank you for coming!"

The person who pushed through the crowd and approached Kurama was the head of the fishing cooperative. Having lived at sea for many years, he must be a strong-willed man, but this time he seems unable to hide his anxiety from him.

"I checked it from above on my way here. In fact, what you described is happening. When did you first notice this phenomenon?"

"Everyone noticed it early in the morning, and some of them said it had been like this since last night. At that time, I thought they were probably drunk and misunderstood..."

While they were talking, the two walked along the main street that runs through the fishing port. The market, which was normally loud and full of energy, was now as quiet as if a fire had been extinguished. Not a single fish was visible in the shop windows that

lined both sides of the street, and he could see the fishermen and shop owners talking anxiously in the background.

Finally, they climbed onto the breakwater and looked out over the open sea.

The sea was silent.

It's not an easy state to be in, like a pause. Both the waves and the currents are completely still. The mirror-like surface of the sea stretched as far as the eye could see, vividly reflecting the sun. If there were no clouds on the far horizon, perhaps he would not even be able to distinguish the boundary between sky and sea.

Kurama asked the union leader as he walked down to the beach.

"Has anyone been to the sea?"

"Some brave people came and looked, but they said they couldn't see a single fish on their radar."

"It would be wise to refrain from setting sail. You never know what will happen."

"I understand. I'll try to explain it to you."

There was an eerie silence on the beach. The sea has become a dead puddle on the shore. He couldn't hear anything, neither the constant crashing of the sea nor the sound of the waves echoing in the distance. To Kurama, who grew up on an island, it seemed like an otherworldly scene that he had never seen before.

No way.

Not quite.

Kurama had seen this scene before.

"It's the same as twelve years ago. That means..."

Kurama muttered as he crouched down on the sandy beach. He dipped his fingers into the sea water and felt the vitality that resides there.

A stagnation. It didn't happen naturally, but there were traces as if someone's life was being slowed down by someone's will.

"I see."

Kurama stood up and the union leader couldn't take it anymore.

"Did you understand something, Sensei?"

"I don't know for sure yet, but this is probably..."

At this moment, a roar sounded from afar.

Kurama and the union leader looked at each other and ran towards the breakwater again.

Many people were gathered on the port dock. Everyone looked at the sea, some pointed and shouted. Kurama also directed his attention there.

A ship was approaching.

It is not a fishing boat. It is impossible for a fisherman to use such a large wooden Japanese boat. Numerous turrets protrude from the ship's shining vermilion and gold hull, moving smoothly like many-legged animals. The ship was slowly approaching them, gliding slowly over the calm surface of the sea.

Curiously, the boat was not making waves. Even when the oar was thrown into the sea, there was not a single ripple, let alone a drop. It was as if the calm sea was carrying the ship by itself.

Kurama knew that his assumption was correct.

He looked at the union leader nervously.

"Council head. Contact Amamiya-san immediately and tell everyone on the island to have a connection."

Taking a deep breath, Kurama spoke clearly.

"The Gonoshima barge has arrived. A spirit has arrived."

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That day, the Amamiya residence was occupied since morning.

When Yukito washed his face and entered the living room, Momoko was sitting up straight and talking into the receiver of a black telephone. From her posture, expression, and tone of voice, Yukito could tell that something unusual had happened.

Yukito asked timidly, waiting for Momoko to hang up the phone.

"Um... is there anything I can help you with?"

Momoko frowned gravely and seemed to realize for the first time that Yukito was there. Her expression relaxed and she smiled.

"Sorry, I've been really busy this morning. Well, could you wake up Jingi-chan? I heard Haruaki-kun is calling him."

"Kurama-san...? I understand. Ah, but..."

In the end, Jingi didn't come home last night. Since he had a crazy party on the way home in the morning, he may be of no use to them now.

Momoko seemed to have read that beforehand and smiled.



"If he doesn't wake up, you can throw a bucket of water on him. He'll be happy to help, Yukito-kun."

That's serious...

Surprised by Momoko's seriousness, Yukito went upstairs anyway. He knocked modestly on the sliding door of Jingi's room and murmured.

"Jingi-san? I'll go in..."

It was about to open, and as it entered, his toe collided with something. The sake bottle fell and rolled until he hit the edge of the futon and stopped.

On the futon, Jingi was sleeping face down. The curtains were all closed, so he assumed that he intended to sleep until the afternoon. As long as he had money in his pocket, there would be no "job" in his mind, such is the man named Sagawa Jingi.

"Jingi-san, please wake up. Jingi-san!"

Yukito shook Jingi's shoulders and shouted in his ear again and again. However, Jingi just tossed and turned noisily and didn't try to wake up.

After letting out a small sigh, Yukito suddenly thought so.

Now that he thought about it, today's training had not started yet.

Yukito returned from the first floor and walked out from the terrace to the garden. The pond is still there like yesterday. Yukito crossed his fingers and cast a spell.

"Man, earth and sky! Water, do not fight for the good of all things, but confront the evils of all people!"

A mass of water rose from the pond, floated into the air, and stopped in front of Yukito's arm. Holding a bucket of water in the air, Yukito re-entered the house from the porch, walked up the stairs, entered Jingi's room, and relinquished control over Jingi's sleeping face.

The water ball was pulled by gravity and fell, hitting Jingi's head and exploding.

"Waaah?! W-what, what's going on?!"

"Ah, Jingi-san. Good morning."

"Yukito? Hey, what are you planning to do? Let people sleep comfortably!"

As he spit the water into his mouth, Jingi grabbed Yukito's chest. Yukito raised his arms in surrender.

"I-I'm sorry. But Momoko-san said that if you didn't wake up, I should do this..."

"What? Why did Momoko-san tell you that?"

"I don't know. But she seemed pretty serious. I think we better hurry."

He may be careless in most things, but there are some people he can't forget. Momoko Amamiya is one of those few. Especially when Momoko gets angry "seriously", she is so powerful that even Jingi, Kurama Haruaki and Ibuki Aka, tremble.

Still clutching Yukito's chest, Jingi's eyes moved from left to right as if in doubt. The drops of water dripping from her bangs were quite annoying.

Finally, Jingi released Yukito. He lifted his wet hair and said something menacing: "I'll remember this!" Then, just as he walked towards the stairs, he turned around and said:

"Yukito, your personality has gotten worse since you came here! You were cute at first!"

With that, he ran down the stairs.

"Who is the guilty?" Yukito said.

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A light car drives on the spring road.

The period of enlightenment had long since passed and Noyama was gradually beginning to awaken. Flowers bloom along the path and newborn butterflies flutter above them. It was a peaceful scene for March, giving an indication that the weather was about to get warmer.

Yukito, who was watching this from the train window, muttered to himself.

"...It's true. The water has stopped."

The canal that ran alongside the path was completely calm. A farmer who seemed to have gone out to work was standing there, looking worried. That person caught his attention and called him out loud.

"Hey, Jingi! Please do something about it! Mitama-san is to blame, right?"

Jingi, who was sitting next to Yukito, stuck his head out of the window and roared.

"I'm about to fix that! Wait!"

"So what are you doing so cool? There was a coming of age ceremony today?!"

"Shut up! There are some things going on here too!"

Light cars continue to circulate and farmers move further and further away. Momoko, who was behind the wheel, chuckled as Jingi sank into the seat and let out a deep sigh through his nose.

"Indeed. Jingi-chan rarely dresses like this."

"Momoko-san probably made you wear it. Absolutely."

Jingi grumbled bitterly and was forced to wear a hakama with a shield.

After that, after Yukito splashed water on him, Momoko ordered Jingi to take a bath first. The change of clothes that came out after that was that crested hakama. Without knowing why, Jingi put it on and she made him sit in front of the vanity, combed his hair, applied lotion and skin cream to his face, and then grabbed him by the neck and pushed him into the passenger seat.

His image reflected in the rearview mirror looks so clear, it wouldn't be surprising if they called it a coming-of-age ceremony. Even the coming-of-age ceremony itself was completely tight for Jingi, who attended in a t-shirt.

"Well, we're trying to calm Mitama down, right? Why do I have to go to the trouble of looking so cool? It's formal."

"Huh? But since Haruaki-kun said so, I guess it's better to do it."

Yukito, who was sitting in the back seat, shyly opened his mouth.

"Are you going to do some kind of ritual where you show up dressed appropriately? Isn't it really important that the water in the rivers and oceans stops...?"

"Well, I guess it's true. Normally, the water flows. If it stops, the farmers and fishermen will all be in trouble and, above all, their lives will be stagnant. It's fine now, but in a week you will have balls everywhere."

"Oh, my God, that's hard."

Momoko, who was driving, said it would be difficult. On the other hand, Yukito's complexion changed.

"Oh, is it really difficult?! What should we do?"

"So, Haru-nii was working hard, and I guess he was forced to take advantage of me. It's Haru-nii who should do something about it, not me."

"Will the other people come too?"

"Well, it's an island-wide problem. Isn't Kado-san here?"

Yukito let out a surprised voice at the exchange between Jingi and Momoko.

"Eh, besides Kurama-san and Jingi-san, do you also have a connection?"

"Suppressing the Mitama is not just about defeating the Aramitama. It's more like exorcising the Aramitama before it happens. There are people who work as farmers and also as connections."

"Eh... there are all kinds of people."

Well, he thought to himself. Although they are called "Pulse Connectors", their skill is extremely high, and even if all of Ninoshima's "Pulse Connectors" were grouped together, they would not be able to compete with Kurama alone. They understand this, which is why they recognize Kurama, who is still young, as the representative of the island's connectors. Although Kurama accepts the responsibility of being the representative, he does not disrespect the older connectors. The balance in that area is delicate.

In any case, the conclusion was already decided. That is...

"In any case, Haru-nii will manage somehow."

Jingi let out a big yawn, leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes.

He could feel Momoko and Yukito exchanging shocked glances. Without worrying about it, Jingi fell asleep.

Finally, the car carrying Jingi and his friends arrived at the Ninoshima community center.

Although it is called a community center, it is a stately mansion with a magnificent gate and a vast garden. It was built over 100 years ago and the shining pillars and thick beams give the viewer an idea of the weight of history. The mansion was originally owned by the Amamiya family, a large landowner, and was offered to the city as a shared space.

In other words, it was originally Momoko's house. Perhaps because of that, she casually opened the door and walked out to the front yard.

Then she stopped, as if frozen.

"Jingi-chan. Please come first."

Momoko muttered loudly, making Jingi suspicious. Momoko Amamiya is an influential person on the island and she is barely afraid of anything. Is there something inside the door that makes she shudder?

Jingi and Yukito also entered the garden and suddenly stopped.

People were lined up along the path from the front yard to the front door.

They were all wearing indigo kosode and hanten of the same color, and they were bowing. It was as if the people of the Edo period had traveled back in time. There was no facial expression on their flat faces and they all looked like each other, like brothers.

It was a strange sight.

Yukito, standing still, murmured timidly.

"Who are these people?"



"Oh, I do not know."

As they whispered among themselves, the man in the lead bowed to Jingi. He then gestured toward the entrance.

"Over here please."

Then, the man behind him said the exact same words.

"Over here please."

"Over here please."

"Over here please..."

As if singing in a circle, the people lined up in a row repeated the words of the person in front of them. It was so creepy that Jingi and Yukito took a step back at the same time.

At that moment, a young man appeared through the front door. That's Kurama Haruaki, a brother of Jingi with white karigi and Toba.

"Ah, Jingi. It's very nice of you to come. Now, let's go inside."

"Oh, hello. Haru-nii..."

At the invitation, Jingi and his friends walked out timidly. Meanwhile, the crowd of people lined up on both sides never took their eyes off Jingi and his friends. Naturally, the three of them moved faster, feeling uneasy as if they were being watched by countless surveillance cameras.

After entering the community center and closing the door behind him, Jingi asked Kurama.

"Hey, who are they?! They're not from this island!"

"...Ah. That's right."

There, Jingi noticed that Kurama's expression was different than usual.

Speaking of Kurama Haruaki, he is the "guardian" of Ayaka Island and is always a meek, gentle and calm man. He has top-notch connection skills and always stays calm no matter what.

Kurama is nervous.

His handsome expression is stern and firm, he is alert and looks towards the back of the mansion. It was as if some incredible monster was lurking there.

He thought that this was not a simple matter.

"Who are those people, Haruaki-kun?"

Kurama answered Momoko's question as he continued down the hallway.

"They are spirits, the residents of Gonoshima. It is their fault that the island's running water has stopped, but it is said that they have no malicious intentions."

"Gonoshima?"

It was Yukito who let out a surprised voice. Kurama stopped involuntarily and looked at Yukito seriously.

Yukito was upset.

"Ah, I'm sorry. I interrupted you..."

"Ah, I see. Yukito-kun has only been on this island for a short time. No wonder he doesn't know anything about Gonoshima."

After Kurama answered that, he widened his eyebrows a little pathetically.

"However, I don't know much about it either. Ayaka Island is an archipelago made up of seven islands, but we have almost no contact with Shinoshima Island. However, they are called "Spirit People" and we have been told that they are a different species to ours."

"Different species?"

Yukito looked even more confused. Jingi snorted.

"That's right, a hybrid of Mitama and human, right? Haru-nii, do you believe that story?"

A long time ago, when Ayaka Island was just established, the race of people who fell in love with Mitama were called spiritual people. It's a fairy tale that falls into a fairly minor category, even on Ayaka Island. Even residents probably know very little about it.

However, Kurama nodded with a serious expression.

"Their appearance largely matches the appearance of the spirits that appear in the stories. The last time they came was twelve years ago, do you remember, Jingi?"

Twelve years ago. If that's the case, Jingi must have been about seven or eight years old, a shitty kid who didn't even know how to connect pulses. His memories of those times are just hazy.

"No... I really don't remember."

"Oh, really?"

Kurama frowned. For some reason, his expression was as if he was criticizing Jingi.

"Then you better remember. Twelve years ago and now, the cause is the same. And you are deeply involved in it."

"W-what is that?"

Kurama didn't respond, but slowly opened the double doors at the end of the hallway.

Beyond was a large room with around 30 tatami mats. Five people were sitting in two rows, facing each other, on pure white tatami mats. Lined up on the right are Mayor Sanji Inou, who is an acquaintance of Jingi, and people he has connections with, such as Kado no Gozen and Yang.

However, he does not recognize the people sitting on the left. The ancient hakama and the vague features of his face were very similar to those at the entrance. That means they are also residents of Gonoshima. An old man with numerous scars on his face was sitting in the back, talking persistently to the woman next to him.

The woman has a resplendent beauty. She looks like she's about 20 years old, she's probably around the same age as Jingi. She has pale pink eyes, blue-black hair, and a kimono with an indigo arrow pattern. An elegant and beautiful woman who looks like she came straight out of a medieval princess.

Light pink eyes suddenly looked at Jingi.

Her eyes widened. She slowly got up and stepped onto the tatami with light steps that did not make her feel heavy. She hugged Jingi's chest as if she were being sucked by him while he remained there without knowing why.

"Ah, Jingi-sama. It's been a long time...!"

Jingi thought as he froze.

(Who is this woman?)

"Since that day, how I have been waiting for this moment to come. I have admired you, Jingi-sama. Sango is happy..."

"Wait! Wait a minute!"

Screaming, Jingi separated from the woman named Sango. She looked at Jingi with a surprised expression.

Jingi was shocked by the innocent look in her eyes.

"Hey, I'm the wrong person, right? It's probably not me you're looking for!"

However, Sango shook her head and said:

"No, there is no way I can be wrong. I am talking about you, Sagawa Jingi, the third disciple of the great hermit Makoto Yanagi. Your face, ah, the image of that time is so clear..."

"N-no, but..."

Seeing Jingi still trying to resist, her coral eyes suddenly became moist.

"Jingi-sama. Have you forgotten about me?"

The room was silent.

Everyone present looked at Jingi. No, he could tell they were looking at him. No wonder he was seen as the worst kind of bastard who would take advantage of a determined woman's feelings.

Yukito and Momoko's cold voices spoke into his sweaty back.

"Jingi-san... that is certainly not the case..."

"I thought you wouldn't do something like that..."

"No, no, no, wait, wait, wait! I really don't know! Haru-nii! Please tell me!"

Jingi screamed and clung to Kurama, his last hope.

Kurama was, as expected, calm. As if to calm Sango's crying...

"Miss Sango. It can't be helped. If you only met once, 12 years ago, I can't blame him even if he doesn't remember."

Sango nodded vigorously as she wiped her eyes.

"Yes, I understand. My feelings are my own. No wonder Jingi-sama doesn't feel the same way. However... somewhere in my heart, I just hoped that Jingi-sama felt the same way about me. The fault is of my own stupidity..."

Only once, twelve years ago. Jingi's brain flashed through memories of him like a flashing light. If he doesn't remember that, he will die socially. Although he normally lives a carefree life, he thought that he would die in that situation and his mind was spinning at full speed.

At that moment, something suddenly occurred to him.

"Sango? Cider?"

Sango's expression suddenly brightened.

"Jingi-sama...!"

Light red eyes, blue-black hair. She was lying alone on the beach. The sound of her voice as she choked on the cider, seeing her in Baba's shirt, and the smile on her face as she played a video game for the first time, all of that came to Jingi's mind at the same time.

"Ah! You're Sango! That lost girl from back then!"

Sango was jumping on the spot, having fun like a little girl.

"That's right! That's right, Jingi-sama! Ah, I'm so happy!"

"It can't be?! You're the girl I played with for a while twelve years ago!"

Looking at Sango, Yukito and Momoko, Jingi shouted loudly. Yukito and Momoko looked at each other awkwardly and muttered, "Well, then that's true..."

Jingi felt relieved. He doesn't know why Sango is so obsessed with him, but at least he can avoid being seen as a bastard.

Kurama nodded and suggested Sango.

"What do you think, Miss Sango? Now that you have arrived, I would like to explain the current situation to everyone."

Sango looked at Kurama and smiled gently, then turned her gaze to the side.

The old man sitting in the back on the left slowly raised his hips. He had an elegant smile on his scarred face and bowed his head respectfully.

"No, Kurama-sama explained it to me before. Please leave this to this old man. Sango, Jingi-sama, please come here."

"Oh, yes..."

Jingi sat in front of him, Sango tugged at his sleeves. Sango also sat next to him. He felt that he had become some kind of fixture. He was able to avoid being looked down upon, but he still had a bad feeling about it.

With his hands clasped behind his waist, the old man silently entered the center of the hall. He looked at everyone around him and began to speak in a clear voice.

"Well, to all of Ninoshima. I would like to greet you once again. We are inhabitants of the "Kisui Village" on the island of Gonoshima. Kisui Sango-sama is my daughter. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused by this unexpected visit."

"Absolutely."

The person mumbling to himself was Kado Gozen, an old man in a kimono sitting behind on the right side. The fact that he is still in his twilight years despite being over ninety years old makes him one of Ninoshima's oldest connections.

"There are many people here who eat thanks to the sea. When the water stops, they have nothing to eat."

"Well, Gozen. Don't be so rude..."

"You should shut up, Sanji. It's an argument between people who are connected to each other."



Inou cringed as he was yelled at bluntly. Jingi secretly sympathizes with him. He is the mayor of Ayakashima City and has a hard-working personality, but is rarely rewarded for his efforts.

A middle-aged man sitting next to Gozen raised his hand and asked for the right to speak. Ando-sama. With a T-shirt and a towel wrapped around his head, he looks like a farmer who wouldn't be embarrassed to appear anywhere, but this is a clear connection.

"Even without the fishing boat, if this situation continues, it will be bad. The stagnation of life energy will lead to the appearance of Aramitamas. Do you agree with Ninoshima being filled with Aramitamas?"

His tone was calm, but Ando's eyes were stern. "Do not let vitality stagnate" is the most basic of all connections, and everyone in Gonoshima should have understood it.

However, the old man had a very calm expression.

"Well, that's because Kaihomaru is complicated, and when you use the Kaido Method to stop water, it will bend their navel and move."

"Even if you go to the trouble of stopping at sea and using a ship like that, you can return home on a sea train or whatever."

"No."

The one who responded to that was not the old man. There was a man dressed in Japanese clothes sitting next to him. His face was strangely flat, almost expressionless on his face.

"That will not happen."

When he murmured, a man next to him in similar Japanese clothing responded.

"That will not happen."

"That will not happen."

"That will not happen."

Like the men in the front yard, they kept singing the same thing one after another.

(I see. This is definitely a "special" group.), Jingi thought.

Among them, only the old man was hardly "special". Or maybe it's because they're "special," but the way they responded wasn't all that different from the people there.

"Yes, that won't happen. It is stipulated that when those from Kisuigu Shrine visit other islands, they must be with Kaitomaru."

"I see, that means..."

The person who murmured was Yang, a young man sitting next to Ando. It is said that he is a young man, but his actual age is unknown, and the only thing they know is that he is a relative who came from the mainland and settled there before they realized it.

"That means he has no intention of responding to our request."

The old man responded with a smile on his face.

"Once we have fulfilled our purpose, we will return to normal."

In the end, he recognized Yang's words. Yang muttered something, but he couldn't make out any meaningful words. Maybe it's the language of his hometown.

"Then please explain your purpose again."

It was Kurama who said that. The old man had a soft smile in his eyes, then he looked at Jingi and Sango.

Sango blushed and looked down.

He had a strong bad feeling.

"The reason we visited Ninoshima was to continue the marriage ceremony between Sango-sama and Jingi-sama."

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Yukito froze, eyes wide.

Jingi's reaction was almost the same as Yukito's, it seemed as if he had no idea what was being said. However, it seemed to be a fact well known to everyone else, so no one was surprised.

Momoko, who was sitting next to Yukito, said and she covered her mouth with her hand.

"Oh, God. Jingi-chan, are you getting married?"

She expressed her honest opinion.

An old man from Gonoshima heard that and looked at Momoko.

"That's right. Sango-sama and Jingi-sama had an engagement ceremony twelve years ago. Now that they are both of good age, I think it's time for things to move on."

Yukito couldn't help but shout out loud.

"But for Jingi-san to get married, that wouldn't be reasonable!"

The old man's gaze met Yukito. He asked, tilting his head slightly.

"Unreasonable? Why?"

"Ah... W-why is that..."

As far as Yukito knows, there is no one who is as far from marriage as Jingi. He is the type of man who goes out at night and comes home in the morning, living hand to mouth 365 days a year. He can't even imagine him getting married and starting a family.

Kurama seemed to be thinking the same thing, speaking cautiously.

"No matter how committed you are, it doesn't make common sense for you to suddenly try to marry someone you met 12 years ago and only met once. Maybe you should get to know each other a little better."

"No. I know Jingi-sama very well."

Sango said that. Although she is polite, her tone is full of confidence. The old man took care of that.

"Jingi-sama likes to drink and have fun. Isn't that right?"

"...Yes, good."

Seeing Kurama's awkward response, the old man smiled.

"The Kisuinomiya family is the leader of us spiritual people. There are many poets and geishas and you can enjoy lavish banquets with delicious drinks from the East and West. I am sure Jingi-sama will be satisfied."

In short, it was a reverse story.

Kurama remained silent. There is a deep expression of resignation on his face. Just by getting married, he can drink and party however he wants, and he even has a cute wife with him. There was no way Jingi would miss such a delightful story. What came to Kurama's mind was probably almost the same as Yukito's.

However, at this moment, Jingi looked up and made a clear statement.

"No way. I'm really sorry about the marriage."

Sango's face suddenly turned white as she looked at Jingi.

Once again the room was filled with hostility. The semi-reflexive hostility that humans feel towards men who deprive women of their feelings. However, this time, Jingi didn't flinch, he stood up from his seat and raised his voice.

"You know, I'm only twenty years old! It's no joke that I'm trying to solidify myself with this stuff! Listen, no matter how good the drinks and food are, they're nothing compared to freedom!"

"Jingi-sama..."

Holding his hand tightly, Sango looks at Jingi as if she is clinging to him. Jingi looked at Sango as if he was embarrassed, but he still tried to push her off of him.

"I'm sorry, Sango. I'm glad you like it. But my life is my own! I'd rather live my life alone than with someone else! Marriage, family, etc. It's no joke to be tied down by things like that!"

"....."

The room was silent.

The people of Ninoshima looked at each other and thought of something. After a while, they looked at Kurama.

"If that's what Jingi thinks, then I guess that's it."

Certainly, the most important thing in a marriage is the will of the people themselves. There is no way that one person's desires can overwhelm the other's desires. No matter how much Sango cares about Jingi, if Jingi doesn't have that desire, it won't work.

With a sigh, Yukito relaxed his body. For the first time he realized that he was at peace and felt a little uncomfortable.

Said the old man, who was standing in the center of the hall, looking directly at Jingi.

"But Jingi-sama. Twelve years ago, you promised to marry the princess, right?"

Jingi accepted that head on and responded with dignity.

"I don't remember anything like that! Even if that were the case, there's no way the promise we made when we were children would still be true!"

"Hm..."

The old man closed his eyes in silence with his hands tied behind his back. Just when everyone around him thought he had run out of arguments, he opened his eyes again and said:

"So, could you return the proof of commitment to me?"

"Eh?"

Jingi frowned. The old man continued without worrying.

"Twelve years ago, the princess gave you a certificate of engagement. It is a secret treasure that only one member of the Kisuimiya family possesses in their life, the "Kisuirin", which is a sign of the vow made to the person they have chosen as their spouse."

"....."

"Don't you remember that too? However, even we can't forget the treasure we gave you. Without it, the princess will never be able to get married. The "Kisuirin" is important."

Jingi blinked slowly.

The blood gradually disappeared from his face.

As Yukito looked at him, he suddenly thought of something. He asked timidly.

"Um. What kind of thing is it?"

The old man drew an oval the size of a chicken egg in the air.

"It's a shiny scale of this size. Yes, it may look like a jewel in your eyes."

A jewel.

The words Jingi said yesterday at the "Usagi" izakaya came back to Yukito's mind.

(Well, I don't know, but there was a strange gem in my room. When I sold it to an antique dealer in Ichinoshima, he was surprised! He bought it for me, enough money to pay off the debts and live for a while!)

The old man looked at Yukito's face and said:

"Do you know something?"

"No."

Yukito responded in a dull voice. He didn't expect to be able to tell such a lie, so he was surprised.

However, Momoko, who was sitting next to him, put her finger on her chin and muttered.

"I may have seen that before. Jingi-chan showed it to me yesterday."

Momoko probably didn't have malicious intentions. She was simply remembering. That is the correct attitude to follow to discover the truth, but he wondered if she had thought about what kind of position that would leave Jingi in.

The old man confirmed that with Momoko.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I remember very well that he asked me if it was mine. When I said that it was not mine, Jingi-chan happily took it somewhere."

"So, Jingi-sama, you definitely have the "Kisuirin". If you are going to call off the engagement, I would like it back."

Jingi was silent.



Sweat was beginning to form on his forehead.

Kurama asked suspiciously.

"What's wrong, Jingi? It's just like the old man said. If you have that jewel and you have no intention of getting married, then you have to return it."

"Ah..."

A middle-aged man sitting next to Momoko murmured. He is also one of the connections, it is Ando. As Ando stroked his stubbly chin, he remembered:

"Well, my drinking buddy said he got an unusual gift yesterday. He apparently had some extra income."

Kurama must have thought about that possibility too. His expression gradually became gloomy.

"What about that extra income?"

"It seems like he got the money because he sold something. I wasn't there, so I don't know the details. No, I can't believe it."

Ando shook his head, as if worried by the possibility, but he still looked at Jingi suspiciously.

Probably everyone present was imagining the same thing.

That is to say...

"...I don't think so, but Jingi-sama. By any chance, did you sell the "Kisuirin"?"

A deadly silence filled the room.

Jingi remained silent. His face was already taking on an earthy color. At that moment, his defeat was certain. No matter how they looked at it, it was clear what Jingi had done.

"Jingi. Answer."

As expected of Kurama, he questioned Jingi with a stern look on his face. Even if the promise made twelve years ago is invalid, selling proof of that promise is highly unethical. As a senior member of the Yanagi clan, he does not know if it is true or not, but if it is true, he will have to pay the corresponding amount of compensation.

At this moment, Sango, who had been silent with her head lowered, suddenly looked up.

Yukito's eyes widened, because Sango was smiling.

"It's okay, Jingi-sama."

For some reason, Yukito felt scared when he saw Sango, who was pulling Jingi's sleeve and looking at him.

"The "Kisuirin" was given to Jingi-sama. Therefore, whatever you do with it is up to Jingi-sama."

While on the mainland, Yukito spent his time in solitude. There was no one he could call a friend. Of course, he's never dated a girl. Therefore, the subtleties of romantic feelings between men and women are as unknown as the weather on the other side of the world.

Even Yukito knew exactly what Sango was saying.

She was telling him to take responsibility.

Jingi looked forward, stubbornly refusing to make eye contact with Sango. However, it doesn't matter where he looks. While he was trying to guess what Jingi was thinking or trying to do, he moved his hands at tremendous speed.

"Man, earth and sky! Each of us returns to our roots as a donated art!"

It was probably the fastest technique Jingi had ever developed in his life. By the time those present at the scene suddenly jumped up, Jingi's figure had already disappeared, leaving only a gust of wind behind.

As for the chaos that followed, it's best not to say too much.

In any case, with the person in question on the run, Ninoshima's reputation was completely destroyed. Representatives such as Inou and Kurama apologized to the old man, who had a harsh attitude, and were made to promise that they would find and arrest the suspect as soon as possible.

The strange thing was Sango's attitude. She should have been angry, sad or depressed by the despicable betrayal of the person she believed to be her fiancé, but she showed no signs of discomfort and smiled calmly.

Yukito felt an eerie and indescribable feeling about that.

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The discussion at the community center ended with the idea that "Ninoshima should take responsibility for capturing Jingi".

Of course, just because Jingi is a resident of Ninoshima, there is no need for all of Ninoshima to bear the brunt of his mismanagement. However, he had no choice but to accept the old man's insistence that he had no intention of returning to Gonoshima unless he achieved his goal, along with his ethical obligation. As long as they remain on Ninoshima, that is, unless they capture Jingi, the water on the island will remain static.

After sending Yukito home, Momoko ran around the island. She did not search for Jingi herself, but rather increased the number of people searching for Jingi. Momoko Amamiya, the current head of the large landowning Amamiya family, has hidden power in Ninoshima. It can be said that there is not a single resident who does not respond to a direct "request" from her.

So she set out to look for Sagawa Jingi through Ninoshima, and when she returned home, the sun had already set.

"Haa."

Momoko took a deep breath as she sat on a cushion in the living room. She was exhausted not only physically but also mentally. She was used to Jingi teasing her, but it's been a while since he's teased her on such a large scale.

At this moment, a voice rang from the kitchen.

"Ah, Momoko-san. Welcome."

Momoko instinctively straightens her back. Brushing her hair loose from her cheek, she forced a smile.

"Oh, Yukito-kun. You were here. I'm sorry, you must be hungry. I'll prepare dinner right away."

Momoko said that and tried to get up, but Yukito came out of the kitchen and hurriedly stopped her. For some reason, he is wearing an apron.

"Oh, no, okay! Um, can I make dinner today?"

"Eh?"

Momoko rolled her eyes. Since Yukito arrived at that house, he was asked to help prepare the food several times. However, this was the first time he had volunteered to do it himself.

That doubt must have appeared on his face. Yukito looked down apologetically.

"Momoko-san, you look tired and besides, Jingi-san is my teacher. I'm sorry to think it's because of him."

"Ah..."

At those words, Momoko's smile became natural.

He is polite and serious, which is the exact opposite of Jingi. That's Yukito's personality. Of course, Yukito couldn't be held responsible for anything Jingi did, but it was his nature to worry about that.

Momoko replied to Yukito.

"So, I guess I'll ask you a favor. Oh, but can I help you too?"

"Y-yes!"

It was strange to see Yukito visibly relieved.

"...Anyway, I wonder where you went, Jingi-san."

Yukito grumbled as he took the curry.

Yukito prepared a curry full of vegetables and mushrooms. It is strange that he has no fish on the table in Ninoshima, where a large amount of fish is caught, but in the current situation where there are no fishing boats available and no fresh fish is available, that is the only option. Tonight, most households in Ninoshima will probably have a menu that doesn't include fish, and unless Jingi is caught, that will remain the case.

Momoko responded as she rolled the potatoes with her spoon.

"I'm sure a lot of people are looking for Jingi-chan right now, but he runs away very quickly at times like this. I wonder if they'll ever find him."

"Has anything like this happened before?"

"Well, I can't even count them anymore. A fight with Alfred-san capsized a ship in the port, and when he tried to create a fountain that would produce alcohol, many Mitama gathered. Every time he does that, he runs off somewhere, so we're used to catching Jingi-chan."

"He is an amazing person..."

Yukito muttered in shock and Momoko let out a sigh.

"But this time he has gone too far. If the sea stopped because of that boy, it would cause problems for everyone on the island."

Yukito said softly.

"It's not that it's Jingi-san's fault..."

"Eh?"

"The reason the sea and rivers are stopped is because the people of Gonoshima are doing that, right? There's no doubt that Jingi-san did something wrong, but that doesn't mean it's all his fault."

Momoko stared at Yukito.

That wasn't her intention, but Momoko's gaze seemed to corner Yukito. He lowered his head and murmured, "I'm sorry..." in a low voice. Momoko grabbed a spoonful of curry, put it in her mouth, and swallowed thickly.

"That's right. I'm sorry, Yukito-kun, you're right."

Yukito looked up in surprise.

"It's not Jingi-chan's fault, but I think the worst thing you can do is trample on a girl's feelings. But it's too much to hold back the ocean for that, right?"

"Oh, that's right. That's what I meant!"

Yukito nodded enthusiastically and Momoko gave a small laugh. She then shook her head slowly.

"But no. The real problem is not who is to blame."

Yukito blinked. He guessed that he misunderstood. Yukito was only fifteen years old, too young to understand how the world worked. Momoko opened her mouth as she thought about how to express herself.

"The real problem is that we can't do anything about the oceans and rivers that these people have stopped. If they make demands, we have no choice but to accept them."

"Oh, that's very harsh."

"If our logic and laws were valid, that would not be the case, but it seems that these people operate based on a different logic."

A different breed, Kurama said. A spiritual person, a hybrid of Mitama and human. Momoko, who was born and raised on Ayaka Island, naturally accepted such people, believing that such existences exist. But acceptance and understanding are two different things.

Momoko continued with a sigh.

"It seems like Haruaki-kun and the others are trying their best to see if they can do something, but other than that, I think it would be quicker to capture Jingi-chan and negotiate with them."

Yukito thought with a difficult expression on his face and then asked in a low voice.

"What will you do if you find Jingi-san? That..."

Momoko was able to predict what was going to happen, although it was difficult to tell. She shook her head slowly.

"I'm not going to hand him over to those people. I'll have to apologize somehow and make them give up. After all, marriage is only possible with mutual consent, right? If Jingi-chan doesn't like it, then I think that's all."

Yukito's face suddenly lit up.



"Oh, that's right! That's good..."

Momoko laughed.

"You're worried about Jingi-chan, Yukito-kun."

After saying that, Yukito stiffened. His gaze moved from side to side awkwardly and he muttered an excuse.

"No, no, it's not that. Even if he does something like that, he is still my master..."

"Hehe, that's right."

Momoko smiled and Yukito didn't say anything else and continued eating.

Actually, Yukito and Jingi seemed to be a pretty good partner. When she first heard that they were going to have a teacher-student relationship, she wondered what would happen, but for Yukito, who is passive about everything, Jingi's assertiveness as he slowly invades his personal space may be the perfect choice.

At this moment, Yukito's spoon, who was scooping up curry and rice, suddenly stopped.

He was looking for something. His wide eyes were not looking at Momoko. He stared at the corner of the ceiling, his gaze slowly sliding to the side. Seeing that, Momoko couldn't help but call out to him.

"Yukito-kun? What's wrong?"

"Ah, that's a... Mitama."

"Mitama?"

Momoko can't see the Mitama. She doesn't have that talent. As someone who was born on Ayaka Island, she knew very well that it was "there".

Yukito put down his spoon and looked at Momoko confused.

"The Mitama is making some kind of noise. A lot is flowing in that direction..."

He then he got up and opened the glass door that led to the porch. So, as if something had invited him, he came out.

"Yukito-kun!"

Momoko hurriedly followed him.

He crossed the garden, left the compound of the house and went up the path that borders the river. Momoko did the same and, like Yukito, she was left speechless.

A boat comes down the river.

An elegant Japanese ship decorated with vermilion and gold.

The boat, totally unsuitable for modern times, glides silently through the calm waters of the river, gently moving the numerous oars that protrude from its hull.

"What's that?"

There was no way Momoko could answer the question Yukito let slip. She had never heard of such a ship in Ninoshima.

As the ship approached them, they slowly began to hear voices singing.

There were several figures on deck. The figures sang in unison, moving their bodies like seaweed glistening at the bottom of the water.

[Today the sun is good and so is the sea.]

[Best of all, Namitaka.]

[Ten and twenty layers of white waves.]

[Let's go to the capital below.]

The center of the group of flickering figures seemed to be a platform, one higher than the others. A man and a woman sit surrounded by screens painted in vermilion and gold. The woman is wearing a white kimono and the man is wearing a hakama with a shield on it, so he wondered if that is a congratulatory message. Now that he thought about it, the figures' voices sang like an old song of celebration.

[The capital is a beautiful place.]

[Maiodori dance of gold and silver.]

[Our capital is Kisuigu.]

[Let's stand up now, Kisuigu.]

The woman dressed in pure white seems dejected and her face cannot be seen. However, that was not the case with the man. Twisting his neck, twisting his body, trying to escape somehow, the man was tied next to the woman.

The man craned his neck and his eyes turned to Momoko and Yukito, who were standing on the bank of the river.

They both shouted his name at the same time.

"Jingi-san!"

"Jingi-chan!"

[Come on, come on, son-in-law.]

[The capital is a beautiful place.]

[I have to return to the town where I was born.]

[I come to tell you.]

"Wait?! What are they doing?! Where are they going?!"

Screaming, Yukito ran away.

He ran desperately trying to catch up with the Japanese ship that was sliding down the river. However, the human feet could not keep up with the speed of the ship and gradually moved away from it. Yukito tied the seal while he ran.

"Man, earth and sky! Um, uh...!"

But he couldn't seem to put the spell together. Maybe he didn't know the proper technique. While he looked at his hands in panic, Yukito slipped and fell over the bank into the river.

"Yukito-kun?! Are you okay?!"

Momoko also ran towards Yukito in a panic. Yukito clung to the shore, coughing violently. Still, his attention was not on himself, but on the ship moving away from him.

"Momoko-san! Jingi-san is...!"

Grabbing Yukito's hand and pulling him towards the river bank, Momoko frowned and looked down the river.

There was no longer any singing and the stern was about to depart. Even if she returned home and started her car now, she wouldn't be able to catch up with him. They, the people of Gonoshima, kidnapped a Ninoshima resident without warning and were about to return home.

It was quite a lick.

Momoko spoke to Yukito with a gentle voice that contradicted her inner feelings.

"Yukito-kun. Let's go back to the house. If you don't take a bath, you'll catch a cold."

"Eh. But..."

"It's okay with that ship."

Momoko smiled. Seeing that smile, fear appeared on Yukito's face. Putting that aside, Momoko spoke in a clear tone.

"I'll make sure to clarify it properly before I drop it."