



"THE EVE OF A SPECIAL WEDDING"

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

## CHAPTER 5: THE DEMON AND THE WITCH

There is a demon cave in Ichinoshima.

It is a place with a decadent atmosphere, far away from the beautifully maintained tourist areas. There are rows of dilapidated wooden buildings, with attached barracks that have obviously been expanded illegally. There were more than one or two men lying on the cardboard-covered floor, and the men chatting in front of a bonfire made of oil drums had tattoos etched all over their arms and chests.

Kurama walked past them without any expression.

Every time, the residents of the Demon Cave stared at Kurama. Currently, Kurama is not wearing the clothes of the Kaizumi Shrine priest, but rather a normal jacket and chinos pants. It was an ordinary outfit that Momoko had prepared for him, but even that was enough to attract attention in this place. If it weren't for the guide, they would have long been entangled.

Yang, who was leading the way, looked at Kurama with eyes as narrow as a thread.

"Kurama-san, this is your first time in Asumi, right?"

"Yes."

As he responded, Kurama's gaze went to the wooden sign hanging over the eaves of the stall. In the mysterious patterns written on its surface, he can see the witchcraft patterns used in South Sea islands such as Indonesia and Oceania. It is a type of curse that manipulates life force and harms people.

Unbeknownst to him, he was frowning. Yang shrugged and said casually.

"It may not be to your liking, but be patient. It is certain that the "Kisuirin" was brought here."

"Yes."

Kurama nodded, but still couldn't suppress the disgust welling up inside him.

Asumi is one of the markets where connectors who came to Ichinoshima gather.

Due to its characteristics, Ayaka Island, which is located on the line of life, has a special meaning for those who are connected to it... witches, sorcerers, magicians, hermits, etc. In particular, Ichinoshima, which is thriving as a tourist destination, has many places where people of this "flow" meet and exchange information and goods.

Among them, Asumi was famous for attracting unscrupulous people.

Although it is not an evil law, it is something that uses the life force only for its own desires. It was no secret that life would stagnate and as a result, an Aramitama would be born. Not everyone was like this, but anyone who frequented Asumi could easily become the object of Kurama's contempt.

"You come here often?"

Those feelings made the voice he spoke to Yang with harsh. Yang smiled bitterly.

"Sometimes, you know. There is information and things that can only be obtained in these places."

Yang was a descendant who came from the mainland and settled in Ninoshima without realizing it. Although he is a newcomer and works mainly in Ichinoshima, he lives in Ninoshima because the rent is cheap. Therefore, Kurama didn't trust him very much.

When they reached an intersection, Yang stopped. He seemed to be located in the center of Asumi, so there was quite a bit of foot traffic. However, he got tired of everyone looking at him strangely.

"Oh, Mr. Yang. This way."

That voice echoed from the back of the store that occupied the intersection and had a sign that said "Mujoya". Without hesitation, Yang entered the dimly lit store. Kurama followed him.

The inside of the store was packed. The walls on both sides are divided into countless squares, each containing a water bottle, soil, stones, jewelry, grass, flowers, roots, skin, feathers, tails, claws, scales, fins, gills, eyeballs, etc. It is a catalyst used as a material for cursed tools or for the spell itself.

At the back, in a place that looked like a basement, sat an old man who seemed to be the owner of the store. He smiled at Yang, contorting his mouth that had fewer teeth left.

"Hey, hey, I'm sorry about the other day. Benius hasn't arrived yet. I'll contact you when that time comes, so wait a little longer."

Kurama whispered coldly behind Yang.

"Sometimes?"

"It's something I've been busy with lately. Well, anyway..."

After a quick excuse, Yang urged the shopkeeper.

"I asked you on the phone, but let me confirm it again. Is it true that the "Kisuirin" was brought here?"

The shopkeeper scratched his bald head and looked at Kurama.

"Ah, well, that's true. I don't know if it's called that or not. I'm sure they brought shiny scales this size."

"Did Jingi come here?"

He couldn't suppress the doubt in his voice. Jingi is a man careless with money and alcohol, but he was never supposed to dabble in illegal practices. He couldn't believe that he went to Asumi.

The shopkeeper blinked in confusion and responded.

"No, it was Kumoi's husband who brought him directly. Hey, Mr. Yang. I'm sorry, but I don't want to get into trouble."

"Of course, I won't cause you any trouble. We just want information. So where is the "Kisuirin" now?"

"It's already sold out and we don't have it here."

"What kind of person bought it?"

At that, the store owner's confusion turned to irritation.

"You know, Mr. Yang, we are a materials store, not an information store. It's true that you are a good customer, but you would be in trouble if people thought that just because of that I was selling information about other customers."

That was true. Yang thought for a moment, then walked past him and Kurama stood in front of him.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Haruaki Kurama. I am the priest of the Kaizumi Shrine in Minoshima."

The merchant's mouth curved.

"I know. You're famous."

"The fate of the "Kisuirin" is very important to me. Could you tell me?"

Kurama bowed his head deeply and the shop owner blinked frequently and looked at Yang, as if he was asking for help. Yang smiled softly and added.

"Of course, I would like to thank you in some way."

Hearing those words, the color of the shopkeeper's eyes changed.

Yang had been told beforehand that money is what talks in a situation like this. Since Kurama is a stranger in such matters, he was to leave all negotiations to Yang and all negotiation costs to the Amamiya family.

"I see, I see. Well, there's no way Kurama-sensei would bow down to you like that."



Taking advantage of his softening attitude, Yang casually extended her hand and placed something in front of the shopkeeper. It is a wad of bills tied with a rubber band, much like a cut rice cake. The shopkeeper took it as casually as Yang, then showed a smile of a salesman for a good customer.

"That flake would have been sold out as soon as it arrived. Well, to tell you the truth, I have had customers asking me for that for a while now. When I contacted them, they came within three hours and bought it right away. Well, it was Good business, right?"

Kurama and Yang exchanged glances for a moment.

Then, Yang leaned over and asked the shopkeeper.

"You are the best material store in Asumi, right? From your point of view, is the "Kisuirin" really that precious?"

The merchant shook his head.

"As I said before, I've never seen anything like it. I can't feel the life force, and it's not even mentioned in the literature, so I can't put a price on it. If that customer hadn't made a reservation, we wouldn't have been able to use it as material."

Kurama nodded slightly. Since Yukito and his friends left, he has searched for as many documents as he could, but he has not been able to find any mention of the "Kisuirin" anywhere. Gonoshima... To be more specific, it is probably a material that originates from Kisui Palace. If they keep their mouths shut, the information will go nowhere.

Then a question arose.

Kurama put it in his mouth.

"Why did that customer want the "Kisuirin"?"

Mysterious glowing scales of which no written record or knowledge remains. What kind of background does the client have that wanted that beforehand?

The store owner gave a simple answer to that question.

"I don't know, that's all. I sell, the customer buys. That's all."

That made sense too. His job is to find out why the client requested the "Kisuirin".

Yang asked in quick succession.

"What kind of person was that customer?"

"He was a man. He didn't have many features, but I remember his eyes were narrowed... oh, yes."

The shopkeeper moved his hands at the back of the store and checked something. Then, he pointed above the heads of Kurama and the others.

He looked up. There seems to be nothing there. However, Kurama noticed that there was a very small hole in the cardboard placed on the shelf. It's a surveillance camera.

When he looked again, the merchant was smiling mischievously.

"If you are going to open a store in Asumi, you must take certain precautions. Ours is no exception."

After that, the teacher kept his mouth shut.

Yang turned his narrowed eyes on Kurama. When Kurama nodded, he took another rolled up bill from his pocket and placed it on the counter. The owner's mouth twitched.

"Hehe, thanks."

As he spoke, he placed a small card on the counter. SD card... probably contains the video data from the surveillance camera. He seemed to have completely forgotten that just a few minutes ago he had insisted that he would not sell customer information.

"I think the guest came three nights ago. I don't remember the exact time. Well, please investigate that for yourself."

"Yes, thanks."

"No, Mr. Yang. Thank you for your continued support."

Kurama turned his back on the two who were exchanging greetings and headed towards the exit while he grabbed the SD card.

After leaving the store, the two walked down the street in silence for a while. He no longer saw the stalls selling magical tools or the men who looked at him suspiciously.

Finally, Yang muttered as he continued walking.

"You have obtained important information."

Kurama nodded and looked at the SD card in his palm.

"Let's check the footage. We may not know who he is, but..."

"It is possible to make some conjectures."

Kurama looked back at Yang, who seemed to be saying that with some amusement. He was probably thinking the same thing as Kurama.

"Where did the client find out about 'Kisuirin', something that no one else should know? Why was he looking for it? There are some things that arise from the actions before and after. He proposes an advance deal with a store that sells materials for cursed tools and

ensures that he will eventually be able to obtain them. Then, shortly after Jingi-san sold the "Kisuirin", they appeared. I can't say for sure, but..."

Kurama bitterly accepted Yang's words.

"The guest must be a member of the Kisui Palace. Jingi was framed."

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"Jingi-sama. Are you thirsty?"

Sango said this with a smile as she sat with her knees close to Jingi.

Jingi, on the other hand, looked at Sango with an indescribable expression. Her elegant and well-groomed features make her look like a lady with a deep window. If someone who knew nothing about her looked at her, he would only see her as a gentle beauty who couldn't even kill an insect.

Of course, Jingi knows that's not the case.

If she had such a kind personality, she wouldn't have tied Jingi's body with a rope with a magic seal and made him sit on the futon.

Jingi opened his mouth carefully as he continued to sit.

"I'm not thirsty."

"I see. You drank a lot of alcohol earlier, so I thought you would like some water. So, aren't you hungry? I heard that Uzura caught a big bream. Whether grilled with salt, steamed with sake, or sashimi, we will prepare it however you like."

Sango responded happily even to the direct tone of his words. Jingi sat on the spot, wondering if they were keeping him company.

"Untie me. That's all I want you to do."

Sango tilted her head in amazement.

"Untie the rope? Why?"

"Ah, why..."

"Even if you break it, you won't be able to escape, right? The cursed rope is also wrapped around Jingi-sama's wrists. Unless you break it, you won't be able to use your life force."

Seeing Sango murmur so innocently, like a little girl, Jingi felt something horrible.

Kidnapping, restriction and confinement. What Sango does for Jingi is called that. It's hard to behave normally when someone does something like that. She should be able to glimpse guilt and regret, or a sense of superiority or a desire to control the life or death of the other person.

However, Sango doesn't have those feelings at all.

She approaches the engagement with a very relaxed attitude, as if she were enjoying afternoon tea time.

Although she is a beautiful woman on the outside, she is a completely different person inside, and Jingi feels cold fear because of that.

Sitting cross-legged on the futon, Jingi murmured:

"What happened to Yukito and the others?"

When he asked that, Sango shrugged.

"Then, he disappeared with his friends. He is Jingi-sama's younger brother, so I wanted to provide him with the warmest hospitality, but I'm sorry."

Jingi secretly felt relieved. For now, Yukito and his friends are his only hope to regain his freedom. If even they were caught, that would be the end of the story.

Sango smiled and stomped those thoughts away.

"But the Elder sent for them, so I'm sure they'll be here soon."

Jingi's face involuntarily tightened. The old man... that damn old man. He was the one who wrapped Jingi in a spell.

That night, that man came with Sango, demanding marriage, and found Jingi hiding in his hideout. Jingi is an expert in the art of pulse control, but even he was no match for the old man.

The Elder's technique is of a completely different lineage from Yanagi-ryu and other pedigree techniques of Ayaka Island. It is probably a technique for manipulating life force that is unique to spiritual people, who are of mixed blood with Mitama. Extraterrestrial, mysterious and powerful. It was impossible for the immature Yukito and the others to escape from him.

Sango's pale red eyes watched the impatience that was slowly seeping out.

"The celebration will be held in three days. The Elder promised to bring Yukito-sama by then. I'm looking forward to it, aren't you, Jingi-sama?"

"...Yukito has nothing to do with this. Leave him alone."

"He is your younger brother. There is a relationship. But..."

Sango tilted her head slightly and asked in a low voice.

"Is it really the case?"

Jingi's heart skipped a beat.



"What is it?"

"I was told that Yukito-sama is Jingi-sama's younger brother. However, I feel that something is different. That person is... instead of being Jingi-sama's younger brother..."

"We are not related by blood."

Jingi said very quickly.

"Yukito is my master's son, but he is not related by blood to Haru-nii, Aka-nii or me. But we are family."

Sango blinked in wonder.

"There is no family without blood ties."

Strangely enough, Jingi didn't dislike that answer. Because he knows that Sango doesn't have any malicious intentions. Spiritual people operate according to their logic. At least within that logic, Sango was pure, innocent, and civilized. For the first time since he arrived in Gonoshima, she smiled a real smile, not a fake one.

"That is possible. In our world."

"....."

"There's no cider here. There's no television, no cell phones, no friends drinking and making fun of people. But there is there. You know that. So it's no wonder there are things there that aren't here, right?"

Sango lives in the Kisui Palace but she is not evil. And she's not stupid either. She nodded and then smiled happily.

"Ah, I'm glad I chose you. You are a wonderful gentleman, Jingi-sama. You are intelligent and can see things clearly. In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with that."

As she did so, Sango lovingly stroked the hair that fell over Jingi's cheek. Depending on the moment and the circumstances, it would have been a touching gesture, but of course all he can do now is murmur in dissatisfaction.

"If you think so, I would like you to untie me from this rope."

Then, Sango smiled and nodded silently.

"That's fine. I'll figure it out right away."

Jingi was shocked and stared at Sango. He never thought that would be accepted.

Sango reached out and grabbed the bell that was placed on a nearby literary desk. A cool sound was heard, and after a short pause, the shoji doors opened silently. From the other side, a large, muscular man appeared: Uzura. Sango looked at him and ordered him.

"Uzura. Take Jingi-sama to the place where my mother sleeps."

"At your command."

Uzura responded in a deep voice and easily lifted Jingi onto his shoulders. Uzura is one of the four Pulse Connectors in the Kisui Palace, but he does not appear to be using any techniques. As he carried Jingi like he was luggage, Jingi muttered to himself.

"Be careful not to hit my head. Unlike yours, mine is full."

Uzura didn't respond. His face, which is rough as a rock, shows only the blank expression typical of a spiritual man. He began to walk slowly, doing his duty. As he followed, Sango laughed and touched Jingi's nose with her index finger.

"No more. Please don't bully him, Jingi-sama. Uzura is a loyal palace official. He will become your vassal one day."

Jingi huffed as he tried his best to resist.

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Ibuki looked at the group with cold eyes as they all stood there soaking wet.

Yukito didn't say anything, and both Chatarou and Yako just looked at Ibuki with scared looks. Ibara was the only one with the same blank expression on her face.

However, when Ibara tried to open her mouth, Ibuki stopped her with a wave of his hand.

"You can explain later. Let's go."

With that, Ibuki turned on his heel and began walking.

Yukito and the others followed him in silence. If you look to the side, you can see Kisui Village and Kisui Palace which is located in the center. Although Josei and the others had returned, that did not mean that they had stopped chasing them. They need to escape from that place as soon as possible.

Below the cape was a vast meadow. There has been no human intervention and the weeds grow freely knee-deep. And there was almost nothing to hide. The sea breeze cooled Yukito's wet body to the core.

Chatarou sneezed many times and looked back each time. It was as if they had heard the sound and thought the pulse splinters were chasing them.

Finally, they reached the forest.

Tall trees and short ferns grow thickly, and every other crevice is filled with vines and tree roots. It seems as if they are preventing people from entering. In fact, there was no path to enter the forest.

Ibuki stopped and stared into the darkness between the trees. The sky had already turned dark blue and the stars were beginning to twinkle as if they were falling. Yukito and the others looked at each other, wondering what he was going to do next.

At this moment, a voice came from the darkness.

"I'll open it now."

Yukito and the others, even Ibara, stiffened. It was a soft and calm female voice. If he had heard it on the street they wouldn't have thought anything. However, the woman's voice that echoed in the darkness of the forest filled them with fear.

In the end, she did exactly what she said.

The trees blocking their eyes bent and split into left and right. The trees opened as if a door was opening. Ibuki entered without hesitation and then disappeared into the darkness. Yukito and his friends were equally confused and scared, but they also knew that they couldn't sit still. Suddenly, they jumped into the darkness.

At that moment, the atmosphere changed.

They could no longer feel the wind blowing anywhere, and even the air that touched their cheeks felt warm. The surroundings are in complete darkness, but the breathing of Chatarou, Yako, and Ibara can be felt nearby. Someone's hand touched Yukito's finger and Yukito unconsciously squeezed it. Then, that hand also grabbed Yukito's hand. There was no shame or shyness. In the dark, people seem to do that naturally.

Suddenly, a light illuminated in front of their eyes.

"Haha. You're soaked."

He heard a voice again. It is the same voice that opened the trees. But this time he didn't feel afraid. Because the owner was right in front of them.

A woman dressed all in black and with a black pointed hat on her head, looking like a witch. Her face is hidden behind the brim of her hat and she rests in an armchair.

"...Uh, what? A room?"

Chatarou blinked behind his round glasses.

Yukito also looked around in panic. As he said, the room that was illuminated by the lamplight was about 12 tatami in size. Above you can see stucco walls, hardwood floors, and a swirling ceiling. Yukito and his friends should have been standing in front of the forest just now.

At that moment, something soft covered Yukito's vision.

"Woah!"

He heard similar voices around him. When he picked it up, it was a towel and a change of clothes. It was a soft black cloth that looked like a bathrobe worn over the head.

"Don't wet other people's rooms. Clean up quickly and change your clothes."

The black-robed woman murmured indifferently. Yukito and the others looked at her in confusion and exchanged glances. At that moment, Yukito realized for the first time that the person holding his hand was Ibara.

They both let go almost at the same time. Yukito looked down, his face getting hot, so he couldn't tell what kind of expression Ibara was making.

The woman said in shock.

"So don't be too young and get dressed quickly."

"Sagaramurudi. At least turn off the lights."

Ibuki, standing by the wall, muttered to himself. The brim of her hat changed direction and the woman... Sagaramurudi snorted. But she didn't complain and then snapped her fingers.

The lamp went out and darkness filled the room.

Yukito learned that having a 15-year-old man and woman changing clothes in the same place, even though he couldn't see them at all, caused a strange amount of tension and guilt. He did his best to block out the sound of rustling clothes next to him from his consciousness. Ibara didn't say anything, she just continued dressing in silence.

It wasn't until five minutes later that everyone was able to dry off, change clothes, and get settled.

"Don't worry. They won't be able to find you here. For a while."

When the lamp was lit again, Sagaramurudi was smoking her pipe. She raised her hat slightly and Yukito and his friends could finally see her true face.

She was a beautiful young woman, probably in her twenties. Her amber eyes blink slowly, resembling a sleepy cat. She said as she placed her cigarette between her pale blue made-up lips and exhaled the smoke.

"You said there were three people chasing you. Was the Elder there?"

Ibuki slowly shook his head. Her pale blue lips smiled wryly.

"I see. If the Elder was there, they wouldn't have tea time like this now. I'm glad they were newly appointed palace priests."

"That..."

Yukito timidly raised his hand and was about to ask a question. There were too many things he didn't understand. Who is she? Where is that place? What is the current situation? Before those questions could be uttered, Ibuki responded.

"She is Sagaramurudi. She is not an ally, but she is not an enemy either. For now."

Ibuki's explanation was brief and insufficient. Yako asked a question.

"Um... Are you a pulse connector?"

Sagaramurudi snorted.

"She's a witch."

Yukito tilted his head at the unknown words. Sagaramurudi shrugged.

"She is based in Europe. She comes to Ayaka Island once a year on vacation. Well, I don't care what her name is. There is no doubt that she is a person who draws life force, trains it, and manipulates it. That is ..."

With one hand holding a smoking pipe, she pointed to the surroundings.

"It's my magic. The main body is a box that fits in the palm of your hand, and the space inside expands and configures into a room. Well, I guess you could call it a portable private room."

Yukito, an inexperienced person, doesn't quite understand what it means to expand a space. Even so, he didn't doubt her words because he had already seen the same technique once before. When Jingi took him to Ayaka Island from Tokyo, Yukito was stored in his backpack.

"Right now, I will let my messenger take care of this room. We will probably arrive at the hotel in a while, but it is better not to go out. You are being searched. If they discover you, this time they will catch you."

Sagaramurudi took a swig from her pipe, exhaled the smoke and let the ashes fall into the ash blower. In relaxed movements there is not the slightest hint of tension. It became clear to him that she was thinking that it would be Yukito and the others who would be arrested, not her.

At that moment, Ibara looked up and saw Ibuki.

"Boss. We..."

However, Ibuki interrupted her and said.

"I understand the situation you're in. Jingi was kidnapped by the Gonoshima boys. You came to get him back. And then you failed spectacularly and were chased by the Kisui Palace. What I don't understand is the "why". Why you came to this island and then went



to Kisui Palace? It doesn't matter if it's just a mission, but if they get caught you, it will be four times more troublesome. Have you predicted that?"

Ibuki's words pierced Yukito's heart like a sharp thorn, although his calm tone did not reveal any anger. Yukito came up with a strategy to play the younger brother who is worried about Jingi and somehow find out what's inside. Looking back now that it ended in failure, all he can say is that it was reckless.

However, Ibuki was not looking at Yukito. He fixed his cold and bright gaze on Ibara.

"Your predictions were too naive. So it's your fault, Ibara. Understand."

"...Yes, Boss."

Ibara looked down. Yukito saw her, who normally maintained an elegant expression, frown in pain.

Out of reflex, Yukito raised his voice.

"Um! No, that's not true! I was the one who came up with the plan, and it's not Ichijou-san's fault!"

Ibuki looked at Yukito. Just because of that, Yukito shivered, as if he was being subjected to physical pressure. Sighing, Ibuki opened his mouth to speak.

A sharp sound silenced his words.

"You don't stop preaching."

Ibuki looked at Sagaramurudi. The witch narrowed her eyes mockingly at his penetrating gaze.

"You know that a child's observations are naive. Or are you trying to tell me that the scar on your shoulder is the result of careful consideration, Ibuki?"

Ibuki's expression showed demonic anger. Even looking at that, Sagaramurudi's pale blue lips curled into a smile.

"From my point of view, you are all unruly children. There is nothing more disgusting than a fight between children. If you make any more noise, I will throw you out mercilessly, so don't worry about it."

Ibuki kept his mouth shut.

There was silence for a while. Sagaramurudi was putting new cigarettes into her pipe. It was then that Yukito first noticed that she had an extra arm. Although it is difficult to see clearly under the loose black robe, it is clear that she has three hands and they move deftly to light the pipe.

Yukito had no idea who Sagaramurudi is.

But there was still something left to say.

"Um... thank you very much."

Seeing Yukito tilt his head, Sagaramurudi's amber eyes widened in surprise.

"Sagaramurudi-san and Ibuki-san. Thanks to all of you, we were saved. Thank you very much."

After saying that, he bowed deeply once more. Chatarou, Yako and Ibara did the same. No matter who she was or what her intentions were, it was certain that she was hiding them at that moment. That's why he felt that she had to express his gratitude.

Sagaramurudi looked at Yukito with a disappointed expression on her face. Then she pouted and turned around. Just when Yukito was starting to worry that he had lost his temper, she suddenly said:

"Come here, Yukito."

"Ah..."

Yukito was confused when his name was called. Sagaramurudi smiled.

"What? Can't you hear what your lifeguard is saying?"

Yukito slowly got up, walked around the table with the lit lamp, and approached Sagaramurudi. The anxious glances of Chatarou and the others passed across his face, but he himself was not anxious. He couldn't say it well, but he couldn't sense any malice on Sagaramurudi's part.

When he was close, Sagaramurudi pointed to the ground. Sitting there straight, her right hand touched Yukito's cheek, her left hand brushed his hair, and her third hand caressed Yukito's chin. Her third hand had six fingers.

Ibuki warned her sharply.

"Hey. You know."

"That's right. I should have explained to you beforehand that this was my purpose."

Sagaramurudi brought her face closer to him. Her amber eyes filled his field of vision and her breath touched the tip of his nose. Yukito became nervous and stopped breathing.

About five seconds passed.

"Eh?"

Sagaramurudi let out a suspicious voice and let go of Yukito. Still sitting up straight, Yukito looked at her.

"What...?"

"Oh, that's enough. You can kneel."

Yukito blinked, then did as he was told and fell to his knees. He had no idea what she wanted to do.

As if she read Yukito's question, Sagaramurudi's lips twitched.

"What, I just wanted to confirm. If you really are Makoto's son or not."

Makoto...Yanagi Makoto. It was the name of Yukito's father.

Sagaramurudi asked, bringing her face closer again.

"What do you mean? Are you really that guy's son?"

Even if she asks him that.

"Well, I don't remember much about my father, so even if you ask me if it's true..."

"Hmm. Well, I guess so."

"I assume you called Yukito to confirm that."

"Unlike you, my eyes don't have holes. I thought you would understand if you saw it yourself..."

Sagaramurudi clicked her tongue in disgust.

"I don't know anything. He seems like a normal kid. I don't know if he's his son or not."

"I'm sorry..."

Seeing her irritation, Yukito reflexively apologized. Sagaramurudi took off her hat and ruffled her hair in a worried manner. Up close, her hair was as red as it was black.

"Don't apologize... Oh, now. You really don't look like him. I wonder what kind of farm he was on to grow up to be such a good boy."

"That's enough. It's time you told me. What kind of relationship do you have with my master?"

Sagaramurudi puffed on her pipe and then...

"Makoto Yanagi is my disciple."

Yukito's mouth dropped open.

She supposed that silly side was really interesting. Sagaramurudi cleared her white throat and gave a deep laugh.

"Of course, he originally was. There was a time when he was studying with me when he traveled the world. He had no discipline, so I don't think he studied with me alone."

"....."

"He was trying to do my own magic, senjutsu, and pulse binding techniques. He wasn't doing it out of ambition or anything, he was just curious. Normally, someone trying to do something like that would get beat up at some point, but that guy was different."

Sagaramurudi narrowed her eyes and then muttered as if she regretted it from the bottom of her heart.

"It was a big waste to die at the age of thirty, actually."

There was no lie in that voice.

At least that's what Yukito felt. He barely remembers Makoto Yanagi. To him, his father was nothing more than a middle-aged man smiling wildly in a photograph. Therefore, he could only speculate about his father based on the reactions of those around him.

He felt that Sagaramurudi's reaction was similar to that of the people who told him about his father in Ninoshima. He felt deeply missed and saddened. It might be wrong to say something like that to someone who was a user of terrifying magic and was called a witch, but Yukito felt something similar to a sense of kinship.

"That..."

Just as Yukito opened his mouth and was about to ask, a low sound echoed and the room shook.

Sagaramurudi looked up and murmured.

"Ah. Looks like we've arrived."

Ibuki moved away from the wall and approached the door. After knocking on the door and taking a breath, he asked Sagaramurudi.

"They are there?"

"Wait a minute."

Sagaramurudi's amber eyes closed. Just like that, she wouldn't move at all. Five or ten seconds later, just as Yukito was starting to feel uncomfortable, she opened her eyelids. A slight smile appeared on her lips.

"The old man is coming. He's talking to Tsugishima. They probably came here to demand they let you out."

Ibuki's gaze became sharp.

"Tsugishima... the hotel manager? Where will he come from?"

"Tsugushima is on the hotel's side. There's no doubt that he was Makoto's disciple, and he still respects him, but the hotel is probably more important to him than you. His mission is to protect it."

"And you? Sagaramurudi."

Ibara, who had been deep in thought about her, muttered to herself. Sagaramurudi looked at Ibuki and Ibara. Ibara met the witch's fearless gaze again.

"You helped us. Do you plan to continue doing so?"

"Ibara."

Ibuki called her name as if to stop her. Sagaramurudi laughed at the sound of the reprimand.

"You are a brave young woman who wants to make a deal with a witch. Can you pay the price?"

"....."

Ibara kept her mouth shut and looked at Sagaramurudi and then at Ibuki. Ibuki shook his head with a grim expression. As if to say, don't talk.

Ibuki probably distrusts Sagaramurudi. He doesn't know why, but it's a great connection. There must be some kind of inevitability.

But...

"What kind of compensation will you receive?"

Yukito asked.

Ibuki's gaze felt like the muzzle of a gun. Cold sweat ran down his back. Even so, Yukito did not take back his words. It is clear that she is a connection with power equal to or greater than Ibuki. If he can make her an ally, his chances of helping Jingi will increase dramatically.

Sagaramurudi gave a slight smile. It was a smile that had no trace of the human touch that had been there before. Ibuki leaned over and tried to intervene. However, the witch used a plate of fire to stop him.

"Shut up, Ibuki. This is a deal between me and the boy."

A faint gnashing of teeth was heard coming from Ibuki's mouth. Yukito felt sorry for him. However, no matter the price, he was willing to pay whatever he could if it would help the cause. Sagaramurudi's hand moved. Her fingers touched Yukito's cheek.

"That's right. Makoto's son. In that case..."



The witch narrowed her amber eyes seductively.

"How about you become my disciple?"

+++++

Uzura and Sango, who were carrying Jingi, move through the labyrinthine corridors without getting lost.

The residence of the Kisuinomiya family, the so-called "Palace", has approximately half of its towers submerged under the sea. Despite the thick humidity and salt air, the wooden hallways remained intact and shone like new under the light of the andon lights. Are they replaced every time or is some type of preservation technique used? Jingi speculates that it's probably the latter.

Finally, they arrived in front of a large door.

It was a double door made of rock. In front of him were two spirits, upright and motionless. When they recognized Sango, they silently retreated to both sides. The surfaces of the two doors are engraved with patterns that Jingi has seen before. Two dragons surround each other like twin wheels: a dragon of fire and a dragon of water.

"...It's here too."

Legend has it that the pair of dragons are the ones who created Ayaka Island. They were also the enshrined deity at the Kaizumi Shrine, where Kurama serves as a priest. He was a little surprised to discover that that belief also has its roots in Gonoshima.

Sango looked at the sculpture and said indifferently.

"Yes. The Dragon God is our ancestor."

"Eh?"

Uzura opened the door with one hand. Beyond was a long, dark staircase leading downward. Following Uzura down the stairs, Sango looked Jingi in the eyes and explained.

"We are descendants of Mitama and humans who once mixed. At that time, Mitama were descendants of the Water Dragon."

"You mean there is such a tradition?"

Sango replied as she laughed.

"No. In fact, it is."

Jingi frowned. Even if she is not a dragon herself, if she is a follower of one, she is a pretty powerful Mitama. It wasn't a story he could suddenly believe, but Sango's words were filled with conviction, as if she had seen it with her own eyes.

Sango narrowed her eyes and added, as if she read Jingi's thoughts.

"It's okay. You'll understand soon."

She added, nudging Jingi in the nose.

The stairs were long and dark. Stones that emit a faint glow are placed on both sides of the stairs at equal intervals. Sango's pale red eyes glistened wetly in response.

Jingi asked.

"Hey. Why me?"

Sango blinked slowly. Anyway, she continued talking to Jingi.

"You and I were only together for a few hours. I'm sorry, but I completely forgot about you the next week. That's how kids are. New things are happening one after another, so you can't remember the old things. But why are you so attached to me, someone you only met once, twelve years ago?"

Sango smiled mysteriously. Her eyes shone in the light and seemed to exude an inhuman color.

"As long as I can remember, my mother and the Elder have always said that I am the heir to the blood of Kisui Palace and that I will pass it on to the next generation. They taught me that my most important role is to find a mate and lead this village as village chief."

Sango slowly raised her hand. Flexible, fish-like fingers touched Jingi's earlobe.

"It was by chance that I entered Ninoshima. While playing in the water, I was caught by an unexpected current and was swept there. However, it was inevitable that I would find you there. Jingi-sama, we were destined to meet one day."

"Ha.", Jingi scoffed.

"Cider and games? It was a cheap destination."

Sango's smile, however, did not falter.

"My mother said that you can tell when a couple is together as soon as you see them. That's what "Shinusuirinko" will teach you. And that day, it certainly happened. It was not my will that chose you, it was the "Kisuirin" that chose you, it was destiny."

It was Jingi who stopped laughing.

If you hear the idea that the scale can tell you who your soulmate is, it's crazy. However, spiritual people are not decent in the first place. They are a hybrid of humans and Mitama, and are a race that operates by their own logic and rules. They probably have their own inevitability, although it's not worth it for the sake of your relationship.

"Are you saying my intentions don't matter?"

When he spat those words at her, the smile disappeared from Sango's lips. Her pale red eyes were downcast with sadness. As she did so, she looked like a heartbroken young woman.

"My love for Jingi-sama comes from the bottom of my heart. How happy I would be if Jingi-sama felt the same. But my mother said: It's hard for people outside the island to accept this, because they have a lot of feelings."

Her sad gaze flickered. She looked at the back of the head of the man responsible for that.

"Spirituals are made of weak thoughts. The old man says it's because of the Mitama mix. The reason my feelings are so strong is because I'm special. Everyone else: the Elder, Josei, Ruazusa, and even Uzura. No, It's like me."

Uzura's head moved slightly. Did he try to turn around? However, he did not turn around and continued down the stairs in silence. He prioritized the orders.

Sango gave a small laugh. It was a sad smile.

"I don't think Jingi-sama understands my feelings. You're surrounded by a lot of thoughts. Yukito-san, Kurama-san, your other brother, and I'm sure your friends. I'm sure there are a lot of them too, but... "

Her voice became quiet and her last words were so weak that they were almost inaudible.

"I've always been alone."

He really couldn't say anything.

Since he was taken to Gonoshima, he was able to understand the characteristics of the spirits. They are more like social insects than humans. They have almost no free will and faithfully follow orders. If they were told to do so, they would probably waste their lives without hesitation.

This is no different for the elders and the other "priests." They laugh. They can make facial expressions in the form of laughter. But it's not about emotion, it's about learning. Their essence is that they are made of inorganic matter, like anything else.

But Sango is different.

She laughs. She is surprised. She may be sad and depressed. It was a sincere reaction, much like Jingi's. It's true that the weight of the twenty years Sango has spent in this dark, dank "village" is something no one knows.

If Jingi had more compassion, he might have thought that living with Sango wouldn't be a bad idea.

"I..."

While he was thinking, Jingi opened his mouth.

"Still, I can't be with you. Sango."

Sango bit her lip hard.

Before he knew it, the mask of a young woman full of composure had fallen from her face. Beneath it was the expression of a hurt girl.

However, that quickly turned into a fake smile.

"I know. People outside won't accept my feelings."

"....."

Jingi pursed his lips tightly.

Jingi was confused by the feelings welling up within him. Maybe that's a type of emotion called pity. It was weird. The woman in front of him is trying to stop Jingi, kidnap him, imprison him, and force him into an unwanted marriage. He shouldn't feel sorry for such a person. Although that is true in theory, the phenomenon of feeling is not logical.

Jingi said with a sigh.

"I have something to do, Sango. That's why I can't do it. It's not your fault."

Sango shook her head.

"You can't do that anymore. You're going to be with me."

"....."

For a moment, Jingi was conflicted.

He has a secret. A secret that he has never revealed to anyone.

If he confides that in Sango, he might be able to handle that stalemate. At the very least, Sango would have been able to get by better than trying to convince the spirits, including the old man.

But...

Sango smiled again and sang.

"Also, if you have something to do, you can do it here, Jingi-sama. Yukito-san should be here soon, and maybe your brothers too. So, let's all have fun and live together in harmony."

Jingi mentally shook his head.

As expected, no. He doesn't know what she will do if he tells her. Sango was close to them among the spirits, but she was still innocent and pure, and because of that, she was dangerous. He couldn't take that risk yet.

Finally, the long staircase came to an end.

Jingi, who was being carried by Uzura, felt his steps become softer.

It feels like stepping on dirt or sand. Before he knew it, his surroundings had changed to a roughly hollowed rock wall. It seems that the basement of the Kisui Palace is connected to a cave somewhere.

Suddenly, Jingi's vision was enveloped in darkness.

The cool, moist air touched his cheek. It seemed as if they had arrived at an open area, but in the lightless darkness, they could not see anything. As Jingi squinted, Uzura whispered something. Probably, it is a technique from a different system than Jingi.

The light slowly began to illuminate the space.

Jingi gasped involuntarily.

That place was at the bottom of the sea. From the hemispherical roof he could see the black, stagnant water. The white bellies of fish swimming around the edges and the blue-black shadows of swaying seaweed. That place was an underwater dome, protected by magic instead of glass.

"This is the place where my mother sleeps."

Sango said softly and started walking in front of Uzura. Footprints dot the white sand. Finally, when they reached the center of the dome, Uzura lowered Jingi's body and sat him down. Sango sat next to him.

"....."

Sango opened her mouth and screamed something. It wasn't a word; it wasn't even a voice. He felt like vibrations in the air, like some kind of sound wave that made his eardrums vibrate.

Nothing happened for a while.

About a minute had passed, and just as Jingi was about to open his mouth, it suddenly appeared.

Something came from behind the transparent wall, from the depths of the sea.

Something big, long and blue.

Due to the depths of the ocean, where light cannot reach, it was not possible to see everything clearly. However, upon closer inspection, he realized that it was a gigantic sea



serpent with blue scales and a blue-black dorsal fin. It's bigger than he's ever seen, let alone imagined. Even after going around that underwater dome, there was still more.

Sango whispered softly in Jingi's ear, who was left speechless.

"This is my mother, Kisuinomiya Yatsuchi-sama."

In response, a roar shook the entire dome.

Ekkkkkkkkkkk...

"She said it's a pleasure to meet her son-in-law."

Swallowing, breathing deeply and drenched in cold sweat, Jingi forced a smile.

"Well, I haven't decided yet."

"No. It was decided that way. Since you received my "Kisuirin"."

"The sea serpent, or rather, Sango's mother, was slowly spinning around the dome. He couldn't even make out where her head was.

Sango explained calmly as she sat next to Jingi with her knees together.

"As I said before, our ancestors are the Water Dragon God and the descendants of him. Those who inherit that blood will have the appearance of humans when they are young, but as they grow, they will become dragon-like beings."

At this moment, Sango suddenly looked up and said in a bright voice, "Ah."

"This is my father."

What she was pointing to was the flank of a sea serpent, or, rather, it was a black shadow protruding from the blue-black body of it. A rectangular shadow is attached to a round shadow. And within the rectangular shadow, there were four more elongated shadows.

It looks like a human form.

Jingi couldn't help but look at Sango's profile and asked.

"Hey. We're getting married, right?"

Sango smiled at Jingi like a shy maid.

"Yes. We will be together, Jingi-sama."

+++++

After confirming that the old man was gone, Tsugishima Sakurainochi, the manager of the "Archipelago Resort Hotel", breathed a deep sigh of relief.

When he was asked to take custody of Yukito Yanagi and his group, he thought his heart would stop. However, he was the manager of this hotel and had the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the guests. When he explained that to him, the old man was convinced, at least apparently.

However, this only applies to the hotel grounds. Tsugishima cannot interfere with what happens outside the hotel. This is the island of spirits.

"Verify."

Suddenly, the words echoed in his head, and Tsugishima picked up his tired body and headed towards the reception. A thin gray shadow was huddled in front of the counter. Tsugishima carried out the prescribed procedures with a professional smile on his face. Tsugishima doesn't know the shadow's identity: is he some kind of hermit, a wizard, or a connection? That espionage is not his job.

As the shadow faded, the next customer appeared at the counter. Tsugishima looked at the person and his professional smile turned into genuine surprise.

"Sagaramurudi-sama. Are you leaving yet?"

The black-robed witch smiled meaningfully. She was a high-ranking guest of the hotel and usually stayed for at least a month. However, this time she has only spent a week.

"No, it seems his client got lost, so I came to drop him off."

Before he knew it, he looked and saw a group of children. Seeing the boy in front, who looked uncomfortable, Tsugishima let out an even bigger cry of surprise.

"Yukito-kun! Are you okay?"

"No, well... yes..."

Tsugishima quickly looked around the hallway. There were no other customers in sight. The others already returned to the village after the scheduled time. The fact that "Yanagi Yukito has not returned to the hotel" has not yet been revealed.

"Well, for now, come here! Come on, hurry up!"

He invited the children, including Yukito, and a tall stranger to the manager's room. Sagaramurudi did not try to enter from the counter. She looked at Yukito and muttered in a low voice.

"Remember the deal, Yukito. If that's what you want, I'll help you right away."

Yukito's shoulders shook. When he looked back, there was an expression of disbelief in his eyes. Still, Yukito bowed his head and entered the room, guided by Tsugishima.

"What the hell did you do in Kisui Village?! Why did the old man come to look for you?!"

When he closed the door behind him, he couldn't help but raise his voice. Yukito shrugged and the tall man looked at Tsugishima. Tsugishima was a little scared and looked at him demanding an explanation.

"Oh, and who is this person? It seems like you guys know each other..."

That question was answered by the person in question.

"Ibuki Aka. I work as a connector in Ichinoshima. I am also a disciple of Yanagi Makoto."

Tsugishima's eyes widened. Ibuki stepped forward and looked at the children.

"Let me explain. What did these guys do?"

Then Ibuki began to explain why they had come to Gonoshima in the first place.

"I see."

Sitting deeply in his office chair, Tsugishima said with a sigh.

There was probably a hint of disapproval in his gaze as he looked at Yukito, who was sitting on the reception couch. He and his friends Chatarou and Yako looked down, uneasy. He knew that he shouldn't scold the boy more than necessary, but he still had to nudge him.

"In that case, you should have consulted me from the beginning! It would be unreasonable for you two to enter the village alone!"

"Yanagi Yukito tried to do that. But I stopped him."

Ibara Ichijou, the only girl who looked up, said that without a care in the world. She looked at Tsugishima.

"Because I couldn't trust you enough."

She is an honest girl.

Tsugishima let out a sigh through his nose and leaned back against the backrest. He murmured as he rubbed the area between his eyes.

"Is it different now?"

"Sagaramurudi said that you were on the hotel's side. If that is the case, at least you are not our enemy."

Ibuki responded calmly. Tsugishima nodded. The mission that Yanagi gave him was to preserve that hotel and, by extension, the "Meisen". Tsugishima's position is to maintain a neutral effect on all other matters. However, is that also okay for Makoto Yanagi's son?

Or even if he is a disciple whom he has raised as his own son?

"....."

A wrinkle of agony was etched between Tsugishima's eyebrows. He knew very well that he should not settle things with the spirits. The "Archipelago Resort Hotel", which is a foreign object on the island, cannot survive without his approval. It was none other than Makoto Yanagi himself who advised Tsugishima not to stand in their way. Then they won't bother you.

"That spiritual person..."

After a long silence, Tsugishima broke his request.

"Most of them lack willpower and emotion. People like Taro and Kiriji are called kaite. They will faithfully follow the orders of the elder and the high priests. They are not related to each other. No, that is a problematic group if we must make our way."

Ibuki looked at Tsugishima, a little surprised. Tsugishima rested his elbows on the desk and continued.

"Among them, those who are connected to the palace are called palace priests. I have only met the old man, but it seems that there are three others; those are the ones who came after you. They will be a big obstacle to helping Jingi-kun."

"Ibara."

Ibuki turned to Ibara. Ibara turned to him and explained.

"I also fought one of his connectors. He is stronger than me, but weaker than the boss."

"There are at least four people like that."

Muttering in disgust, Ibuki looked at Yukito and the others.

"What are your skills?"

"Chatarou Fukuwake and Yako Amano are more or less the same as the two of them combined. Yukito Yanagi... well, I don't know. He doesn't have many techniques that he can use, but his strength is stronger than mine."

At that, Chatarou and Yako expressed their agreement.

"Oh, that's right! Yukito is amazing!"

"Yukito-kun saved us when we were surrounded by spirits in the Kisui Palace. We were able to escape by using a large ball of water and manipulating it."

"Were you the one controlling that?"

Ibuki's expression, which had been stern until then, suddenly softened. There's a slight warmth in the way he looks at Yukito, as if he's caring for his younger brother.

"I see. As expected of my master's son."

"No, uh... I was just desperate..."

Ibuki reached out and stroked Yukito's head as he grumbled.

However, that was the extent of Ibuki's warmth. As soon as he withdrew his hand, his expression returned to the coldness of reality.

"On the other side, there are four people who are related to each other. I don't know the ability of the head of Kisui Palace or Sango of Kisui Palace herself. On the other hand, besides Ibara and me, there were two half-humans and maybe one unknown person. We definitely don't have enough strength."

"Ah..."

Chatarou dropped his shoulders pathetically, but Yako calmly stated.

"Yes. Also, there is another problem. Even if we want to help Jingi-san, we don't know where he is. Even if we go to visit him, they won't let us see him."

"It's full of problems."

Ibuki said that, but Tsugishima raised his hand.

"If that's the problem, we can solve it."

Ignoring Ibuki's doubts, Tsugishima opened a drawer in his office desk and took out a book. It was a work diary that he had kept since he started working at that hotel.

He opened one of those pages and gave it to Ibuki.

"I have lived on this island for many years, so I am familiar with the customs of the spirits. They hold important ceremonies in a place called "Kerukaiden" at the top of the palace."

Ibuki looked over there. A look of understanding crossed his face.

"The marriage of the next head of the family is definitely the most important ceremony among them. The question is when will it take place."

"Ah! I heard that! I think it will be the night three days later!"

Yukito suddenly looked up and shouted. Ibara, Chatarou and others agree one after another. That's what they said when they found Jingi and Sango.

"It is already decided."

Ibuki looked at them and muttered to himself.

"We will move the night of three days later. It will be a celebration. Security will be tight, but we cannot miss this opportunity."



The children, except Ibara, looked pale. It is not surprising. They are planning to wage war against four people linked to a village.

Tsugishima cleared his throat, partly out of pity for them, but also because he knew another solution. Catching Ibuki's gaze, he suggested it.

"There is still a problem. Even if we manage to rescue Jingi-kun, they will still chase you. Even to Ninoshima."

"It's too late now. They were the ones who took action first. I'm not going to lie down and cry after they kidnapped my brother."

"The spirits do not consider it "kidnapped". Kisuinomiya Sango handed over the "Kisuirin", which was a proof of commitment, and Sagawa Jingi accepted it. Then the commitment has already occurred. They will never allow it to be unilaterally abolished. That is why..."

After taking a breath, Tsugishima continued.

"The most reliable way is to return the "Kisuirin". Spiritual people who place importance on "contracts" will no longer have any reason to restrict Jingi-kun once the proof of commitment is returned to them. He will be returned to us in peace."

"I guess that's why we're having so much trouble because that idiot sold that "Kisuirin"."

"And I heard that Ninoshima's connections are currently looking for him. How has that progressed? Is there a way to contact them?"

Chatarou timidly raised his hand.

"Ah, there is. Or, rather, I have it. Before we came here, our master gave us a magic tool. He said it was for emergency use."

"This is an emergency. I think we should use it right away."

He thought it was a fair opinion, but for some reason the atmosphere in the room became heavy and dark.

Chatarou held his breath and cast furtive glances at Ibuki. And Ibuki's expression showed strong anger and irritation. Tsugishima had no idea why he was making that face in this situation.

Ibuki clicked his tongue and turned his back away from the wall. That alone made Chatarou's body tremble, and Ibuki bluntly said goodbye.

"I'm going to take a look around."

"Huh? No, but..."

Before Tsugishima could tell him that the hotel was safe, Ibuki left the manager's room.

Tsugishima looked at the children, confused. Ibuki is the most powerful and senior connection there. He doesn't know why he acted like that.

Upon receiving his gaze, Yukito also shook his head in confusion.

"Well... there are many things."

"Fukuwake Chatarou. It's okay, just contact him."

"Oh, yes."

Chatarou was confused by Ibara's request, but he nodded. He took out a ceremonial note from his pocket and closed his eyes.

"Man, earth and sky! Each of us is a gifted art returning to our roots!"

The ceremonial etiquette emitted a golden light.

Trembling, he broke free of Chatarou's grasp. It spun in the air again and again and then charged toward the window in a straight line. Before Tsugishima could say anything, the ceremonial etiquette slipped through the window gap and flew into the distant sky.

All that was left behind was everyone who stood there dumbfounded.

"...Ah. That."

Suddenly, Yukito pointed out.

A line of light appeared in the room. The light reflected across the room like a thin golden thread and continued beyond the window. After a while, Tsugishima realized that this was a sign that the ceremonial etiquette had moved.

After a while, the beam of light began to shake.

"Ro... cha..."

At first, the voice was full of static, like a satellite call from the other side of the world. But that was only so at the beginning; As the tremor of the light rays decreased, the sound became clearer.

"Chatarou. Can you hear me? What's going on there?"

"Ah, Kurama-sensei! Okay, okay, I can hear you!"

"That's good. How is the situation now?"

Chatarou blinked behind his glasses and Yako stepped forward to respond in his place.

"Master, I am Yako. We are now in a safe situation. There is a hotel in Gonoshima, and the manager is an acquaintance of Master Yanagi. His name is Tsugishima Sakurainochi."

"An acquaintance of the master?!"

The beam of light... Kurama's voice was tinged with surprise. Tsugishima stepped forward and greeted him.

"Nice to meet you, Kurama-Sensei. My name is Tsugishima Sakurainochi, and I am the manager of the "Archipelago Resort Hotel". I am indebted to your master, Yanagi-Sensei, for saving my life. Personally, I would like to help the Yanagi clan as much as possible."

"Nice to meet you, Tsugishima-san. Thank you. As Chatarou and his friends, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you."

Tsugishima nodded and looked at Yukito.

"Now then, Yukito-kun. Please explain the situation immediately."

"Oh, yes!"

Then, Yukito began to speak. For the most part, it was the same thing he told Tsugishima earlier. Arriving in Gonoshima, they found Tsugishima, stayed at the hotel and visited Kisui Palace, it was at this stage that he helped them.

"Aka. Really...?"

The murmured voice was so cold that Tsugishima couldn't help but look at Yukito and the others. Ibara reacted to that and silently shook her head. Since Ibuki left, it seems like these two Yanagi disciples don't get along with each other.

Finally, Yukito spoke about the current situation.

"Right now we are stuck in the hotel. It seems that there is a "contract" that says that the spirits will not touch us as long as we stay inside. So, Tsugishima-san said that, if we can return the "Kisuirin", that people would free Jingi-san..."

"I see."

Tsugishima thinks that's the important point.

Will they be able to find the "Kisuirin"? Everything depends on that. If they don't find it and still try to get Sagawa Jingi back, it could lead to an all-out war between Ninoshima and Gonoshima. The spirits never forgive anyone who violates their rules.

At that moment, the beam of light changed shape.

The light particles came together to form a rough image. The video shows a man receiving something from a counter inside a small store.

Kurama's voice rang out.

"In conclusion, the "Kisuirin" has not yet been found. However, it was discovered that this man had purchased the "Kisuirin". Considering the circumstances, we believe that he may be one of the spirits."

Tsugishima frowned.

"Does that mean that a spiritual man bought the "Kisuirin"?"

"That's what I guess."

"However, I think it's difficult to think about that. Spiritual people are not the type of people who come up with such plans."

For example, it is possible to cast some sort of spell on the "Kisuirin" so that it is recognized the moment it leaves Jingi's hands. If you hide the newly obtained "Kisuirin" somewhere, a marriage relationship will be established that you can never refuse. However, as Tsugishima saw it, such an elaborate method was not at all typical of a spiritual person. They are an inflexible race, but they are also simple people.

On the other end of the line, Kurama was silent. He knew what he was thinking. If that person was not a spiritual person, it would be almost impossible to recover the "Kisuirin". If that happens, all that will be left will be a full-scale confrontation.

"Ah, that!"

At this moment, Yukito raised his voice.

Tsugishima opened his eyes and looked at Yukito. It wasn't just him, Chatarou, Yako and Ibara were staring at the image.

Yukito pointed at the man and shouted again.

"I've seen that person before at Kisui Palace! His name is Josei and he's the high priest who showed us around!"

+++++

Inhale and exhale.

The air we breathe contains life force. Because vitality resides in all things. The exhaled life force travels through the universe and returns to the vital vein, and is then expelled from the vital vein again and resides in the air again.

Every time you breathe, you feel it. The air, the ocean, the trees and the land are all aspects of circulating vitality, and he is also included in that.

"Hmm..."

His body was now on a small hill in the northwestern part of Gonoshima. He was sitting cross-legged at the top of a tree that only grew at the top. When he opens his eyes, he can see the resplendent "Archipelago Resort Hotel" below. There was no need to do so, as his mind was connected to the life line and covered the northern part of the island like a network of nerves. The hotel was something strange on that island... even now for him.

When he tried to make a "contract" with that place, the Elder strongly objected. They knew they needed to interact with the outside world, but that didn't mean they needed to build a facility where people from the outside could stay. They thought they should manage the "Meisen" themselves.

However, his master, Kisuinomiya Yatsuchi, rejected him. That man signed a "contract" with Makoto Yanagi and chose to have the "Spring of Life" managed by a stranger.

He had no complaints about that. He has known Kisuimiya Yatsuchi since she was still in human form, even when she was a baby, but now she is the old man's superior. Obeying that order was the beginning of the spiritual man.

But now.

"Hmm..."

The Elder's eyes filled with strength as he meditated.

Another strange object appeared from outside the island.

He broke the old man's technique, which stretched like skin, and pierced a point in the hotel. Something like a thread or a ray of light. The Elder assumes that this is some kind of communication or link.

The old man's face, covered in scars, was grimly distorted.

"Tsugishima. You're a fox."

Tsugishima said that Yukito Yanagi was not at the hotel at the time and that he would let him know when he returned. Even if it's just a verbal promise, it's still a "contract". That man trampled him. In the end he would have to pay the price.

But he has other things to do now.

"Josei."

"Yes!"

A voice echoed under the tree. Josei, a court lord under the Elder, is sitting at the foot of a tree with his eyes closed, as is the Elder.

"As expected, they are hot. Their tails stick out."

Pure blue eyes looked at the old man.

"Are you going to attack them?"

"Good. We have to keep him safe there. It's a "contract" made by the Lord."

"Yes."

While he exchanged words with Josei, the Elder attempted to decipher the enemy's techniques. If it were a message, if they could grasp its content, their advantage would be even greater.

But...

"Ok, I will do it."

The old man spat.

The techniques used by the spirits of Gonoshima and the others are very different systems. The old man realized that when he saw the technique of Makoto Yanagi, who once appeared on this island. They don't know how to deal with that technique. The same thing happened with the elderly.

Just when he was halfway to deciphering the tightly organized technique, he suddenly stopped. He suddenly disappeared, as if a needle was being pulled out of his skin without a sound, and he couldn't feel anything for the rest of the time.

At that moment, the old man opened his eyes for the first time.

After blinking the horizontally divided pupils several times, they returned to human eyes. The old man asked as he touched his white beard.

"What about Ryuzusa and Uzura?"

"They are protecting Sango-sama at the sanctuary."

"Have Ryuzusa protect the north. Anyone who leaves the island is free. However, no one can enter the island before congratulations."

"Yes!"

Josei stood up and was about to walk slowly when he stopped. He looked back at the old man.

"Elder, will you stay here?"

"Hmm..."

"How about a congratulatory message?"

The old man stared at Josei.

Josei has a cool expression on his face. Spiritual people have little individuality. But that doesn't mean there aren't any. Although Josei was the youngest judicial official, he often made such comments. The old man felt a fine mist-like sensation.

The old man only murmured.

"Go away."

Josei bowed and disappeared.

"Hmph.", he snorted. The slight feeling, he had of being unfit to be a spiritual person disappeared with just that. Afterwards, his thoughts returned to how they usually were.

The congratulations will be done in three days, no, the date has already changed, so it will be in two days. It's a full moon night.

On that day a new owner of Kisui Palace will be born. From Kisuinomiya Yatsuchi to Kisuinomiya Sango. She will create a new clan by mating with that man named Jingi Sagawa. That was decided twelve years ago. He never expected that the person to whom Sango gave the "Kisuirin" was Makoto Yanagi's disciple.

It was the right choice. The moment he saw that man; the old man knew.

Sagawa Jingi is excellent and pure. He has a pure soul that is completely free of laws and regulations that humans have. With it, Sango will be able to better guide the village. That's why the "Kisuirin" chose him.

Give the "Kisuirin" to the person you have chosen as a partner. If the prospective spouse does not return it, the marriage ceremony is considered to have concluded.

That was the rule of Kisui village and the principle of spiritual people.

The old man has been alive for a long time. Rules and principles are the meaning of his existence. He does not tolerate anyone who violates that. And in his experience, it was always strange objects that violated rules and reason.

"I won't let you get in my way."

Muttering to himself, the old man's eyes opened again. While he meditated, he made a sign with both hands and looked at the sky.

Kudo perturbation method.

The wind began to blow. The trees swayed and a fallen leaf brushed the old man's cheek. Looking at the sky, which had begun to ripple, the old man continued developing his technique.