



"THE EVE OF A SPECIAL WEDDING"

TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

## **CHAPTER 6: DECISIVE BATTLE AT KISUI PALACE**

Breakfast was buffet style.

The dining room itself was small, but the food on display was first class to anyone who looked at it. Seafood salad with lots of crab, marinated salmon, Spanish omelette with cod and avocado, creamed scallops, mussels in wine, fried sea bass, seafood paella, raw oysters, grilled prawns, etc. A beach restaurant. It's a resort, there's a lot of seafood, but it's so luxurious it's hard to believe it's breakfast. Still holding the tray, Yukito looked at the delicacies around him in confusion. He wasn't used to that kind of breakfast. While he stood there stunned, he was suddenly slapped on the back.

"Good morning! Yukito!"

"Good morning."

They were Chatarou and Yako. Yako was well dressed, but Chatarou's hair was disheveled. Feeling relieved, Yukito also returned the greeting.

"Oh, good morning to you both."

"Is this breakfast? It's amazing! It's like a resort!"

"It's extremely luxurious. Will it be profitable...?"

Surely. As Yako said, the dining room was empty, or rather, only Yukito and his friends were there. He wondered what will happen to such a large amount of food.

However, it seemed like Yukito and Yako were the only ones who cared about that. Chatarou quickly placed the plate on the tray and began to chop the food with tongs. Yukito and the others looked at each other for a moment, then laughed at the same time and followed Chatarou.

A few minutes later, the three of them came out to the terrace with a large amount of breakfast on the tray. Ibara was sitting in a seat overlooking the white beach and the blue sea.

"Oh, Ichijou! Good morning!"

Ibara, who was looking at the horizon, looked at Chatarou. Chatarou didn't care and he placed the tray in front of Ibara and settled down. Yako sat next to her. Ibara remained expressionless and narrowed her eyes.

Yukito said in panic.

"This is good?"

Ibara looked at Yukito. He felt that there was a slight smile in those eyes.

"You're already seated, right?"

"That's right. Don't hold back, Yukito."

"You should hold back a little more."

Smiling bitterly at Ibara's blunt words, Yukito placed the tray next to Ibara.

She began to look at the horizon again. Aside from Chatarou who hurriedly started eating breakfast, Yukito and Yako also turned their attention there.

Yako muttered to himself.

"That's amazing, huh?"

Yukito looked into the distance and nodded with a shudder.

A grayish-white wall appeared on the horizon.

The huge wall blocking the sky was a mass of thick clouds. The bluish-white lightning flashing inside can be seen even from a distance. He wondered if the distant roar of the sea is the sound of the angry waves there. However, the blue sky stretched over the hotel and the morning sun was shining brightly.

Grayish-white walls stretch around Gonoshima. Yukito murmured anxiously.

"I guess that's the technique of a spiritual person after all..."

"Of course."

Yukito instinctively straightened up at the voice that suddenly rang.

Ibuki placed the tray next to Yukito and sat down. What's on the plate is like meat, meat, meat, fish, fish, fish, fish. No matter how you look at it, it wasn't a breakfast menu item, but Ibuki casually took his fork out of it and threw it into his mouth along with the sauce that dripped.

Ibara looked at Ibuki and muttered in shock.

"Boss. What does that look like?"

Ibuki was wearing completely different clothes than usual. A bright red Hawaiian shirt, white shorts, and beach sandals. Coupled with his sharp and unyielding face, he looks like the leader of a group of half-grays on vacation.

Ibuki swallowed the meat and grumbled bluntly.

"I borrowed it from the manager."

Apparently, he had not brought a proper change of clothes since he planned to stay for a short period of time. Ibara didn't press any further and simply put the seafood salad in her mouth.

Ibuki said unamused as he looked at the wall of writhing clouds in the distance.

"The old man and the others certainly seem to have a powerful connection. The master is the only user I know who can manipulate nature on such a large scale."

As Yukito released the grilled fish with the tips of his chopsticks, he felt his heart swell.

He had seen the old man in Ninoshima. He just can't seem to connect that gigantic wall of clouds with the old man's cheerful smile. However, he was undoubtedly Gonoshima's strongest connection, and Tsugishima assured him that he would be no match for him even in the East.

That's why they called Kurama last night.

Yukito looked at Ibuki. Ibuki was eating meat in silence.

He had to teach him that. He had to tell Ibuki the information Kurama obtained. To help Jingi, Kurama and Ibuki's cooperation was absolutely necessary. This is not the time to disagree.

Yukito gathered his courage, took the step and opened his mouth.

"Ibuki-san. Um, we contacted Kurama-san yesterday..."

Ibuki looked at Yukito.

Seeing the look in his eyes, Yukito felt an instinctive fear. Feeling prey when a predator appears. Yukito swallowed and continued with a trembling voice.

"It seems that they have discovered the whereabouts of the "Kisuirin". It seems that it is currently kept in the Kisui Palace due to the strategy of a spiritual man."

Ibuki's eyebrows raised. Yukito continued forward with momentum.

"So, um, I explained that Ibuki-san was here, and then Kurama-san said that until I went..."

"Yukito."

There was nothing resembling temperature in the voice that murmured. Yukito's body trembled and he looked down. What little courage he had vanished into a single voice. He couldn't even look at Ibuki's face.

"You guys are free to call him whatever you want. But that has nothing to do with me. I'll do whatever I want. It's okay."



"....."

"If you understand, please answer."

Yukito nodded sheepishly.

He wondered if Ibuki was satisfied with that? Anyway, he left his empty plate where he was and left the terrace.

Once he was out of sight, they let out a collective sigh. Chatarou and Yako also seemed to have stopped breathing, as did Yukito. Yukito threw himself on the table and said in a pitiful voice.

"...Sorry. It didn't work at all."

"No, no! Yukito did a great job!"

"That's right. If it were us, we probably wouldn't have been allowed to say the first word."

Chatarou and Yako comforted Yukito. That agreement was made when they contacted Kurama last night. For Ibuki, Yukito is his younger brother. That's why they thought it would be better for Yukito, who is the one involved, to intervene in the "family affairs".

Ibara let out a small sigh.

"I was hoping that they would join forces to bring back Sagawa Jingi, but it seems that our expectations were naive. Well, enough is enough. Instead..."

Ibara turned her gaze towards the wall of clouds in the distance.

"Will that person really come?"

Of course, there is no one there who can answer that.

The technique of a spiritual man who can even control nature. There's no way it can seem meaningless. Perhaps yesterday's communication with Kurama was captured by the spiritual man. They don't know if the content of the conversation was leaked, but they are sure that they discovered that Yukito and his friends were at the hotel. And help will come from outside.

The barrier to that is probably that wall.

Ibara said as she poked the bacon and lettuce with a fork.

"Get organized. Our purpose is twofold."

She raised the fork in front of her and twirled it, causing the lettuce to flutter.

"One is to rescue Jingi Sagawa. This is our first objective. The other is the discovery and capture of the "Kisuirin". This is a secondary objective, but it is a high priority."

"If we take the "Kisuirin" and return it from Jingi-san's hands to Kisuinomiya Sango, the "contract" between those people will be invalidated."

"But will it really be that convenient? They are the kind of people who forcibly kidnap people one by one. Even if they fight back, aren't they ignored?"

"I have no choice but to trust Tsugishima Sakurainochi. He is the one who knows the most about the customs of spiritual people."

Chatarou groaned and fell silent. Ibara was right. Even if there are risks, you have to believe in something when you act.

Ibara twirled the fork again.

"Back to the topic. It is absolutely necessary to recover the "Kisuirin". Otherwise, Sagawa Jingi will be hunted forever. It is certain that that spiritual person has it, but I don't know where it is hidden. We have to sneak into the Kisui Palace and find it."

"Oh, us? I wonder if he's okay..."

"It's definitely not right. The other side has better connection skills, so it's better to think that they will find it first. That's why..."

Ibara pointed her fork at Yukito.

"Yukito Yanagi and I will make a distraction."

"Hey..."

Yukito is confused by the sudden nomination. Chatarou made an accusatory sound.

"Wait, why Yukito? Taking on such a dangerous role..."

"Because Yukito Yanagi can't use the "hidden technique"."

Hidden technique: It is a trick to hide yourself. Certainly, Yukito cannot use it. In fact, he did not even know that such a technique existed.

"You can use it, so you are suitable for infiltration and search. Yukito Yanagi can't use it, but he is strong. In that case, he is more suitable for the role of being violent and attracting attention."

"Ah..."

"Besides, we're not the only ones acting as a distraction. When we board the ship, the boss will be with us. So we can't say which one is more dangerous. Even if they get caught, there won't be anyone to help them."

Anxiety crossed Chatarou and Yako's expressions. It would be better if Kurama came, but with that wall of clouds blocking them, they don't know what will happen. If Kurama doesn't show up, they'll have to infiltrate Kisui Palace alone.

A shadow of suffering covered Yukito's heart. He looked at the roasted fish that had cooled and muttered to himself.

"Is it okay to ask that person for help?"

Everyone instantly knew who he was referring to.

"No! What are you talking about, Yukito-kun?"

As if involuntarily, Yako raised his hips and screamed loudly. What flashed in his eyes was a look of impatience and concern. Yukito flinched at Yako's flustered expression.

"Yako is right. Forget about her, Yukito."

The usually cheerful Chatarou's deep and low words echoed. The eyes behind the glasses looked accusingly at Yukito.

He understands what they mean. Making a deal with a witch is not something Yukito wants at all. Although it was to help Jingi, it was too high a price to pay to stop being Jingi's disciple.

But...

Yukito stared at the small black box in his hand. Sagaramurudi gave it to him when they separated.

--- If that's what you want, I'll help you right away.

She will never change her words. If Yukito wishes. And what they were about to travel was an infinitely difficult path. Under such circumstances, is it really possible that oneself does not want the help of a powerful connection?

If Kurama appears, that anxiety will disappear. But for now, all he could do was turn his gaze from him to the wall of clouds with deep anxiety.

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"Are you sure you're going?"

Yang's voice had a rather amused tone.

Kurama did not respond, instead he looked towards the enormous cloud rising in front of him. As he approached he realized that it was more of a storm than a cloud. The roaring wind, the rain falling like gravel, and the eerie bluish-white lightning bolts are blocking the view of him.

The two are at Shinoshima Station. The place where Yukito and his friends were sent away, and is the source of Kurama's regret.

Standing on the edge of the white platform, Kurama closed his eyes loosely.

This storm could not have been natural. The vitality is too strong. It must have been the work of someone, more precisely a spiritual being. That old man, known as the Elder, is so powerful that he can stop the sea. If so, it would be possible to cause a storm.

He doesn't know anyone other than Yanagi who has that kind of power.

"This is the end, my farewell. My life is at stake."

"Very well. From now on, it is my responsibility. Not yours."

"That's good. It would be helpful if you could convey that to the others as well. That I have done my duty properly."

Kurama looked at Yang's narrowed eyes suspiciously. Although Kurama didn't trust the man who came from that continent, it was true that he was still useful.

Yang's lips curved into a tight smile as if that thought had been conveyed to him.

"In my hometown there is a saying: 'It's easy to make a lot of money, but it's hard to make friends.' I want to earn the trust of other people on this island. That's all."

"I see."

There seemed to be some credibility in those words. Although he didn't know how he planned to use it, Kurama still bowed deeply to Yang.

"Thank you for your help, Yang-sensei. I hope we continue to unite for the peace and harmony of Ninoshima."

Yang waved a hand.

"Good luck, Kurama-sensei. I hope you come back alive. Trusting the dead won't help you."

Kurama narrowed his eyes, but said nothing.

Wait. The train tracks go on and on, disappearing behind the angry clouds. As if to challenge it, Kurama quickly made a seal and released a spell.

"Man, earth and sky. Between heaven and earth, it is empty and never ends, and it moves until it finally comes out."

Kurama's legs left the platform and he slid through the air. Thus, his body was submerged in the raging storm.

".....!"



The inside of the storm bothered Kurama even more than what he saw from the outside. The roar deafened his ears and the violent wind threatened to blow him away. The raindrops obscured his vision, making it impossible for him to see even a few meters ahead. Inside, the only guide was the train tracks passing below.

Railways connect all the islands. In theory, if they followed this line, they could even reach Nananoshima.

Therefore, Kurama flew just above the sea surface. The high waves hit again and again, soaking Kurama's hunting clothes from head to toe. Even so, Kurama did not close his eyes. He was now jumping into the middle of the enemy's techniques. He had to open his eyes to see what was going to attack him and what kind of glare would appear.

Finally, the end of the line was in sight.

Even in the midst of the storm, the platform stood out in white. Kurama stopped his jutsu and landed on the platform.

The station name board with the words "Gonoshima" written on it continues to sway while exposed to strong winds.

At this moment, a familiar voice rang out above the sound of the wind.

"Master!"

"Kurama-sensei, this way!"

Kurama took a breath and looked towards the voice. On the other side of the platform, Chatarou and Yako stood in the pouring rain and wind.

Without umbrellas, they were soaked, smiling and waving.

"...Chatarou. Yako."

Kurama approached them, raising his wet hair. He asked in a low voice to the two disciples, who were smiling as if their faces were glued together.

"What happened to Yukito-kun?"

The two spoke in unison while smiling.

"Yukito is dead!"

"We kill him!"

"The same thing will happen to you from now on, master!"

At the same time, their upper bodies writhed. With claws growing on all four of their hands, Chatarou and Yako... The illusion that took their form attacked Kurama from above.

Kurama made a seal at lightning speed.

"A fish must not escape from the abyss. A dishonorable ship must not be shown to anyone!"

A flash of light scattered the two approaching shadows. His final screams didn't sound like screams. The sound of the ocean could be heard in the distance, or maybe it was something like that.

Kurama calmed down and observed his surroundings.

His feet are on the platform. However, Kurama had no idea it was real. There are a wide variety of techniques to refine and manipulate life energy. He knew there were many ways to deceive and dazzle people.

Is the owner of this illusion the same one who created the storm?

Or was there another genjutsu lurking within the storm technique?

Kurama stopped thinking at that. He closed his eyes, he made the sign again with his hands and began to draw life energy from his life vein.

A voice sounded as if he wanted to interrupt that.

"Master."

"Master. Kurama-sensei..."

It sounded like it was coming from beneath Kurama's feet, like he was coming from the depths of the earth. At the same time, something grabbed his ankle.

Kurama didn't open his eyes. Illusions are nothing more than things that disturb the mind and deceive the ears and eyes. It is not enough to be afraid if you close your heart and cover your eyes and ears.

"Man, earth and sky!"

Chatarou and Yako's curses continue to echo through the spaces between the murmured spells.

"Why?"

"Why did you bring us to this place?"

"Master, it's cold."

"Master, it's dark."

"It's cold and dark."

"Master, please come with me."

The disciples shouted in anger, but Kurama's heart was not disturbed. He knew for sure that it was just an illusion, that the real Chatarou and Yako were on the real island of Gonoshima.

Kurama took a deep breath and opened his eyes, trying to complete the spell.

At this moment, another voice rang.

"Why, Haruaki...?!"

Kurama's breathing became erratic for a moment when he felt the ugly, distorted right hand that was wrapped around his feet.

The next moment, something wrapped around Kurama's neck. The platform that should have been under his feet disappeared and a tremendous force dragged him into the water. The cold seawater soaked his entire body and his breath foamed out of his mouth. The pale, shimmering surface of the sea was receding rapidly.

There was a muffled female voice in his ear.

"My order is not to allow anyone to enter the island, Kurama Haruaki-sama."

Kurama closed his eyes again as he was dragged to the bottom of the dark ocean.

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Yukito watched anxiously as the sun set and fell beyond the storm wall.

Two days had passed since then. Tonight, the celebration will begin in "Kerukaiden". The mission to rescue Jingi and escape from this island is about to begin.

Despite that, Kurama was nowhere to be seen.

"Master..."

Yako, who had approached him before he realized it, muttered to himself. Yukito looked at his profile. His normally gentle expression was filled with deep anxiety.

It was not surprising. Kurama is his master. The master did not come to the place he said he would come and could not contact him. His concern for his safety was probably even greater than Yukito's.

However, Yako looked at Yukito and forced a smile.

"It's okay, I'm sure he's having trouble getting through that storm. Sensei will be here soon."

Yukito blinked a few times and nodded. Yukito wished he could have said something witty, but the words never came to mind. Yako always cared about him, but he felt bad for not being able to do the same.

Chatarou and Ibara left the room almost at the same time.

"Hey. You're early, both of you."

Chatarou smiled and patted Yukito on the back. Yukito didn't miss his always cheerful manner, but for a moment he turned his gaze to the other side of the clouds. Chatarou is also afraid. He just tries not to show it.

"Come on."

He murmured and started walking, taking the lead.

He walked towards the hotel along the dock that leads to the floating cabin. Ibuki was already waiting on the beach at sunset. Instead of wearing a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, he was wearing his usual black suit. He was standing with his arms crossed, but he wasn't looking at Yukito or the others.

The person he is looking at is a vague looking man standing by the beach. A spiritual man.

If he remembers correctly, I think his name was Taro. He was the spiritual man who took Yukito and his friends to the Kisui village that day.

Employees like them were always monitoring Yukito's movements. He never gets in his way or tries to cause him any harm. But they were always there.

"I guess they'll keep an eye on us and let us know if anything happens. They're his henchmen."

Ibuki had said that at some point. Yukito thought that was true. They were enemies. And Yukito learned that there are some types of enemies that won't attack you.

"Boss. Everything ready."

Ibara called out to Ibuki, who was looking at the spiritual man. Still, Ibuki didn't turn around. Instead, he approached the spiritual man and his footsteps crunched on the sand.

Yukito and the others looked at each other.

Ibuki had also been informed of the details of the plan: Yukito and Ibara would act as a distraction, and Chatarou and Yako would take the opportunity to infiltrate. Ibuki agreed and announced that he would also participate in the detour, but he did not say anything about specific arrangements. There's no point in talking unless they get to Kisui Village first, but...

"Hey."

Ibuki spoke to Taro and Taro responded politely.

"What's up, customer?"

"Give me your car keys."

A hint of confusion appeared on Taro's impassive expression.

"The car is property of the hotel."

"I know. But lend it to me. I need it."

Taro let his gaze wander from him. He is certain that no client has ever made such an unreasonable request. When Taro realized that there was no help around him, he said in a weak voice.

"If you need help, please contact us..."

"My job is to attack your village. Do you plan to help me with that? No problem, just lend it to me."

When Taro opened his mouth, Ibuki slowly took out a gun from his pocket and pointed the barrel at him.

A minute later, Ibuki was listening to Yukito's furious protests as he inserted the car key into the tuk-tuk's key cylinder.

"It's a disaster! Why did you do that?! Is it a robbery?!"

Frowning in annoyance, Ibuki started the engine and grabbed the steering wheel.

"They kidnapped Jingi and tried to imprison you. There's no point in being polite to them."

"It's not because of that...!"

"If you have any complaints, get out of the car. You're going to walk to town."

Yukito gritted his teeth and closed his mouth.

Ibuki stepped on the accelerator.

The tuk-tuk jumped and began to run along the rugged roads of the southern country. Chatarou and Yako clung to the side bar in panic. While doing so, Chatarou asked Ibara.

"Oh, is your boss always like this...?"

"Well, mostly."

Ibara's voice was full of resignation.

The tuk-tuk moved at high speed through the trees and along the road that runs along the coast. It was already dusk and a wall of thick white clouds still separated the sky from the sea. Until the crescent moon cloak hid everything, Yukito watched the scene with a slight hope that Kurama would appear.

Finally, twice as fast as when Taro was driving, the tuk-tuk reached Kisui village.

The town was bright and deserted. There was a large path running through the center, and on either side were many bonfires that illuminated the area in orange, but the villagers who were supposed to have lit them were nowhere to be seen.

Parking the tuk-tuk on its side, Ibuki jumped out of the car first. His eyes moved left and right, his eyes alert. After that, Ibara got out of the car, followed by Yukito, Chatarou, and Yako.

"There is nobody here?"

Ibuki looked at Chatarou who muttered in a low voice.

"We will split up here. You guys will infiltrate. Me, Ibara and Yukito will go from the front."

"Hey..."

Ibuki continued to stare coldly at Chatarou, who made a confused sound. Chatarou swallowed and nodded deeply.

"Oh, I get it!"

"Please be careful."

Ibuki snorted at Yako's words and took a step forward.

They then looked at Yukito and Ibara. Chatarou lightly patted Yukito on the shoulder, frowning worriedly.

"Be careful, Yukito. And Ichijou too."

"Uh, yes. That too..."

"At best, they won't find me."

"So how to say it!"

After saying that angrily, Chatarou laughed. That laugh infected Yako and then Yukito. And also Ibara. Her mouth curved into something resembling a smile, and Chatarou smiled at her, as if to give her something.

Then, the two looked at each other, clasped their hands, and shouted at the same time.

"Man, earth and sky! I can see this, but I can't see it, so I'll give it a name and call it Yi!"

A sudden gust of wind enveloped Chatarou and Yako. The next moment, they were nowhere to be seen, as if they had been blown away by the wind.

"Come on."



Ibuki called to Yukito who was looking around and continued forward. Yukito began to walk alongside Ibara.

Yukito stared at the crackling bonfire as he walked. The bonfires that illuminated the main street, however, did not illuminate the gaps between the houses. Something could be lurking in the shadows. Spiritual beings, or perhaps they were connected to them? Every time Yukito remembered the image of them chasing him across the ocean, he felt his arms tremble. The Kisui Palace looked like a huge wall in the dark. A torch was tied to the top of the door, but it was as expected.

There was no one there. Without hesitation, Ibuki walked up the stone steps and through the door. Ibara and Yukito did the same.

After taking a few steps through the entrance hall, a sharp metallic sound echoed from behind.

Yukito instinctively turned around. An iron-barred door blocked his escape route. However, Yukito was the only one with a scared expression on his face. Both Ibuki and Ibara walked down the hallway with cold faces and finally suddenly stopped at the same time.

Before he knew it, two men were standing in the center of the hallway.

They were two contrasting people. One was a large, tanned, muscular man, with almost no expression on his face. The other is a handsome man, with light skin, with a smile on his thin lips.

Both spirits seemed familiar.

A light-skinned man named Josei stepped forward and bowed respectfully.

"We have been waiting for you, Yukito Yanagi, Ibara Ichijou and Aka Ibuki. By order of my master, Sango Kisuinomiya, I will guide you from here."

"Which one is the old one?"

Ibuki asked absently. Josei bowed his head.

"None of us are old. The one here is Uzura, and I..."

"If you're not the old man, you don't have to say your name. He's the only one I don't trust."

Ibuki didn't want to say anything else. He started walking slowly again. Josei looked at him suspiciously and raised a hand to stop him.

"Please wait, Ibuki-san."

With a gesture as natural as taking out a wallet in a store, Ibuki took the gun out of his pocket, took aim, and pulled the trigger. The water jug across the hall shattered and a light stream of blood flowed from Josei's cheek.

In an instant, the emotion disappeared from Josei's well-groomed face.

Ibuki looked at him amused and muttered to himself.

"There are still more "congratulations". Feel free to accept them."

"Uzura!"

At the same time as Josei's shout, Uzura slammed both fists. As if in response, Ibara put on her gauntlets and spirits with weapons in their hands emerged from the hallways everywhere.

Yukito gulped. He didn't expect it to start so quickly. However, he remembered that they didn't come there to argue. They came to rescue Jingi by force, so he also made a seal.

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It is said that his ancestor was a snake that lived in the sea.

Since ancient times, a pair of twin dragons have lived on Ayaka Island. The twin dragons, who rule water and fire, have come into conflict with each other and coexisted, causing life energy to flow and nourishing trees, fish, insects and beasts. The circulating life force harmonizes all things and eventually returns to the life line. The lives congratulated the twin dragons who brought them there, and many followers were born to the great twin dragons. The snake belonged to one of them, the water dragon.

He lived near Gonoshima. One day, a human man appeared there. The snake, who did not know anyone with a will other than herself, became interested in the man and finally fell in love with him. Snakes and humans mixed and gave rise to a clan. Those who live between land and sea: spiritual people.

"That is why we have built our temple here. As children of our mother, the Great Sea Serpent, and our father, human, we have built a shrine of shining land and deep water, the Kisui Palace."

"Whatever you say. So, they're going to push me into deep waters from now on?"

Trapped in a spiral, Jingi looked down at the sea far below and felt a pang of sadness.

The place where Jingi and the Elder were located was near the zenith of Kisui Palace, in a place called "Kerukaido". Of all the sanctuaries submerged in the sea, this tower was the one that went furthest into the sea. A long, narrow bridge crosses the center of the donut-shaped square, and the pitch-black ocean stretches below. Countless bonfires were lit around them, and spirits swayed silently beneath them. Only the low rhythm of the fishing drum could be heard, mixing with the sound of the waves.

The old man looked at Jingi's face and smiled.

"If you wish, Jingi-sama, you can play underwater. You will be able to do so."

"What I want is to untie this rope, return to Ninoshima and have fun with my drinking friends."

Despite the biting tone of his words, the old man's soft smile did not falter. He stroked his white beard and nodded slowly.

"Your wish will come true. Once the congratulations are over, there is no need to tie Jingi-sama up anymore. You can swim to Ninoshima at any time. Sango-sama doesn't like alcohol, but... if Jingi-sama wishes, she will join you for a drink in the evening."

"How am I supposed to drink it inside that guy's belly?"

"You should drink the sake that Sango-sama drank."

The old man laughed, but it didn't seem like a joke.

Suddenly, the rhythm of the fishing drum stopped.

On the other side of the bridge, Sango appeared dressed in white. A pure white cotton hat shines faintly in the light of the full moon.

It was hard to tell what her expression was because she had her head down, but her red lips seemed to be smiling.

Jingi, on the other hand, was wearing a black-crested haori and hakama, but he was tied so tightly that he looked completely tattered compared to his girlfriend. Still, since the only people in the audience were the spiritual people, no one but Jingi cared.

"Now then, Jingi-sama. Go ahead."

The old man turned around and muttered a little.

The center of the bridge is a round pedestal. The idea is for the couple to meet there. He really didn't want to think about what would happen there. Jingi turned his head and made a final plea to the old man behind him.

"Hey, Elder. I don't want to die yet."

"We will not die. We will become one, Jingi-sama."

"So that means I'm going to die! It's going to eat me, right?"

Stroking his white beard, the old man shook his head pitifully.

"It seems like you're misunderstanding something, Jingi-sama. You're not going to be eaten... well, something like that may turn out along the way. Your existence won't disappear."

Pushed from behind, Jingi was forced to take another step forward. Likewise, Sango approached. Jingi let out a strained voice.

"You mean you can live inside her belly? Are you serious?"

"I'm serious. If her husband dies after this blessing, how will the head of Kisui Palace be able to have a child? Sango-sama's father is still alive. In her mother's body. Yatsuchi-sama said that she and her husband live happily together."

"Did you ever talk to that father? After Sango was born?"

After a moment of silence, the old man muttered to himself.

"No. Now that I think about it, never."

"No! I'm going home! Please let me go home!"

Jingi turned his head and shouted. Still, his legs continued to move forward on their own. As if some kind of magic had been applied to him, he couldn't move freely except from the neck up.

The old man murmured in admiration.

"Hmm. I'm really impressed with how serious your death will be, Jingi-sama. You have a pure soul, free of things like shame or outside rumors."

"Don't praise that!"

"As expected, being chosen by the "Kisuirin" is all that is needed. That is to find someone suitable to be the husband of the head of the Kisui Palace. That is what it means to be you."

At that moment, an idea flashed through Jingi's head.

No, in fact, from the moment he heard the truth about those squama, he had doubts in his heart. That is...

"No way! You guys came right after I sold that squama?! Can such a convenient coincidence happen?! You must have framed me!"

The old man blinked once.

His eyes alternated between seeing Jingi's desperate face and Sango slowly approaching from the distance. Jingi did not miss that the same light that was in her own heart shone there.

"Who told you to go to Ninoshima at that time?! When I let go of the squama, who was it that told you to go ahead with the wedding?"

"It was Sango-sama. She was ready."

"Then it's her doing! She set it up!"

Jingi realized that the old man was not involved in the plan. That was good news. This old man was stubborn, cold, and inorganic, but Jingi knew that he was a stickler for the rules. If it turns out that it was Sango's trick that caused the "Kisuirin" to no longer be Jingi's, then the old man might reconsider the legitimacy of this marriage.

"Give the "Kisuirin" to the couple you meet for the first time. Unless the potential couple returns it, we will consider the marriage ceremony to be completed."

The old man said foolishly. After blinking a few times, his pupils opened horizontally. Like the eyes of a frog.

"No one has ever introduced any kind of arbitrariness into it. Hmm..."

"That's right! Is that true?! Isn't that your rule?"

They were already a few meters from Sango. Coral eyes peered out from under the cotton hat. Her pale pink eyes were redder than usual and seemed to shine in a bewitching way.

The old man was silent for a while and then nodded.

"You didn't return the "Kisuirin". That's all, Jingi-sama. Even if Sango-sama was involved in that, there is no clause in the rules that prohibits it."

And all of Jingi's hope vanished.

He finally reached the central pedestal. Sango had a shy smile on her face, like a bride who has been waiting for this moment. Jingi's heart pounded. Out of fear, of course.

"Tonight, under this moon. We will be a couple forever. Dear Jingi-sama."

Sango slowly extended her hand towards Jingi and caressed his stiff cheek. On her hands were pale blue scales and unusually long nails. Her pink lips parted and a forked tongue appeared. The human-shaped spot on the snake's belly flickered in his mind, and Jingi imagined his own face pressed against it.

Unable to bear it, Jingi screamed.

"Yukito! What are you doing? Help me quickly! Your master will be eaten!"

He didn't expect a response to his screams of fear.

However, there was a response. A different roar and vibrations to the rhythm of the fishing drum shook the foundation of the "Kerukaido".

Sango lost her balance and almost fell into the sea, but immediately caught herself. Her face showed confusion and anger, like that of a bride whose wedding is interrupted.

"What is happening, Elder?"

The old man craned his neck and looked out to sea. That was also reflected in Jingi's vision. A part of the Kisui Palace wall that jutted into the sea was completely destroyed, emitting black smoke.

The old man said calmly.

"You are a bother."

Sango wrinkled her nose. If she weren't noble, she would have clicked her tongue. Instead, Sango ordered sharply.

"Then delete them."

"As orders."

With his hands tied behind his back, the old man stepped into the air as naturally as if he were descending the stairs.

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

At the same time as Ibara's voice, multiple thunderclaps were heard.

She invaded the room at the speed of light. About five spiritual beings were struck by the lightning, they convulsed and fell to the ground, unable to move. Yukito was worried that they weren't dead, but he crossed his fingers and completed the technique.

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

This time it was not necessary to generate water from scratch. There was plenty of water in the numerous jugs placed there.

The water rose like well-kneaded clay and destroyed the spirits that were trying to surround Yukito and his friends. They are not closely related, but with a hoe, sickle or hammer in hand, they are enough to pose a threat.

There were about ten spirits enveloped in a body of water. Ibara immediately used a lightning technique. The spiritual beings who were electrocuted by the water bounced like fish thrown onto the shore and then floated in the water like fish. Yukito quickly spat them out of the water, trying to at least prevent them from drowning.

On the other hand, Ibuki was engaged in a fierce battle with two courtiers.

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

With a unique sounding spell, countless water snakes emerged from under Josei's feet and attacked Ibuki. Ibuki quickly lowered his gun and pulled the trigger.



A single bullet meant nothing to a swarm of water snakes. Unless that bullet is imbued with witchcraft.

The moment the bullet came into contact with a piece of water, it exploded, dispersing a shock wave. The air in the room trembled and the pure blue technique turned into a stream of water that soaked the place. Later, even Josei himself stepped on the tatara.

"The gutter!"

Uzura jumped towards him, trying to get in front of him.

The fists of both hands were black and hard. As if by some kind of magic, he shook his obsidian-like fist and the hall shook again, causing a huge crack to appear on the stone floor. Ibuki avoided it just in time, clicked his tongue loudly and backed away even further, releasing three consecutive shots.

Two shots veered off course from him and landed on the wall and ceiling, and the other shot was deflected by Uzura's fist. Uzura pursed his lips tightly, moving even closer to Ibuki.

"Hmph."

Ibuki snorted mockingly.

The bullets embedded in the walls and ceiling exploded and returned with a bright light. It turned into multiple beams of light, traveling from the walls and ceiling to the muzzle of the gun and crashing into the back of Uzura, who was on its way. Uzura, who had stumbled forward, crashed into the water jug as if he were flip-flopping, breaking it into pieces.

"Amazing..."

Forgetting the situation, Yukito admired him. Both Josei and Uzura should be difficult opponents. He also remembered that Ibara was going through a difficult time with Sango. However, Ibuki seemed to be the only one taking control of them.

"Yukito! Don't look away!"

"Oh, I'm sorry!"

Scolded by Ibara, Yukito made the seal again. The spirits entered the room one after another, trampling the unconscious allies and trying to capture Yukito and his friends.

"If you are brave, you will be killed; if you are not brave, you will live!"

Along with the technique, Ibara's body glowed faintly. Even the glove on her right arm emitted a silver glow, and she punched, kicked, and threw the spirits that attacked in groups at a speed that could not be seen. All Yukito could do was manipulate the water and keep the enemy away as much as possible.

(I have to go up...!)

As much as he could, Yukito searched for a way to the upper floor. Jingi should be giving a congratulatory speech in "Kerukaido" right now. Get there and regain custody. Jingi himself is a powerful connection, so, if he could break the seal caused by the cursed tool, his chances of success would increase.

A loud shot was heard.

Surprised, he looked and saw a huge hole in the hallway wall. Beyond the black smoke, he could see the night sky filled with stars. And below he saw Josei, covered in soot, kneeling.

"It's the end."

Ibuki said it coldly and loaded the bullet. Josei looked at him expressionlessly.

At this moment, a voice echoed from a hole in the hallway.

"It was foolish of me to leave it to the brats."

An old man appeared from the hole, as if he was passing through the air.

It's the Elder.

With his hands tied behind his back, the old man descended through the air step by step. He said quietly, not paying attention to the kneeling Josei.

"I'll take care of this guest. Find the other rats and kill them."

"Yes."

"As orders."

Uzura and Josei stood up and turned to Yukito and the others. That alone made Yukito's body stiffen, and Ibara held the glove up to them.

However, with a sigh, the old man reprimanded his subordinates.

"How stupid are you brats? I'm not talking about them; I'm talking about the rats that crawl underground."

Uzura and Josei looked at each other and then started running at the same time. At the side of the hall, they jumped to the place where the spirits came out and disappeared.

Ibuki shouted.

"Yukito, Ibara, go after them! Help the children of Kaizumi Shrine!"

".....!"

A moment later, Yukito and his friends also realized that. The old man pointed to Chatarou and Yako who were hiding. If Josei and the others found them, they would not hesitate to "get rid of them".

That's all they have to stop them.

"Follow me!"

Ibara ran towards the hallway where the pure blue sky was. She punched the ghost that came out of there and then jumped over the area where he fell unconscious and continued forward. Yukito followed her, gritting his teeth.

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Chatarou and Yako were walking through a dark, damp hallway.

Due to the effects of the technique, they can recognize the appearances of others. But they can't make any sound. The spell won't be broken by just making a sound, but if a voice comes out of nowhere, the people present will probably wonder what it is. And spiritual men were everywhere. They went back and forth from one place to another carrying dishes, musical instruments or tools that they do not understand, such as hoes, sickles and hammers. Each time, Chatarou and Yako had to hold their breath and hide behind the scenes to avoid being hit by them.

(So where is what we're looking for?)

In an area where the number of people coming and going had become scarce, he wrote it down in his notebook instead of using his voice and showed it to Yako.

At night, he put his serious face and take notes the same way.

(There is no way for me to know.)

That's how it is. They've only been to Kisui Palace once and they don't even know what's there. So there's no way to know.

But they could make a guess.

Chatarou and Yako moved down the hallway. Towards the side where there are no people.

He had heard from Yukito what the "Kisuirin" was. It appears to be a shiny gemstone the size of a chicken egg.

If it is a treasure like that, it should be kept somewhere. A safe or treasure chest. It is probably located in a particularly secluded location within the Kisui Palace. He doesn't know if they distrusted thieves, but he was sure they kept important things in hard-to-reach places.

However, he had no idea how to get to such a place. Neither of them had yet been taught how to pick locks or find hidden places.

(If the master were here, there might have been a different method.)

Chatarou thought that as he looked at Yako who was walking next to him. Yako was also looking at Chatarou with the same expression on his face. Even without notes, they can communicate to that point.

Kurama Haruaki. Chatarou and Yako's master. If only he were there...

But he's not there right now. Although he said he would come, he never showed up until the day they finally carried out the mission.

Chatarou didn't have any deep worries about that. Although Kurama Haruaki was an extremely good connection, there were some areas where he lacked. Maybe he got lost somewhere, or maybe he just accidentally set the time wrong. Chatarou had no idea that something had happened to him. However, it may happen that he appears suddenly after everything is finished.

The two continued forward. Towards the unpopular side.

(...Yako.)

(What?)

(Do you know where we come from?)

Yako shook his head with a dull expression on his face.

Apparently he got lost. As a result of moving from the least popular aisle to the least popular, they have completely lost their bearings. A dimly lit, board-lined hallway stretches on and on. There was a wall to the left and a row of tatami rooms to the right, but they looked like they hadn't been used for a while. It smelled of damp tatami mats and wet sliding doors.

However, Chatarou didn't think it was that bad. He was an optimistic boy. First of all, if you don't even know where your destination is, there is no way you can get lost. Search blindly. That was all the two of them could do now.

At this moment, Yako stopped and pulled Chatarou's sleeve.

(Please watch.)

Chatarou looked towards the door, indicated by a note and a finger.

There was a heavy door on the left wall. The appearance is clearly different from other doors. Above all, carved into its surface was a pattern that Chatarou and his friends were familiar with. Two dragons chasing each other. It is the patron saint of the twin dragon that is enshrined at the Kaizumi Shrine where they serve.

It seemed like an important place.

And there must be something important in important places.

Chatarou and Yako nodded and tried to open the door together. At first, it didn't move when they pulled, so they both put their weight on it and pushed as hard as they could. Then, the door moved slightly with a creaking sound. Chatarou's face turned bright red and he continued pushing, finally, there was a space big enough for a person to pass through. Chatarou passed first, then Yako.

Inside was a staircase leading down.

He tried to close the door, but no matter how hard he pulled on it, it wouldn't budge. Finally, the two gave up. If someone could see the door ajar, they might discover that there had been a robbery, but they would open it anyway when they returned. They thought they could get in quickly and return quickly.

They both fell. Poom. Poom.

"That's a long staircase."

Chatarou grumbled loudly. In the dim light, he could see that Yako was looking accusingly at Chatarou.

"It's okay. No matter how you look at it, there is no one here."

"...Well, that's right."

Reluctantly, Yako admitted. The stairs were long and dark and there was no sign of anyone. If someone is coming from above or below, they could hear their footsteps.

Finally, a low vibration and the sound of an explosion came from above.

Chatarou couldn't help but look up. He was probably initiated by Ibuki and others. To get Jingi back or to buy time until Chatarou and his friends find the "Kisuirin".

Chatarou muttered to himself as he walked down the stairs.

"Yukito, are you okay?"

He was worried. There was something about Yukito that he couldn't leave alone. They assume he has talent. Probably more than Chatarou and Yako. However, his new friend was quiet, reserved, and seemed unfit for battle. Even at that very moment, his spiritual connections can corner him.

By saying that, Yako also showed that he was of the same opinion. He silently looked towards the stairs and said:

"Let's hurry up."

If they can find the "Kisuirin" and return it as quickly as possible, the battle will be over. Jingi will be back. And Chatarou and his friends will be able to return to Ninoshima without missing anyone. They put their hands on the wall and began to descend quickly.

Finally, the wall he touched began to turn into a rocky surface. The ground beneath their feet began to feel rough, as if they had been carved directly from stone.

The sensation suddenly changed to something soft.

When he looked down, he saw that the stairs had ended. The straight path is lined with wet white sand. The smell of the ocean became even stronger and the drops falling from above ran down his cheeks and into his mouth. It was salty.

"Salty! Is that sea water?"

When Chatarou said that, Yako frowned suspiciously.

"That can't be true. Because... no..."

He murmured into his mouth and looked up. The sheared rock ceiling was wet and shiny.

The two went down the stairs. During that time, it never folded. He wasn't sure of the direction, but if those were stairs leading to the sea, wouldn't that mean they were at the bottom of the sea? Finally, his prediction came true.

At the end of the hallway was a huge dome. There was a blanket of white sand under their feet, and the curved walls and ceiling were filled with black sea water. The white bellies of the schools of fast-swimming fish reflect the light emitted from inside the dome.

The two watched the fantastic scene with their mouths wide open.

"Is this... a jutsu?"

"Yes, I guess. But at least..."

Yako looked around and said without hiding his disappointment.

"It doesn't seem like a hidden treasure. What we want isn't here."

"....."

Still, Chatarou did not give up and walked towards the center of the dome, taking quick steps. There may be shiny squama's buried somewhere in this sand. At that moment, he heard a voice from behind.

"The clear water mesh is strong and the exorcism is fast!"

Something like a wind that could not be touched passed through Chatarou's body. The moment Chatarou stepped on the tatara and looked back, he realized that his and Yako's hidden form had dissolved.



Then, behind them, at the entrance to the dome, were two expressionless spirits standing.

"Yako!"

At the same time as he let out a cry of alarm, a large spirit man rushed forward, kicking up sand. On the other hand, the little spirit man, Josei, pointed his index finger at Chatarou and muttered a spell. Intuitively thinking it was a trick, Chatarou turned his body around and threw himself onto the sand. Ultra-high pressure water brushed against Chatarou's arm. He winced at the pain, which felt like fever, but he still made the seals and perfected his technique.

"Those who do not lose their place are already gone, and those who do not die are already gone!"

An armor of strong winds swirled around Yako. The great spirit man paused for a moment. At this moment, Yako took out a fire-breathing bamboo and completed the spell.

"Between heaven and earth, it is like a veil!"

Flames erupted from the bamboo tube, threatening to burn the great spiritual man, but he was saved. Both hardened fists waved rapidly, dispersing the flames. With sullen lips, the great spirit man looked at Yako and then at Chatarou.

Chatarou shouted as he backed away.

"Th-these guys are the palace priests! What are we going to do, Yako?!"

"H-how is this..."

Murmuring into his mouth, Yako also took a step back. According to Ibara's analysis, the priests are stronger than Ibara. And Ibara is stronger than Chatarou and Yako. With two opponents like that, there was no way they could win.

He gritted his teeth. Josei raised his finger again. Could he avoid it next time? To what extent can it be avoided? The image of his body being pierced by that high-pressure water and the white sand stained with blood flashed through his mind.

"Man, earth and sky, it's still like drawing a bow!"

A spell echoed further from behind the palace officials.

The two palace priests narrowly avoided the lightning.

Two more people burst in from the entrance to the dome. They were Ibara and Yukito. When they saw Chatarou and Yako cornered, they immediately used their techniques.

"A fish must not escape from the abyss. A dishonorable vessel must not be shown to anyone!"

"Where the teacher is, there will be thorns!"

A spreading water net and a glowing glove attacked the two palace leaders. When Josei raised his hand, the water nets stopped in the air and formed a shape that linked them together. Meanwhile, Ibara and the great spirit man began to engage in a striking hand-to-hand combat. The black and silver fists collided, sending sparks into the humid air.

Chatarou and Yako took a deep breath and then signaled to join the battle.

(This might work...!)

There's nothing just the two of them can do. But there are four people. Ibara is a great connection and Yukito's talent is obvious. If they can somehow outwit the palace chief, they could reverse the unfavorable war situation.

A roar that shook the ocean floor shattered that faint hope.

Ekkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk...

The sound was so loud that the entire dome vibrated. It's as if the sea itself is screaming.

The first to react were the priests. They backed up to the wall of the dome, looked up at the same time, and knelt there.

Josei said quietly.

"Our mistress is angry. A terrestrial creature desecrated her sleeping place without permission."

The great spiritual man also murmured in a low voice.

"It seems that Yatsuchi-sama will swallow them all directly."

Before Chatarou could understand the meaning of those words, the walls of the dome collapsed and seawater entered.

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The bullet he fired quickly slowed down in the air and then stopped completely.

The old man untied his hands behind his back and pinched the bullet floating in front of him between his index finger and thumb. His eyes were open horizontally like a frog's as he stared at him.

"Are you putting a curse on a lead ball? You're a monster."

"I don't want you to tell me anything."

Ibuki muttered as if he was going to vomit and pulled the trigger even harder. One shot, two shots, three shots, four shots. They all veered away from the old man and hit the walls, ceiling, and floor where they had been aiming all along.

Ibuki crossed his fingers over the barrel of his gun and muttered to himself.

"Man, earth and sky. He who overcomes sharpness and softens the light is called Gendo."

The four bullet holes in the wall, ceiling, and floor began to glow brightly. Red, like hell fire. The four bullets that resonated with each other created a tetrahedron with the old man in the center, and the inside of the tetrahedron was consumed by flames.

Finally, the effect of the technique ceased and the hellfire barrier suddenly disappeared.

What was left inside was not the charred corpse of the old man, but a floating mass of water.

There was a crash and the mass of water fell and broke on the ground. When the old man came out from inside, he wasn't even wet. He muttered to himself.

"What a waste of jutsu and bullets."

A sarcastic smile appeared on Ibuki's lips. He shook the gun, which was still smoking, and put it in his pocket.

"So it seems."

Then Ibuki crossed his arms.

In fact, a gun that shoots cursed bullets is not Ibuki's greatest strength. That weapon was designed so that even those who cannot use magic can fight against the Aramitama. If used by someone who is connected to it, it can become a more powerful method of attack than one who is not. However, against truly powerful enemies, Ibuki always used other methods.

And the old man is one of the truly powerful enemies.

"Shimeidaizan."

Ibuki muttered the trigger words and looked at the old man.

Life flows to him from his folded arms. The life force that circulates through all things and forms all things. It is a forbidden technique to stagnate it within him, consume it and use it.

The old man's white eyebrows raised.

"A warrior is martial. War is anger. Victory is given, and people and servants are arrogant. The ultimate evil."

Life flowed into Ibuki's body. Life fills the blood vessels, nerves, muscles and even the bone marrow. But it never goes out. The vital energy that circulates at high speed within the body heats up every time it spins. The heat of battle, the heat of anger, the heat of hate.

His right arm became enlarged and distorted in an ugly way. An eye appeared on the back of his hand. Cloudy eyes are the symbol of the Aramitama. Ibuki knows what he's looking for. Because those are his own eyes. Enemies, more enemies, enemies to destroy!

"Oooooooooooooooooohhh!"

A roar came from Ibuki's throat. The eyes that opened in his demonized right hand looked at the old man and at the same time he kicked the ground.

It thinned out at the same speed as the hurricane and hit his claws. For the first time, the old man took defensive measures. Using his right arm, he waved the claws that came down from above, twisting and retreating. Ibuki chased after him. Vertically, horizontally, diagonally. The old man continued to circle the hall, avoiding attacks that could instantly tear a person's body apart.

He murmured.

"I wonder if that man's disciple is a user of evil methods."

The emotionless tweets further intensified the heat circulating. Anger and hatred form the basis of Ibuki's evil law. That's because vitality is influenced by people's emotions. The bad emotions that gave rise to the Aramitama were Ibuki's current weapon.

The two walked through the square, as if dancing the dance of death. Skillfully dodging the rolling spiritual beings, the Elder withdrew Ibuki's attack with just a bit of strength. Behind his raging emotions, Ibuki clicked his tongue. If that continues, the truth will not be revealed. Then...

Ibuki clenched his huge right fist and hit the old man from the front.

"Hmm."

The old man moved his left arm, crossed it with his right arm and took it calmly.

The small body flew out, flying across the hallway like a bullet and hitting the opposite wall. Looking beyond the thick cloud of dust, Ibuki jumped and ducked into the hole in the wall where the old man had appeared. His physical abilities, which had been strengthened to the extreme by the evil demonic transformation method, could easily pass through holes, climb rock walls, and jump over the towers of the Kisui Palace.

He climbed to the roof at the zenith and sharpened his vision.

(A semicircular plaza with a hollow interior near the zenith of Kisui Shrine. A bridge is built and in the center is Daiba.)

The scene was exactly as described in Tsugishima's diary.

Under the full moon, there were two figures on the platform in the center of the bridge. One is white and the other is a crested hakama. However, the hakama is tied tightly. His frightened eyes met those of Ibuki, who had turned into a demon.

Those eyes were more familiar to him than anyone else's.

"Brother?! Aka-nii! This way! This way! Please help me quickly!"

Without shame or guilt, Jingi screamed. The woman in pure white was looking at Ibuki with terrifying eyes. Maybe that's Sango from Kisui Palace.

Instead of responding, Ibuki kicked the ceiling and landed in the hallway. Several spirits got in the way and tried to stop Ibuki, but most of them were impressed and ended up falling from the "Kerukaiden" into the sea.

Sango hid Jingi behind her back, no doubt watching Ibuki. Ibuki didn't really care. He clenched his right fist and slowly approached him.

"Get out of the way."

Sango stubbornly insisted, even though her handsome face was filled with fear.

"This is my partner. I won't let you take him anywhere!"

A fierce smile appeared on Ibuki's demonized face.

"During this period, the victim, he is a great princess and my younger brother. That's why I will take him home."

Saying that, Ibuki extended his huge right hand towards Jingi.

At that moment, a cold sensation ran down his back.

It was his intuition as a fighter that made him jump. Half a moment later, the old man's heel hit the bridge. The impact was so strong that the narrow bridge tilted and shook. If Ibuki's skull had been taken seriously, it would have shattered like a grenade.

Standing on one leg like a crane, the old man looked up.

"Get away, you bastard. I won't let you touch my master with even a single finger."

He let out a low sound and then took a big step forward.

He blocked the blow of the left fist with his demonized right hand. The impact resonated to the bones. Almost at the same time, a roundhouse kick to the side of his head. Low and barely elusive. He avoided it by hitting the palm of his hand on his chin and twisting his neck. However, he grabbed the hair on the back of his neck and head-butted his in the nose.

"Guh...!"

When he reached out to crush Ibuki's head, the old man let go of Ibuki's hair and took a half step back to avoid him. A split second later, he intervened and threw a punch at his throat. Ibuki backed away and evaded. However, the old man did not leave, and no matter how much he retreated, the other party advanced. A series of blows from a fist to the sulcus, chest and solar plexus, and only the first blow was blocked.

If he had not become a demon, he would have penetrated the body as he was. Ibuki jumped further back, spitting out blood.

Before he knew it, Jingi and Sango were far away. Ibuki was breathing heavily at the foot of the bridge, while the old man wasn't even breaking a sweat. His bright eyes stared at Ibuki.

"If the disciple is like this, Yanagi will not be able to rest among the dead."

Ibuki gritted his teeth and roughly wiped the blood from his nose with his left hand.

"Shut up. My master has nothing to do with this."

"Stop laughing. A disciple's immaturity is a shame for a master. Don't you even understand that kind of logic?"

Then, the old man spread his legs wide and placed his right fist on his hip.

"I will ask Yanagi to train you again... in the afterlife."

Cold sweat ran down Ibuki's spine again.

A premonition of death enveloped his entire body. Although he is a powerful spell caster, his fighting style appears to be hand-to-hand. And the blow that will be unleashed from now on will be the strongest yet.

If he does not receive it, he will die.

That fact did not resonate as fear. Rage and hatred colored the rotating vitality. It only served to increase it.

The reason why he resorted to evil methods was to gain more power, to defeat the enemy. To never fall to the ground again. Like a wild god, with the power to destroy even a fire dragon.

He had no intention of dying in a place like that, against such an old man.

He crossed his demonized right arm with his human left arm. Yanagi style hand seal. The Elder specializes in hand-to-hand combat, but Ibuki also combines it with techniques. After the big move, there is a story about what would have happened if he had been alive when the counterattack was decided.

Seeing Ibuki's determination, the old man narrowed his eyes.



He was blowing an especially strong sea breeze.

His fists contain enough power to distort the providence that distorts life around him. He thought he would come. Holding his breath, Ibuki waited.

And...

"....."

Nothing happened.

The distorted life force gradually decreased. The old man abandoned his posture and clasped his hands behind his back.

Ibuki suspected. The old man's expression turned gloomy. Frowning white, he turned his head and looked at the distant horizon.

"Is he also Yanagi's disciple?"

Ibuki finally realized that from the old man's words.

The wall of clouds that stood like a long wall disappeared and the night sky and sea spread across his field of vision.

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Even when seawater entered the dome, Yukito was able to suppress his panic.

He was used to water; Not that he liked it, but he was used to it. For a long time he often dreamed that he was floating peacefully at the bottom of the water. His master's belief is that this is because Yukito has a nature suitable for water. Those who have the talent to manipulate life force have their own attributes. In Yukito's case, it's water.

However, that is not a dream but a reality. The seawater that submerged him up to the crown of his head was freezing and the breath he exhaled turned into bubbles. If you do that for five minutes, you'll have a nice drowned corpse.

The next moment he took a deep breath, the entire dome filled with seawater.

Yukito crossed his arms, being played with no distinction between up and down. He closed his eyes. He practiced techniques. The accuracy will be lower, but he should be able to perform the spell without saying it.

And Yukito perfected the technique.

Nothing happened.

"....."

When he opened his eyes underwater, the salt water soaked his eyes. He tried to use the technique over and over again. "Mizukuri no jutsu", the art of freely manipulating water. A technique that would lift him and his friends and bring them to the surface.

Nothing happened.

Panic instantly filled Yukito's heart.

In the dark depths of the ocean, he wasn't even sure where he was. He couldn't even feel the presence of his friends. Somewhere, like Yukito, they must be suffering from the friction of the water. They may be gasping for fear of drowning and may be on the verge of opening their mouths and screaming for help. Just when they open their mouths to scream, the sea water will come in and take their lives.

That's his fault.

Misunderstandings, errors in judgment, immaturity, no matter how you describe it. It was his fault anyway. Without a doubt, Yukito is the one who leads his friends, who believed in him and followed him, to death.

The tears disappeared into the sea water and were instantly assimilated. Yukito opened his mouth. To cry out for help. To ask for help for his friends, not for him.

Well, there was an answer.

Suddenly, gravity returned. Yukito was thrown hard to the ground and coughed violently. The inside of his nose hurts like he's been stabbed. Blinking his teary eyes again and again, Yukito saw him in his blurred vision.

The black-robed witch was smiling.

"Saga... ra..."

Hearing Yukito's barely murmured voice as he coughed, Sagaramurudi put the pipe in his mouth and exhaled the smoke.

"Do you know any negotiation tips, Yukito?"

Yukito looked at the witch in amazement, not understanding what she meant. She continued smoking a cigarette.

"It's about lending a hand to someone when they are in trouble. You can sell water to a child lost in the desert for more money than a child lost in the city. Also, you can take someone who is drowning and put him in a ship, something like that."

"Why...?"

"Why am I here? It's the opposite, Yukito. You came here. I've been watching you for a long time. My "sack room" can be plugged in anywhere. Also in the box I gave you."

Yukito gasped. Sagaramurudi's smile deepened.

"Why help you now? I should have explained it to you before. Think about it for yourself."

The answer came out in an instant. He said it with a distorted face.

"...To make me... a disciple."

"It's a shame. The correct answer is 'buy you cheaper'. When I called you my disciple, I was talking about when I offered you a deal. If you ask for my help now, you must become mine. When I tell you to dance, you will dance, when I tell you to move, you will reach out, and when I tell you to die, you die. You become a 'thing'."

She threw the ashes out of the pipe.

"As I said, water in the city and water in the desert have different prices. Right now you are asking for help and desperately. Not only for yourself, but for your friends. Naturally, the price is higher. I hope this lesson will be useful to you, in your future life. By the way, one of your friends just stopped breathing."

Yukito's face distorted. The witch shook her head.

"The other one has also stopped. The other one is trying her best to fight, but it's useless. The water in this area is controlled by Kisuinomiya Yatsuchi. That's why your technique didn't work. And that snake wants you to be food for its fish."

"Become..."

Before she knew it, Yukito was on his feet. He put his hand on the table in front of the witch and pleaded with a desperate expression.

"I will become your disciple or your 'thing'. So please help everyone. Please."

Sagaramurudi smiled like a witch. When she stood up, her black robe spread like the night sky.

"Okay! The contract is already done. I like guys who think quickly, Yukito. I hope you will continue to be like this in the future so I don't get bored with you."

Yukito gritted his teeth.

He never imagined it would end like this. To think that he would come to the aid of his own master and become someone else's disciple.

No, in Sagaramurudi's words, would he become her "thing", something like a servant or a slave? Yukito couldn't imagine what that life would be like, but he could imagine that he probably wouldn't be able to return to Ninoshima.

But for now, that's all he has. He couldn't think of any other way for everyone to come home alive. It seemed like there was no other way but to hold on to that witch.

(This is the only way to do it.)

At the same time, he let a bitter murmur fall into his heart, he heard a bang. Immediately, that echoed the voice of the witch.

"Space is here!"

The room had doubled in size. The walls and ceiling spread further apart and the space became as large as the Amamiya family's living room.

Then his friends fell from above. Chatarou, Yako, and Ibara were thrown to the ground with the sound of splashing water. Only Ibara seemed to be conscious, half sitting up and looking around her with a dazed expression.

However, Chatarou and Yako were not breathing. Sagaramurudi's words were true. Yukito instinctively ran towards Chatarou and picked him up. His glasses flew somewhere and his eyes remained barely closed.

"Chatarou-kun! You..."

"Don't do that."

It was Sagaramurudi who said that, and she grabbed Chatarou by the back of his head with one hand and forced him to lie down on his back. As Yukito watched with bated breath, wondering what kind of magic she would use, she raised her palm and said:

"Hmm!"

She threw it as hard as she could towards Chatarou's stomach.

"Gaaah?!"

Chatarou's body bent into the shape of a dog's leg and seawater gushed out of his mouth. He coughed violently. Sagaramurudi did the same with Yako, revived him, then returned to her chair and looked up.

"Oops. Kisuinomiya Yatsuchi noticed you. He's a smart guy even though he's a fish. Now then..."

Yukito grabbed the sleeve of her black robe. Sagaramurudi looked at Yukito coldly.

"What's wrong, Yukito?"

"I have to help Jingi-san. To do that, I have to find the "Kisuirin"."

The witch's eyes narrowed.

Behind them, Chatarou and Yako regained consciousness and watched their exchange without understanding why. Only Ibara seemed to understand, as she clenched her fists nervously. That is because a cold, penetrating life force emanates from the witch.

"You're supposed to be mine now."

"No. Not yet. "Everyone" hasn't been saved yet."

Yukito's thoughts were spinning at high speed.

A deal, he said. In exchange for Yukito becoming her "thing", she would help "everyone". It was supposed to be a contract between the two of them.

She knew it.

"We came here to help Jingi-san, including Jingi-san. You also have to help Jingi-san."

Sagaramurudi's third hand grabbed Yukito's hair and lifted him up.

"Yukito!"

Yukito raised his hand to stop Ibara from screaming. His toes went up in the air and ripped out some of his hair. Despite the pain of being torn away, Yukito still raised his head and stared at the witch's face.

"You're a troublesome guy. You look like your father."

"I don't know my father. I just do what I think is right."

"Now I can throw you all back into the sea."

"Are you breaking the contract unilaterally?"

Yukito raised his chin arrogantly.

"You will help "everyone" and I will be "yours". You were supposed to be the one to shout that the contract was over."

Of course, if Yukito and his friends were submerged in the sea from now on, there would be no problem for Sagaramurudi. There are no witnesses or evidence anywhere, so even if they keep their mouths shut, there's no way they'll be exposed.

However, Sagaramurudi opened her hand and let go of Yukito.

Anger and frustration poured out of her handsome, captivating face. Clicking her tongue, Sagaramurudi said indignantly.

"Okay. You win. I admit it was my fault for not working out the details of the contract."

Taking a deep breath, she looked up.

"Return to Kisui Palace, find the "Kisuirin" and free Sagawa Jingi. That's what "help" means. Okay?"

"Yes."

"When that's over, you must be ready, Yukito."

Then the witch laughed. She must have thought about that scene and her smile was horrible.

"You will discover for yourself what happens to those who provoke the witch's wrath."

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Haruaki Kurama shook his wet hair and landed on the bridge.

The woman he was carrying on his shoulder, Ruazusa, was thrown at his feet. She was the one who "flew away" with him, but he couldn't leave her alone in the stormy sea. He doesn't really understand the nature of spirits, but if you leave them in the ocean, they usually die.

"It's been a long time, Elder."

The old man on the other side of the bridge seemed to be a different person from him when he met him in Ninoshima. There was no trace of a smile on his face, which was covered in scars. He asked, looking at Ruazusa who was lying at Kurama's feet.

"Did you kill her?"

Kurama slowly shook his head.

"She's just sleeping. She's not causing any harm."

The old man stared at Kurama and shook his head slowly.

"I really don't understand what outsiders think. Ruazusa had been ordered that she not let anyone into the island until the wedding. That means killing the intruder. But didn't you kill Ruazusa?"

"What I'm looking for is harmony and my brother. Not conflict."

Those words did not seem to cause any emotion in the old man. The old man looked into the distance and asked.

"Kudo disturbance method. I never thought it would break."

Kurama also looked in the same direction. With a smile tinged with fatigue on his small face.

"I had a hard time figuring it out. It was a completely different jutsu system than Yanagiryu. It was complex, mysterious, and constantly changing. By the time I finished it, I had circled this island five times."

The old man's white eyebrows widened in surprise.

"Have you been carrying Ruazusa with you for about two days?"

"Yes. I couldn't let her die."

The old man looked like he was about to burst into laughter.

However, the old spirit did not laugh. Instead, he shook his head again and muttered to himself.

"As expected of Yanagi's disciple. You are very different from the other one."

Then he looked back.

There was a man that Kurama had deliberately taken out of his consciousness.

A man who indulged in evil practices and whose body became ugly and distorted. The three eyes that looked at Kurama burned with anger and hatred. A squeaky voice came out of his mouth.

"What are you doing here, Haruaki? That's my opponent. Don't touch him!"

Kurama ignored him completely.

"Elder, I say it again. All I ask for is harmony and my brother. Please, would you listen to this wish?"

"Harmony?"

The old man nodded slowly. That old man is not a stranger at all. He has a wisdom that he has cultivated over a long period of time. But...

"Harmony is woven through law and reason. And in both cases, the answer is that Jingi-sama is a suitable match for Sango-sama."

Kurama opened his mouth, choosing his words carefully.

"In fact, Jingi renounced the "Kisuirin". However, we have confirmed that after that, a spiritual being named Josei obtained the "Kisuirin". Can that act be considered appropriate according to your laws?"

"Josei. Hmm."

The old man saw the bride crouching on the platform in the center of the bridge. The girlfriend, Sango Kisuinomiya, is suppressing Jingi, keeping her mouth shut and glaring at Kurama.

Seeing that, the old man let out a sigh and shook his head.

"It is unthinkable for him to act of his own will. He probably received an order from Sango-sama. No master has ever used such a method to capture the "Kisuirin" by trickery."

"Well, then..."

"But there is no law in Gonoshima that prohibits it."

In a firm tone, the old man rejected the request.

This time, it was Kurama's turn to sigh.

"Isn't that what you call anarchy, Elder?"

"Maybe."

The old man admitted. However, contrary to his words, he swung his fist towards Kurama.

"Still, law is law and reason is reason. Only they can achieve harmony in our village. It is Kurama Haruaki who is disturbing the harmony of this place right now!"

With a low cry, the old man ran through the air.

As if there were invisible footholds in the air, the old man ran through the air and headed straight for Kurama. Kurama quickly crossed his arms and put together a jutsu.

"Between heaven and earth, it will never end, it will move and never come out!"

Multiple tornadoes emerged in an instant and attacked the old man. The old man reflected irregularly in the air, circling the area, looking for an opening. As he did so, the old man let out a loud voice.

"Sango-sama. It seems like it will take a while to deal with these two. Please take Jingi-sama to safety."

Sango, who was sitting on daiba, nodded slightly. Kurama watched her from his side. The Elder is a powerful spellcaster. It will be extremely difficult to evade his attack and regain custody of Jingi.

So can he defeat the old man?

Kurama silently dismissed the thoughts floating in the back of his mind. It's not about whether he can or not. He must do it. Otherwise, his brother will never come back.

He regretted losing his family.

"A fish must not escape from the abyss. A dishonorable vessel must not be shown to anyone!"

Kurama spun spells in rapid succession. Although it is a water barrier spell, the effective range of it is narrow and the capture ability of it is strengthened accordingly. A powerful barrier is applied to the area where the tornado's range of action is restricted; This is a strategy to ensure that the man is trapped while he bounces erratically.



However, the old man did not flee. He thought he had given him a big kick in the air and then jumped towards the water net. He placed his fist in front of his forehead, opened his eyes wide and let out a loud voice.

"Katsu!"

The voice that shook the space blew up the net that was flying towards him. For just a moment, shock and awe crossed Kurama's mind. For him to erase the magic with a single voice, it could be the old man's fear, or perhaps it was also the magic of a spiritual being.

Kurama narrowly avoided the fist that was thrown. The hem of the hunting uniform was torn. Kurama tried to escape by flying into the sky, but the Elder chased after him, bouncing into the air. The pupils with horizontal slits never let Kurama escape.

At this moment, a voice sounded.

"Go blind with the five colors, deaf with the five sounds, refresh yourself with the five flavors, and go crazy with hunting in the field!"

Crimson flames erupted directly from below, enveloping the man's body along with black smoke. It is a great fire technique. When he returned his attention to the source, Ibuki continued to emit flames from his distorted right hand.

(Aka, fool!)

As he stayed away from the old man, Kurama looked at the caster, Ibuki, with irritated eyes. All he had to do was free Jingi from Sango's grasp while he pulled the old man over. Sango was currently trying to escape inside the Kisui Palace while she dragged Jingi's body.

Finally, the smoke cleared, revealing the old man's figure.

Although his entire body was burned, the old man seemed to be in a very good mood. He looked at Ibuki and then at Kurama with bright eyes, then clasped his hands together.

A loud voice that could be heard throughout "Kerukaiden" resounded once again.

"Oarsmen, return to the palace! From now on, these people will be judged by the Kisui Palace!"

The spirits that had been packed into "Kerukaiden" began to return inside in an orderly manner. Their expressions were uniformly blank, showing neither fear nor surprise.

Kurama and Ibuki, who remained in the now deserted "Kerukaiden", stared at the old man, who was floating in the air. They could see that the life energy was so thick that it distorted the space around them, beginning to rotate around them.

This technique does not need to be perfected. The brothers quickly realized this and launched an attack at the same time.

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"This turned out to be an amazing wedding."

Jingi called out to Sango, who was panting, as she pulled him towards her.

Jingi was wrapped in a circle, but if he wanted to, he could walk. However, he had no intention of distancing himself from the brothers who had come to save him. He relaxed his entire body and tried to put as much tension on Sango as possible.

Sango looked at Jingi. The hate-filled eyes were different from the snake eyes he had seen before and had reverted to human eyes. The fingers gripping Jingi's body no longer have long nails.

"Can't you take it back?"

Sango suddenly blushed at the teasing words. She pouted her lips and said sullenly.

"I was in the middle of it, but something got in my way. I had no choice but to stop. It's a shame."

"I guess you made a mistake choosing me, right?"

Even though he was dragged, Jingi still spoke fluently.

"You can still talk to Haru-nii, but Aka-nii is making a mess. Seeing the situation, I don't think it's necessary to say anything. Not even that old man can beat my brothers."

Then, a smile appeared on Sango's lips. She had a wide smile, like when she was proud of her family.

"That is not true, Jingi-sama. I guarantee it. The Elder is the strongest magician on this island. It is said that he once competed with your master, Makoto Yanagi."

"So, he lost, right?"

"The old man said that he had reached a good point."

Jingi put on a serious face and looked towards "Kerukaiden".

If that's true, it's a bit of a problem. If he was able to compete with Makoto Yanagi even to the point of "good point", it could be dangerous even for the two of them.

Panting and sweating, Sango dragged Jingi along. Suddenly, Jingi's body slid down the wooden hallway. Jingi turned his head and asked Sango.

"Where are you going?"

"This is my room. It's a pity that the wedding turned out like this, but there is still the moon outside. Let's wait until the old man fixes things."

He was about to say that "getting rid of them" meant getting rid of his siblings, but he stopped himself. If that happens, he won't have any other options. He will simply end up in that woman's womb.

Sango's room seemed to be in a section of the Kisui Palace tower. The plaster wall peeled away, revealing a hallway overlooking the ocean. A strong wind blew through Sango's hair. The view from there also included a part of "Kerukaiden".

However, the place was now covered in pitch-black fog.

A smile appeared on Sango's lips.

"The Elder is planning to resolve the matter."

Jingi didn't like that smile and asked.

"What's that?"

"Law of shido kalten. It is the elder's most powerful technique. No one has ever defeated it."

He didn't like that answer even more than the smile.

Sango opened one of the sliding doors and dragged Jingi inside.

Bright stones illuminated the room. It was a nondescript Japanese-style room about eight tatami mats in size. The only furniture visible was a dresser or desk. It was too simple for a princess's room, but now that he thinks about it, he had never seen her in fancy things.

However, when Jingi saw what was on the desk, he couldn't help but be surprised.

An old cider bottle.

".....!"

Noticing that Jingi was watching, Sango grabbed it faster than anything he had seen before. Just like that, she opened the sliding door of the dresser and put it away. The ears that protruded from the cotton cap were dyed red.

Jingi felt an indescribable feeling.

It must be true that Sango liked him. She really wanted to have him in her womb and she also wanted to marry Jingi. That is the expression of her love as a spiritual person.

Should he say something? Kind words.

But there was nothing he could say. Sango and Jingi's opinions are clearly at odds. Jingi wants to leave and Sango wants to "be with" Jingi. There is no way to make those two things true.

Sango turned around. The vermilion stain on her face had faded. She opened her lips and tried to say something.

At that moment, a roar and commotion shook the room.

Sango fell on top of Jingi who was lying there. Jingi felt the wedding dress on his stomach and blinked. It was not necessary to look for the epicenter. It was because she was appearing before his eyes.

A huge black box appeared as if it had sunk into the sliding door.

A sea breeze came through a hole in the sliding door on the hallway side. Plaster and pieces of wood were flying around the room in the wind. Jingi and Sango watched with blank eyes.

The box was kicked open from the inside.

What came out from inside was a woman dressed in black. She looked around her with a displeased expression on her face, then fixed her amber eyes on Jingi and the others.

"I found it. I guess he's okay, Yukito."

The next moment, the boy with that incredible name appeared from the box.

Jingi's mouth dropped open.

Then, following Yukito, faces he knew well (Chatarou, Yako, and Ibara) came out of the box one after another. It doesn't make sense for them to be all soaked, but it also doesn't make sense for them to be there. If his hands were free, he would have pinched his cheeks, wondering if they were showing him some kind of illusion.

However, when Yukito saw Jingi, he smiled as if he felt relieved from the bottom of his heart.

"Jingi-san! Oh, good!"

It's fake after all, Jingi thought. The only thing that guy would have given him was a grimace or a look of surprise, and he had never smiled at him like that before.

The woman in black kept her eyes on Sango. Sango's face was pale, reflecting fear and confusion. The woman looked at Sango for a moment, then looked around her, before finally landing on the dresser.

"No!"

A voice like torn silk came from Sango's throat.

She kicked the tatami and rolled toward the dresser. She opened her arms, trying to protect the dresser like a mother protects her child with her back. With frightened eyes, she looked at the woman in black, Yukito, Chatarou and Yako and said.

"No... no... what, guys! This is my room! Get out!"

"Chains for you."

At the same time as the woman's voice, her life twisted complicatedly. The knees of her wedding dress gave way and she fell onto the tatami. The cotton hat fell off and Sango couldn't seem to fix it. All she could do was move her pale red eyes clouded with fear and mutter.

"Stop..."

The woman ignored her and she began to rummage through the dresser.

On the other hand, Jingi was surrounded by children and about to be freed from his restraints. It was difficult to untie the coiled rope, but Ibara used a glove and pulled it out with all her strength. Then, she blocked the white and black rope techniques in his left hand.

And Jingi was free.

He stood up. He took a deep breath and exhaled. Then, Jingi looked at Yukito. The boy who freed him. The disciple who came to Gonoshima and saved his life without worrying about his life.

"...Yukito."

Saying softly, Jingi smiled and bent his knees to look him in the eyes.

He asked Yukito in a soft voice, looking shy.

"Do you have any alcohol?"

Yukito blinked.

"Eh?"

Jingi stretched, scratched his hair, and laughed.

"Well, you were the same guy just now, right? It's just a congratulation, and they didn't let me drink anything. I've been thirsty for a while. Please! Just one drink!"

Yukito's eyes took on a coldness of absolute zero.

At the same time, he felt pain and shock in his stomach. Letting out a deep sigh, Jingi looked at him in frustration.

"Hey, what are you doing, Chatarou? It hurts!"

"It's because you're joking, idiot! You wonder how Yukito felt when he went that far!"

Chatarou was furious and shouted, and Yako and Ibara looked at Jingi with the same eyes as Yukito.

Jingi pouted his lips and tried to argue.

At this moment, a voice sounded.

"Hey."

When he looked, the black-clad woman who had been rummaging through the dresser turned to him with a shocked expression on her face. She for some reason she had three hands.

When Jingi saw what was in one of her hands, he gasped.

"Is this what you're looking for, Yukito?"

"The "Kisuirin"."

In her third hand she held the shiny white squama. The woman threw it away and handed it to Yukito. Yukito took it and then thanked the woman with a somber expression on his face.

"...Thank you. Sagaramurudi."

"Call me master."

Hearing that, Jingi stopped breathing.

She looked at the two of them. Yukito looked down and the woman looked at him arrogantly. Sagaramurudi. There is no doubt that she is a skilled connection. But why is she there? Why does Yukito look like this? Chatarou, Yako, and Ibara also seemed to be in pain.

Shyly, Yukito offered the "Kisuirin" to Jingi.

"Jingi-san, please return this to Sango-san. With that, we should be able to conclude this wedding."

Jingi accepted it. Seeing the shiny squama, Sango let out a voice filled with fear and sadness.

"It's not enough...!"

"Hey, hey. Sagaramurudi-san."

Regardless of that, Jingi turned to the woman in black.

"I don't know who you are, but you just said something I don't understand. Master? Whose master are you?"

Sagaramurudi smiled like a witch.

"I know who you are, Jingi. Makoto Yanagi's third disciple. It's true, you look a bit like him, bastard and all."

"I want you to answer my question. Whose master are you?"

"I'm this guy's master."

A third hand grabbed Yukito's head.

Jingi looked at Yukito. Yukito lowered his head and let it happen.

Chatarou and Yako murmured with weak voices.

"Yukito promised to become that person's disciple."

"It was to save us. We were all drowning under the sea and..."

Ibara bit her lip in frustration and looked down. Her clenched fist trembled slightly.

Sagaramurudi snorted at everyone.

"Okay, give it back now. That will be the end of everything. Spiritual beings keep their contracts. You can return to Ninoshima."

"Everyone except Yukito?"

The witch's smile deepened. A third hand pulled Yukito towards Sagaramurudi, and two more hands gently held Yukito's chest. Yukito remained silent as if he had swallowed lead.

"He is the son of Makoto Yanagi. I am sure that he will be useful to me. If you return that squama, he will become mine. If you understand it, finish it quickly, former master."

Jingi thought for a moment long enough to blink twice.

When that was over, he had already decided what measures to take. He took a deep breath and let out a sound that sounded sad at best.

"I see. Is that the case? If that's the case, I can't help it."

Then, he timidly turned to Sango and slowly raised the "Kisuirin".

"Hey, Sango. It's the "Kisuirin". This is for you..."

He threw it as hard as he could through the hole in the sliding door, towards the ocean he could see from the castle tower.

Everyone except Jingi froze.

The "Kisuirin" flew in an arc as she emitted a bright white glow, and was finally swallowed by the black sea and disappeared from sight.

For a while no one said anything.

There was only one person, except for Jingi, who murmured in satisfaction as he pushed his hands away from it.

"Oops. My hand slipped."

"Eeeeeeeehhhhhh?!"

The next person to break the silence was Yukito. He shook off the witch's hand and lunged at Jingi with the force of a tackle.

"Aaaaahhh... You!"

Yukito punched Jingi in the stomach as hard as he could. When his body bent into a dog's leg shape, he grabbed his chest.

His face turned red like a boiled octopus as he approached.

"What are you doing?! I-I was looking for that squama...!"

"Oh, no, it's a shame. My hand slipped. Go get something else, Yukito."

Yukito's face contorted as he raised his fist once more and laughed out loud. However, it seems like he's found something else to do instead of punching Jingi in his face. He opened the sliding door with a tremendous noise, crossed his arms and shouted.

"Human, Earth and Sky! Water, do not fight for the good of all things, but deal with the evils of all people!"

Generating water from nothing requires considerable training.

Yukito is not at that stage yet. It has been a few weeks since he arrived on Ayaka Island, and even less since he began training the pulse connection. Although this is a world where talent matters, connections are too short.

It was supposed to be like this.

Yukito's eyes began to glow blue. The vertically split pupils looked at the air in front of them.

Then, a drop of water appeared in the air. It quickly swelled and became large enough to envelop Yukito's body. Just before entering that body of water, Yukito looked at Jingi and shouted with hatred.

"Idiot! I shouldn't have chosen someone like you as my master!"



Then, the mass of water surrounding Yukito jumped into the sea in search of the "Kisuirin" that Jingi slipped from his hand.

Jingi looked at Sagaramurudi.

She had her mouth open.

Finally, an expression of understanding appeared on her face. It quickly turned to anger. The third hand suddenly reached out, she grabbed Jingi by his chest and pulled him closer to her. Unlike Yukito, Sagaramurudi's face was pale, but both of them were still angry.

"...You. You... did you know?"

"Me, what?"

Jingi looked at the children, smiling as always. Chatarou, Yako and Ibara were all confused. They just don't understand how things are going. What just happened there? The only people who understand the curve are Jingi and Sagaramurudi.

"Well, even if you know something, there are too many people who won't tell it."

"....."

Sagaramurudi also looked at Chatarou and the others. When she clicked her tongue sharply, she murmured:

"Guys. Get out."

"Eh?"

"N-no, but..."

"Okay, get out of here!"

Chatarou and Yako hurriedly turned around at the sound of a loud voice that shook the air, grabbed Ibara's arm and ran out of the room.

All that was left behind was Jingi and Sagaramurudi... no, only one more person remained. There was also Sango who was slumped next to the dresser.

Sagaramurudi looked at him. As if she remembered that he was bound by a spell and could not move, she openly raised her hands and snapped her fingers.

Then he suddenly felt the life force that Sango had bound him with unravel.

Sagaramurudi said to Sango, who was free but she was still dumbfounded.

"You too."

"No. Sango, it's okay. I have to ask this guy too."

When Sagaramurudi returned his gaze, the smile had disappeared from Jingo's face. Seeing that, Sagaramurudi suppressed her irritation and muttered in a low voice.

"...In that case, why don't you explain it to me? What does it mean? Why does Yukito have a "dragon eye"?"

Sango blinked again and muttered under her breath.

"Dragon eye?"

Jingo responded.

"It's an eye that only dragons have. And there are only two dragons on Ayaka Island. One is the fire dragon that my master sealed ten years ago. And the other... is the water dragon."

"Blue dragon eyes are only possessed by water dragons. In other words, that guy."

Jingo took over.

"That's right. Yukito Yanagi is not a human. He is the incarnation of a water dragon."

There was silence in the room.

Sango opened her mouth and looked at Jingo in disbelief. It is not surprising. Speaking of water dragons, they are the ancestors of this girl and are the main beings. There was no way she could easily believe that the boy she had met just now was the same being as a god to spiritual beings.

However, Sagaramurudi was not surprised. She just asked questions.

"Is this Makoto's work?"

"That's right."

"Why did he do something like that?"

"It's because the water dragon was weakening. Originally, the twin dragons were supposed to exist as a pair, but the fire dragon's strength became too strong and the balance was upset. That's why it needed to temporarily transform into a human form and accumulate power."

The witch's amber eyes looked deep into the sky. As she did so, she muttered to herself.

"Even if it's temporary, if the water dragon disappears, it's not like the balance will collapse. The fire dragon will get out of control. That was ten years ago, right?"

"Yes."

Jingo's voice that responded was thirsty.

Ten years ago. Jingi was still a ten-year-old boy. Although he had the power to act as a connection, he could do nothing in the face of the Shinoshima eruption. Along with young Yukito, Momoko took them away and they had no choice but to evacuate to shore.

Yanagi, Kurama and Ibuki were the ones who killed the fire dragon.

However, Yanagi's life was lost in the process. Because of that, Ibuki left the island and turned to evil practices in search of greater power. The rift between Kurama and Ibuki arose from that. Yukito was also sent to the mainland according to Yanagi's will.

Jingi's family was devastated by an incident ten years ago.

Taking a deep breath, Jingi turned his attention back to Sagaramurudi.

"The reason Yukito has returned to this island once again is to wait for his awakening as a water dragon. I don't think he is that far in the future. Now, Sagaramurudi-san, I have a question for you."

Jingi turned his index finger and pointed it at Sagaramurudi.

"Are you still planning to make Yukito your disciple? If you force him away from this island, you know what will happen. In the worst case, he could go crazy right next to you. Or is it a no-brainer that the great witch-sama has a pet dragon?"

Sagaramurudi's face distorted and Jingi mocked her.

"You can't do it, right? Not even my master could put an end to a dragon's attack without risking his life. It's too much for you. You know it yourself, that's why you're so irritated, right?"

"....."

"Thank you for helping them. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have been able to find the "Kisuirin". But Yukito is my disciple and my precious little brother! Don't mess with him!"

In response to the powerful attack, Sagaramurudi swung her fist and dealt a hard blow to Jingi's body.

"Gaaak?!"

"Don't get carried away, boy...! I can kill you here and now."

Even though they grabbed his chest and lifted him up, Jingi managed to smile.

"I guess so. You're smart and knowledgeable. Don't you know my role?"

Sagaramurudi narrowed her eyes and clicked her tongue in frustration. She let go of Jingi's chest and let him fall to the ground. With that action, Jingi realized that his prediction was correct.

Sango next to him said in shock.

"What do you mean, Jingi-sama? What is your role?"

Then Jingi saw Sango.

From now on he had to tell her something terrible.

But he had no choice. Either way, someday it will happen. If Sango was aware of his role, she might simply give up on her mission.

"Did you know that something similar happened a long time ago? The water dragon became weak and Ayaka Island was in danger. At that time, there was a spellcaster who turned the water dragon and revived it."

Sango blinked in confusion and then nodded.

"Yes, yes. I know there was something like that in an ancient tale. A wizard gave his life to regenerate a water dragon..."

After saying that, Sango's eyes widened.

Jingi gave a weak laugh and shrugged.

"That is my role. I am a sacrifice to awaken Yukito as a water dragon."

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A dream, floating peacefully at the bottom of the water. Once, when he had that dream, Yukito was enveloped in a sense of calm. It was cold and silent, nothing could harm him. It was a lonely place, but it was a safe place.

And now, Yukito's heart was in a place far from tranquility and calm.

It's the second time that day. The first time he almost drowned. Even after being saved, he was forced to make a difficult decision. He was still able to overcome that decision and finally achieve his goal.

And that stupid master...!

Yukito was so overcome with anger that he forgot where he had jumped. Sagaramurudi said that that is the sea governed by the Kisui Palace. Normal techniques won't work out there in the water. That is because it is under the control of Kisuimiya Yatsuchi.

But now it seemed different.

Yukito dove. He manipulated masses of water to go deeper and deeper. Searching for the only key that can free him, the "Kisuirin" that Jingi threw away.

He didn't notice that his eyes were glowing blue.

What meaning does that light have at the bottom of the water?

For some reason, he could see clearly through the seawater, which was as dark as tar. When he drowned before, there was only darkness. Now he can see the white sand of the ocean floor with a gentle slope. He can see the fish that live in the shadows of the reef. He can see the algae swaying as if they were dancing.

And Yukito saw it.

Slowly emerging from the depths of the black sea. A huge sea serpent.

The sea serpent was looking at Yukito. Although he didn't know where the snake's eyes were, Yukito felt that way for some reason.

If she wanted, the sea serpent could swallow his body. However, Yukito did not feel afraid. He didn't know why, but he instinctively knew that she couldn't hurt him.

"Eeeeeekkkkkk..."

The great sea serpent... Kisuinomiya Yatsuchi slowly changed direction as her voice echoed in the sea. A big belly that looked like a white wall passed by Yukito. Her blue squama rippled like waves and her blue-black dorsal fins lined up like swords.

Between the blue and the bluish black, there were shiny white squama.

When the "Kisuirin" came within reach of her, the large sea serpent slowed her swimming speed. Then, Yukito extended his hand and took it. He realized that the great sea serpent had brought that to him.

(Thank you.)

Naturally, Yukito thanked her. Well, maybe he just remembered. At that point, Yukito was no longer able to distinguish between language and thoughts.

Still, it seemed that Yatsuchi felt his gratitude.

"Eeeeeekkkkkk..."

With a cry of deep respect and joy, Yatsuchi turned her head and returned to the bottom of the sea.

Jingi was standing in the exact spot that had emerged.

"Hey. Good job!"

Crouching with his feet still in the water, Jingi said that without hesitation. Yukito's eyes were filled with immeasurable anger as he poked his head out and looked at Jingi.

"Jingi-san, you...!"

However, Jingi did not pay attention to those matters. Reaching out his arms, he grabbed Yukito by the neck and pulled him out of the water.

"Well, don't make that face. But if I hadn't, that old hag would have seriously tried to take you away. I'm a quick thinker."

"I have no idea what you're talking about. Could you explain it to me?"

"Ok, let's go."

Ignoring Yukito's protests, Jingi floated to the surface, still holding him by the neck. Far from the sea, up, up. They were approaching the Kisui Shrine, which is submerged in the sea, and the "Kerukaiden", which extends near its zenith.

As he did so, Jingi opened his mouth.

"Still, that was quite unreasonable, Yukito. I didn't expect you to go this far."

"You told me to do that. I told you I would definitely come to save you."

"That's why you..."

He was about to say that, but Jingi kept his mouth shut. He looked at Yukito and then awkwardly looked away. It was his usual disinterested attitude.

After a while, Jingi said again.

"Good, thank you."

Yukito's eyes widened in surprise and he stared at Jingi.

He never thought that that arrogant, selfish, self-centered bastard man would thank him.

Unable to say anything, Yukito was detained by the authorities and arrived at the "Kerukaiden".

There were multiple figures in "Kerukaiden". When Yukito saw one of them, he couldn't help but scream.

"Kurama-san! Are you okay?"

He regretted it after saying it. No matter how you look at it, it wasn't right. His robe was in tatters and blood was flowing from all over his body. It seemed like it was the end of a fierce battle, but he still had a calm smile on his face and raised a hand as usual.

"I'm sorry, Yukito-kun. We're quite late."

Ibuki was sitting cross-legged some distance away from him. Most of his suit was torn, leaving the upper part of his body naked. Like Kurama, he was torn apart, but he never tried to meet Yukito face to face, so he didn't know what to say to him.

Then, in the center of the platform, there were two figures.

They were the Elder and Sango.

The old man tied his hands behind his back and looked at Yukito emotionlessly. There was not a single scratch on his body. Yukito couldn't help but look at Kurama and Ibuki.

"Okay, I got it."

At that moment, Jingi reached out and snatched the "Kisuirin" from Yukito's hand. Yukito observed the situation in amazement.

With the "Kisuirin" in hand, Jingi approached Sango with casual steps. In contrast, Sango looked like she was about to burst into tears.

Well, maybe she really cried. Her cotton cap was long gone and her lightly made-up face was stained with tears.

She shouted in a weak voice.

"Jingi-sama."

Jingi raised the "Kisuirin" in front of her and stared at her. Then, in a tone like a sigh, he said.

"I thought it would be quite expensive to pay for the cider. That was too expensive."

He then looked at Sango with kind eyes. As a groom would do with a bride, he reverently took her hand and gently pressed the "Kisuirin" on her.

"I'll give this back to you, Sango. I can't be with you."

"Restitution has been made."

The old man stated gravely.

"The master handed over the "Kisuirin" and the couple rejected her. If that were the case, that person would not be part of our clan, and would not become part of our clan. We hereby renounce our marriage contract."

Yukito felt as if his entire body had lost its strength.

That was over.

The mission of traveling from Ninoshima to Gonoshima to help Jingi was finally completed. Spiritual people value contracts. Now that he has been returned according to the contract, they will no longer be able to harm them.

The old man looked at everyone around him with more than cold eyes and showed no emotion.

"If that is the case, you are no longer an enemy or a guest. I recommend that you return home as soon as possible."

"Damn old man."

It was Ibuki who murmured. The old man must have heard him, but he didn't react. In response, Kurama bowed respectfully and urged Yukito and the others.

"Come on."

After that, Jingi also turned on his heel and attempted to cross the bridge.

At that moment, Sango's hand reached out.

"Wait, don't go."

Jingi turned around in surprise when she grabbed him arm and sleeve. Sango, dressed as a bride, had tears welling up in her pale red eyes. One by one, the jewel-like tears fell to the bottom of the dark ocean.

"Please stay here, Jingi-sama. You don't have to be my companion, just as a guest. Because, if you don't...!"

"Sango."

Sango's words were interrupted by Jingi's soft voice.

Stroking her hair, Jingi smiled shyly.

"See you."

"Ah...!"

Sango's palm spread out against Jingi's cheek.

It had a nice dry sound.

Sango turned around. With slow, steady steps, she crossed the bridge to the other side. The old man blinked once and then angrily followed the bride as she left.

"Please say it..."

Jingi rubbed his cheek and noticed the blank stares from his brothers. He then laughed shamelessly and shrugged.

"Ah. They left me."

Even Yukito wondered what that person was saying.