



"THE EVE OF A SPECIAL WEDDING"

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

CHAPTER 4: IN GONOSHIMA

The witch's third arm gently lifted the pipe.

Purple smoke billowed from the pipe. Smoke seemed to fill the darkened room with the curtains closed.

Or maybe it was some kind of curse. Ibuki Aka looked straight into her eyes, warning himself of that.

"Kinasa. That's a nostalgic name."

A soft voice echoed in the room. Holding her mouthpiece between her red lips, she slowly inhaled and exhaled the purple smoke. The room became even more smoky and Ibuki frowned.

"There are not many opportunities to come to Gonoshima. Now is the time to pay your debt, Sugaramurudi."

"Hehehe."

Her black robe swayed with the sound of laughter and the giant pointed hat hid the face of the witch Sagaramurudi. The appearance of an "evil witch" is exactly like something out of a fairy tale. The right side of her normal arm was raised and pointed directly at Ibuki's face.

"Don't be so arrogant, boy. It's not you I owe."

There was not the slightest hint of malice in her calm voice. Despite that, Ibuki was aware of the gun in her pocket. If Sugaramurudi wanted to do that, she could do everything she could to escape.

Then, the fingers of her right hand suddenly pointed upwards. She continued to twist her fingers.

"And I don't remember which one I owe. I must have owed something to Kinasa. In general, what do you mean?"

"2011. Misurata."

When he said it simply, her fingers stopped moving.

The witch cast a sidelong glance at Ibuki. Bright amber eyes. Feeling a little dizzy, Ibuki focused on the pointed hat. Ibuki knew that he should not let his guard down even for a moment against the evil master. Because he himself is like that.

"That is certainly a large debt."

Muttering, Sugaramurudi tapped the ash dropper with her pipe. Poom, poom. Each time, the collar of the hat catches the light of the lamp and shines.

Finally, she sighed and sank deeply into her chair.

"Okay. What do you want?"

"The "Star of Galilee"."

When he responded vaguely, Sugaramurudi snorted. Her original arm, the left side of it, extended. Her eerily white fingers slid between the stacks of books, past the medicine bottles filled with mysterious creatures, and touched the handle of an old dresser.

Her arm extended several meters. Ibuki didn't move an eyebrow. What the witch does with her body is up to her.

Finally, Sugaramurudi's hand extended a box in front of Ibuki. When he received it and opened it, he found a regular dodecahedral crystal inside. Countless stars shine inside the crystal. After confirming that, Ibuki quickly closed the box.

Ibuki said briefly as he put the box into his bag.

"I certainly received it."

Just when he was about to turn around after saying that, Sugaramurudi murmured.

"Yes? That's all?"

".....?"

Ibuki stopped and looked over his shoulder. Sugaramurudi's amber eyes stared at Ibuki. Buried in the couch, she murmured.

"Don't you care about your younger brother? You are a heartless person."

"Younger brother?"

Ibuki has two younger brothers. Among them, he called out the name of the one who would most likely cause trouble.

"What's wrong with Jingi?"

Sugaramurudi rolled her eyes as if she was bewildered.

"Are you slow? You should train your eyes and ears a little more."

Ibuki turned to Sugaramurudi. Her eyes glared fiercely at the witch.

"What did you do to Jingi?"

Sugaramurudi twisted her face in disgust. Even so, she did not face Ibuki's tense hostility head-on. Waving her white hand, she said in a careless tone.

"I haven't done anything. I only know that Yanagi's third disciple was brought to this island."

"Did they bring him in? Kidnapped? By who and why?"

"Do you wish me to provide you with information?"

The witch's eyes narrowed in amusement and Ibuki fell silent.

There is no direct interest between Sugaramurudi and Ibuki. Ibuki came to Gonoshima at the request of Rika Kinari, the woman who had taught him her bad habits. She wanted a magical tool called "Star of Galilee" that belonged to Sugaramurudi.

Sugaramurudi traveled all over the world and it was difficult to track her whereabouts, but she occasionally visited Gonoshima during her vacations. However, Gonoshima is always protected by a barrier, and only those authorized by the island's owner can easily cross. That's why Kinari was always watching Gonoshima.

That barrier was loosened the other day. Kinari notified Ibuki about that matter. The witch Sugaramurudi gave him the "Star of Galilee".

Although he was irritated by his work as his servant, he owed her a considerable debt of gratitude. Ibuki traveled to Gonoshima just to fulfill his duty.

The success was excellent. All that's left to do is return to Ichinoshima and hand over the cursed tool.

It was supposed to be like this.

"....."

Ibuki frowned and thought.

Sugaramurudi is a witch, or even called a magician. They are similar and different to pulse connectors, and although they are still people who create techniques from their life energy, their systems are different.

What is clear is that the magician, at least Sugaramurudi, is not good enough to grant wishes for free. If you want your wishes to come true, you must also make her wishes come true. After thinking like this, Ibuki opened his mouth.

"What do you want?"

There's not much he can offer. It would be a different story if he returned to the "Ayaka Security" headquarters, but the only magic tool he has now is a bullet that has been treated with a spell. Although it is doubtful that they have information about the witch...

Sugaramurudi was silent for a while.

The visor of her pointed hat hides her eyes. Sugaramurudi slowly let out purple smoke and said in a low voice:

"Yanagi Yukito."

Ibuki's gaze became sharp.

Did Sugaramurudi realize that? She continued in a calm tone.

"Is it true that he is Makoto Yanagi's biological son?"

He had to choose his words carefully.

He had no idea why the witch wanted information about Yukito. The only thing he had to avoid was what Ibuki thinks could cause Yukito harm. Ibuki gave her precise information that she can find by doing a little research.

"That's what I heard."

"Where is her mother? Who is she?"

"I don't know."

The tip of the pipe tapped the bowl of ashes in irritation.

"You don't know anything. You're useless."

"I don't care if my information is useful to you or not. I answered what you asked me and you must answer what I asked you."

Then, Ibuki lowered his voice and said:

"If you do anything to Yukito, I will kill you."

Sugaramurudi stared at Ibuki. There was a look in her eyes that he didn't like. It's like she's trying not to laugh.

Finally, the witch put down her pipe and opened her arms freely.

"Don't get me wrong. I'm not planning on doing anything. I just want to know. Does he really have a son?"

"....."

"Okay. I'll tell you. What you want to know is about the third disciple."

Then, the witch slowly began to tell the story.

+++++

The Gonoshima Station platform was built directly on the sandy beach.

Blue skies, blue sea, white sand beaches. The sun is soft, the air is warm, and a soft sea breeze gently sways the leaves of the palm trees that grow along the coast.

When the group got off the sea train, they looked around cautiously and then whispered to each other in low voices.

"It's more normal than I thought."

"It's not just an ordinary place, but it's a really beautiful place. I thought it would be a darker, damper island."

Yukito felt the same. Since there was almost no information available, he was left imagining things. Even during the day, huge and ferocious beasts roamed among the dark, trembling lava and thorny mountains. However, as far as he could see, he could see a luxury resort that looked like the one seen in travel agency brochures.

"It's better not to let your guard down."

Ibara scolded the three of them. She opened her bag and put a glove on her right arm. That is the weapon mainly used by Ibara, the head of "Ayaka Security" at the location.

"Even if it seems peaceful at first glance, you don't know what's going on. Until we can confirm it's safe, please be aware of your surroundings."

"Uh, yes. That's right."

Yukito nodded again, then opened his eyes suddenly.

"Something is coming...!"

At the end of the stone steps that descended from the platform to the sandy beach was a primitive, unpaved path that could only be traveled on foot. The path winds through the palm trees, and from the other side, something was approaching with a roar.

The group nervously prepared. Was it a demonic beast that lived in Gonoshima or was it an attack from a spiritual being? Yukito felt his hands start to sweat and he thought of a defensive spell on his head.

He approached, made a slight engine noise, and then slowly stopped.

It was a car.

It has three wheels and no doors, allowing direct access to the second row of seats. It is a simple taxi-like car that is sometimes seen on television specials about tropical countries.

"Just in time."

In front of everyone who was frozen in place, someone got up from the driver's seat. He is a man in his 40s, wearing a polo shirt and shorts, with a friendly smile on his tanned face. He extended his arms towards Yukito and the others and shouted with a smile.

"Hello, nice to meet you! Welcome to Gonoshima!"

"....."

Nobody could answer anything.

The man looked around. Then, with a strange expression on his face, he asked Ibara who was getting ready.

"Um... I guess it's just you guys? What about the parents?"

"....."

Ibara looked at Yukito as she held the glove. Clearly confused. Yukito wasn't good at this kind of communication either, but he decided to get closer and...

"Yes, uh, just us."

"Ah, that's right! Although you're still young, that's a big deal! Well, first, let's take care of your luggage. It may not fit four people, but if they use the roof..."

"Hey, wait a minute!"

Yukito quickly stopped the man as he grabbed the luggage that had been left on the platform. The man blinked and then let out a sound of understanding: "Ah!"

"Sorry, sorry! It's been a while since I heard about the arrival of the sea train, so I moved on. I have to change that. Well, then..."

The man cleared his throat and took several cards from the pocket of his shorts.

"My name is Tsugishima, the manager. Please feel free to ask me anything during your stay."

It was a business card. Yukito and his friends took it while looking at each other. In fact, the business card had the same title and name written on it: Tsugishima Sakurainochi, "Archipelago Resort Hotel", Manager.

Tourist hotel.

Chatarou was the first to speak, to everyone's surprise.

"No, is there a hotel?"

Tsugishima looked a little taken aback.

"Well, I have one, but... I wonder if it's okay?"

"No, no, do you mean...?"

Chatarou looked at Yako as if asking for help, and Yako asked him calmly.

"Sorry. We don't know much about Gonoshima. Could you tell us what kind of things there are and what kind of people live here?"

Tsugishima nodded as if he was satisfied.

"Sure! But let's load the suitcases first. We can explain it while we're on the move."

"Ah, yes, then..."

As they led him away, Yukito handed his backpack to Tsugishima. He skillfully carried each item on the roof of the tricycle. Ibara looked at Yukito as if she wanted to say something, but he stacked her backpack on the roof with his bare hands.

"Is this island dangerous? That's so strange! So I am the guardian of this dangerous island!"

Laughing happily, Tsugishima gently turned the wheel.

The three-wheeled vehicle, apparently called a tuk-tuk, spun slowly along the coastal road, kicking up gravel. Chatarou, who was sitting in the back seat, cheered as he saw the endless white sand beach. Yako and Ibara, who are sitting on either side of him, also look at the beautiful scenery as if fascinated.

Yukito, sitting in the passenger seat, shyly opened his mouth.

"I don't have any information about this island... I'm sorry."

"No, no, you have nothing to apologize for. Besides, it is true that it is dangerous in a sense."

As he spoke in a slow tone, Tsugishima looked to the right of the road. There is a pristine virgin forest.

"This side of Shinoshima is not originally a place for ordinary people to live. The only people who come here are people who have contracts with Kisui Palace, hermits, and wizards. Our hotel is a resort hotel for people like that."

"Contract...?"

"I don't know the details either. It seems that the spirits of Kisui Palace sometimes go out to the outside world and make contracts with them. Gonoshima is a spirit island, so you can't enter without their permission. Except that sea train, because it's been a long time that doesn't move."

"Can you do that?"

In response to Chatarou's question, Tsugishima turned with only his head.

"Well, to a certain extent. People who come to Gonoshima for tourism purposes are not very interested in worldly possessions. That's why it's better to pay money... Oops, that's a bad way to put it! In any case, I haven't problems managing the business."

"Are you related to that too, Tsugishima-san?"

Tsugishima smiled a little sadly at Yako's question.

"I used to want to do that. I had no talent for connection. But when I said that because I wanted to get involved, even a little in this world, someone entrusted me with the management of that hotel."

With that, Tsugishima raised his chin and pointed into the distance.

At the end of the gently curving sandy beach you can see a building at the tip of the cape. It is a small hotel with an elegant white design that can be seen even from afar. That must be the "Archipelago Resort Hotel" where Tsugishima is the manager.

Ibara tilted her head.

"Alright?"

"It was difficult at first, but if you keep at it you'll get there. I'm sure that person was anticipating that too and entrusted me with this hotel."

Tsugishima narrowed his eyes wistfully. Yukito looked at his profile and asked.

"What kind of person was he who entrusted you with the hotel?"

"Ah, if you're from Ayakashima, you may have heard of him. His name was Makoto Yanagi, and he was a great sage who was called the "Great Hermit"."

"....."

Yukito was speechless and stared at Tsugishima.

Similarly, the members behind him looked at Tsugishima and Yukito with wide eyes. Tsugishima seemed confused by the sudden silence.

"What's wrong? Did I say something strange?"

"No, no, no! Are you serious, Yanagi Dai-sensei?!"

"We are from the Yanagi clan. Our master is a disciple of Yanagi Dai-sensei."

While Chatarou and Yako were talking to each other, Tsugishima yelled, "Huh?!" while he continued holding the steering wheel.

"Really?! So that girl too?"

"Yes."

Tsugishima still smiled happily at Ibara's unfriendly response.

"I see, children from the same school! That makes me happy, Yanagi-san's teachings are still alive on that island."

Chatarou smiled and poked his head between the driver and passenger seats.

"It's easy to be surprised! Who do you think is by your side?"

Tsugishima looked at Yukito, and Yukito instinctively shrugged. What could he say about that situation? It wasn't a good thing. But, unable to remain silent, he timidly introduced himself.

"Huh? My name is Yukito Yanagi. I am the son of Makoto Yanagi."

Tsugishima's expression hardened.

Not only his facial expressions, but also his actions and thoughts seemed to have frozen in place. The tuk-tuk travels along the tropical coast. The front has a gentle curve. However, Tsugishima still gripped the steering wheel, motionless as if time had stopped. The tall palm trees were getting closer and closer.

"Hey, Tsugishima-san, look ahead!"

"Oh?!"

Hearing Chatarou's shout, Tsugishima quickly turned the wheel. The tuk-tuk, which until then had traveled without problems, began to shake and in the rearview mirror he could see Ibara, who was sitting in the back seat, sticking out about four inches.

Shaking violently, the car snaked from left to right until it crashed into the sand and came to a stop. Yukito raised his arms and listened to his heartbeat. Chatarou and Yako also looked like their souls had been taken from them, and Ibara was holding the top of her head and looking down. She apparently was hit.

"I'm sorry! Are you okay?"

"...I'm fine."

Ibara responded with a trembling voice. Tsugishima then apologized several times and then grabbed Yukito by the shoulders again.

"Oh, is that true?! Yanagi-san's son!"

"Ah, yes... maybe."

"What do you mean maybe?!"

With their backs turned, Yako and Chatarou give an explanation.

"Yukito-kun has been away from the island for about ten years. He only recently returned here."

"But it is true that he is Yanagi Dai-sensei's son! The people of Ninoshima and our teacher remember Yukito well!"

"I see. I see. That person had a son..."

Tsugishima murmured wistfully and looked at Yukito's face. The expression on his affectionate face was one he had seen many times before. That was the same reaction Momoko and Inou had when greeting him when he arrived at Ayaka Island. Yukito was both happy and embarrassed about that.

Tsugishima nodded a few times and then shouted encouragement with his voice.

"Okay! You guys are staying at my hotel, right? In that case, let's get the best suite! We can't afford to lend our benefactor's son miserable accommodations!"

"What?! No, that's..."

"Are you serious?! That's it!"

Chatarou quickly lowered his head, suppressing Yukito who was trying to hold back. Yako and Ibara did the same one after another. Yukito was completely stumped, but then thanked him with a small "Ah, thank you...".

+++++

"Ooooooooooh! This is amazing!"

The moment Chatarou entered the entrance of the "Archipelago Resort Hotel", he let out a cry of joy.

It was a spacious hall reminiscent of a chalk palace. Part of the wall is an atrium that offers a panoramic view of the resort's white beach. Tall tropical plants reaching up to the glass ceiling swayed in the gentle sea breeze.

The most striking thing is the enormous fountain in the center. There is a sculpture of two dragons intertwined and water continues to gush around them. As he approached, he noticed that the surface of the water seemed to emit a golden light every time it swayed.

As Yukito looked on in shock, Tsugishima said in a confident tone.

"This is the life spring that our hotel is proud of. The spring water here is influenced by the nearby life line and is rich in vitality."

Yukito's eyes widened. He has seen the presence of strong vitality several times before, but this is the first time he has seen water containing such different colors. Yukito brought his face closer and stared.

"It's not dangerous?"

It was Ibara who asked him calmly. She was the only one who did not approach the fountain, looking at the gushing water with a cautious look.

Instead of answering, Tsugishima walked over to the fountain and placed his hand on it. Something like waves floated in the air, blocking Tsugishima's palm. He withdrew his hand and shrugged slightly.

"Indeed, the "Source of Life" attracts all kinds of mysterious life forms. Mitama, Aramitama and even more troublesome things. To avoid this danger, a barrier has been placed around this fountain. The one who did that was..."

Tsugishima looked at Yukito fondly.

"Yukito-kun, that was your father."

Yukito blinked.

"However, even with Yanagi-san's power, it was not possible to completely seal the life force leaking from the "Source of Life". Therefore, a place and a person were needed to manage it. This is the origin of "Archipelago Resort Hotel" and my story. Look."

When Tsugishima looked at the point he was pointing with his hand, before he knew it, a shadow appeared beyond the "Meisen". Yukito instinctively took a step back. The confusing shadow, a mix of black and gray, looked like a figure with arms that were too long and legs that were too short. He sways as if he is looking at the "Source of Life".

"That person is one of our clients. He appears about once every six months and likes to be close to the "Source of Life". I guess you could call it "Bath of Life", but surprisingly there are a lot of people who want that kind of thing."

"That..."

He was about to ask if it was a person, but he felt that he was rude so he couldn't help but bite his tongue. However, Tsugishima seemed to have read that and said with a big smile.

"No matter who he is, he won't cause a commotion here. We have a contract like that. So it's fine."

Although he didn't answer the question, Tsugishima waved his hand anyway.

"Then I will prepare to search them. Wait a moment."

After saying that, he loaded Yukito's luggage and his group into the cart and headed to the counter.

Yukito and his friends who were left behind looked at each other. Chatarou and Yako looked with indescribable expressions at the number of people gathered around the "Meisen".

Yukito asked Ibara next to him.

"Maybe I should talk to that person about Jingi-san?"

Ibara looked at Yukito. She crossed her arms and thought. The glove is still attached to her right arm.

"I don't know."

Ibara muttered as she thought about it. Her knowing gaze turned toward the reception.

"Even if that person was your father's disciple, his current position is still unclear. As soon as you mention Sagawa Jingi, he might become our enemy."

"No, that's..."

"You should take all the precautions you can."

There was no hesitation in Ibara's words, and as Yukito listened to them, he had the feeling that "that might be the case". It may be true that Tsugishima feels close and longing for Yukito, but it may be too early to reveal everything.

At this moment, a figure slowly walked out of the reception.

"Welcome, customers. Please come here."

Yukito froze.

A flat face and a voice without inflections. Although he was wearing the same hotel uniform as Tsugishima, he was definitely the spiritual man who came to Ninoshima with Sango and his friends that day.

".....!"

Seeing Yukito speechless, the spiritual person repeated the same words without seeming confused.

"Welcome, customer. Please come here."

"What's wrong, Yukito Yanagi?"

Ibara made a strange sound. She has never seen a spiritual person directly. The person in front of him is definitely one of the gang members who took Jingi away, but he is wearing a hotel uniform and trying to work as a bellhop.

"Ah, Kiriji! Sorry, please carry his luggage first."

Tsugishima left the reception and called the spiritual person. He turned his face flat and said in a flat voice.

"Understood, Manager."

He responded, pushing the cart to the side of the counter and walking out towards the back of the hotel.

"Yukito-kun, could you write your name here?"

Yukito headed to the counter when he was called. He timidly asked Tsugishima as he wrote his name in the accommodation book.

"Um, who is that person just now?"

"Hmm? Oh, what about Kiriji? He's from Kisui Village, he lives near here and helps with a lot of work at the hotel."

"Oh, are you hiring him? Um..."

He could barely swallow the word "spiritual person". However, it seems that it was still transmitted to Tsugishima. He looked back, smiling bitterly.

"I don't know what kind of knowledge you have about spiritual people, but they are not that bad. There are many things that are different from us, but you don't have to be scared just because of that."

Yukito suddenly blushed, as if he had guessed the inner feelings of him.

At that moment, Ibara appeared next to Yukito. She said in a calm tone.

"Tsugishima-san. There are two things I would like to ask you."

"Yes, what?"

"First. Where is Kisui Village you were talking about before? We have something to do there."

"Hm?"

Tsugishima cocked his head. She looked like she was asking him what she wanted, but he didn't say anything and instead he pulled out a piece of paper from the counter drawer. That says "Gonoshima Tourist Map" in a pop font.

"Kisui Village is just on the other side of the island from here. It might be a little difficult to walk there, so if you need it, I'll send you a car."

Yukito thanked him as he received the map.

"Ah, thanks. I could ask you to do it later."

"Okay. So what's the second thing you want to ask?"

Ibara looked towards the entrance hall that stretched to the side. However, in the spacious lobby there was not a single customer apart from them.

"Is someone named Aka Ibuki staying at this hotel?"

Tsugishima frowned in confusion.

"I'm sorry. It is against service rules to give information about guests to other people."

"That's right. So if you meet someone named Ibuki, tell him, "Ichijou Ibara is here". You can also tell him our room number, okay?"

"Oh, yes!"

Ibara confirmed that and Yukito hurriedly nodded. Finding Ibuki is Ibara's purpose for coming to the island, and he could become a powerful ally for them. Even Yukito wanted to contact him once.

"I see. I understand. Are you done with your questions? Well, then, let me show you to your room."

Tsugishima said cheerfully as he left the counter and began walking through the entrance hall. Yako and Chatarou, who were having fun, also began to walk away.

When Yukito came out, he couldn't help but let out a voice of admiration.

"Wow..."

The view of the beach from the complex is spectacular. Umbrellas and sun loungers are scattered along the rolling white sand beach. The emerald green sea that stretched as far as the eye could see was so clear that schools of fish could be seen even from the shore.

Chatarou and his friends also stopped and admired the color of the sea.

"Wow... I've never seen the sea like that before."

"Although it's not that far from Ninoshima, I feel like I've come to a completely different place..."

At that impression, Tsugishima laughed happily.

"The sea around here is especially beautiful. I don't know the details either, but it seems to be due to the power of the Kisuigu Yatsuchi Shrine."

Yukito's heart skipped a beat.

Kisuiguu. Coral name. And, the night Jingi was kidnapped, the figures in the circle on the barge were chanting that name.

Ibara asked casually.

"Is that person a connector?"

Tsugishima cocked his head, unsure of the answer.

"I don't know. I have never met him either. However, I have heard that Kisui-sama is the chief of the spirits of the Kisui village and rules the Gonoshima sea."

"Out of control."

Chatarou said with a touch of tsukkomi. However, Tsugishima was still smiling.

"Sure, it sounds like a joke. But this is Gonoshima. I wouldn't be surprised if something like that existed."

"....."

Chatarou kept his mouth closed, then looked towards the beautiful tropical sea with eyes of a different color than before.

Yukito and his friends followed Tsugishima. Bright tropical flowers bloomed along the boardwalk along the beach. Red, yellow, orange, white, purple: various colors sway in the sea breeze, matching the sound of the waves. Pushing through the flowers, Tsugishima turned right and approached the beach.

There were several cabins lined up on both sides of the pier that extended from the beach. The stark white walls of the hotel had been exposed to waves and sea breezes for many years, but did not appear to have suffered any damage. There are stairs on the opposite side of the entrance, allowing you to jump directly into the sea from your room.

Halfway down the pier, Tsugishima stopped and looked at Yukito and the others.

"Well, this is where you will be staying. Your luggage is packed in this room. Now, each of you can choose the room of your choice."

"Hey, one room per person!"

Chatarou's voice is fascinating. Tsugishima nodded naturally.

"He is my master's son and his friends! I am going to treat him as warmly as I can."

"No, but that's..."

"I'm in this room."

Walking away from the confused Yukito and the others, Ibara confidently stepped forward and pointed to the cabin on the right. Tsugishima took out a set of keys from the bag on his waist and handed one of them to Ibara.

Before long, Chatarou, and then Yako, sheepishly specified their own cabin. Each person received a key and finally Yukito was given the key to the cabin where the luggage was brought.

After finishing his work, Tsugishima opened his arms with a smile.

"Then I'll go back to work. If you want to eat, please use the restaurant in the main building or call room service from extension number 1. I hope you enjoy your stay at the "Archipelago Resort Hotel"."

After saying that, he slowly walked along the pier and headed back to the main building.

"....."

Everyone watched without saying a word until his back disappeared behind the flowers by the sea. Of course, the first to come to her senses was Ibara, who pointed at Yukito's cabin with her chin.

"For now, strategy meeting."

Yukito and the others nodded at the same time at her calm words.

The interior of the cabin was spacious, and every corner was well maintained.

Immediately after entering, there is a large hall. Next door was the bedroom, and when he looked in, he saw a king-sized four-poster bed.

When he returned to the room in fear, he found a large piece of glass placed on the floor in the center of the room. It seems like the idea is that you can look at the ocean from the comfort of your room. Brightly colored tropical fish swim happily between the blue water surface and the sandy bottom. Yukito couldn't help but kneel down and watch the scene carefully.

Similarly, Chatarou looked towards the sea beyond the glass and thought:

"Hey, Yako. Did you bring your swimsuit?"

Yako frowned as expected.

"I didn't come here to play, Chatarou!"

"I know, I'm just kidding! But come on, I've never stayed in a room this nice before, so I'm excited!"

Ibara let out an exasperated sigh at Chatarou's casual words, and Yukito smiled bitterly.

An L-shaped couch was placed near the sea-facing window, offering a view of the endless ocean. Yukito and his friends sat there and decided to have what Ibara called a "strategy meeting". Spread on the low table is the "Gonoshima Tourist Map" that she received from Tsugishima.

"It's a tourist map. Although tourists don't come."

Chatarou unexpectedly attacked, but Ibara shook her head.

"There is a hotel, so it's no wonder there are tourists."

"Tsugishima-san said that this is the hotel where their relatives come to stay. They probably come from somewhere other than Ayaka Island."

Yukito also agreed with Yako's words. The people connected with Ayaka Island knew almost nothing about Gonoshima. When he searched the Kaizumi Shrine's archives, all he found was an outdated document, and even there, there was little mention of Gonoshima.

However, Yukito has doubts. What are people looking for when they come to this island? The scenery in Gonoshima was spectacular, but there are many other tourist destinations. Is there something that can only be found on this island?

"As for other connections, it's fine for the moment. For now, our destination is here."

Hearing Ibara's words, Yukito came to his senses.

She pointed out a place on a tourist map. About a quarter of the way around the island from the hotel, there is a cove with several private houses painted in it. The words "③ Kisui-ri" are written there. Chatarou read the description of the place written at the bottom of the map.

"Umm... "Kisui-ri is a place where spiritual people live. If you want to visit, request a tour"."

"I wonder if Jingi-san is here."

"The one who kidnapped Jingi was the daughter of Kisui Village, right? If that's the case, it's natural to think that he was brought here."

"So, does that mean this is our next destination? But... is it okay if we enter from the front?"

Yukito also tilted his head to the side at Yako's question.

The reason Yukito and others, half-human so to speak, were sent to Gonoshima, not Kurama or any of the other connections, was to explore Gonoshima without being alerted by the ghosts. They need to gather as much information as possible in case Kurama appears one day. But that doesn't mean they can be reckless. He had promised Momoko that he wouldn't do anything dangerous.

At this moment, Ibara opened her mouth.

"If it's dangerous to board from the front, why not try to sneak in?"

"Uh... no, but how...?"

Yukito couldn't help but ask, and Ibara responded casually.

"If we use the Hidden Form, we can probably sneak in. Can you guys use it?"

"Hm."

Chatarou nodded and Yako made a bitter face.

"I can use it, but I'm not good at it. I don't know if I can do it well..."

"Yes. Yukito Yanagi, what about you?"

Yukito was confused as everyone focused on him. He had nothing that could be used.

"What's that...?"

Ibara looked at Yukito seriously and then spoke in a professional tone.

"The hidden way is a technique for hiding. If you are going to sneak in, it won't work unless everyone can use it."

"I'm sorry."

Yukito muttered a little and lowered his head.

He felt embarrassed. He's the one who came here to rescue Jingi, but he's the one who stops them. All he could do was cringe in shame.

Chatarou loudly defended Yukito.

"It hasn't even been a month since Yukito returned to Ayaka Island. It's only been a while since he found out about the pulse connection, so it can't be helped if he can't use the technique."

Ibara pursed her lips.

"I don't blame you. But I think you have no choice but to go there."

"What should we do, Yukito-kun?"

Yako asked in a low voice.

They all agreed that Yukito was the leader of that group. It was both ironic and unfortunate to have to make a decision even though he was the least experienced of them all.

However, the eyes of Ibara, Chatarou and Yako looking at Yukito certainly did not have any signs of condemnation. There is a positive sense of confidence that they will do what he says.

Had they ever looked at him like that before?

For a brief moment, Yukito felt as if the inside of his lungs were being squeezed tightly. Maybe it's a kind of feeling called a sense of responsibility. Depending on Yukito's

decision, they could be in danger; The more he thought about it, the more his lungs contracted painfully.

Yukito clenched his fist and then said loudly.

"Come on."

Yako breathed lightly and Chatarou nodded slightly. Ibara... has no expression. Still, Yukito perked up and continued.

"If we had just waited, we could have made it to Ninoshima. If we've made it this far, there's no point unless we get to where Jingi is, but what do you think...?"

The reason he stopped in the end was because he remembered Momoko's words about never doing anything dangerous. However, if you come to Gonoshima and stay at a resort hotel, you have no idea why you came. At the very least, they need to find out exactly where Jingi is being held and how the spirits are treating him.

Still, Chatarou slammed his fist into the palm of his hand as if to keep his spirits up.

"Ok! Well then let's go right now!"

"How do we get there? Walking? Or..."

It was Ibara who answered Yako's question. Holding the tourist map of Gonoshima, she pointed to the explanatory text below with her fingertips and said.

"..."If you want to visit Kisui-ri, please contact the hotel reception". Whatever you can use, you should use."

Hearing that opinion, Yukito and the others couldn't help but look at each other.

+++++

A tuk-tuk travels on a tropical road.

The white sand beach had long since disappeared and what now stretched to the right was a shallow reef. Every time a wave gently breaks, a bank of white foam rises, and a black seabird sinks its legs into it and sinks its beak into a crevice in the rocks. When you look at it this way, it seems that the landscape is almost the same as the other Ayaka islands.

Yukito, who was sitting in the passenger seat, looked at his neighbor.

It wasn't Tsugishima who was driving. He is an employee named Taro, one of the spirits who works at the hotel.

It seems that he will be in charge of the activity service that Yukito and his friends have requested: the "Kisui Palace Tour".

Taro turned the wheel and stepped on the accelerator, keeping his calm face looking forward. Taro hadn't said a word since he got into the car. According to Tsugishima, this seems to be a characteristic of a spiritual person. He is extremely taciturn and expressionless, and rarely talks about anything other than business matters.

Yukito turned his confused eyes towards the back seat.

Chatarou and his friends looked at Yukito as if they wanted to say something. Kisui is, so to speak, the enemy's stronghold. They need to get as much information as possible as soon as possible.

Yukito cleared his throat and spoke to Taro.

"Hm, Taro-san. Can I ask you a question?"

"Yes, what is that?"

Taro responded with a voice without intonation, like a mechanical voice, as he looked forward. Yukito was a little scared, but he continued anyway.

"What kind of place is Kisui?"

"It's our hometown."

Taro's words were short and empty. Yukito instinctively looked back.

The eyes of the three people were the same as before.

Yukito looked at Taro's profile once more. Yukito waited a moment and asked again, forcing himself to do so.

"How many people live there?"

There was a brief pause. The tuk-tuk took a gentle curve and braked. Taro responded as he slowly turned the handle.

"I think it's 160 or 170. I don't know the exact number. I'm sorry."

"Ah, no! You don't have to apologize for that..."

"Besides, there are only a few people living in the village now and we don't know much about the people living in the palace."

Palace.

It was a word he wasn't used to hearing. Yukito didn't know what it meant, so he asked it as a genuine question, not to get information.

"What do you mean by palace?"

"I'm talking about Kisui Palace."

Yukito was a little confused and just let go.

"Hm, isn't Kisuinomiya your last name?"

"The shrine in Kisui village where the ladies live is the Kisui Palace. As rowers, we are not allowed to enter, so we cannot know the details."

Yukito remained silent and continued to speculate based on the information he had obtained.

"Osama" probably refers to Kisuinomiya Sango or his family. Kirisui-ri is a village ruled by the "Kisuinomiya family", and the word also refers to the house and place where they live.

If there is a purpose, it must be there.

"That is..."

Just as he was about to ask where it was, a long curve came to an end and the road in front of them suddenly opened.

It was a cove shaped like a crescent moon. The terrain is almost the same as what he saw on the tourist map. Between two capes stretches a long, curved sandy beach, inside which wooden houses are built here and there.

In the center of the bay was a huge stone palace.

Although it was surrounded by dilapidated wooden houses, it had a majestic appearance. Several buildings stand side by side, half submerged in the sea. Beyond the vermilion and white painted walls and bronze tiled roof stood a majestic tower.

The question he was about to ask lost its meaning halfway through. Even without asking Taro, he knew it at first glance. That's all...

"Kisui Village..."

Taro nodded slightly at Yukito's murmur.

Taro parked the tuk-tuk in the parking lot of a wooden building that seemed to be the entrance to the town.

Can you also call that parking? It was a space that could only be considered an emergency stop, made up of four stakes connected with a yellow rope. As far as he looked around the town, he couldn't see any cars anywhere, or maybe the "Archipelago Resort Hotel" was the only one on this island that had cars.

"Here it is."

Taro turned around once and began to lead the way. Yukito and his friends observed his surroundings as they walked.

That reminds him of an old photo from a history book. A valuable but low quality photograph of a modern fishing village. Such a scene unfolds before his eyes. People dressed in simple clothes you would never see in Ninoshima were carrying baskets full of fish and chopping firewood. Some people walked around wearing only a loincloth.

Suddenly, Taro, who was in the lead, opened his mouth.

"Fishing is our main occupation for the people of Kisui village. Most of the fish we catch is consumed within the village. Some people work as loggers or farmers, but everyone does it to meet the needs of the village."

"I see..."

"It is rare to find someone like me who works in a hotel. However, this is also work for the people. The only point of contact for people coming from outside is the "Archipelago Resort Hotel", where they can get objects of value that cannot be obtained in the town."

Taro's tone, in which he spoke without hesitation about what he would probably hear before someone asked him something, reminded him of audio guides heard in art museums. Or maybe he's just speaking from some manual.

"The valuables include fine clothing, alcoholic beverages, candy, magic tools, etc., and most of them are presented to the people of the shrine. Furthermore, it seems that customers who participate in this tour will be able to do business with the members of the sanctuary."

"....."

Yukito exchanged glances with his friends.

That was the most important reason why he requested the "study trip".

This is because the tour includes contact with the Kisui Palace. If you use it, you will think that your sense of identity will be imprisoned.

They can enter Kisui Palace without being suspicious. Or maybe they could even find out where Jingi is. Ibara's view was that if there was little that could be done, information should be gathered.

Yako asked Taro a question.

"Palace, are you doing business with the people of Kisui Palace through a connection?"

"In addition to pulse connectors, there are also people who work in magic and senjutsu. Although most of them are hotel users..."

At that, Taro's words suddenly stopped.

Up ahead there was a man standing on the road.

His hair was black, his skin white, his lips red and his half-lidded eyes smiling with a hint of amusement. He is clearly different from Taro and Kiriji. His clothing was an old-fashioned but dignified kimono, unlike the other villagers, who only wore crude pieces of cloth.

Taro stood still and bowed his head.

"They are customers."

"Ah. I'll guide you from here."

When the man announced in a high-pitched voice, Taro bowed to Yukito and the others and began to return the way they had come. Yukito asked confused.

"Hm, what about you...?"

"Oops, I'm late. My name is Josei. I am a high priest. Thank you for your understanding."

Another word came up that he didn't know. However, his assumption is that he is probably a spiritual person who serves the "temple". His way of speaking and his facial expressions were completely different from other spirits and he was filled with excitement.

Josei bowed with an exaggerated gesture and began to speak calmly.

"Shinoshima's customers are you."

"...Yes. My name is Yukito Yanagi."

"Yanagi."

His smile suddenly disappeared and his narrowed eyes looked at Yukito seriously. On Ayaka Island, the name Yanagi is...

It has a special meaning, especially between people related to each other. Yukito is starting to understand that. Without fear, he looked directly into Josei's eyes.

"Oh, I see."

As if satisfied, Josei nodded. He looked at Yukito, then at the other classmates, and tilted his head in confusion.

"Did you come to rescue Jingi-sama? Just you?"

"....."

This is it, Yukito strengthened his heart.

He had never acted before. However, he must not allow others to understand his true intentions. He must make them fully understand his position and feelings, and make them lower their guard.

"No. It's not about that!"

It wasn't his performance that turned his voice upside down. Impatience, fear and desperation to overcome it. Yukito stepped forward and looked at Josei.

"I think it was inevitable that you guys would take Jingi-san. It's true that they were engaged, and it's also true that he lost the proof of that. But...Jingi-san is my master and I'm his brother-in-law."

Josei looked at Yukito without blinking. No doubt. At least, he can't confirm it from Yukito's eyes.

Yukito said encouragingly, trying to keep his voice from shaking.

"Ever since I came to Ayaka Island, I have been indebted to Jingi-san. That's why I would like to at least say goodbye. That's why we came here."

"Farewell..."

Josei crossed his arms. With a blank expression on his face, he thought of something.

Yukito swallowed. If that were his ultimate goal, he could easily lie and deceive others, but Yukito hardly has that ability. However, to obtain information, he had to continue pretending to be a poor disciple who had his master taken away from him, or a poor younger brother who had his elder brother taken away from him.

Finally, Josei suddenly turned his gaze towards Yukito and the others.

"Follow me please."

He pointed back with his chin. On the other side of the way, stands the Kisui Palace.

"I can't make a decision on my own. Please come to the shrine. I will discuss it with the other shrine priests there."

"Oh, many thanks!"

Yukito's face suddenly lit up. He followed Josei as he began to walk. When he looked back at Chatarou and the others, they also gave him a slight nod.

First they passed the first barrier.

The only thing left to do is see if they can locate Jingi's whereabouts.

+++++

Jingi was drinking alcohol.

"Ahahahahaha! Okay, great! This is exactly like the dance of a bream or a flounder!"

At the back of the large tatami room, about 30 tatami in size, with his back to a huge folding screen with an ink painting, Jingi was doing his usual cheerful voice.

In the center of the room, beautifully dressed dancers danced fluently to elegant music. Its uninterrupted rhythm is like that of a colonial creature.

When the music finally stopped, the dancers bowed respectfully. Jingi clapped his hands in good spirits.

"Hmm, okay! Come here, have a drink!"

Following the beckoning spirit, the dancers approached quietly and knelt. Everyone received the cup from Jingi and drank it in one go. Then they bowed again and retreated left and right.

The beautiful woman sitting next to Jingi, Kisuinomiya Sango, carefully placed the sake bottle on the table and picked it up.

"Jingi-sama, please make a toast."

"Oh, Sango, you've become more attentive! Look, you should drink too!"

"Well. Thank you, Jingi-sama."

After receiving the cup, Sango smiled solemnly and rested her head on Jingi's shoulder.

Yukito and his friends watched the scene with cold eyes.

Josei, who had been guiding them, discreetly moved to the side of the room and leaned next to Jingi. After that, Jingi finally seemed to notice Yukito and the others. With his drunken eyes wide open, Jingi shouted loudly.

"Oh! Yukito! And those two idiots of Haru-nii!"

"....."

"What's that? Is the unfriendly person with you too? I'm glad, Yukito, even though you have a communication disorder, you've made some great friends! It's all because I tried my best to help you! Hey, Sango?"

"Yes. As expected of Jingi-sama!"

Sango said, sounding deeply moved, and poured sake into the empty cup again.

"Yukito."

Chatarou, who was right behind him, muttered to himself.

"Are you guys going home yet?"

Ibara and Yako nodded at the same time. His eyes, like Chatarou's, have a coldness of absolute zero.

The person they came to save, voluntarily risking their lives, enjoys a party with good wine and beautiful women. Seeing such a scene, he doesn't believe that there is anyone who doesn't have zero motivation.

Whether he was aware of Yukito's temperature or not, Jingi clapped his hands and shouted.

"Hey guys, my little brother brought his friends here. Make a seat for him! A seat!"

The spirits playing musical instruments all stood up at once, brought four new plates, and placed them in front of Jingi. Among the hesitant group, Yukito was the only one who left first and reached the food.

When he looked at Jingi closely, he noticed that he hadn't changed much since before he was kidnapped. His face was flushed, probably because he was drunk, and his eyes were smiling happily.

"Well, you've made it this far, Yukito. Do you want to drink too?"

Yukito gave an awkward smile as Jingi snatched the sake bottle from Sango and raised it slightly. Meanwhile, Chatarou, Yako, and Ibara reluctantly began to take their seats.

"Jingi-san seems fine, which is fantastic."

"That's great, because even if I don't have to work, I can get sake and delicious food on my own. And I even have such a beautiful fiancée!"

Sango blushed and lowered her eyes.

"Well, Jingi-sama. I have asked you to call me your wife many times."

"...Well, what about that? Of course I plan on doing that once we're officially married, right?"

"But if you were to disappear from Ninoshima, wouldn't it have been better if you just said something?"

Sango answers Yako without any remorse.

"Yes, I'm sorry. However, since Jingi-sama accepted my feelings, I would like to hurry up. I'm thinking about greeting everyone again at the celebration."

"...Jingi, are you seriously getting married?"

Chatarou opened his mouth as if he couldn't take it anymore. He looked at Jingi, who was laughing out loud, and said, slapping him.

"Hey, I guess you didn't like it at first. Why did you change your mind?"

"Well, I guess it was decided because when I came here, it was heaven. Free food, free drinks, free game. If I come here, the things I like will be served the way I like them. Do you think I'd pass up that opportunity?"

"...I don't think so. That's the kind of person you are."

Hearing Chatarou's muttered words, Jingi raised his glass high.

"So that's it! Say hello to Haru-nii and tell him that Jingi is living a happier life in Gonoshima!"

He said that and laughed out loud.

"Let's go home, Yukito."

Chatarou repeated in a low voice. His tone was stronger than before, probably because he had looked down on Jingi from the bottom of his heart. But before he could respond, Jingi called out to him.

"Yes, Yukito, are you training properly?"

"Eh?"

Yukito was confused by the sudden change of topic. Sango held up a new bottle of sake and offered it to him, while Jingi said...

"If you are going to stay here for a while, it would be a good idea to have the palace priests train you. They are all very talented. The same goes for Josei over there, but the most surprising one is that old man. Isn't he the one who stopped the sea, Sango?"

"Yes. Yes, he is also the father who raised me. He is the oldest and most skillful connection between spirits."

"Oh, yeah. And... um, how many other people are there?"

Josei, who was standing by the wall, turned his gaze towards Sango with a cold smile on his face. When Sango nodded slightly, he finally opened his mouth.

"Aside from Elder-sama and me, the only other connections are Uzura and Ruazusa."

He could hear Ibara gasp slightly. Yukito also slowly understood the meaning of those words.

There are four people in Kisui Village.

It was important information. What brought that to light was none other than Jingi's guidance. Is he speaking without thinking or is he trying to teach him that?

Ignoring Yukito, who was deep in thought about him, Jingi continued speaking.

"Well, you're already in contact with me. You can manage without me, right? You know, remember that time? When I was asked to do something about an Aramitama that appeared on the channel."

He doesn't remember much about it, but it happened just ten days ago. It's harder to forget.

"That must have been tough. You rarely see fish as big as that in Ninoshima. However, thanks to me bravely facing the Aramitama to protect you, my pretty disciple, I was able to quell it somehow. As expected of me! Sango, what do you think?"

"That's wonderful, Jingi-sama!"

Jingi swallowed the served sake with a smile and cast a wistful look into the air.

"I wish I could do something like that again. There's nothing I can do now that things are like this. I'm sure you're going through a hard time, you feel lonely and anxious, but please hold on and do the best you can. If you do that, you too, like me, can one day become a great connection!"

Yukito stopped his breathing and stared at Jingi, who was pointing at himself.

He understood from what he had just said.

It's a lie to say that Jingi has changed his mind.

The first thing Jingi did when he faced the Aramitama in the canal was run away.

He neither protected Yukito nor bravely confronted, but instead ran away without saying a word. Rather than getting angry, he understood. Ten days ago, Yukito didn't know much about Jingi to the point of wondering how that man's head worked.

But now he knows. Although he is a fool, he is not stupid; He often does stupid things, but deep down, he's not stupid at all.

No one except Jingi and Yukito know what happened to that Aramitama in the channel. When he said, "I want to do something like that again", he meant that he wanted to escape from that place.

"I understand. Jingi-san."

After thinking quickly, Yukito responded.

Jingi's chin rose and fell slightly. For a moment, a look of despair appeared in his eyes, which were red with intoxication. He is also trying to get the spirits to let their guard down. If that's the case, he has no choice but to accept it. Thinking like this, Yukito lowered his head.

"Thank you for your help so far. I wish you and Sango a long time of happiness."

When he looked at Sango, he saw a calm smile on her handsome face. She is dignified and elegant. However, he had no idea what she was thinking as she smiled easily and her eyes turned pale red.

"Please don't be so afraid, Yukito-san. If you are a younger brother to Jingi-sama, you are also a younger brother to me. Please take it easy."

"Yes."

Normally, he should have laughed and responded, but Yukito's reaction was awkward. That night, the image of the Japanese ship gliding down the river and the circle of figures dancing above it remained in his mind like an irresistible fear. The woman in front of him was at the center of everything.

At that moment, Sango clapped her hands.

"That's right. Yukito-san, why don't you stay at Kisui Palace for a while?"

"Eh?"

Yukito rolled his eyes and Sango smiled. It was a smile as innocent as that of a little girl, different from the smile before.

"We are planning to have a formal congratulation in three days. If possible, I would like Yukito and his friends to attend. We will become a family, so I would like you to stay here to deepen our friendship."

"Not that..."

"Yeah, okay. Let's do it."

Sango clapped her hands twice.

The multiple spirits that had been waiting near the wall all rose at once at the sound.

They approached Yukito and his friends. Without expression and without emotions. The scene resembles a swarm of robots faithfully following orders. Yukito was impatient and he didn't know what to say...

"This is a great offer, but I have to decline."

A cheerful voice echoed from behind.

It was Yako. He stared at Sango with clear rejection in his narrowed eyes.

"We came here to check on Jingi-san. Other people are also worried about Jingi-san. We need to tell those people what has happened so far. I don't have time to stay here."

However, Sango didn't miss her smile. As if she was looking at a cute little animal, she looked at Yako with a loving look and said:

"In that case, let's invite those people to come too."

"Eh?"

As expected, Yako couldn't understand the meaning and asked with a puzzled look, and Sango spread her arms.

"There are many unused rooms in Kisui Palace, and we can also create new rooms using Kai-te. I hope that all of you who are worried about Jingi-sama and don't want to be separated from him can come. ...No..."

The coral eyes suddenly shone. she said, raising her voice like a girl with a great idea.

"You and those people should live in Kisui Palace! Oh, why didn't I come up with something so simple? If Jingi-sama's family, friends, and everyone else could live happily in Kisui Palace, would everything be resolved?"

Yukito and his friends were speechless and could only watch as Sango spoke happily.

Their common sense is different from that of spiritual people.

He thought he knew, but when she unfolded in front of him, he had no idea how to react. But, anyway, he knew that he wasn't going to be as good as he seemed.

Yukito opened his mouth. What he's saying makes sense, but he had to contact them for now, so he'll leave it for today. As he rehearsed that line, Sango continued in a cheerful tone.

"I'm sure so. Jingi-sama thinks so too, right?"

"Eh, me?!"

When they told him the story, Jingi's face became as stiff as he could make it. He looked back and forth between Sango's pale red eyes that looked at him, Yukito, and the others who were all stiff. Then, as he subtly looked away...

"Well, if they want to go home, wouldn't it be better to let them do it?"

Sango's smile disappeared for the first time.

A shiver ran down Yukito's spine.

Sango's impassive face looked like a beautiful fake. Although they were completely different from the spirits he had seen, they had the same face.

"Yes."

Sango's head moved. She looked at Yukito and the others. A smile appeared on her face. It wasn't the elegant, graceful or innocent smile she had before.

A cold smile that seemed fake.

"But I think it's better that he doesn't come home. Isn't that right? Josei."

"At your service."

A voice from behind made him turn around.

Josei was standing there, blocking the exit. He was laughing too. It wasn't fun or joy, just his red lips forming a smile.

The first to react was Ibara. She got on her knees and stared at Josei. His voice was as cold and hard as steel.

"Does that mean you have to do your best?"

Josei's smile deepened.

"We don't want you to come back."

As soon as he murmured that, the spirits that had been waiting by the wall rose all at once. They moved silently on the tatami and stood behind Yukito and the others.

Surrounding them.

His head turns white with confusion. Momoko's words, telling him not to do anything dangerous, echoed in his mind.

Even so, he ended up heading to the opponent's base, which was a mistake in his opinion.

Josei kept his right palm facing down and gently pointed at Yukito and the others with the tips of his nails. He sang in a whisper-like voice.

"Moth, moth, I follow the life of the ocean dragon and collect all my thoughts."

At that moment, something like a swarm of snakes emerged from under Josei's feet.

When he looked closely, he saw that it was water. It's a water snake. Countless water snakes undulated, tangled, and stretched towards Yukito and his friends. Nobody could react to that. He had imagined something like this could happen, but imagining it and responding are two completely different things.

Except for one person, Ichijou Ibara.

"Man, earth and sky! The place of the master is where thorns arise!"

The glove glowed faintly. Ibara swung it to the side to crush the water snake that attacked them. The snakes shattered and turned into foam, scattering around the room and, at Josei's feet, they took the form of snakes again.

The spirits ran out and tried to arrest Yukito and his friends.

However, at that moment, Yukito and his friends had come to their senses. He crossed his fingers and repeated the spell.

"Man, earth and sky!"

"The softest and the most solid in the world are conquered and nothingness enters nothingness!"

Chatarou completed the spell faster than Yukito. The plate of food that was kicked directly hit one of the spirits in the face and instead of falling, he began to spin. The life force refined through the pulse connection technique created a supernatural tornado above the hall.

The tornado continues without a trace, destroying several spirits. They crashed into the ceiling, were thrown against the wall, and crashed to the floor... and still, the spirits rose with no expression on their faces. They are like zombies. Although Yukito was horrified, he continued the spell himself.

"A fish must not escape from the depths, and a dishonorable ship must not be shown to anyone!"

The moisture contained on the table and in the sake containers suddenly rose, writhed like a snake, and lunged towards Jingi. A barrier spell that uses water. However, his plan to use this technique to protect and recapture Jingi was crushed in an instant. Just before reaching Jingi, the dampness shattered, as if it had been hit by an invisible wall.

"What...?!"

Seeing Yukito astonished, Sango put her hand to her mouth and laughed.

"Oh, my. You are a naughty person despite your appearance, Yukito-san."

She wasn't making fun of him. Her tone was full of compassion, like that of an older sister caring for her younger brother. Yukito was more scared by that than by the fact that his technique had been nullified.

Jingi kicked the table, stood up and screamed.

"A barrier has been placed around Sango! Magic won't work!"

"Oh, darling."

Sango looked at Jingi, who was desperately trying to warn them, with a bit of resentment.

"Just like I thought. It was a lie when you said you would be with me. Don't be mean to me..."

"Come on, Jingi! If you plan on coming home, hurry up and help!"

Chatarou and Yako are busy trying to avoid the swarm of ghosts. Meanwhile, Ibara was engaged in a fierce battle with Josei. She attacked with her gauntlet that glowed a dull color, but Josei fluttered and dodged it with a thin line. A relaxed smile was plastered on her red lips.

Jingi gritted his teeth and raised his right hand. On his wrist there is an ornament on her arm woven with black and white thread.

"If I could escape, I would have already! It's sealed with a Jutsu!"

Disgusting.

Yukito reflexively thought so. This is the home of the spirits. Although it would be too much for Josei alone, the other spiritual beings and their connections would soon hear about the commotion and come. If that happens, there is no chance of winning. Because of him, everyone is trapped.

(What I have to do? What I have to do? What I have to do?)

Yukito was on the verge of panic when Jingi's scream rang in his ears.

"Run! Yukito!"

Yukito suddenly looked up and looked at Jingi. Jingi was aiming directly at Yukito while Sango grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

"Just run away from here and come back! Listen! You're coming back! You'll definitely have to come help me!"

"Jingi-sama. Shut up."

Sango's fingertips gently reached out and touched Jingi's lips.

With just that, Jingi's lips closed on their own. He was still mumbling something into his mouth, but his words didn't make any sense. Sango narrowed her eyes and turned to Yukito.

"Yukito-san too. Could you calm down now?"

A few murmurs made Yukito make a final decision.

Do what Jingi told him to do.

Assemble the stamps and perfect the image.

"Water benefits all things and does not fight for it."

In Yukito's eyes, the situation was getting worse and worse. The spirit people like a swarm of zombies surrounded Chatarou and Yako. Josei skillfully used the water snake technique to catch Ibara who was flying across the room.

The small amount of moisture that was there was consumed by the previous technique. They had to create water from nothing. Yako said that it was an advanced technique. Can Yukito, who was struggling even with the water of a flowing river, really be able to do such a thing?

But they had no choice but to do it.

"I will punish people for their misdeeds!"

As soon as the spell was completed, a small ball of water appeared in front of Yukito.

Yukito gasped.

He did it.

That doesn't change anything. The only amount that could be produced was a small amount, about the size of a glass of water. It won't do any good here.

Then there is more.

An image, at his feet, under the living room. At the bottom of the shining sea, flowing deep underground, the shining river of life. The life line. He pours all the life force he extracted into the water in front of him. The life force that inhabits all things turns into water and the water ball expands rapidly. The water, which was about the size of a glass, swelled to the size of a head, a soccer ball, a balance ball, and eventually grew to a size that could envelop a person's body.

Of course, Yukito didn't notice that his eyes were glowing bright blue.

Sango realized that. For the first time, a hint of caution oozed across her calm features. She stood up on the spot and shouted loudly.

"Josei, stop Yukito!"

Josei looked at Yukito. The water ropes that were trying to trap Ibara all turned towards Yukito at once.

Yukito couldn't move. If he does not clench his teeth and concentrate all his concentration, he will not be able to maintain the technique. A swarm of water like a writhing snake attacked Yukito from above...

"Man, earth and sky, it's like bowling!"

Sparks emitted from the side swept across the water all at once. It was Ibara. The moment she escaped from Josei's pursuit, she initiated a counterattack.

The ball of water that Yukito had created had swelled enough to reach the ceiling of the room. The spirits that had surrounded Chatarou and his friends were being swept away by the water and scattered.

Yukito shouted loudly towards the gap in the collapsed fence.

"Everyone, come in!"

Chatarou and his friends immediately understood Yukito's intentions. He pinched his nose, held his breath, and jumped into the water. Yukito manipulated the inside of the water to create enough space for them to breathe, before finally entering the water himself.

The bubbles that had swelled to a gigantic size flattened according to Yukito's will and began to move. At first it was slow, then faster, and it wasn't long before the current changed from the intensity of a mountain stream. The "moving river" that flowed out of the tatami room swallowed the spirits that tried to block his path and then spat them out, breaking the sliding doors, shoji, and handrails as he left the Kisui Palace.

The orange sunset was melting on the horizon.

"Yukito?! Hey, what should we do about this?"

Chatarou's confused cries turned into screams halfway. This is because the "moving river" that jumped from the Kisui Palace tower began to fall towards the sea surface about 20 meters below.

"Hold your breath!"

Yukito shouted at them and extended his hand directly below.

The "moving river" was now part of Yukito's body. The water stretched in response to his movements and landed, raising the water column.

Having found a foothold to hold on to, Yukito tried to slow his fall as much as possible. Within the "moving river", Chatarou and his friends were shaken like snow falling into a snowball. Water may have entered the nose or ears, but no life-threatening accidents will occur. It should be like that.

The "moving river" floating in the sea began to move again at the speed of a mountain stream. Yukito did not return to land, but continued running steadily over the sea. Kisui village has now become enemy territory. The landing would be dangerous. Ibara's voice broke his thoughts of detouring around the sea and returning to the "Archipelago Resort Hotel".

"Yukito, they're coming after you."

Although soaked from head to toe, Ibara was still inside the moving river, looking cautiously behind her. Yukito was also fooled by that and couldn't help but turn around.

It was pure blue. Chasing Yukito and his friends as he jumped fast and low over the sea like a flying fish.

It's not even clear what kind of technique he is using. However, at least it was far superior to the inexperienced Yukito's "water drawing technique". The distance between them was rapidly shortening, and Yukito felt as if lead had been shoved deep into his stomach.

Yako and Chatarou quickened the mood even more.

"Y-Yukito-kun! He's on the left too!"

"They're coming from the right!"

That was true. To the left was a tall woman, and to the right was a large, muscular man, each moving in a wide circle to block Yukito's front.

If this continues, they will be trapped in a pincer attack.

However, there is no way to fix it.

Sensing Yukito's agitation, the "moving river" trembled. It is not because of fear of the spirit. He was afraid of endangering his friends and the people who had believed in him. His own ignorance and helplessness will hurt them. Just thinking about it made him faint and he almost lost concentration on the technique.

The spiritual people were approaching. Ibara skillfully turned her body in the water and prepared her glove.

Chatarou and his friends also made their own seals, as if they had already made up their minds. Seeing that, Yukito closed his eyes tightly, feeling guilty.

At that moment, the sea exploded.

".....?!"

He was so surprised that he almost made a mistake in the operation. Meanwhile, the explosions followed one after another. A huge column of water rose above the surface of the sea, and first the woman on the left, then the burly man on the right, were hit by the aftermath and slowed down.

"W-what...?! What's going on?!"

Chatarou spoke for the feelings of everyone present. The explosions followed one after another. Right, left, right, back... Finally, Yukito began to understand. No matter who does it, that is not an enemy attack. It seems they are helping them escape.

Finally, the man and woman on the left and right slowed down further and merged with Josei. The pure blue was also slowing down as if it was afraid of a water explosion. The spirit figures gradually receded, and finally, as if they had given up chasing them, they turned around and began running in the direction of Kisui Palace.

"Are we safe...?"

Yukito couldn't respond to Yako's murmurs. He really didn't understand what was going on. But at least the immediate crisis seemed to be over.

Suddenly, Ibara looked up. Her eyes widened and her gloved finger pointed at a single point.

"Over there."

At the end of a crescent-shaped bay, on a cape that jutted out into the sea, there was a man. He was wearing a black suit that was not suitable for a tropical country and a slightly loose red tie. In his right hand, hanging loosely, he still held a smoking pistol. Between his red hair, he was looking at Yukito and the others with an exasperated look.

With a sigh of relief, Yukito said his name.

"...Ibuki-san."