

AYA KA

— あ や か —

SIDE STORIES



Brothers

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Brothers

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"AYAKA – SIDE STORIES 01":

BROTHERS 01: YANAGI YUKITO & KURAMA HARUAKI

From Yukito Yanagi's experience, there were quite a few people who had the fixed idea that "raising children in an orphanage is a pitiful existence".

In particular, the older you get, the more likely this is to happen. The reason why he dare not call it prejudice is that there is sympathy and concern, and there is not much discrimination or condescending sentiments.

It's a little different if you just say it's an admission based on precise facts.

Yukito, who left the island where he was born and raised as a child and lived in an orphanage, realized early on in his life that perfect happiness is not often found in this world. At the same time, he naturally came to understand that there was no such thing as pure unhappiness.

The orphanage was a mixture of happiness and unhappiness.

Of course, the environment in which the enrolled children were born and raised is quite harsh compared to general world standards.

Father abuse. Disappearance due to financial bankruptcy of the parents. Abandonment of the mother. Accidental death of all relatives who only helped.

The children who came under such circumstances have wounds in their hearts that will never heal.

A slightly older boy at the same institution had a habit of urinating on the bed even when he became a high school student. He had an older sister who never made eye contact with him. Some of them left the institution before graduating from high school because their violent behavior towards others was notorious.

They were all carefree to a greater or lesser degree, but that does not mean that they were depressed or lamented by their misfortunes.

They were all working hard to overcome the handicap of the absence of family and live a full life according to their age.

Although commonly misunderstood, children in institutions are guaranteed a certain degree of financial freedom.

In addition to his monthly pocket money, he received a small gift at Christmas and, although it was not expensive, he was given a New Year's gift at the beginning of the year.

Also, the use of pocket money was basically voluntary for the kids, unless it was for some very odd purpose, and they were free to save it up and buy slightly expensive items like gaming hardware.

In the shared space of the institution where Yukito was, there was a fairly comprehensive collection of the latest game consoles, software, manga, etc. purchased by the children who were enrolled with his pocket money.

Yukito once invited a classmate to the institution where he lived, but the boy...

"Well, I have lots of toys to play with."

He had mixed feelings when he heard him mutter with envy.

From Yukito's point of view, more than any toy, he would be happier to go home and spend time with his family at night. He remembers feeling vague and almost frustrated, and when he consulted the most trusted Yu-nii-chan in the facility...

"But you know, Yukito."

Brother Yu twisted his body from his study desk, turned around and said in a soft voice.

"Maybe there are childlike circumstances that Yukito doesn't know about. Just because you have your own home doesn't necessarily mean it will lead to happiness."

Yu-nii-chan, who looked intellectual with his silver-rimmed glasses, was a second-year high school student. He was the facilitator for the children at the facility.

"We often tend to think that we are the only unlucky people in the world. You have to be very careful there."

It's not like he was 100% convinced by what he said, but because it was Yu-nii-chan, whom he respected, who reprimanded him, Yukito was able to accept the feelings he had at the time.

And he was shocked that Yu-nii-chan was an adult after all. When he grew up, he honestly wanted to be like Yu.

However, after that, he naturally distanced himself from that classmate. He doesn't even remember his name now.

Yukito Yanagi lifted his upper body from the bed and stretched once. He stood up, rubbed his eyes, opened the blinds and looked outside to see a cloudless blue sky.

It hasn't been that many days since he came to the Ayaka Islands, but most of the time it was clear and sunny like this. He still doesn't understand many things, but he has no doubt that this is a place where the weather is nice.

Normally, he would have been able to wake up in a good mood, but the noise in the middle of the night woke him up, so he couldn't deny that he was lacking sleep. But when he looked at the clock on the table next to his bed, it was already eight.

Unlike when he was at the facility, he didn't have a set time to wake up, but the habits he had cultivated over the years were firmly ingrained in Yukito.

Besides, he didn't want his roommate, Momoko Amamiya, to think of him as spoiled.

He doesn't care about the other roommate.

After getting dressed, when he went out into the hallway, another roommate besides Momoko Amamiya, who was the cause of Yukito's lack of sleep, was lying on his stomach.

Sagawa Jingi.

He was the one who invited Yukito to this mysterious island, and now he is Yukito's teacher. Just in case. Yukito squatted down with half-hearted eyes and silently looked up at the strange art object, which didn't even move. This teacher went out alone at night, drank a lot and then went back to drinking with his bad friends. He woke him up to the sound of them making a lot of noise.

The others seem to be on their way home at dawn.

Currently, only one person, Jingi, is lying on his back in the hallway in a strange posture with only his right hand stretched out.

(Are you breathing?)

As expected, he was a bit worried and looked at his face.

(You're not dead, are you?)

At that moment, Jingi's arm trembled. Yukito was startled, Jingi looked up slightly.

"W-Water..."

He spoke as a person lost in the desert. Yukito sighed, went to the first floor sink, filled a suitable glass with water, and headed back upstairs to Jingi.

He dared to put the glass at a distance that his hand might or might not reach. Squatting down and looking at the strange insect with observant eyes, Jingi managed to grab the glass, his fingertips trembled and his arms stretched out as hard as he could.

Purupuru.

Purupuru.

His fingers moved at different angles.

Jingi's face changed seven times with a desperate expression. Eventually, however, he wore himself out and returned to the same position.

"Gu~"

After a while, a nice snore came out of his mouth. Yukito sighed and stood up.

He thought from the bottom of his heart that he would never want to become that old.

On his way from the second floor to the first floor, he could already smell the fragrant smell that stimulated his appetite. He could also hear the sizzling sound of something getting cold.

Yukito headed for the kitchen, the source of the sound and smell. The door was open, so he looked inside.

Momoko Amamiya was cooking on a frying pan as she softly sang.

She moved her shoulders from left to right for a while, and when she finished singing...

"And in the potato~♪"

As she made the comment, she scraped up the contents of the pan with a spatula and poured it into the blue bowl.

She always seemed to be smiling happily, but she was in a particularly good mood this morning. Even when Jingi came home in the middle of the night and made a fuss, she didn't seem to wake up, so he guessed that she's the type of person who can sleep soundly once she goes to bed.

It was a bit awkward to watch in silence, so when he tried to talk to her...

"Uh..."

Momoko turned around and said:

"Oh, good morning, Yukito-kun."

She said the morning greeting. Her voice was slightly inverted. She must have been embarrassed that she sang without realizing Yukito was there, and she tilted her head awkwardly.

"Oh, good morning."

He wanted to insist that he wasn't spying on her, but he didn't have a good way to convey it.

He breakfasts at the dining room table.

All of Momoko's home-cooked meals gleamed in the soft morning light. Tofu and Iwanori seaweed (harvested on the island), miso soup, freshly cooked rice, perfectly cooked salmon fillets, and potato salad with sautéed bacon and onions (excellent!)

Not only did it look great, it tasted great, but he couldn't eat in peace.

The reason was simple. The awkward atmosphere that had been created between Momoko and Yukito had continued for a long time, and he couldn't really enjoy breakfast. Yukito was wondering how Momoko was doing, and Momoko was also curious about Yukito.

"Ah, the rice is very delicious."

Like Yukito, she thought that she was telling her true feelings, but somehow her voice sounded like she took it for granted.

Momoko too.

"Oh, thank you."

Although she looked happy, she couldn't hide the "Did I make you worry about me?" expression.

Yukito is not good at interacting with people. It is a so-called communication disorder. So it was common for institutions and schools to have this type of situation.

It was the first time Momoko and Yukito were so awkward, so he was confused. Then he suddenly realized the reason.

At the same time, he clicked his tongue in his heart.

(Because Jingi-san isn't here.)

He didn't want to admit it, but if Jingi was there, he would talk to her, including things she didn't need, so there was a side of him that had a gap.

It hasn't been that long since he came to the island, so he hasn't had many chances to come face to face with Momoko.

(What should I do?)

He thought of ten patterns of conversation clippings in his mind. As a result of the examination, four of them were caught up in the following conversation, two were excessive self-talk, the other three were somewhat inappropriate topics to talk about in the morning, and the last one was nonsense.

As a result, he chose to remain silent. Momoko, on the other hand, seemed to still be trying to make conversation with herself.

But then he said...

"Mo-, Momoko-san, I, my head, want..."

As he held out his hand in front of her, Jingi stumbled into the dining room like a zombie, plopped down on his own chair and fell forward in disappointment.

"Jingi-chan! Wait a second? Are you alright?"

Momoko ran to him and began to take care of him.

"I'm going to get you water and medicinal herbs right now, okay? Oh, I told you not to drink too much!"

It was only a little, but he could see the sense of relief that she was able to finish the exchange with Yukito.

No.

It could just be Yukito's jealousy and preconceptions.

He had just finished eating, so...

"Thanks for the food."

He curtsied politely and tried to take the plates to the kitchen. He tried to leave that place.

"Uh..."

Momoko looked at Yukito. After...

"...Yukito-kun. What do you want for lunch?"

That was what he heard.

Yukito replied.

"Anything will be fine."

He thought it was cutting speech.

He regretted his attitude towards the person he was indebted to, but Yukito had some reason to behave that way.

For some reason, Momoko always asks what he wants to eat after every meal.

At first, he was frustrated and frantically searched for the answer, but gradually it became a nuisance. Yukito is not a picky eater. None of the children in the institution complained about the food they were served.

That was why he was grateful to eat whatever Momoko cooked for him.

Being too careful is really painful.

(I wonder if I'm not good "here" too.)

Suddenly, negative emotions arose that made him sick.

At that moment, a strange gelatinous thing crossed in front of him.

Yukito was startled for a moment and then immediately realized it.

(Mitama?)

There are many strange things on the Ayakashima Islands that are not found on the mainland, and this Mitama is one of them.

The size of a fist. It's just faint, but it looks like it's glowing. Also, Yukito could hear them muttering something under their breath.

The Mitama shifted while rolling in the air. Yukito unconsciously chased after the Mitama. The Mitama finally entered the living room as he made a playful little noise.

Yukito followed slowly, making sure not to catch up with the Mitama. Before long, the Mitama crossed the room and slowly began to float towards the sky through the open window.

Yukito went to the window frame and opened it. With the clear sky in the background, the Mitama became smaller and smaller.

When he looked closely, there were many other Mitama floating and they were about to flow in the same direction.

(There is something there?)

However, he didn't have the curiosity or the perseverance to go out of his way to chase after it. He tried to leave the room, but somehow he got curious and looked towards the Buddhist altar where the portrait of his father was placed. He hesitated for a moment about what he should do, but for the moment, he nodded towards the picture of his father, who had a very bright face.

He only looked at his father's face.

He couldn't remember anything in particular.

It was the same for this family, Momoko and Jingi. Although he was a child, he should have lived with everyone for a considerable period of time, but he did not feel any special emotions.

To be more precise, he only remembers a little bit, he has a memory like that, but it doesn't connect with intense emotions.

Maybe he is a colder person than he thought.

It was the same when he saw his father's portrait placed on the Buddhist altar. Exceptionally sad and nostalgic. He couldn't help but feel that this house is where he truly belonged. He remembered feeling uncomfortable somewhere like when he was on the premises.

Even if he suddenly went to another place like when he was brought to that island, he wouldn't feel so much pain.

Yukito let out a small sigh and left the room.

He thought from the bottom of his heart that he is not good at interacting with people, but he was too easily influenced by people.

Or maybe it's because he's not good at interacting with people.

Either way, it's easy to get carried away. Yukito thought idly as he soaked in the hot water of the public bath.

It was the first time in his life that he entered a public bath in broad daylight. The exterior and interior of the building were old, but the bathroom was beautifully polished and filled with a refreshing clean feeling.

Brilliant sunlight streamed in through a large skylight, illuminating the mural of cherry blossoms.

He let out a sigh of relief. So...

"What's wrong? You're so old even though you're a kid."

Jingi Sagawa, who started to enter the bathtub with his feet up, called out to him with a smile. And when he plunged into the milky white water up to his shoulders...

"Haa, it's hot, it's hot. Hot water is good. My lifespan is really getting longer~"

He walked past him and said words that sounded like an old man.

"....."

Yukito silently stared at the person who had half-heartedly put him into that public bath. Jingi, who noticed that look, pouted his lips.

"What? It can't be helped! The best thing for a hangover is to take a bath during the day."

"Then go alone! Don't involve me."

"Okay. There's no need to worry. You don't have anything to do, right?"

Jingi calmly stirred the hot water with his hands like water on a frog's face. Yukito was confused by those words. Indeed, Yukito, who is currently on spring break, has nothing

in particular to do other than the training that Jingi has imposed on him as a connection to his veins.

"What is this?"

The voice that he tried to object to was weak.

To be honest, it is undeniable that he had nothing to do. Otherwise, no matter how forcefully he was invited, he probably wouldn't have followed.

(And I'm a bit uncomfortable with Momoko-san right now.)

If possible, he wanted to avoid a situation where Jingi would go out and be alone with Momoko at home. Jingi didn't care about Yukito's condition at all.

"This place is a natural hot spring. And yet, there aren't always many customers, so I wonder if the business is doing well."

He turned his neck a little. It's true that there were no other customers at the time, Yukito thought for a while and then said:

"No, I'm not particularly familiar with that either, but it's usually the public baths that get crowded, don't you think? But, it's past noon, right?"

"Oh, no, actually. After all, I basically just come here hungover."

Jingi laughed unapologetically. Yukito made a disgusted face.

"You're a really bad adult, aren't you?"

"Don't praise me like that, don't praise me."

"I'm not praising you!"

"Hahaha." Jingi turned and laughed. Yukito sighed. If you try to reason with this person, you will run out of physical strength. It may be fair to ignore it moderately.

At the moment, he is supposed to be a teacher.

At that moment, Yukito noticed that Jingi was looking at him with a different expression than before, so he cautiously asked.

"What?"

"Well, I brought you here, but are you okay with taking a bath with people?"

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"No, I thought a guy like you would absolutely hate these kinds of naked places."

"...Well, not bad at all."

Yukito looked away and answered, being careful not to be self-deprecating on purpose.

"Sometimes I can't say that because I grew up in an institution."

"....."

After being silent for a while...

"Momoko-san was worried about you. During breakfast today, she thought that she said something that offended you. You were in a bad mood at the end, weren't you?"

Yukito was surprised and turned his gaze to Jingi. He said slowly:

"Something happened?"

"....."

"Tell me if you don't mind. I am your teacher after all."

With his hands wet with hot water, Jingi stroked Yukito's head. The droplets traveled down Yukito's forehead and cheeks.

Yukito was a little annoyed by his behavior that seemed to be tolerant, but in reality he wasn't very sensitive, but he didn't take his hand away.

Maybe Jingi brought him here on purpose to make time for just the two of them.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that something happened."

After making that introduction, Yukito slowly spoke about his own feelings. Jingi listened quietly as he looked up at the ceiling.

"That's why I get to eat all the delicious dishes that Momoko-san makes. Even so, every time I'm asked what I want for the menu, I'm like..."

Yukito couldn't help but stammer at that. Jingi listened silently.

"Do you want to stop being treated like a customer all the time?"

Yukito was silent for a second, then nodded slightly. After giving a big yawn...

"Yes! In fact, I felt that way too. Momoko-san worries too much, right?"

Yukito once again shook his head weakly.

"But Momoko-san also has a reason for doing that. That person, above all, I feel sorry for you."

"Eh?"

Jingi smiled at Yukito.

"Although it was my master's last will, I sent you to the mainland alone when you were a little boy, and suddenly called you back, right? It's not like I, Haru-nii, or Inou-san don't have that kind of feeling, but Momoko-san is the kindest."

"...That's right."

"I'm sure you had a proper life there, but I thought I could have taken it away from you."

Yukito sighed deeply.

It seems there are several things he didn't understand.

(Is that why you thought that I could spend a comfortable time on this island?)

Jingi said with a sensible face.

"Well, you should tell Momoko-san how you feel right now. If you can't do that, you're still a kid, right?"

He tried to admire Jingi for the first time, but...

"Eh?"

Jingi peered into the tub.

"Ahahaha, you are definitely still a child!"

He laughed so hard that he stopped. Yukito turned bright red and twisted his body to the side.

After leaving the public bath, Jingi had washed hair and a bright face.

"Well, I'm going to play with my friends again!"

He gestured with his finger and left. Yukito let out a sigh with a slight amount of admiration mixed with the great amazement.

(That person is living like a playboy in a period drama.)

Or a college student on a long vacation.

Yukito had no choice but to go home alone. He was a little nervous about seeing Momoko alone, but maybe he should tell her how he feels as soon as possible.

He is frustrating, but his advice never fails.

Momoko was making a big mistake.

(I was at that facility...)

At that moment, Yukito realized that he was near the irrigation canal that had been attacked by the Aramitama the other day. It seems that he took a slightly wrong direction while he was walking while he was thinking. He reflexively steeled himself.

He was afraid of meeting an Aramitama again, but he was more afraid of losing control.

But, there is no perfection.

No one can protect you or stop you.

Yukito quickly got out of the irrigation canal.

Before he knew it, he was in a place he had never seen before. He seemed like he was completely lost. In front of him, dense trees grew, and the path he had been walking up until now continued there.

He didn't remember going through a forest like that, so he had to turn around. When he was about to turn back...

"That is...?"

Yukito suddenly noticed that many Mitamas were floating around him, moving towards the forest in front of him.

Each of the Mitamas fluttered, moving gently up and down, and happily flowed into the forest like children riding in a flowing pool (that's what Yukito saw).

(Maybe...)

Yukito thought. The Mitama that he saw at home this morning may have also flown in this direction. Thinking about it, he began to wonder what was in store for him. Yukito made up his mind and followed the Mitama and the others into the depths of the forest.

At first, the path was quite paved, but the undergrowth gradually increased, and before he knew it, there were no clear tracks left. It wasn't that he couldn't walk or anything, but that a narrow path that could only be described as an animal trail stretched through the trees in a zigzag pattern.

At first, Yukito advanced timidly, looking back to keep track of the way he had come, but gradually he began to take a bolder and bolder step.

In the morning, the depression that he was feeling faded away as he progressed, and instead, a faint feeling of happiness and an uplifting feeling that made him want to ignore it gradually filled his heart. At first he thought it was the cool forest air that made him feel this way, but then he realized it.

(I see. I can sense the presence of a particularly strong lifeguard here on the island.)

Yukito knew that he had special senses that normal humans don't have. The sensor detected it.

(If I remember correctly, Jingi said that the lifeline flows underground on the island and vitality comes out of it...)

In Yukito's words, how would he describe it?

The density of life is dense.

The Mitamas, who were taught to filter out of the lifeline in the same way, increased in number more and more, and were circling around Yukito like a group of fireflies.

They were all fluffy, swaying and having fun.

Yukito felt a little uneasy that he wouldn't be able to go home if he didn't come back soon.

He doesn't know why, but that forest is full of life. He could feel the same kind of presence in some shrines and trees even in the city, but the level of concentration was completely different.

In the city, it's like a powdered soup diluted dozens of times, but here it's thick and strong like porridge boiled to mush.

And he feels so comfortable in that peculiar space that he felt a little bloated. To be more precise, within that feeling of joy, there is also the anxiety of opening doors that should not open in order.

He may not really be able to come back.

(By the way...)

Yukito remembered.

At that moment, he felt that kind of excitement and fear at the same time.

That happened on a trip he took with everyone at the facility. It was summer vacation. They stayed in a national lodge in the mountains, played table tennis and bathed in hot springs. There were staff at the facility, there were children of the same generation, and there was Yu-nii-chan, whom he adored.

The event occurred on the last day. When he was playing in the water in the river bed, he got into a fight with one of the children from the institution over a trivial matter. Yukito felt that he was being mean to him, but the other person probably didn't have much malice.

It was a common fight between the children.

Emotional shocks that inevitably occur in institutions with several children. A piece of everyday life that is insignificant. The only thing that was different from the norm was...

There was an uncontrollable creepy power latent within him. Before he knew it, the river water suddenly rose up and swallowed the other boy, who was in agony unable to even scream in the water.

Yukito, who was stunned, finally realized that the abnormal phenomenon was caused by him, and in overwhelming fear, he tried to free the boy.

Luckily in the midst of the misfortune, the column of water dispersed and the boy fell helpless to the surface of the water before he lost his life. For better or worse, it was a series of events that happened because the check on power wasn't working.

After that, a nightmarish time with no sense of reality passed. Ambulance with flashing red lights.

The police rushed. Adults coming and going. Children crying.

Yukito was questioned many times by the people around him about what had happened, but he was unable to answer any of the questions.

Partly because he was still in the lower grades of elementary school, he didn't fully understand what had happened in the first place.

And before he knew it, he was back at the institution. Yukito came to his senses and first tried to apologize to the other boy. Just to be sure, he underwent a full examination at the hospital, but no significant abnormalities were found and he heard he was resting in his room.

However, he was interrupted by a boy in the middle of the hall.

It was Yu-nii-chan.

Yu-nii-chan stopped Yukito and said:

"Yukito, you should stop."

"Uh, but..."

"Even if you go, it will have the opposite effect. That child..."

Yu-nii-chan hesitated for a moment.

"Now he's scared."

After a while, Yukito realized what Yu-nii-chan didn't say.

What is the child afraid of?

None other than Yukito Yanagi himself.

"....."

Yukito realized that tears were welling up at the corners of his eyes.

"Yu-nii-chan? Are you afraid of me, Yu-nii-chan?"

Yu-nii-chan slightly averted his gaze from him and then responded with a laugh.

"Haha. Yukito is Yukito. There is nothing to fear."

Yukito bit his lip and nodded as he thought.

Yu-nii-chan is an adult.

He is so good at lying that he cares about people.

After that, Yu-nii-chan and the people from the facility treated Yukito very well, looking fair. If the frightened children acted to drive Yukito out, he even liked it.

However, Yukito had already stopped opening his heart to those around him. If he disturbed his emotions, he might hurt someone important again. If the teacher in the facility or Yu-nii-chan were to suffer damage, he could never forgive himself this time.

And what was even scarier was...

(I feel comfortable with this flow of power. If I let my guard down, I feel like I'll be swallowed as is.)

The sensation was strange to him. The Mitama around him was constantly increasing and it was already like a great current. He had the feeling that the further he went, the closer he got to a place out of this world.

Momoko made a big mistake.

(At first, I didn't have a place to live on that institution. That's why I didn't resist coming to this island at all.)

No maybe...

In the first place, his own place may not be anywhere in human society. With a strange mix of frustration and joy, Yukito advanced further into the depths of the forest.

Somewhere in his heart, he vaguely thought that he might not come back.

(If that's the case, then that's fine.)

He wasn't weird or sad or scary.

And suddenly his vision widened. There was a gap between the trees, a small open space in the woods.

Yukito stiffened his body. It was not because of the impressive vitality, nor because of the countless Mitamas that continued to circle around the place with joy.

Because there was an unexpected client. Sitting quietly on the mat in the center of the venue. As he hummed, he pulled out a bottle and a bag of candy from a bag.

"Ah?"

The person immediately noticed Yukito's appearance.

"Hello, Yukito-kun."

He waved his hand in a happy and smiling voice.

"Are you taking a walk too?"

Yukito was speechless. Intuitively, he approached the image of meeting in isolated and unexplored territory.

(Walk?)

That person is...

Kurama Haruaki, Yanagi Makoto's former disciple and Sagawa Jingi's classmate, called out to Yukito with a smile.

"You can come too. Today is really a good day for a picnic, right?"

"....."

Yukito came closer as if he was fascinated. He really felt like he had been charmed by a fox or a raccoon dog.

As Yukito sat on the edge of the rug, Kurama excitedly poured the warm liquid from the bottle into a glass.

"Take this, it's tea."

He continued speaking.

"Do you want sweets too? Do you want crispy and delicious fries?"

Yukito looked at the delicate and neat face of a woman in Kurama, and then said:

"Oh, no, thank you. I'm fine with just the tea."

He finally murmured his thanks to him and received the tea. He was completely detoxed.

He took a sip of the tea into his mouth, and when he somehow felt comfortable, he sheepishly asked a question.

"Umm, Kurama-san, what are you doing here?"

"Ah?"

Kurama, who was looking at the soft light coming through the cracks in the trees, smiled and bowed his head.

"Eh? What are you saying...? I'm taking a walk... Just like you, right?"

"Oh, yes."

Yukito nodded vaguely. Kurama nodded.

"This is a place where life flows well. I like it too, and sometimes I come here to bathe in the forest. Come to think of it, my master used to walk here a lot. Fufu, you can't fight blood. It's very good."

Kurama looked very happy.

"....."

Yukito finally understood.

At first, he thought that Kurama had gone before him for some reason to help or warn him.

But not.

(This place, which I have entered with all my might, is nothing more than an easy daily path for Kurama-san.)

Kurama's next statement made it confirmation.

"If you don't mind, can I show you the deep end?"

".....!"

Something that had been stubborn inside Yukito suddenly melted away. He let out a wry smile involuntarily. The tragic feeling that he had thought that he might not be able to come home now was ridiculous. He was sure that he must have been walking on a promenade that was the size of a hiking trail, as if it were the end of the world.

"No."

Yukito shook his head with a giggle.

"I'll stop. Today..."

"Yes?"

Kurama tilted his head curiously.

Then he spent some time with Kurama. He drank another cup of tea and took some sweets with him. At first, the vitality he felt was excessive, but as he chatted with Kurama, he changed to a moderately comfortable level.

Yukito felt his feelings calm down slowly and silently. Before long, he helped Kurama put the mat away and walked with him to the entrance of the forest.

At that moment...

"Speaking of which, what about Jingi?"

Kurama asked.

"Yes. Well, I'm fine. That person isn't a proper adult, so it's a big deal."

"Yes."

Kurama seemed worried. They reached the exit of the forest faster than he expected.

(I see... I didn't go into the forest at all.)

He thought deeply.

The sun was still high when they came out of the woods. Thereupon, Yukito parted ways with Kurama, who had other business to attend to, and headed straight home. Strangely, unlike him before entering the forest, he was able to return home without hesitation.

When he got to the door, he met Momoko who was sweeping.

"Ah, Yukito-kun."

Momoko looked at him as if she saw Yukito's expression. Yukito took a deep breath.

(Alright.)

He talked to himself and smiled.

"Momoko-san, I have a little story to tell you."

Anyway, he thought of telling her little by little what happened while he was away from that island.

Momoko relaxed her shoulders and smiled as if she had sensed something.

"Yes. Well then, why don't we have a cup of tea? There are delicious rice crackers, would you like?"

"...Yes!"

Yukito followed Momoko through the front door. He noticed that his shoulders were weaker than when he left.

BROTHERS 02: KURAMA HARUAKI & JINGI SAGAWA

An Aramitama was crying.

While spinning like a tornado, he would swing his eight arms and destroy whatever he hit.

It was like a storm of malice that cut fields, felled trees and stone walls. The constant roar of the wind sounded like a scream of agony.

Poor thing.

Kurama Haruaki feels helpless pity for the supernatural beings that wreak destruction.

A block of stone was blown by the wind from the Aramitama, brushed the hem of his hunting clothes and hit the railing behind him. Steel railings were smashed into dogleg shapes and stones were smashed to pieces. With that behind him, Kurama stepped forward.

"Oh, pathetic vitality that has become stagnant and polluted. I will exorcise your suffering."

And Kurama crossed his arms.

"Between heaven and earth, empty and endless, move and finally come out."

The Aramitama turned to him.

Red eyes glued to the raging wind widened. The vitality that floated in the surroundings moved towards Kurama as if it was drawn to him. It became the current of the atmosphere, the wind, and began to revolve around Kurama.

An Aramitama has no intelligence. However, instinctively, the Aramitama recognized Kurama's vitality as "something that makes it difficult for him to exist". Extending his eight arms, the Aramitama rushed towards Kurama with the force of a hurricane.

The golden fan was flung open.

To hide his mouth, Kurama turned his fan forward. The gold-rimmed key shone faintly in the sunlight. Kurama swung the fan from right to left, like a good dancer dancing for a moment.

The Aramitama's charge drifted far to the left.

Caught by the hand of an invisible giant, the Aramitama began to spin around Kurama as if he was being forced. He stretched out his eight arms and struggled to grab hold of Kurama's body, but was never able to escape Kurama's path.

Kurama kept dancing. He was also spinning on the spot, pulling his legs, stretching his arms, and swinging the fan constantly.

Kurama was now producing a large tornado. When he turned, the atmosphere changed, and the wind from the Aramitama turned into a tornado entangled in a tornado. The eight

arms that were in front of Kurama gradually lost their strength, and began to sway as if they were responding to Kurama's fans and enjoying dancing in the wind.

"Nothing is called the beginning of heaven and earth, existence is called the mother of all things."

When Kurama chanted that spell, the entire tornado began to glow pale gold. The flowing vitality eliminated the Aramitama's stagnant vitality and he was about to eliminate it. Aramitama himself, as if pleased by this, extended his eight arms and pointed them towards the sky.

A golden glow enveloped the Aramitama.

Eight arms stretched out into the sky, the red eyes caught in the center turned into golden bubbles and melted in midair. Like a receding wind, the golden bubbles rose up in a tornado and were sucked into the heavens.

Before long, Kurama stopped dancing.

Nothing was left behind. You couldn't even feel the sway of a gentle breeze. A veil of tranquility fell everywhere.

Kurama raised his face.

His usual calm expression had returned. He closed the golden fan with a snap and returned it to his pocket.

As if on cue, a young man jumped from the railing of the embankment.

"Hey, Haru-nii. Are you done?"

Jingi waved his hand slightly with his usual sloppy face. Kurama let out a small sigh and looked up as if to reproach him for such an act of kindness.

"You're too late, Jingi. I finished everything."

"Ok, then, originally it wasn't a job two people could do."

"That's right. It's a job you should do alone."

When he said it without hesitation, Jingi was unable to answer and remained silent. Kurama slowly climbed onto the bench, one step at a time, a smile on his face.

"In the first place, you're the one who said that you wanted to appease the Mitama because you needed money, so why did I come earlier?"

"No, well, that's... a lot happened. I helped an old lady who was in trouble on the road."

"Hmm. Where is she from? I have to say hello later."

"....."

Kurama was smiling. It wasn't that he was angry. He has been seeing his brother like this for over ten years. It's not that kind of relationship that will make you angry, shocked or abandon him.

But where it must be pressed, it must be pressed.

Upon reaching the embankment, Kurama tapped him on the shoulder.

"But don't worry, Jingi. You still have work to do."

"What is it...?"

Kurama turned around. A desolate field stretches there. Fortunately, it was fallow land, so there was no crop damage.

"It must be hard for the people in this house to clean up after themselves. Please help me with that, Jingi."

"....."

Jingi made a very unpleasant face. He knows this because they have known each other for a long time. The act that this younger brother hates the most is none other than "work". In particular, he thinks that he would be better off dead than doing simple, tedious, persevering work like cleaning up afterward.

Of course, Kurama doesn't care about such things. If you want compensation, you have to work for it.

"Then please, I'll give it to you, Jingi."

"Oh, I'm coming!"

Shouting as if he had given up, Jingi went down the embankment. Kurama nodded in satisfaction when he saw her back.

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"This is the last time!"

He threw the large stone caught in the field back into the original river bed and it collapsed on the spot.

His entire body was drenched in sweat, and while he was out of breath, Jingi wiped the sweat from his forehead. He had already taken off his jacket and was only wearing a T-shirt. He covered the areas that could be covered with the pulse patching technique, but all other areas were manual labor. His entire body creaked, telling him that he would definitely have muscle pain tomorrow.

"Haru-nii! It's over, damn it!"

Still crouched, Jingi turned his head and looked toward the bench. Under the sky that was turning redder, Kurama was sitting calmly on the edge of the bench.

"Yes. Thanks for your hard work, Jingi."

Kurama, smiling and drinking tea, looks like a jizo or something. In fact, all around him were rice, vegetables, sake and other offerings, in other words, gifts from the islanders. Kurama, who has appeased many Mitama as the priest of the Kasen Shrine, is very popular among the islanders, and even if he passes through the path, he will receive things.

Standing up and starting up the embankment, Kurama lifted the teapot next to him.

"Would you like some tea? Tomi-san in the back made it for me. I have some for you."

"No, it's okay, I'll have this drink."

Jingi took the four-sided bottle, put it directly into his mouth, and began to drink. The sweet alcohol slid down his throat and his insides heated. He let out a breath and sat down on the spot.

"Ah, I'm tired... or rather, Haru-nii, if you're just looking at me here, please help me."

Kurama smiled slightly.

"I can't do that. It's a devotional job, so I can't get my hands on it."

"If that's the case, there's no point in being here. You should have waited somewhere warmer."

"My brother is working for the first time in a long time. Isn't it your brother's duty to watch over you?"

Jingi sighed quietly. If he was someone other than Kurama, he would have simply pointed out, "You shouldn't be watching, you should be helping". But this brother says it from the bottom of his heart. Look at Jingi with the affection of the family, not with duties and responsibilities.

Precisely because he knows that, Jingi didn't raise his head to Kurama.

Kurama brought his mouth close to the teacup and then looked inside. He looks like he ran out of tea. Kurama suddenly directed his attention to the bottle Jingi was holding and handed him a cup of tea.

"One for me too."

That was fine, Kurama is fresh mouthed. Jingi smiled wryly and tipped the sake bottle.

"Okay."

Totto-totto-, the teacup was filled abundantly while making a pleasant sound. After waiting for the sake to settle down, Kurama took it to his mouth. The white throat moved up and down two or three times, and Kurama let out a satisfied sigh.

"Yes. I like it, it turns me on."

"Is that so? Are you cold?"

"Oh, of course. It's still time for hot sake to be delicious."

Suddenly, the brothers' eyes met. They didn't need words. They nodded to each other, rose to their feet at the same time, and began preparations for withdrawal.

He returned the teapot and teacup to Tomi-san in the back, and for some reason, it was decided that the reward would go to Jingi. It was rare for Jingi to do this kind of simple job, but for some reason, when she got close to Kurama, he turned like this.

"Come on."

Kurama was walking down the sidewalk with Jingi, clutching a four-sided bottle in one hand. His face was slightly drunk, and he had been repeatedly hiccuping for a while now. If other people were doing the same, they'd be sloppy drunks, but when his brother's drunk, there's a happy atmosphere.

"Hey, Haru-nii. It's dangerous, come a little closer."

"Hmm? Oh, that's right. Fufufu, thanks, Jingi."

Kurama smirked as he staggered closer to Jingi. He should have been reasonably strong against alcohol, but it might be because he drank the sake from the teacup in one go. When he was worried about whether he could reach his destination safely, Kurama suddenly took something out of his pocket.

He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

"Haru-nii, that..."

"Oh, this? Fufufu, it's alright. Chatarou and Yako chose it. Are you jealous?"

"No, it's just a cell phone, right? Everyone has one."

"Is that so, isn't it? Oh, my, this is so easy to operate!"

"That's because it's for children. It's the first time I've seen a twenty-year-old wearing something like this..."

"Well, it's better to be easy than hard, isn't it? Well, that's it... What are you trying to do?"

Kurama stopped, turned his head and began to think. After that, he suddenly turned his cell phone towards Jingi, pointed at the messaging app.

"Hey, Jingi. What's that red thing in the upper right?"

"What? It means you have unread messages. What's that?!"

"Is incredible?"

"Haru-nii, you didn't reply! Look at this, you've been receiving confirmation messages from Chatarou many times!"

"Chatarou, ah, that's right! I was thinking of telling Chatarou that his job was done! Great, do your best!"

With a bright expression on his face, Kurama patted Jingi's head. Although he was weak, he was willing to accept it.

Kurama looked at his cell phone again. He blinked several times with his eyes wet with alcohol and, for some reason, crouched down with the sake bottle at his feet.

"Well, if you want I'll show you. Click here... then..."

"....."

"Press the white area, then... "F" "O" "R" "C" "H" "A" "T" "A" "R" "O" "U"..."

"....."

"Hmm? Hey, okay? How can I make the "letters" smaller?"

"Don't worry! Lend it to me!"

Jingi grabbed Kurama's cell phone and sent a message to Chatarou at high speed. "I'm done with my work, so I'm going out for a drink. Just do it right away."

No matter how you flip it, it's a line Kurama is unlikely to say, and Chatarou will probably get confused, but that's not what Jingi knows.

"Yes, it's over! That's enough, don't use your cell phone!"

When he handed back Kurama's phone, he clapped for some reason.

"Oh, that's amazing! I'm sorry, Jingi. After all, you are a reliable little brother."

"Oh, I'm not at all happy to be praised for something like this..."

"But is it okay? Maybe it's too soon and it won't arrive properly?"

"Eh?"

Kurama crossed his arms and thought. He's always been fluffy, but now he's twice as fluffy because he's drunk.

"If you go too fast, you might make a wrong turn or get stuck somewhere. I'm starting to feel uneasy. Would that message get lost?"

"That's not going to happen, what are you saying?"

"Hmm. Just in case, let's send it by another means."

Kurama didn't seem to have heard Jingi's words at all. He put his cell phone in his pocket and took out something else in his place. It was a note on Japanese paper and a brush.

He scribbled something on a notepad and tossed it into the air. Concentrating on the fluttering notes, Kurama signaled at a speed that didn't draw attention.

"Humanity, earth and sky! Each one of us, the arts and crafts of our husbands, return to your roots!"

A localized tornado erupted, entangled the memo and propelled it into the sky. The note flew over his head like a bird into the sky at breakneck speed.

Looking at the stunned dedication, he nodded in satisfaction.

"With this, I should get to Chatarou properly. Come on, Jingi."

Looking at Kurama's back, who began to walk quickly, Jingi replied weakly.

"No, you don't need a cell phone, you..."

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Izakaya "Usagi" has many advantages, but the biggest one is that you are free to bring your own food.

Of course, there is a fee per seat, but still, it's cheaper to bring as many snacks and sake as you want, and if you pay for the ingredients and technical fees, the owner, Azuki Mitarai, will cook you a decent dish. In Ninoshima, where there are many people engaged in agriculture and fishing, it was truly a dream shop.

That's why Kurama and Jingi visited "Usagi".

"Oh, Kurama-sensei! That's weird!"

"Sensei! Thank you very much for the other day! Thanks to you, my wife is fine!"

"Sensei! Have a drink! It's my treat!"

As soon as he entered the store, the customers welcomed Kurama at once. Kurama greeted with a smile, responded to the handshakes and gratefully accepted the alcohol and food they offered him. It was also nice not to show unnecessary restraint or concern, and it was one of Kurama's virtues.

Kurama, who was in high demand, was finally given a seat at the table in the center of the store. On the other hand, Jingi delivered the offerings received from the residents to Mitarai.

"Azuki-chan, I beg you to do this. Keep it nice."

"Okay, but I'll take the exact price. The bill won't be paid this time."

"Huh? Well, that's it, hahahaha..."

"Don't fake it by laughing."

Unlike Mitarai, who had a calm look, Jingi's gaze wavered.

Kurama thought with a drunken head. (My brother is in trouble.) Then it was his brother's turn.

"Okay, okay, I've got this place. Let's pop, pop!"

The interior of the store exploded.

"Oh, Sensei!"

"Are you sure you want me to do that...? We didn't do anything."

"But that's what Kurama-sensei said. I'm grateful here..."

Kurama tilted his head. He really didn't understand why everyone was so upset. It occurred to him that his comments were interpreted as "treat everyone".

Jingi noticed the same thing and rolled his eyes and said:

"Wait, wait, you cheeky bastards! Why would Haru-nii buy from you?"

"Of course it's fine! Everyone's portion is also my present!"

Jingi opened his mouth wide and the drunken guests cheered.

"Uooooooooh, as expected of Kurama-sensei! Higher humans are different!"

"Sensei! Bring as many bottles of sake as you can! Sensei, I'll order it for you!"

"Sensei, I will follow you forever!"

"Sen-sei! Sen-sei!"

"Sen-sei! Sen-sei!"

Kurama laughed and waved to the applause that rained down. Jingi said bitterly as he sat down across from Kurama.

"Hey, Haru-nii! Are you alright?! Even the Kasen Shrine can't afford it!"

"Well, that's good. It's a celebration of devotion to work."

"No, I just happened to work today, and it's not like I'm going to get a job."

"Oooh?! Did you hear that?! Looks like Jingi is going to get a job!"

"What?! That devastating dedication!"

"Jingi's Dedication?!"

"A worthless dedication!"

"Stay in line there. I'll hit you one by one!"

He got angry and kicked his seat, but the same number of sake bottles as the number of guests were pushed, and they were thrown back to their seat. The sake cups were lined up in front of Kurama, and they poured one after the other without worrying about spilling.

"Come on, Sensei! First of all, come over here!"

"Yes."

For now, Kurama held the sake cup in front of him high.

"Good luck then."

"Cheers!"

He didn't remember much after that.

He only remembered the hands of the owner who brought the food, his expression of devotion as if he had swallowed a sour bug, how he toasted each time a new customer arrived, and how many people asked him for advice, but his drunken head closed. But he couldn't quite understand, and when he repeated "I see" and "I see", the conversation somehow went smoothly.

Before long, those hours had passed, and when the only people sitting at the table were Kurama and Jingi, he suddenly said:

"How is Yukito-kun?"

"Eh?"

Jingi, who was drinking chuhai, looked at Kurama with dark eyes. Up to that point, he's been drinking gallons. "Ah...", he let out a voice that sounded just like he remembered it, and Jingi laughed out loud.

"That reminds me, I heard you met him the other day. Somewhere in the woods. I don't know what to do, but please tell me, thank you."

"Thank you? What?"

"Well? He mentioned that he was able to get home thanks to you. He got lost?"

Kurama thought with a drunken head. It is true that he met Yukito during a bath in the forest, but he didn't think he was lost. All Kurama knows is that they had tea together and had a good time chatting.

Jingi then slammed his body against the back. Suspending the handle of the cup with just his little finger and turning it (Kurama thought it was dangerous, he shouldn't do it), he said without looking at anyone.

"Well, is it okay for me to be his teacher? Isn't it better that I be Haru-nii? You have two apprentices of the same age."

It's not like he's complaining. Jingi is not that kind of person. He was just expressing a question that had just popped into his head.

Indeed, Kurama thought. Jingi isn't necessarily qualified as a hookup master. Little serious and irresponsible, living from day to day. No matter how much a person likes Jingi, he can't deny that he is given such an evaluation.

But Kurama smiled and shook his head.

"That's not true, Jingi. Luckily, you're fine as his master."

Jingi looked at Kurama. He had a look as if he was asking, "Why?"

Kurama closed his eyes thoughtfully and answered.

"Of all of us, you are more like his master than anyone. You are similar in his ugly parts, but you are also similar in his amazing parts. That is why you are perfect for Yukito-kun, my master's son."

"....."

"Aka and I probably won't be as good as you. We won't be able to open Yukito-kun's heart. That's why he's okay with you, Jingi."

Jingi gasped slightly. It must have been because his head was half asleep. Kurama didn't quite understand who he was talking about.

He just took a small breath and laughed.

"Then. Well, if Haru-nii says so, I will remain his master in silence."

"Yeah. That's fine. That's fine."

It was then that he lost consciousness for a moment.

Before he knew it, Kurama was being shaken by someone. When he opened his eyes and looked over there, he seemed to be the owner's face. With a slightly concerned look on his face, he shook Kurama's shoulder.

"Sensei, Kurama-sensei, we're closing the shop. Damn those guys, they made him drink until he was like this..."

"Oh, yes. I'm sorry, Mitarai-san. It's alright, I'll prepare..."

"Hmm? Are you going to walk along the river bank?"

For some reason, while drinking canned chuhai, Jingi, who was sitting in front of him, asked curiously. Kurama smiled wryly. Sleeping for a moment, his thoughts woke up a bit. The difference between Kurama and Jingi is that he likes sake, but not enough to drink.

"No, it's the end of the day, Jingi. Go home properly for today."

"...Yes."

Seeing his younger brother nod more obediently than usual, Kurama smirked and reached for his kariginu's chest.

He serched and serched.

He serched again.

Kurama then looked at Jingi. With a troubled smile, Jingi's expression suddenly clouded over.

"Jingi."

"What's happen?"

"Apparently, I lost my wallet. I think it was when I faced the Aramitama."

"Eh?"

The matter seemed problematic. If Jingi said the same, he'd probably be cussing, "Liar, you runaway bastard!" There was no way the famous Kurama could do such a thing. Before long, his gaze remained on Jingi's twitching face, as did Kurama.

At that moment, Kurama, with a completely innocent smile on his face, said to Jingi:

"Then please take care of me, Jingi."

"Even so, you really listen to what Sensei says, you bastard. To think that he would just go looking for his wallet."

Mitarai muttered something like that as he cleaned the shop.

To his credit, Kurama was allowed to wait inside the shop. Although it is spring, the nights are still cold. It was a political consideration that he couldn't throw at a celebrity who was still drinking sake, but Kurama didn't notice that and grabbed the cup of tea he had just drunk with both hands.

"Yes. He's a reliable little brother."

He said it sincerely and drank the tea.

BROTHERS 03: JINGI SAGAWA & AKA IBUKI

Human beings have certain qualities that they are born with, each has its own position and is designed to fit where they should.

"Mochi is a rice cake", "Society is a puzzle that compensates for unevenness", "Everyone is different, everyone is good". No matter who you ask, you'll probably come across one or two of those idioms.

Taihei Makita believes that there is some truth to this mediocre view of society.

But at the same time, there are people in this world who are truly extraordinary, people who cannot belong to the "professional", and there are tasks that only they can do. Makita also knows that such a person exists.

For example, Aka Ibuki, the head of "Ayaka Security", is one of them.

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He still couldn't sense anything disturbing in the lights of the distant downtown area.

However, the reason why he seemed like this is because Makita has no spiritual qualities. A keen sense, due to a special practice or innate constitution, the possessor can see the flow of spiritual energy before it solidifies and manifests, what the local language calls "Ki".

How would you like this scene?

He wondered what the representative of "Ayaka Security", Aka Ibuki, sees.

Saying nothing, Ibuki took a chocolate bar from his pocket and chewed on it. It hasn't been long since he started waiting in that alley on the outskirts of town, but the garbage can next to him was already full of packing scraps.

Ibuki stuffed things into the spaces between work and daily errands. Since he was a child, he's always been a big eater, but lately he's been much hungrier than normal people.

He is not a giant like Makita. His physique wrapped in a suit is rather slender. As for where the food disappears, it probably becomes Ibuki's "abilities" and physical drive, in other words, the heat of the fight.

A strange scream was heard from the direction of the city center. A bestial roar was mixed with an unpleasant metallic sound.

"An Aramitama, it has materialized. Let's go there."

"I understand... Boss, I'm coming."

When Makita, who received the report, looked at him, Ibuki gave a slight nod and began to walk towards the light. His whole body began to feel strange. It was a high-pressure life force that glowed in the surrounding air like a mist of heat.

"Ayaka Security" is a security company whose service area is Ayaka and Ichinoshima Islands. That is their official position, but in reality they are a group of armed exorcists whose mission is to exterminate the materialized psychic disorder "Aramitama" and minimize the damage.

The distant screams began to mix with the shots, and then those driven to shoot appeared.

Hovering over a two-story building on the outskirts of the city, a huge "snake" with a thick body that looks like the trunk of a large tree, with two arms twisted like a rope. It has a mask-like head with a gigantic eye that splits vertically.

The members of "Ayaka Security" surround the squirming "snake" and chase after it. A team of about 10 people, focused on young people in their twenties. They are armed with large and small firearms such as pistols, rifles, and machine guns. It is a weapon that is sophistically approved for use under the guise of "a tool used in festivals held on the island". All bullets have undergone goryo exorcism and have a spiritual impact.

However, the anti-personnel firearms did not do much damage to the giant "snake". The "snake" rushed forward with increasing speed, as if it hated the hail bullets that were hitting its entire body. It was an impulse that tried to crush Ibuki who was standing in front of him.

Ibuki took out a large pistol from his pocket and fired casually.

The bullet landed on the "serpent's" forehead and its huge head was knocked off.

Ibuki's weapon, itself, was nothing compared to the firearms his subordinates possessed. However, the power of the bullets fired from there was incomparable. It is the difference in ability between the subordinates who use weapons imbued with the power of magic and Ibuki, who is a powerful magician.

In succession, two, three more bullets fired by Ibuki hit his torso, scraping the flesh of condensed vitality, and the "snake" soared into the sky as he raised an anguished voice, and then, eyes shining at Ibuki. He recognized Ibuki as his enemy.

A gigantic sickle head turned towards Ibuki, and his entire body was bent with terrifying power. In the next moment, it came out like a spring.

A fierce smile appeared at the corner of Ibuki's mouth. As he took a low stance and stomped his feet firmly on the ground, the vitality that enveloped his entire body began to emit a strange glow. In other words, he himself was a monster comparable to an Aramitama. The "snake" roared and jumped on another monster that appeared in front of him, opening his jaws. He was already too close for a gun. A poisonous fang like an iron spear would pierce through Ibuki's body at that moment. The pistol grip was hammered into the forehead of the "snake".

A strong blow like an iron hammer broke the mask of the "snake", the face of the exoskeleton with a single huge eye.

Ibuki uses a pistol to apply his own technique to the bullets and shoot them from a distance. If you are within range of realistic fists and legs, it is more effective to hit with meat.

Second shot, third shot and more. With each punch, Ibuki made a big swing and threw his grab, elbow, left fist, left and right knees with all his might. Furthermore, he plunged deep into the frightened

Aramitama, placed the pistol in his right hand on his chin in a boxing manner, and fired rapidly. When the magazine was empty, he dropped the pistol and hit the head and entire body of the "snake" with both fists. His rough appearance is exactly like a devil.

Makita gave instructions to the members who were chasing the "snake" and had them surround the demon and the "snake" from afar. If that happens, there is nothing they can do. Originally, the purpose of that mission was to drive the giant Aramitama away from the city and guide him to that place where his "boss" could wield all of his power.

An Aramitama up to a certain scale can be dealt with by members with the provided firearms. However, it's hard to deal with something that has grown to a monstrous size, like that, unless it's a real caster.

Although "Ayaka Security" prides itself on being Ikki Tousen, it is essentially a one-man team focused on and working to support the powerful magician Aka Ibuki. If you compare it to a Guso puzzle, Aka Ibuki is a gigantic distorted and sharp piece. He is irreplaceable.

"Oh, it's decided!"

One of the bloodthirsty members raised his voice.

A barrage of fists and feet strengthened by supernatural art finally shattered the "snake" mask. A gigantic eyeball the size of a melon, Aramitama's core was exposed and rolled out of the half-destroyed skull. If that is destroyed, the Aramitama will no longer be able to maintain his body, and it will become a stagnant life force and disperse.

But...

Another eyeball appeared behind the giant eyeball.

"There are two cores...!"

Makita and the members were amazed, and Ibuki also took a retreat stance as a precaution.

The first eyeball of the "snake" formed a new skull with a thick vitality in the air.

The torso, like the trunk of a large tree, fell apart. It was originally made of two "snakes" twisted together like a shimenawa.

(This is bad...!)

In a head-on fight, Ibuki never loses, but the separation of the Aramitama in front of him was completely unexpected.

He started a two-on-one battle against the two-headed "snake". Just as Makita feared, the two coordinated snakes played with Ibuki, who was superior in strength. As Ibuki's eyes warned against one of the "snake" heads, the other ate from the side.

A living fist struck one of his long torsos, and the other, unharmed, became entangled.

Makita ordered the members to take cover, but the firepower was insufficient, and moreover, the line of fire was limited so as not to hit Ibuki, who was fighting with the "snake". It could not be called a decent force. There was no place for ordinary people to enter the vast arena of spiritual warfare.

As the armed members struggled to get their hands on it, Ibuki was quickly outnumbered. Originally, it is a style that consumes a lot of physical strength and is not suitable for long duration battles. Even as he did that, Ibuki's attacks were muffled and his defenses were weakening. At some point, he would receive fatal damage.

Not that there was nothing they could do. It would not be impossible to forcefully intervene in this battle between the devil and the "snake" to break the deadlock. But that puts some members at risk of injury.

"You can go. I'll stay a while and become a decoy."

The member who spoke earlier, Furin, told Makita.

"There are many people who can replace us, but there is no one who can replace the boss. Make no mistake."

"No, no, you are irreplaceable human resources."

Makita smiled wryly as if to fool his inner thoughts, but he had to make a decision immediately.

Finally, the fangs of the "snake" grazed Ibuki's shoulder, it didn't seem like a fatal blow, but his stance collapsed and his next move was delayed. On the other hand, the "second snake" had already built up strength in preparation for the next blow.

"Come on!"

As Furin jumped, something flashed overhead with a sharp sound.

Next, the head of the "snake", which attacked Ibuki, was flipped over by a great force and fell backwards. Fine droplets smelling of alcohol fell on Furin's head.

"What is this... alcohol?"

"Alright."

A young man approached from the street. He raised one hand in a nonchalant tone and held a long can of commercially available chuhai in the other hand.

"Jingy...!"

"Hey, why are you here?"

Both Furin and the other members, looking somewhat relieved, called out to the man in the chuhai.

To Ibuki Aka's "younger disciples", Sagawa Jingi's face was familiar.

"When I was drinking in town, it seemed like there was some kind of chaos around here... so..."

As he spoke, Jingi climbed up on the wall next to him and sat cross-legged.

"Haha, I came to see you."

"Hey, if you're just kidding..."

Controlling the wind forest, Makita said:

"Please give your support to the boss."

"Well, it's alright. This brother will do his best~♪"

Jingi tipped the can over and spilled the contents on the ground in front of him.

No, the spilled liquid floated as if it had lost gravity just before hitting the ground, turning into a spongy transparent sphere. It is the effect of the moisture manipulation technique, which is Jingi's specialty.

As he did so, the two-headed "snake" regained its stance and attacked with a beast-like siren scream.

Responding to the simultaneous left and right attacks, Ibuki turned towards the head approaching from the left and punched out with his fist from the front. A blow that entered the center of the monocular, the impact shattered the "snake's" skull, and hard eyeballs protruded from the back of his head.

Another "snake" head attacked Ibuki's empty back. A fist-sized transparent mass hit the side of his head. It wasn't as fast as a bullet, and it wasn't as powerful as Ibuki's fist, but with just the right amount of power, it accurately hit the opponent's nose.

The time gained by Jingi was less than a second. That was enough for Ibuki to regain his balance.

Ibuki, who turned towards the remaining head, grabbed the center of the "snake's" head with his fist as before and pulled it out of the skull.

The life energy that made up the body of the "snake" that had lost its two cores quickly dispersed, and the yorishiro that was left in midair fell with a thud. It's probably something like the amulet you're dealing with in Ichinoshima Shrine. It is a keyring with two bells attached to a small shimenawa.

"Well done, big brother. Congratulations!"

Jingi lightly clapped his hands and Ibuki loosened his grip as he undid the technique. His breathing was rough and his fatigue was dark, but his expression remained calm.

"But maybe you're trying too hard. Let's take it easy."

Jingi jumped off the wall, walked around after the fierce battle, picked up the Aramitama cores one by one from the ground, muttered something, and tossed them into empty chuhai cans. Then, for some reason, a handful of eyeballs were sucked into the small spout of the empty can. As if to check the contents, Jingi waved the can to his ear and heard the sound of small things rolling and a low moan.

"Wow, is this the same guy?"

Jingi picked up the "snake" yorishiro from his feet. A small shimenawa, wriggling like two entwined worms, jingling bells.

"Maybe it's because I used the shimenawa as a yorishiro... the veins of the two Aramitas got entangled and their lives will be lost. Well, there's more than I can handle..."

"Jingi, I'll take care of that here."

As Ibuki extended his right hand, Jingi suddenly frowned and stared at his hand.

"No. I'll take this guy to Minoshima and make him calm down."

When Jingi mentioned the name of the place, the atmosphere of the place stiffened for a moment. The employees of "Ayaka Security" secretly looked at Ibuki's complexion.

After a short pause, Ibuki jerked his chin toward the path home.

"Do what you want."

Jingi smiled and nodded, then began to walk briskly. In contrast to Ibuki's behavior, which would intimidate even his direct subordinates, Jingi had nothing to defend. He is a unique respite from the sibling relationship.

"Well then, big brother and everyone, see you later."

Jingi slipped past the employees and walked toward the city. Just as he thought, he came running from a few steps away.

"Almost forgot! Big brother, pay for the chuhai you used in the technique just now, pay! 200 yen! 200 yen!"

"You're a child!"

Beside Furin, who reflexively retorted, Makita smiled wryly. Ibuki's expression also seemed to soften a bit.

"Makita."

Prompted by Ibuki, Makita took his wallet out.

"Here. Liquor fee plus attendance fee. Thank you very much."

"Oh, you have a million tickets! I love you, Maki-chan!"

Jingi waved the 10,000 yen bill he was holding between his fingers and literally danced away.

"Thanks big brother! Let's all play again!"

"It's not 'Let's play again'. We're working."

"Hahaha..."

As Jingi slipped past the employees, he stepped into the darkness, jumped, and disappeared.

"Damn... as usual, he's an iffy guy."

"He's hanging out anyway, so he should work at 'Ayaka Security'."

"Ah, regardless of personality, he is reliable as a fighting force."

"What do you think? He can't be a team player, right?"

As the main members of "Ayaka Security" said, Makita warned them with a wry smile.

"Don't say that. He must have his own way of thinking."

So...

"No, that's not true, Makita-san."

"He only moves with immediate glue!"

"Haha, is that so?"

While laughing, Makita looked at Ibuki.

Ibuki stared thoughtfully into space as he rubbed his right hand, but after a while he pulled a chocolate bar from his chest and began to nibble on it.

Makita shrugged slightly and began to instruct the members to stand down.

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Human society is a puzzle. While each other's distortions complement each other, they come together as one.

But Jingi Sagawa is not a piece by any means. Like water, like smoke, it seems to fit anywhere and doesn't fit anywhere. He slips through a small gap and drifts off again.

There are extraordinary people in this world, and there are duties that only these people can fulfill. Taihei Makita knows that such people exist.

Ibuki's "little brother", Sagawa Jingi, is probably one of those people.

Makita, who is an ordinary person, has no way of knowing what kind of duties he will carry on his shoulders.

BROTHERS 04: AKA IBUKI & YUKITO YANAGI

"The sea train is not moving?"

Yukito Yanagi stood still in the Ichinoshima Station building with a puzzled expression on his face.

"It sure is windy today."

In contrast to the puzzled Yukito, Sanji Inou nodded calmly.

"Um, when are you moving in?"

"Well, it's impossible today, isn't it?"

A reluctant driver said rudely.

Yukito became increasingly worried and looked in the direction of Yukito's current home in Ninoshima. The island's shadow isn't far away, but if it's separated by the sea, Yukito won't be able to reach it on his own.

He had heard that the sea train was easy to stop, but he didn't think that even on a sunny day, strong winds would stop it.

"What shall we do? The ship..."

"If you ask, there will be places that provide it, but you shouldn't force yourself to cross the sea on a windy day. Stay in Ichinoshima today."

Inou said that lightly. For 15-year-old Yukito, not being able to go home today was a big deal, but seeing Inou's calm smile, his shoulders relaxed as he wondered if he would be forced to find a way to get home.

Today, Yukito came to Ichinoshima at Momoko's request. It was a simple mission to deliver the botamochi made by Momoko to Inou and buy a special ham from a store in Ichinoshima. Since he came to Ayaka Island, he has always gone out with Jingi, but this morning he went out to have fun, so Yukito is alone. He felt a little uneasy, but he remembered that he had been taken there before, and he was able to get to the town hall without any problem. Inou welcomes Yukito when he visits, treats him to tea, and accompanies him to a renowned butcher shop that sells delicious ham.

He had finished his errands without a hitch and all that was left was to go home.

Yukito followed Inou out of the sea train station building.

"Well then, you should come to my house. However, I'm sorry I can't have dinner with you today because I have a dinner plan..."

"No! All I need is a place to sleep."

"But..."

It seems that Inou can't bear to let Yukito eat alone. He turned his gaze as if he was thinking, fixed his eyes on a corner of the busy Ichinoshima street and exclaimed: "Ah!"

"Aka-kun!"

As he followed Inou's gaze in shock, he saw a tall, thin young man in a suit across the street.

Aka Ibuki. The second disciple of Makoto Yanagi, Yukito's father. He currently heads "Ayaka Security", a special security company that deals with the Aramitamas on the island of Ichinoshima, while also fighting on the front lines himself.

His eyes are sharp and he wears a terrifying atmosphere that seems to be not solid. In fact, Yukito knows that he has a weapon hidden in his pocket (it's a special anti-Aramitama weapon, and although seems to have obtained permission from the city, it's still dangerous).

Yukito has a strong revulsion towards Ibuki's way of eliminating the Aramitama. In addition, there is also a feeling close to fear from having witnessed that incident.

Yukito flinched, but Inou smiled and moved closer to Ibuki. Yukito reluctantly did the same.

"Aka-kun, are you at work?"

"Yes. I'm about to head back to the office after completing my patrol."

"Are you free after this?"

"As long as no Aramitama appears, that's it for today."

Yukito had a bad feeling about the way Inou was speaking.

"Umm, Inou..."

"If you don't mind, can you have dinner with Yukito-kun today and let him stay the night? He was in trouble because the sea train stopped and he couldn't return to Ninoshima."

Yukito hugged his head.

Inou, who had been kind enough to say so, scratched his head and said, "My house is fine, but I can't bear to leave him alone late at night."

Ibuki's gaze turned to Yukito.

(Say no.), Yukito prayed in his heart. It's not that he hates Ibuki, but he's kind of scary and awkward. Even now, he remembers feeling suffocated. Ibuki was too high a hurdle for Yukito, who hadn't trained well in interpersonal relationships.

"You guys are like brothers, but you haven't been able to talk much since Yukito-kun came back, right? Because Yukito-kun is always monopolized by Jingi-kun."

Although Jingi is a troublesome guy with a high degree of uselessness, he now deeply felt how calm he was. Ibuki looked at Yukito for a few seconds with a blank expression that he didn't know what he was thinking. As soon as he said "Come on.", he turned on his heel.

Frowning, Sanji Inou looked at him with a smile on his face, as if to say that he was happy, and waved his hand saying, "See you later."

Reluctantly, Yukito followed Ibuki.

"I'm counting on you, Aka-kun.", said a relaxed voice behind him.

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"I don't mind."

He was worried that he was angry at the way he was speaking, but Ibuki gave Yukito a sidelong glance and blurted out more words.

"What do you want to eat?"

"Eh?"

"In the dinner."

He seems like he really wanted them to have dinner together.

"I, anything..."

"...Right. Then I'll search the store properly."

Ibuki nodded to himself.

"I'll go back to my office. Yukito, please wait in the restaurant."

"Yes."

He once went to GOZ, a restaurant apparently owned by Ibuki. The "Ayaka Security" office seems to be in the same building where GOZ is located, so after parting ways with Ibuki once in the elevator, Yukito went to the restaurant alone.

GOZ was a store with a high threshold for Yukito, and after hesitating for a few seconds to work up the courage to open the door, he opened from the other side.

"Oh, you really are here."

A muscular brown-skinned man (he thinks his name was Makita) who showed his face from the other side of the door smiled brightly at Yukito.

"I just got a call from the boss. Aka-kun is coming, so drink some juice and wait for him."

"Thank you."

As he entered the store, the eyes of the four men and women sitting in the front boxes, dressed in outfits similar to Ibuki's and wearing red "Ayaka Security" armbands, turned to Yukito.

"Oh! That kid is Yanagi-sensei's son? It's dangerous."

A long-haired man in a threadbare suit got up from his seat and approached Yukito.

Furthermore, a beautiful woman leaned forward and tried to look at Yukito's face.

"Hey! He's cute! Is he around the same age as Ibara-chan? Ayakai!"

"Hey guys, don't do anything to surprise him."

A serious-looking young man in glasses scolded them both.

"...Sorry. Nice to meet you."

A young man with bangs long enough to hide his eyes greeted him silently.

When Yukito was puzzled, not knowing how to respond, Makita smiled brightly.

"I'm sorry, Yukito-kun. They are employees of "Ayaka Security"."

Furin was the man with long hair, Kanezaki was the beautiful woman, Mizutani was the man with glasses, and Onden was the man with long bangs.

The four of them (especially Furin and Kanezaki, who seemed to have bright personalities) seemed to want to talk to Yukito more, but the shy Yukito hesitated and went to the counter where Makita was. Makita laughed and opened a bottle of cider for Yukito. He poured cider into a glass filled with ice and there was a refreshing sound of bubbles popping.

Yukito sat down at the counter and thanked him for the glass of cider.

"Since you are the boss's younger brother, everyone is very curious about Yukito-kun."

"Brother..."

"Ah, I know. They're not related by blood. But, Yanagi-sensei's three disciples were all Yanagi-sensei's children, so it felt like they were brothers. Actually, Yukito-kun is probably an only child, but I can't help feel that he is the youngest."

None of them clicked. Ibuki and the others were like older brothers, and Yukito was thought to be the youngest, and he was the only son of a man named Makoto Yanagi.

"We're both Jingi's classmates. So when I was in elementary school, I often heard Jingi talk about Yanagi-sensei, his older brother, and his younger brother Yukito-kun. It felt like family proud."

Kanezaki smiled. Unable to imagine it, Yukito tilted his head vaguely.

"He's Yanagi-sensei's disciple and I get along with him because he's a future connection, right?"

Furin laughed. It was easy to imagine how he would get carried away, and this time Yukito nodded vaguely.

"But it's true that he loved his family, the Yanagi clan. He must be very happy that Yukito-kun has returned to the island. It seems that when he was a child, he loved them so much that he would protect their happiness. "

"Haa... I see, what is it?"

Yukito bowed his head again at Mizutani's words. He couldn't help feeling that he was getting "love" in a bad way even though he meant it with "love".

"Yes."

It was Makita who accepted the contract with a brilliant voice.

"Jingi is such a guy, but I'm very happy that Yukito-kun is back. And so is my boss."

"Ibuki-san?"

"Yes. It's hard to understand, but the boss is also happy about Yukito-kun's return. He has that kind of personality, and well... a lot has been going on, so it's hard for him to go see Yukito-kun on his own. Therefore, today, let him indulge you and eat expensive meals."

"No, not that..."

"Hahaha, it's filial piety to treat your older brother."

When Yukito was confused, the restaurant door opened.

"Ah boss! Good job!"

Looking at the person who entered, Furin straightened his posture and said that. The other three also shouted, "Thank you for your hard work!"

Expressionless, Ibuki slightly raised his hand in response and looked at the other people. He doesn't think he's angry, but his deadpan expression is intimidating.

The employees of "Ayaka Security" must have gotten used to Ibuki, so Kanezaki casually asked, "Boss, what are you going to eat with Yukito-kun?"

"...I thought of some candidates, something like "Arcane Ciel"."

A commotion broke out among the employees.

"Arcane Ciel?! That restaurant on the top floor of the most luxurious hotel in Ichinoshima?!"

"If you want to decide on a proposal, go there! Is that right?! The steak looks really delicious!"

Seeing Kanezaki and Furin raise their voices, Yukito broke out in a cold sweat and approached Ibuki.

"Ah, that's too high a threshold...!"

At Yukito's appeal, Ibuki raised his eyebrows, "I see."

"So, what about the "Grand Feast"?"

"Grand Feast?! It's totally a party place, isn't it? The giant roast turkey over there is so delicious they say you have to make a reservation two years in advance for Christmas!"

"Maybe I can get in at this time of year, but isn't it hard for two people to go together? Let's go together?!"

Mizutani calmly retorted from the side of Kanezaki and Furin, who were once again in shock, saying, "Guys, don't get in the way where the brothers come in."

Yukito's cold sweat increased and he shook his head.

"Um... if you could just ask at a store that wasn't so important!"

Makita laughed and sent a boat to help.

"Boss, you're too enthusiastic. He's only fifteen years old, so we have to make it a place where middle and high school students can eat comfortably."

Hearing Makita's words, Ibuki made a serious face.

"Is that so?"

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The charcoal grill placed in front of Yukito made a small creak.

Ibuki grabbed the raw meat with tongs from the plate placed next to it and put it on the net. There was a nice sizzling sound and the fragrant smell of burnt sauce wafted through the air.

In the end, it turned out to be yakiniku.

It seems that everyone in "Ayaka Security" often goes to eat that "Gyouen". The security personnel were relieved to learn that they had settled into a reasonably secure restaurant, but a yakiniku restaurant was unfamiliar to them. Or better...

"It's my first time at a yakiniku restaurant."

Ibuki slightly raised an eyebrow as he remained expressionless.

"...Oh, really?"

Yukito was raised in an orphanage. He didn't have many opportunities to eat out. As he was looking curiously at the meat dripping with juices and being roasted in front of him, Ibuki yelled, "It's about time."

"Oh, yes."

When he tried to pick up the colored meat with his chopsticks and put it on the plate with the sauce, he said: "Wait!"

"That's too salty. You should dip it in lemon instead of sauce."

"Yes."

He wondered what that was next to the sauce dish, but it turned out to be a dish with lemon juice. As Ibuki instructed him to dip it in lemon and put it in his mouth, the refreshing taste of the meat spread out. It has a strange texture and is delicious.

He said, "Hey, hey.", as he felt the heat of the freshly roasted meat, and Ibuki replied, "I see."

Ibuki's expression was still deadpan with the usual sharpness, but he felt that his eyes had softened a bit. As he was looking at Ibuki's face through the smoke billowing from the charcoal stove, he told him, "The next one is cooked too."

"These are ribs. Dip them in the sauce and eat them."

"Yes!"

"The roast was also cooked. This is also a sauce."

"Thank you."

"Skirt Steak, Cooked"

"Yes, thanks."

"Rice is here too. Eat it with meat. Refills are free."

"Yes."

"Growing children should also eat vegetables. This grass is lettuce. Wrap the meat in plenty of sauce and eat it."

"Hm."

"This is a hormone. This one is also cooked."

"....."

He had run out of time to respond.

Without letting go of the tongs, Ibuki roasted the meat one after another. When Yukito's eating rate couldn't keep up and his chopsticks no longer reached the top of the net, Ibuki used his chopsticks to throw more and more ready-to-eat meat onto Yukito's plate.

The kalbi, tenderloin, flank steak, and hormones were delicious, but he felt like he was slipping away.

"Ah, umm, let me grill the meat next time. I've always had Ibuki-san take care of me, so..."

Rather than be considerate, it was an offer to at least control the pace of the cooking, but Ibuki firmly shook his head.

"No need. Yukito, focus on eating."

Ibuki still clung to the tongs, but while he took care of the meat that was always scattered in the net, he didn't neglect his own meals at all. He ate meat, rice and drank twice as fast as Yukito. Also, he called the store clerk and placed an additional order.

"Special Kalbi, Pork Tuna, Thick Sliced Beef Tongue, Bone-in Kalbi, Pot Pickled Brisket, Roasted Short Rib, Rump, Yukgejang all on two plates and one raw."

"Guh..."

Involuntarily, a frightened voice came out.

"Oh, it's too..."

"Don't stop"

"It's not that..."

"Also, rice for two."

"Uh..."

He was desperate to eat the meat offered to him one after another, and he forgot about the tension of being alone with Ibuki halfway through.

Yukito walked out of the store with a stomach that looked like it was going to burst.

"Thanks for the food..."

"Yes."

Ibuki must have eaten a lot more than Yukito, but he didn't seem to be sick to his stomach. Yukito looked at Ibuki's toned abdomen, wondering what was going on with that person's body.

"So, shall we go?"

He planned to stay at Ibuki's house today. However, Ibuki's legs headed for the building where the offices of GOZ and "Ayaka Security" were located. When he opened the door to the building, Yukito bowed his head.

"Are you going back to GOZ?"

"No, my room is next to that store."

"Eh?"

When he unintentionally let out a surprised voice, Ibuki looked at Yukito and smiled a little.

"Don't worry. I only have the bare minimum, but I don't have trouble sleeping. If you're hungry, go to GOZ and eat something."

"No, I'm not hungry anymore for today..."

It was a painful level of satiety. He even felt that he would be fine if he didn't eat anything for the whole day tomorrow.

Yukito let out his voice because Ibuki lived next door to GOZ, in other words, just below the "Ayaka Security" office, and it felt like he really only saw the house as "a place to sleep". Therefore, it was much like Ibuki to live a life dedicated solely to exterminating the Aramitama. They boarded the vintage elevator in the multi-tenant building and descended on the fifth floor. A bright voice could be heard from the other side of GOZ's door, and he could sense that the members of "Ayaka Security" or other customers were making a fuss, but Ibuki turned his back on them and opened the door at the back of the room runner.

Ibuki's room was as drab as he had said and as Yukito imagined.

The only furniture is a bed, a couch and a simple coffee table. There was not a single cooking utensil in the small kitchen. He had a feeling that this person was running a restaurant so that he could hire Makita to cook his daily meals.

"Yukito, use the bed."

"Uh, no, I'm the one staying here, so I'll be on the couch..."

"Can you put a child to sleep on the couch? Sleep in a suitable place and grow up."

Perhaps, before this person, Yukito could still be a five-year-old somewhere.

When he suddenly thought about it, well, until he was five years old he lived in the same house as this person, like a family.

After taking a shower and brushing his teeth with a toothbrush he bought, he couldn't spend any more time in the empty room (it was impossible with Ibuki's personality and Yukito's skills to enjoy chatting) and he went to bed early.

Lying on his side as if to protect his belly from his swollen meat, Yukito stared at the couch. Ibuki was lying on his back on the couch and covered himself with a blanket. His long legs dangled over the edge of the couch.

"Yukito."

Ibuki yelled with his eyes closed. Yukito flinched a bit, wondering if he had been caught spying on him.

"Yes."

"Are there any drawbacks to living in Ayakashima?"

"No. Momoko-san is kind, Inou-san cares about me, and Jingi-san is a careless and troublesome person who always drinks alcohol, but... as my teacher, he teaches me various things. I think I'm living a much more pleasant life than I thought."

Kurama's name was consciously not mentioned. Yukito, who has only been on the island a short time, doesn't really understand the enmity between Ibuki and Kurama, but he does know that there is an extraordinary animosity between them. Kurama also lived as brothers in the past, but the distance between Yukito and Ibuki wasn't close enough to ask such a thing.

"It's alright then. If Yukito is alright, I'm sure my master will be happy."

Ibuki said that quietly, lying down with his eyes closed.

It's not like Yukito's feeling of weakness and fear towards Ibuki that he felt that day when they first met disappeared.

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For Aka Ibuki, hospitality meant feeding him.

Ibuki has never flattered others. He therefore, he does not know how to please others.

However, rice is the source of human energy and the source of the body.

For Ibuki, giving it was the best expression of goodwill and a proof of respect.

"Eat."

He decided to have breakfast at GOZ. It's not cool, but it's made by Makita, so it's nice that it's flexible.

He placed a hamburger in front of Yukito. Ibuki ordered three thick burgers with cheese and tomato sandwiched between them.

Ibuki grabbed his own slice of the burger by pressing down on the bun and squashing it up and down. When he looked to the side of him, Yukito couldn't handle the tall burger and half collapsed as he ate it with all his might. It may be that he has little experience eating not only yakiniku but also burgers.

"Makita. Two full plates of fried chicken."

When he placed an additional order, for some reason, Makita gave him a concerned smile.

"Um. Is that for the boss?"

"Since there are two plates, one plate is for Yukito."

Yukito widened his eyes and looked at Ibuki.

"Ah, Ibuki-san, I still have the roast meat left over from yesterday..."

"What are you talking about? That's not true."

While thinking that he was the one holding back in a strange way, he signaled to Makita, "Let him eat the freshly fried stuff." Makita gave a slight shrug and headed for the counter.

For some reason, Yukito let out a low voice, "Hieh..."

He knows that Yukito has a feeling of rejection because of his way of doing things that he deviates from the principle of connection.

He has no desire to be understood.

It was unfair to Yukito, but he should learn and grow from Kurama's side. Yukito is the legitimate successor of his father, his teacher.

The most Ibuki can do for Yukito is to feed him when he visits him like this.

After breakfast, he took Yukito to Ichinoshima Station with Makita.

"Come back when you feel like it."

"Yes..."

Yukito, who was wobbling with his arms covering his stomach for some reason, he was put on the sea train and fired.

As he looked at the tail of the train in the distance, when he was thinking that he could treat him well, Makita muttered to his side, "Maybe I should have given him stomach medicine..."