

# AYA KA

— あ や か —

SIDE STORIES



# 03

ダイナーGOZの  
奇妙な客

著者：渡瀬草一郎

原作：GoRA/KINGRECORDS





## **TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD**

### **"AYAKA – SIDE STORIES 03": A STRANGE CUSTOMER IN GOZ**

Taihei Makita, a member of "Ayaka Security" and owner of the "GOZ" restaurant, was worried.

He is a carefree boy who acts as if he has no worries, but is sensitive to the subtleties of people's hearts.

If he notices that his friends are having problems while eating, he can't leave them alone. Now that he doesn't know what the problem is, he worries what to say first.

Should he just laugh out loud and pat him on the back like he always does?

Should he let him finish his mocktail and ask, "Is something wrong?"

Or perhaps he should take another approach: for example, bring a prototype dish, ask him to try it, and wait for an opportunity through small talk.

Before he knew it, Makita had almost unconsciously poured oil into his favorite frying pan.

Ibara Ichijou, on-site supervisor of "Ayaka Security", was worried.

She is admired by her classmates for her outstanding observation skills, judgment, fighting ability and, above all, her always calm and serene personality, but her physical appearance is that of a 15-year-old girl.

(Makita's food is delicious, but it worries me about the amount of oil.)

The owner, Makita, must trust the taste of the restaurant and although she is a foodie girl, she is hesitant to say anything about the food. Above all, delicious things are delicious. If he reduces the amount of oil and the taste deteriorates, she will feel sorry for the other customers who love this restaurant.

But... that will make you fat. Definitely. Almost certainly.

"Ayaka Security" officer Ranko Kanazaki was worried.

Her respected boss, Aka Ibuki, invited her to a dinner and she came to the dinner with her younger colleague, Ibara Ichijou, but the two usually don't talk much.

She feels like he's making up a reason to eat and that there's something he really wants to talk about, but Ibuki can't bring himself to say it and just devours the meat. He's already on his third steak.

Ranko Kanazaki is a positive person. She is a strange girl on the island. She's good at saying the right things depending on the mood of the situation, but she's also good at reading the mood.

It's not her turn now. There are times when she should just rush through without worrying about such things, but at least now is not the time.

Ibuki is probably trying to tell Ibara and Ranko something. He's not the type of person to give boring lectures, so it's something more important. Temporary work, special training, or a difficult investigation... Ranko waited patiently for Ibuki to speak.

Aka Ibuki, director of "Ayaka Security", was not worried about anything in particular.

He had a nervous expression on his face, like a spider web, as if he were deep in his thought, but he wasn't thinking about anything else.

Honestly, he felt like he should add a little more pepper to the steak he was eating, but... it really wasn't worth complaining about. The quality of the meat and the cooking point are perfect.

Two of his subordinates are now sitting in front of him as he continues eating.

Although he is still young, Ibara Ichijou is a talented woman who was selected as the site's administrator because of her ability.

Ranko Kanazaki is a promising member of the team, but her skills and potential improve on her.

From Ibuki's point of view, they are both very young, especially Ibara, who can still be considered a child.

Of course, as long as they are prepared to fight Aramitamas, it does not matter whether they are adults or children, but there is no denying the fact that they are growing girls and their nutritional status is a concern.

Earlier, he was hungry and was about to go to a restaurant, when he saw Ibara in the office.

She has no expression. As always, she looked hungry.

Her gaze was cold. As usual, she seemed hungry and anxious.

Her face was pale. Maybe it was the LED lights, but she looked like she was malnourished.

Then he invited her to dinner.

He also approached Ranko Kanazaki because she was there and he had no other intentions. Honestly, he thought it would be easier to work with other coworkers than go toe-to-toe with their unfriendly boss.

By the way, Ranko Kanazaki was also working very hard, so he had a cheerful attitude and thought, "Let's treat her to lunch once in a while".

Although he is often misunderstood due to his quiet, unfriendly, and arrogant nature, Aka Ibuki actually takes good care of his subordinates.

"Do you have enough? I'll order another one."

"I'm already full."

"...Ah. I'm fine too!"

Very affectionate.

The problems that people have are difficult for others to understand.

You may simply be making assumptions or being too careful, and it's easy for misunderstandings to occur. Even if they say everything, there is no guarantee that their words are true.

Even comrades who fight together sometimes cross paths like that.

It's no laughing matter. It's not as serious as a tragedy.

If he had to say it, that's a mask.

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Just as Ibuki was about to order his fifth steak, Makita came out of the kitchen.

The dish he brought had an egg, bacon, and avocado gallette. It wasn't on the restaurant menu, so of course he didn't order it.

"Hey, guys. Let's try this..."

The cell phone on Ibuki's chest vibrated at the abrupt moment of interrupting Makita's words.

"...Makita, I'm sorry. It's Mizutani."

Junnosuke Mizutani, who made the call, is one of the subordinates of "Ayaka Security". Today he remains in the office as a night substitute.

"What's wrong, Mizutani?"

"Boss, excuse me for interrupting you while you're eating. I just looked on the surveillance camera, and there was a man I don't know walking up the stairs leading to the restaurant, and I think he's from off the island. It's a little strange, so be careful."

"Was he acting strange?"

"Yes. He was extremely aware of his surroundings and his face was strangely serious, as if he were deep in thought... or extremely nervous. It's the face you see before doing something."

"I understand. I'll be careful."

He doesn't think it's a useless report.

Since the cautious Mizutani had identified him as "suspicious", something was probably up, even if he had nothing to do with Ibuki.

Furthermore, "Ayaka Security" is officially a "security company" and although there are not many cases of hard feelings, there is some concern that criminals or suspicious people may hold a grudge against them.

To put it in an extreme way, if the people around them were harmed because of the Aramitama, there is a possibility that they would be hated for unreasonable reasons such as "being slow to help". For better or worse, there are all kinds of people in this world.

Just to be sure, he consulted the waiting staff.

"Is Kanda still there?"

The young man, the most skilled of his subordinates, is considered by his colleagues to be a kind of "ninja" and is a bit out of touch. It is a great way to be prepared in case something happens.

He tried to invite him to dinner before, but he didn't show up.

"He's out of commission, so he's going fishing at night. Do you want me to call him?"

"No, there's no need for that. As long as you know where he's going, it's fine. What about Furin?"

"He just took a nap. Do you want me to wake him up?"

"No, it's fine. Just let him sleep."

His subordinate, Ichita Furin, has a somewhat cheerful personality and can be a bit clumsy, but he is also a humor creator and very witty.

It's part of the job to ensure enough sleep in case of an emergency, so there's no need to have them on standby before something happens.

However, Mizutani, who should be aware of this common sense, speaks in a dark voice on the phone.

"Do you want me to wake him up? Do you want me to splash him with water? I'll be happy to do that."

"...Let him to sleep."

It seems like something happened, maybe someone ate their midnight snack from the refrigerator or something.

Immediately after Ibuki hung up the phone, the sound of footsteps began to be heard coming down the stairs and the door to the store opened.

(I see, he is blatantly suspicious.)

He is a man of medium build. He is in his late twenties or early thirties, and although his features are not particularly striking, there is a sense of urgency in his expression.

He clearly wasn't a tourist, he was wearing a cheap and inelegant suit, but he didn't look like a local either.

He looked as if he had come from the mainland on a business trip, but the way his eyes scanned his surroundings gave the impression that he was uneasy and even scared. At least he didn't have the "I came to eat at a restaurant" attitude.

The owner, Makita, works to serve customers with an innocent expression on his face.

"Welcome! Please take the seat of his choice."

"Oh, yes..."

There were no other customers in the store.

The suspicious man chose a table near Ibuki's seat.

Ibuki was no longer looking at the man, but he could feel his gaze on him.

Ibara Ichijou spoke almost silently, using only the movement of her lips.

(Do you know him?)

Ibuki silently shook his head. He didn't have any idea.

Ranko Kanazaki quickly typed text on her cell phone.

"But he's looking at you, right?"

Ibuki pretended to chew the meat and nodded.

The man's direct gaze was fixed on Ibuki.

Those are not intimidating eyes. It was the look of an observer.

Finally, the man stood up from his seat.

Ibara and Ranko were wary of the man who walked slowly, taking one or two steps, and put strength in their limbs to be able to move at any time.

Meanwhile, Ibuki gently wiped his mouth with a paper napkin.

"Do you need something from me?"

He took the initiative and spoke to him before they could get between them.

The man suddenly went still.

"Are you the director of this security company...?"

Ibuki responded coldly to that trembling voice.

"What if I was?"

Ibara and Ranko, his two subordinates, avoided looking at each other.

Makita stood at the entrance of the store, blocking any chance of escape.

He without even noticing the movements around him, the man in the suit twitched his nose and looked at Ibuki.

"My wife... Leave my wife!"

Hearing those words come out in a hoarse voice, Ibuki unusually stopped thinking... All of his subordinates had to worry inwardly.

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The man named Aka Ibuki generally has a good face.

It's just that he has a good face.

Although he himself is not very aware of this, all of his colleagues and islanders who know him believe this and, unless they have a very particular aesthetic sense, they usually have the same impression.

However, since he is abrupt and does not use his words well, it is difficult to say that he is "nice to women". Plus, there's a part of his life where he spends all his time dealing with Aramitamas instead of working, and there's no point in trying to casually date someone of the opposite sex.

In short, his personality is not fun.

There was no way a man like that would mess with someone else's wife, and the three subordinates present had no doubts about Ibuki's innocence.

However, there is only a slight difference in the "guess" each person has.

Ibara thought.

(It's scary to be the wrong person...)



Ranko thought.

(Making a married woman fall in love with you just by looking at her face... As expected of a boss...)

Makita thought.

(So when the other party's affair was discovered, was it possible that she was forced to falsely accuse him?)

Despite believing in her superior's innocence, Ibara suspects he is the wrong person, Ranko suspects a married woman's unrequited love, and Makita is the first to suspect a false accusation.

The two girls' ideas were quite natural, but there is a stage before Makita's thinking. That's not Ibuki's story, but an acquaintance ran into a similar problem before.

The husband found out about his wife's affair. However, the man ran away and could not be identified, and when she was questioned, the wife, to protect the real couple, invented a fake couple that the husband would find difficult to touch. That's a frustrating turn of events.

It is a superficial and improvised lie, but there are many people who find themselves cornered and resort to lying to escape.

In any case, all the subordinates present, including Makita, were convinced of Ibuki's innocence.

That's why Makita decided to intervene without hesitation.

"Client, I don't understand the situation at all, but for now, let's calm down and listen to what you have to say. My boss is a serious guy who spends his free time at work, so it's hard to imagine him having an affair."

Suspicious, Ibuki also turned his eyes and looked at the man.

"I'm the wrong person. I'm single and I have no intention of being suspected of having an affair."

The man in the suit covered his face with one hand, his shoulders and back trembled.

"You have no intention? There is no way a handsome man like you has no intention! Even now, you are seducing two young women...!"

"Ah..."

"Hey..."

Ibara and Ranko, caught in the unreasonable situation, tensed their cheeks.

"No, we are just subordinates."

"I only came here to eat at my boss's expense, but..."

The man looked at the two of them with a stern look.

"There is no way that a small security company on a remote island has two such young and beautiful employees!"

(That's true. He hit him where it hurts the most.)

(No, that is a crazy argument. For starters, these are not small businesses, but small and medium-sized businesses, and this comment would be disrespectful to remote island security companies across the country.)

However, the reality of "Ayaka Security" is that it is a private company designed to combat Aramitamas. It was true that the company simply called itself a "security company" as a cover, and what the man said was partially true.

However, they couldn't admit that and honestly say, "Actually, we are not a security company".

Ibara and Ranko, who are said to be beautiful, were also holding back headaches, frowning as if to say, "This old man is a headache". The wording is based on Makita's subjective opinion.

He should have ignored that and changed the subject.

"Okay, calm down. First of all, I'd like to hear your name. It seems like you know our boss, but we don't even know who you are."

Makita tried his best to speak warmly.

It's easy to pick on a guy, but he's clearly upset. It would be troublesome if someone pulled a knife out of his pocket, and it would be boring if they held a grudge against him.

There is no doubt that these are false accusations. The only thing left to do is how to convince him of that.

The man in the suit was sitting in a chair and everyone looked at each other again.

"And what's your name?"

"Kobayashi."

It's not a particularly rare surname. It is difficult to determine whether it is a pseudonym or a real name, but even if it is a pseudonym, as long as the person gives the name honestly, there is room for "dialogue".

"Alright, Kobayashi-san. I'm Makita. So, do you know our boss's name?"

"...He must be Ibuki-san."

The matter was probably a misunderstanding, but for now the names match. The chance of there being a "wrong person" has decreased and the chance of a "misunderstanding" has increased.

These two types look similar, but are slightly different.

Ibuki is the wrong person to think that he is "Mr. X, the person his wife is cheating on him with".

Although he is convinced that Ibuki is Ibuki, his mistake is assuming that he is the one his wife is having an affair with.

If it was a clear mistake, the man should have apologized to Ibuki and left the restaurant at that time.

However, since the names coincide, it is necessary to continue this fruitless dialogue for a while longer.

For the sake of his beloved boss, Makita put in many delicate thoughts, belying his gigantic stature.

Boss Ibuki isn't a bad conversationalist, but he also doesn't have the personality to play tricks too much.

He is not at all an idiot, he is always calm and collected, and has a quick wit, but he does not have the skill to put effort into analyzing other people's feelings and use proper speaking techniques.

However, that land was the domain of Ibuki's younger brother, Jingi Sagawa.

For the sake of his boss, whom he respects, Makita offered to serve as host.

"Well then, Kobayashi-san. Please tell me the details. His wife was having an affair with my boss. Did his wife say that?"

Kobayashi twitched the bridge of his nose and nodded.

"That's right. I heard from my wife that she was dating the director of a security company. She also told me his name at that time..."

A one-sided false accusation based on a painful lie by the wife.

He was glad he had come to that conclusion so quickly. And when that happens, the question arises: "How do we resolve that misunderstanding?"

At the same time, some problematic considerations also need to be made.

(If this lie is discovered, will that wife be okay...?)

It's easy to dismiss the situation and say that the fate of a liar is unknown, but even if it turns into a murder case, it's hard to stay calm.

Above all, if she went out of her way to mention Ibuki's name when she was questioned, there is a possibility that the wife and Ibuki knew each other.

"Kobayashi...Kobayashi-san. Boss, do you recognize that lady named Kobayashi?"

"That's right..."

Ibuki thought with a serious face.

"I don't know his name, but his last name is... he is a fisherman who has lived near the port for generations..."

Ranko lowered her head in shock.

"No, boss... that's Shizu-chan's fishing master, Kobayashi-san, right? The old lady over there is over 80 years old and her husband lives a normal life..."

Shizumaru Kanda, a member of "Ayaka Security", sometimes goes fishing in the sea.

The local fisherman who showed him places and fishing tips was an old man named Kobayashi, and his wife Momo, who, of course, has the last name Kobayashi, had nothing to do with this case.

There may be a young woman with the same last name as a relative, but there is no way to know her face or her name.

Makita has an acquaintance named Kobayashi, but he is also a man. Since the surname is not that rare, such coincidences occur.

Ibara murmured indifferently as she ate the "Egg, Bacon and Avocado Gallette" to try.

"A Kobayashi was also a classmate of mine in elementary school... Um, Kobayashi-san, you're not from this island in the first place, right? Where did you come from and how did you get here?"

Kobayashi's eyes widened for a moment.

"I'm from Tokyo... I arrived on this island yesterday..."

Ranko bowed her head at that response.

"From Tokyo? No, wait a minute. So your wife is also in Tokyo, right? Then she couldn't have had an affair with our boss on the island."

After hearing Ranko's point, Kobayashi's gaze wavered unnaturally.

"No, no, my wife is on this island... I'm the only one who lives in Tokyo for work."



There was only a small pause.

Makita understood. His colleagues are probably thinking the same thing.

(Is this guy hiding something?)

To begin with, it is an unnatural story.

Infidelity and cheating are impossible for Ibuki, and this man named Kobayashi is also extremely suspicious.

If done wrong, it could even turn into a psychological horror story where the wife is just a figment of his imagination and may not actually exist.

"Ah... Kobayashi-san, do you have any photos of your wife? Look, on your cell phone or something."

Doubting the very existence of his wife, Makita suggested that.

Now, if he shows him a picture of a celebrity or a photo with no one in it, he'll need to take a different approach. The security company cannot do anything about it and they need help from medical institutions.

"Photography..."

Kobayashi looked upset.

"Of course, you can bring her with you. That way it will be clearer. Your wife is on this island, right?"

"...No, I have a photo. It's from a while..."

Kobayashi took out his cell phone from the inside pocket of his suit and operated it with practical ease.

Finally, the screen showed a bride in a wedding dress and a man in a tuxedo. The man looks a little younger than he is now.

"...This is a wedding photo. Three years ago..."

"Oh..."

Apparently it really existed.

At first glance, Makita and his friends looked at the screen, somewhat relieved by that.

"Boss, do you know them?"

"No. I don't recognize them."

He had the impression that the bride's face was calm. He's not a very notable guy.

On the other hand, Ibara and Ranko's eyes became more serious.

"Excuse me, I'll come a little closer."

"Mmmm...? Mmmm..."

The two didn't just say, "I don't know". However, their memory seems vague and they kept tilting their heads to the side.

"As if I knew, as if I didn't know..."

"...No, I know. Wait a minute. I remember now."

Ranko pressed her hands hard against her temple.

Several seconds passed in silence and then she fanned herself.

"...This person is probably that one. Look, I think she looks like the part-time employee at the bakery near the post office..."

Ranko seemed a little unsure, but Ibara nodded her head.

"As Ranko-san said, they look a lot alike. Compared to the wedding photo, the hair and makeup are different, but... I think they look similar enough that they could be twin sisters."

Makita was stunned. Ibuki, unusually, also let out a surprised sound.

"A bakery employee, huh? If that's the case, I've probably shopped there before, but I don't remember her face or her name."

"Kanazaki and Ibara, you remember well, right? You were close?"

Ranko shook her head.

"Hmm, we just had a little chat or something. Plus, she didn't seem to be from the island, so it was a little unusual... I don't even know her name. I don't think she was wearing a name tag or anything."

"I called her an employee too. Kobayashi-san, is his wife an employee at a bakery?"

Kobayashi froze unnaturally.

Yes, unnaturally.

Very unnatural.

(What is this guy...? Isn't that a question you can't answer?)

The Ibara issue is just a "confirmation".

Of course her husband should know, so there was no reason to be confused.

Makita put his hand on the man's shoulder.

"Kobayashi-san, what's going on? There's no way you, the husband, don't know where his wife works."

"Ah, no, I'm sorry. I got really dizzy before coming to the island... I'm still a little uneasy..."

Makita stood up from his seat.

"Oh, that's probably why you don't look good. If so, let's get some water. Boss, please help me carry the dishes."

"I understand."

"No, in that case I..."

Ibara tried to get up, but Makita stopped her by winking so Kobayashi couldn't see him.

Ibuki also knows this and is in his natural state.

"No, I'll also bring some extra food. Kobayashi-san, would you like to eat something too?"

"...No, no. I am ok..."

"It's better to eat something when you have a conversation like this. If you're dizzy and can't eat, I'll give you something light, like a snack to have a drink."

The two said casually, as if they had known each other for a long time, and quickly entered the kitchen.

Then, as soon as they were away from the audience seats and their voices could not be heard, they whispered to each other.

"...Boss. He's lying."

"It is also suspicious that he is dizzy. He said: 'I arrived on the island yesterday'."

If it is severe dizziness, it is not impossible for the effects to last more than a day, but in this case, the person's face is more likely to be pale due to "nervousness" or "mental load" than due to dizziness.

When a shy person hides something, he tends to unconsciously repeat little lies as an excuse. Ibuki also nodded, his eyebrows furrowing slightly.

"I guess. And he's pretty mentally exhausted. The killing intent is gone now, but as soon as he entered the restaurant, he wanted to kill me."

Makita was also aware of that signal. That's why he showed an attitude of "seriously listening" and responded in a particularly calm manner.

He was obviously an amateur, and it was impossible for Ibuki to be on guard, but there was nothing to be gained by going out of his way to stir up resentment.

"It helped that you distracted him so well. Thanks to you, I think we can avoid any problems."

"I hope so, but... that Kobayashi guy doesn't have much reserve in his eyes, and he has the air that could explode at any moment. A move like that is a bit troublesome."

On Ayaka Island, the word "explosion" has a slightly different meaning than on the mainland.

The strong negative emotions that people have sometimes cause stagnation in those around them and become a trigger that favors the appearance of "Aramitama".

The original job of "Ayaka Security" is to control the Aramitas that arise in this way, and it is Ibuki Aka's daily life.

Makita kept his voice even lower.

"There's no doubt he's making a fuss, but I wonder how much truth he's telling... First of all, are you serious about suspecting cheating?"

"Is that why you doubt it? It's hard to say that about someone who was falsely accused, but it's true that the reason for contacting me was to "confirm the fact that he was having an affair". Rather, what worries me is the wife who had no choice but to lie to that man."

Ibuki said with a serious face as he took a bite of the fish sausage that was in the kitchen.

"Are you still going to eat it?" Makita said, not surprised at all. It is always so.

"So she involved the head of "Ayaka Security" and lied to him?"

"Yes. If she's getting me into trouble and running away as fast as she can, that's fine..."

"It's not a good idea, but it would be bad if the lady was in a situation where I couldn't even contact her. She could be threatened, imprisoned or... should I call the police?"

He expected him to nod, but Ibuki immediately denied it.

"No. If he sees the police officer right now, he will go crazy. Life is building up, which is no longer good. Before that, I want to make sure your wife is safe. When you return to the table, please send a message to Kanazaki and Ibara telling them to leave the restaurant and head to the bakery."

Although he had no intention of opposing the instructions, Makita bowed his head.

"I understand. But you're being very cautious, aren't you? If you were a normal boss, I think he would be offended by a move like that."



"It doesn't matter if I'm dealing with Aramitamas, my opponent is an ordinary person. It's also possible that he is thinking too much. Above all, if the safety of the islanders is at stake, we must proceed with caution."

To Ibuki, even the perpetrator who has falsely accused him seems to be one of the islanders who must be protected.

Makita thinks Ibuki is too lenient, but many of the members of "Ayaka Security" have been helped by Ibuki's kindness.

That's why Makita has no intention of denying Ibuki's sweetness. Although he is easy to be misunderstood due to his intelligent appearance, the man named Ibuki Aka is very affectionate.

"So, boss, please take some nuts and go back first. I will send instructions to Kanazaki and the others and then return."

"Ah. I'll take care of this. Also, I'll order some roast beef."

For a moment, Makita couldn't believe what he heard.

In that situation, it seems like he still intends to continue eating. Once again he was surprised by the density of those nerves.

"It's a big portion."

"Yes..."

It was not necessary to ask the amount, it was something natural. Although he is encouraged by his boss's good attitude, he sometimes finds himself questioning his sanity.

Ibuki returned to the audience with a jug of water and mixed nuts in his hand, and as Ibuki saw him off, he busied himself with cutting the roast beef that had already been prepared.

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When Ibuki returned to the counter, Kobayashi seemed calmer than before.

Ibara and Ranko, who were sitting in front of him, were also in a bad mood, but they did not show any hostility towards Kobayashi.

"I brought some water. Kobayashi-san, please."

"Oh, thank you."

When Ibuki handed him a glass, Kobayashi was confused, but thanked him.

And he looked at Ibuki with a serious face.

"...Ibuki-san. Umm... do you really have nothing to do with my wife?"

"Ah. Excuse me, but I don't even remember her face. My subordinate seemed to know her by sight, but I only go to that bakery once in a while, so I doubt I've seen her before. How long have you been working?"

Kobayashi did not answer that question. He was thinking silently.

Ranko opened her mouth, unable to bear the silence.

"I'm really talking about the last few months. Maybe after the new year."

"If that's the case, maybe we've never really met. Kobayashi-san, did your wife say anything else about her when she mentioned my name?"

"...Oh, ah... no... that..."

Little clarity. However, that was starting to change from "hidden" to "embarrassing".

Ibuki continued to observe the other person carefully.

"During an argument, your name came up and we are dating... However, my blood also went to my head, so I don't know the details... I heard that he was the head of "Ayaka Security"..."

It seems that he has finally realized that his wife's words may have simply been a false lie.

He wished he had realized that possibility sooner, but he knew from the beginning that he was extremely confused. Mizutani, who saw the surveillance camera, did everything she could to report him.

"Anyway, does your wife know me?"

"The boss stands out, that's why everyone in this neighborhood knows him."

"We also wear bracelets, so when you see us you'll know we're from "Ayaka Security"."

A message rang on Ranko and Ibara's cell phones.

After reading the screen, the two got up from their seats.

"...Oh, no, break time is up. Boss, please excuse me first."

"Thanks for the food."

"Ah. I'll be back in a bit."

Makita's message was never conveyed to Kobayashi.

The two girls left the restaurant, leaving Ibuki and Kobayashi alone in the restaurant. Makita was still in the kitchen.

"...Well, Kobayashi-san. Continuing with what we just talked about... You just said, "My wife told me that she was dating the director of a security company".

I don't doubt you, but did your wife really tell you that they were dating? For example... Maybe it was a way of saying, "I'm in a relationship"."

Kobayashi opened his eyes in shock.

Apparently he was a star.

When it comes to relationships between men and women, the term "dating" is a bit confusing.

If you say, "I'm dating him", it's easy to associate them with a loving relationship.

If you say, "I have a relationship with him", it may just be a friendship or a business relationship.

If you say, "I'm in a relationship with him", it gives a strong impression that it's a romantic relationship.

If you say, "I go out with him sometimes", you may simply be spending time together, such as shopping or hobbies, when you meet or when it's convenient.

From that sentence alone, it's hard to tell whether or not he has romantic feelings.

Even if you say the wrong particle or auxiliary verb during an argument, or simply mishear it, misinterpretations can occur.

Kobayashi, who had suspected his wife of cheating on him from the beginning, probably reacted only to the word "date". It might have something to do with the atmosphere of the place, but Ibuki has no way of knowing from his perspective.

"Personally, I didn't know their faces or names, but "Ayaka Security" patrols the shopping district, so I have a business relationship with each store. It seems like she knew my employee to the point that she could have a small chat with her, and I also know the "owner" of that bakery. Sometimes we get calls asking for help with suspicious people or people in trouble since they don't want to draw the attention of the police."

More specifically, there are problems where an Aramitama is suspected of being involved, but they do not wish to explain the details to people outside the island.

Ibuki calmly asked Kobayashi, who was speechless.

"Now, have you cleared up your misunderstanding?"

"I'm sorry. It may have been a one-sided misunderstanding on my part."

Kobayashi tried to get up from his seat.

However, Ibuki quickly pressed his shoulder.

"Well, wait. There must be some kind of connection that involved me like this. I'm sure I also have the right to ask about the situation. And... it's worrying to say that it could have been a misunderstanding. I want you to be sure about that and there are some things that worry me."

Ibuki put pressure on his fingertips.

Kobayashi couldn't stand up. More than the use of force, psychological coercion also played a role.

Makita returned from the kitchen with a pile of roast beef and sandwiches in his hands.

"What, Ibara and the others are back to work? That's good. From now on, let's talk to each other in peace."

The huge Makita was sitting on the other side, blocking Kobayashi's escape route. It was a message from Makita that caused Ibara to move, but such a tendency does not even occur in burping.

(At this point, I can't let Kobayashi go. There are several things I need to check before doing so.)

Makita, with a friendly smile on his face, grabbed Kobayashi's shoulder. There was no smile behind his eyes.

"The nuts and sandwich are on the house. Please eat them."

Ibuki also stuck his fork into the roast beef covered with a rich sauce.

"Kobayashi-san. There are too many unnatural things in your history and attitude. Your wife is on this island and you were in Tokyo until yesterday. But it wasn't because of work circumstances... Maybe your wife ran away from you and "disappeared", hiding on this island?"

Kobayashi paled in an instant at Ibuki's point.

"I knew it! After all, you are...!"

"Calm down. Like I said, I have nothing to do with it. Anyone could guess that by watching your reaction. First of all, I know that I am innocent and I don't know anything about your wife. However, if that wife did everything possible to mention the name of the director of "Ayaka Security"... if I had to guess the reason, I can only assume that it was because she was "afraid of violence or persecution from you"."

Makita shrugged.



"That's right. When it comes to violence against islanders, the only place to turn is the police or "Ayaka Security". We are a community company. In fact, we are much more flexible than the police. It's just a business, so "we charge according to the actual work".

"As part of our contribution to the community, we offer discounts to island residents."

Although their main job is to "kill Aramitamas", if they are called by someone they know, they can mediate fights or subdue drunk people. The money often comes from vegetables grown in the fields or fish caught in the sea, which customers use as gratitude.

Ibuki spoke in a cold voice to Kobayashi, who began to shake little by little.

"Even if it was a clear misunderstanding, I can imagine that his wife felt he was in danger when she hinted at her "relationship" with "Ayaka Security". If the police knew anyone, they would have talked about it, but it seems that our employee was a regular customer of the bakery, so the first thing that came to mind was us."

By the way, the basic stance of the police is not to intervene in civil matters. If she fights with her husband or ex-husband, she may not always get the response she wants.

"Come on, let's hear what you have to say. I'm well aware that I'm a busybody, but it's my nature that I can't ignore."

"Ah..."

(I am not fond of getting involved in fights between men and women.)

However, Ibuki has a reason why he can't leave him alone.

In Ibuki's eyes, Kobayashi's body was covered in a dark, stagnant, and murky "life force" that clung firmly to him.

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"ABC" is a bakery near the "Ayaka Security" headquarters.

The shop's name is an abbreviation of "Ayakashima Bakery Camellia", and Camellia comes from the owner's name, "Tsubaki".

It was already after nine at night and most of the stores had already closed. This bakery was no exception and its shutters had long been closed. However, the second floor of the store is still used as a residence, so the owner is still there.

Ranko Kanazaki nimbly climbed the outside stairs leading to the second floor and called the intercom.

"Good evening, Tsubaki-san. I'm Kanazaki from "Ayaka Security"."

She does not know the name of the part-time worker, but she does know the name of the store owner, which is also related to the name of the store.

The bakeries prepare early in the morning. Maybe he's already asleep at nine at night.

After waiting a while, a light came on on the other side of the window.

"Kanazaki-chan...? What's going on here in the middle of the night?"

The owner, Tsubaki Ayabe, is a former Yan. Even now, at 30 years old, his hair is blonde and he is good-spirited in many ways.

Tsubaki appeared at the door wearing a casual t-shirt and tracksuit outfit, but when he came out to the store, he was only wearing that and an apron, so he looked more or less familiar to her.

Tsubaki, who was rubbing his eyes, looked at Ranko and Ibara who were standing before him, and tilted his head curiously.

"Is Ibara-chan with you? What's going on?"

Ibara nodded silently and Ranko closed one eye as she apologized with one hand.

"I'm sorry, Tsubaki-san. Are you asleep yet? Um, there's a part-time person working here, right? I'd like to ask you about her. Is he here now?"

"Ah? Miyuki-chan? I think she's...huh?"

Her name seems to be "Miyuki". Now that she thinks about it, Kobayashi called her "wife", and Ibuki and others called her "wife", so she didn't know her name until now.

In fact, something that needs to be confirmed first is that Kobayashi misinterpreted Ibuki as "his wife's unfaithful partner" and probably assumed that he knew her name. Tsubaki looked scared as he opened a private room near the entrance and looked inside.

"Miyuki-chan? Huh? I guess she hasn't come home... Today was her day off, so she went out and said she was going to go sightseeing around the island... I also arrived early in the morning, so I went to bed first..."

Ranko and Ibara looked at each other harshly.

"Miyuki-san's husband is in GOZ now. Do you know what kind of person he is?"

Tsubaki turned his head and looked at Ranko and Ibara. The sleepiness instantly disappeared from his face and his eyes were wide and trembling.

"Wait a minute... Kobayashi? He came to this island? He's on this island? That bastard! He should lower his head!"

His deep voice, mixed with clicks of his tongue, reminded him of his active days.

"...Ah. I guess, after all, he was the kind of husband who would be called "that bastard"."

"...I also got a message from Makita saying, "They're probably having problems because of the divorce"."

Ignoring the two girls' sighs, Tsubaki took out a metal bat from inside.

"He's in the restaurant, right? I'll punch him!"

"Put it away. Tsubaki-san, put it away."

"We have weapons, so calm down. Instead, please contact Miyuki-san."

"Ah. That's right... the cell phone, the telephone..."

While Tsubaki operated his cell phone, Ranko and Ibara asked questions.

"Is Miyuki-san a relative of Tsubaki-san?"

"Hmm. We are quite distant relatives, but I feel like she is like a younger sister. I am not from this island, but... This bakery was originally inherited from a deceased grandfather, and she is the granddaughter of that grandfather's brother."

"So, uh... you mean she's like your cousin?"

"It's from the heart."

Ibara quickly gave the correct answer.

"Yes, that's right. So, I filed divorce papers with her husband, since she was a victim of domestic violence, but he became violent and rejected me, so she ran away and hid for a while..."

Tsubaki's words were cut off.

An automated voice started playing from the device's speaker and he said, "The call you made..."

The situation that Ranko and Ibara associated with a lack of radio waves or a power outage was definitely not what the automated voice was saying.

A needle-like light shone in Ranko's eyes.

"Ibara-chan, please send a message to the boss. We couldn't secure the target. Her cell phone is not connected and she is gone."

"Yes."

Tsubaki gulped in front of the two whose mood had suddenly changed.

"Wait a minute. I can't believe it... Has Miyuki-chan already met that violent husband...?"

Ranko was vague in her response.

"Tsubaki-san, stay here. If Miyuki-san returns, please contact me."

"No, I won't sit still! Me too...!"

"We have already taken custody of Kobayashi-san. I understand how you feel, but we would be in trouble if Miyuki-san returned and there was a misunderstanding..."

"Why is that scum in that restaurant in the first place?"

Ibuki was suspected of having an affair with his wife... and when she was about to respond, Ranko suddenly realized something.

"Tsubaki-san. By any chance, did you tell that person, Miyuki-san, about my boss?"

"I've already talked about that. Not just about Ibuki-kun, but about everything related to the people in the neighborhood."

Ibara also asked.

"What did you tell her about the boss?"

"Well... what did I say...? Well, he is strong, and he is more affectionate than he seems, and he is a person who has a good eye for many things, so if you need help, ask him. He is the most reliable around here. Something like that?"

The epicenter was found.

Ranko relaxed and looked at Ibara.

"I knew from the beginning that it was a false accusation, but..."

"He is also a good person who can be easily trusted..."

However, it can be said that the fact that he has gained so much trust from the neighborhood is a result of Ibuki's actions so far.

"So what happened? Why did Miyuki's ex-husband go there?"

They had no choice but to explain... Ranko left Ibuki and Makita at the restaurant to deal with Kobayashi, and began to talk about what happened that night.

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In a corner of the "GOZ" restaurant, three men stand face to face.

Aka Ibuki, director of "Ayaka Security".

His subordinate is Taihei Makita, the owner of the restaurant.

And Kobayashi, a person who showed up suspecting that Ibuki and his wife were having an affair.



A beautiful and intelligent young man, a muscular giant and an ordinary man in a worn suit are a combination that is difficult to understand from the outside.

After receiving a message from Ibara heading to the bakery...

In front of Kobayashi, Ibuki took off his "private security company representative" mask.

"...Kobayashi-san. When you came to this store, I could feel the killing intent towards me, but I couldn't smell blood. So I waited to see what happened... but it seems like we can't get in touch with your wife. You said you got my name from your wife. What did you do to her before you came here?"

He felt very intimidating even for Makita who is used to it.

Hearing that, Kobayashi turned pale and opened and closed his mouth.

"W-what are you saying...? I didn't do anything special..."

Makita grabbed Kobayashi's shoulder.

"That excuse is impossible. I just received a call from my coworkers who were sent to the bakery. Did your wife leave the divorce papers and disappear? The cause was your violence... and you already found your wife in this island and you heard the boss's name from her mouth. It seems that the matter is completely over, but... what happened to the "chat" between you and your wife?"

Kobayashi looked down. His shoulders were shaking and the sweat dripping from his face stained his pants.

Sensing that he wouldn't speak like that, Ibuki relaxed her grip on him.

"...Kobayashi-san. I can guess what you were thinking when you came here. To be honest, you seemed completely desperate when you came here. It seemed like a no-brainer. Isn't that what you intended to do, without even thinking about it, kill the adulterous fellow of your wife, even if it means stabbing each other?"

Kobayashi did not respond. Although they cannot simply take the fact that there is no negative statement as a statement, this time it seems to be so.

Although Kobayashi suspected that Ibuki was his wife's unfaithful partner, he was not sure.

Why is that?

That may be because the wife's phrasing, like the fact that they were in a relationship, was confusing, but, although there was a misunderstanding, there is no evidence that the wife attempted to explain it.

Furthermore, "Ayaka Security" has not received any notice or apology from the wife.

(If the wife is in a state where she can no longer do any of these things, then it all makes sense.)

Ibuki asked again, also to confirm it.

"...You killed your wife, you killed your unfaithful partner, and in the end, you were going to die too... Isn't that right?"

Kobayashi stopped shaking.

"When I came here with that in mind, you turned out to be a complete stranger who didn't even know my wife's name... I lost all momentum and, as I was wondering what to do, I started to feel cold. I guess it's about time. What should we do? If you want to hand me over to the police, I will go there. Although I am not familiar with the geography of the island."

Of course, it does not mean politeness, but rather "carry". If he refused, he would have to force him, but he had a feeling that wouldn't happen now.

This is a remote island. He can't escape without a boat and he can't escape on a boat either.

He despaired precisely because he knew he was lost.

"...I didn't mean to kill her."

Without blinking, Kobayashi murmured that. It wasn't a conversation or a statement, it was just a monologue.

"I hired a detective... to find out where my wife was going. Her phone was dead, so I decided to meet her in person and talk..."

He said he arrived on the island yesterday, but didn't show up at the bakery and was probably looking for a time when his wife would be alone.

"...But then she ran away towards the cliff, took out her cell phone, gave your name, and tried to call you...Then we got into a fight...and she ended up in the sea..."

He couldn't say it was an accident.

Regardless of whether he had initial murderous intentions or not, his malicious intentions became clear when he cornered her and tried to take her phone from her. Although his original purpose was not to kill her but to bring her back, he chose violence to achieve that goal.

Immediately, Makita twitched the bridge of his nose and raised his voice.

"Hey! Didn't you help her?!"

"Oh, there's no way I'll survive if I fall from that height...! And..."

Kobayashi looked at Ibuki.

Although he denied any murderous intent, he probably no longer intended to help.

Although Ibuki cannot understand the mentality of a man who decided his wife was dead and prioritized killing the person she was having an affair with, Ibuki also knows that there are real people who are destructive and motivated by arrogance and desperation.

"She was going to die anyway..."

Makita clicked his tongue and made a phone call. He gave instructions to his colleagues who were waiting in the office to search the coastal area.

Ibuki left Makita in charge of communication and helped Kobayashi up.

"It's up to you to consider suicide, but I have no intention of releasing you like this. I'll leave the rest to the police. Come on."

Kobayashi didn't seem to have the energy to resist, so he slowly began to walk with a ghostly pace, guided by Ibuki.

Makita ended the phone call and let out a sigh as he walked behind them.

"...Hey, you. When you came to the store, you told my boss to leave your wife, right? I understand that you intended to kill him if he admitted that you were dating, but... what would you have done if he had simply said, "Then we'll break up"?"

"There's no way I can forgive someone who played with my wife."

Kobayashi responded indifferently with an emotionless voice.

"I don't think you have the right to say that since you killed your precious wife."

Kobayashi remained silent at Makita's comment.

The feelings he had for his wife were probably more possessive than loving.

Both parties misinterpreted his possessiveness as "love", which led to a wrong marriage. Over time, he took off his mask as a good husband and they started talking about divorce.

Everyone needs a mask of sociability. When that mask breaks for some reason... that person is treated like a crazy person by those around them.

After leaving the restaurant and heading to the police station, Ibuki ran into a familiar face on the street.

"Ah, boss... it's dinner."

The one who bowed deeply was Shizumaru Kanda, a young subordinate with a fishing rod in his hand.

He wasn't wearing a jacket. Next to him, a young woman wearing his jacket shook her shoulders.

Both bodies were soaked and the woman in particular was so weak that she could no longer walk alone.

Shizumaru is lending his shoulder to her now, but depending on how you look at it, it looks like they're hugging.

Makita's cheeks twisted.

"What? Hey, wait... that person..."

"Huh. When I was fishing at night in the sea, this person fell off the cliff and seemed to be swallowing some water, so I thought I'd take her to a clinic for examination, just to be safe."

The young girl looked at Ibuki and... no, she looked at Kobayashi and her face stiffened.

"Gaah...?! Ah... ah... ah...!"

She sat there without making a sound.

Meanwhile, Kobayashi's cloudy eyes widened and he forgot to blink.

"Mi-Miyuki... you... why...?!"

"D-don't come! Don't come near me!"

The reunion at that moment was completely unexpected for both of them.

Ibuki grabbed Kobayashi's shoulder and forced him to stay in place.

"Kanda, take her somewhere safe. I'll take care of this place."

"I understand."

Shizumaru Kanda quickly picked up the woman who couldn't move due to fear and jumped into a nearby alley with cat-like movements. One of his strong points is that he is intelligent enough to quickly follow instructions without interfering in the situation.

Almost at the same time, the dark and stagnant life around Kobayashi increased in concentration.

The moment Kobayashi saw his wife and Shizumaru hugging her, something in Kobayashi that kept him connected to reason broke.

In reality, it was not infidelity or adultery, but the "scene that suggested it" broke his spirit, as he was already on the verge of breaking down.

His distorted attachment to his wife, the negative thoughts that were born from that, combined with the stagnation around him, became a dangerous factor that led to the outbreak of "Aramitama" on this island.

He just got saturated.

"Take him too, Makita. It's coming."

"Eh, what?!"

At the same time Makita jumped back, Kobayashi rolled his eyes and fell.

Then, the black life force that had gathered around him spun around him, took shape, and materialized into the form of a "monster" that was visible to the human eye.

One-eyed, four-legged, human-sized, but looking like a gigantic rat-like beast, without hesitation, Ibuki took out a pistol from his pocket.

At first glance, it appears to be a modified metal gun.

However, the bullet he fires is a special life force bullet meant to be used against the Aramitama. Although its penetrating power against the human body is low, the life force contained in it has a strong effect on Aramitamas.

If it were brought to the mainland, it would violate the Firearms and Swords Law, but on the island they are considered "sacred tools used in festivals" and are used as equipment for "Ayaka Security". It is also a valuable weapon for fighting "Aramitama", and in this sense is similar to a hunting weapon for exterminating vermin.

It is also used by the members of "Ayaka Security" in times of emergency, but if Ibuki, who has a talent like connection, wields it, his power will increase dramatically.

If it hits the vital point of the Aramitama, "the first eye", that alone will destroy a weak individual and serve as a deterrent even against a strong opponent.

Ibuki's basic strategy is to close the gap while he fires his gun and eventually engage in hand-to-hand combat.

That night, there was no need to go that far against the newborn "Aramitama".

Ibuki casually pulled the trigger.

A special bullet fired at close range with a sharp crack pierced the rat-like Aramitama's first eye, dispelling the stagnant vitality from him with a single shot.

Makita, who was sitting at a distance, let out a trembling voice. He couldn't see it before since he is not connected with it. However, anyone can see the Aramitama after it has "materialized".

"...Oh, great job. Is that a hit?"



"Right after it happened, I just took advantage of the void of people who didn't even know how to protect themselves yet."

If you give it even a little time, it won't be that easy.

It was like killing a foal that could not yet stand, a cicada that could not fly after having shed its skin, or a butterfly that had just emerged and had its wings rolled up. There was nothing more surprising than that.

Kobayashi was fainting at his feet. It was not that he was surprised, but that his own life force was probably absorbed due to the outbreak of the nearby Aramitama. He will notice it over time, but there may be some consequences.

"Let's take this guy to the police. I'll inform Kanda to go directly to the clinic."

"I understand. I'll carry the luggage."

With his huge body, Makita easily carried Kobayashi as if he were a burden.

As they began to walk, Ibuki sent a message to Shizumaru with just the main points.

"I should let Ibara and Kanazaki know that we're safe... But it's been a strange night. I used to think those weapons weren't trustworthy, but..."

The idea of not disclosing anything is that "evil people will definitely receive divine punishment", but if you look at the world, this is not necessarily the case. There are evil people everywhere who sleep with their pillows raised.

Kobayashi's thoughts and actions cannot be understood or defended. However, it is easy to imagine that he found himself cornered in his own way, lost his mind and went crazy.

His mental state should not be excused, but he feels a little sorry for him for not being able to control his own heavy emotions, and cannot ridicule him.

If his life had gone a little better, including the period surrounding his character development, he might have become a normal husband.

Makita shrugged.

"I really don't understand how difficult things like this are. Tonight, two people who were supposed to die were saved thanks to the boss and Kanda. I don't think it was that bad of a night."

"This is mainly because of Kanda. If the attacker had survived and the victim had died, it would have left a very bad impression. I'll treat him to lunch sometime tomorrow."

He even made the two girls cut their dinner short. It seems like they haven't eaten much yet, so he would like to treat them to something new.

From behind, he heard footsteps running on the asphalt and a voice calling for Ibuki and the others.

"Boss, I just saw your message! Miyuki-san is safe."

"Thank you for your hard work. I'll let baker Tsubaki-san know too."

Apparently the two were returning to the restaurant. Since their shift was over, they could have gone straight home, but they were probably curious to know what had happened.

Ibuki looked at his subordinates without even smiling. Although they still seemed a little confused, he could see relief on their faces.

"Ah, you have also had difficulties. However, after fighting, I am hungry. I will report the culprit to the police, and when I return to the company, I will order a midnight snack."

Makita looked stunned.

"Huh...? Boss, did you just fire a shot...?"

"I'm just tired. Kanazaki, Ibara, and you too?"

"...No. It's a little difficult to get something to eat at this hour..."

"Um... especially the food at GOZ is very oily..."

Makita's gaze went into the air.

"Now that you mention it... I didn't really pay attention to it because I ended up eating a lot. Are you thinking about having a healthy menu in the future?"

Ibuki also groaned. That was inconsiderate.

"Lean meat? Not bad."

"No, stay away from meat. Let's eat vegetables, vegetables."

"Why doesn't the boss gain weight with that amount of food? Even though he reached 3K, which is high in protein, high in fat and high in calories..."

Ibuki ignored the two girls' tsukkomi and looked up at the night sky above the island.

Unlike the city, you can see the stars and the moon clearly.

That starry sky may be the reason why Shizumaru usually goes fishing at night, even though he doesn't catch much. When you look at the night sky, you can distance yourself from the harsh reality and feel how small you are.

That's not romanticism. Rather, being aware of one's own smallness belongs to realism.

Due to his outstanding strength, Ibuki is often thought to be individualistic and meritocratic, but he himself knows that his abilities are immature. He is also aware of his weaknesses.

That's why he created an organization called "Ayaka Security".

Taihei Makita, Ibara Ichijou, Ranko Kanazaki, Shizumaru Kanda, Junnosuke Mizutani, Ichita Furin and other members...

All of his friends probably think that "Ibuki Aka" is his greatest strength, but for Ibuki himself, he is the one who stays alive thanks to them.

Organizational power is strong.

Since he realized that, Ibuki is proud that he has become stronger.

Although he doesn't say it often because he's embarrassed, he was grateful to his co-workers.

"Ugh..."

Kobayashi, who was being carried along, groaned softly without waking up.

Ibuki lightly punched him on the shoulder.

"I can't sympathize with this man, but if he had the freedom to look at himself objectively, he wouldn't have done such a stupid thing."

He believes that everyone should have the mental space to vaguely look at the starry sky of this island.

Makita laughed heartily.

"No, no, it's probably because of the food you eat. You can tell at a glance that you haven't eaten much food."

Ranko also groaned in dissatisfaction.

"Hmm... I guess it's not just a personality thing..."

The search for Ibara is even harder.

"I don't think I'm old enough to blame anything for my misdeeds."

Ibuki Aka responded with the kind of smile he only gives his family in response to those three people's comments, and proceeded to walk under the starry sky.

That night wasn't so bad.