

AYA KA

— あ や か —

SIDE STORIES



09

幸人の来た日

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TRANSLATION: NARU-KUN / K – PROJECT WORLD

"AYAKA – SIDE STORIES 09": THE DAY YUKITO ARRIVED

In an unknown darkness.

The "great hermit" Makoto Yanagi was observing life.

More precisely, he saw everything that moved with vitality as a light shining in the darkness.

The thread of life that can be called a giant blood vessel through which the life of the stars circulates, the countless small Mitama that form it, and the two dragons that rotate in a circle.

Although it was called a circle, its shape was distorted.

Half of the circle is a dragon that emits a bright red glow and the other half is a dragon that flickers with a faint blue glow.

Although it was said to rotate, the rotation was unstable.

The rotation speed and orbit of the unbalanced dragons, which lost their balance long ago, are so unstable that they are about to disintegrate.

The two dragons suffered from the distortion and gasped from the instability.

(Hmm, this is even worse than I thought. It's been a year, or even less.)

Yanagi, who had planned to wait and see, did not panic at the unexpected crisis.

However, he placed his palms together in front of his eyes, hoping that a little prayer would liven things up.

When he let go of his hand, the atmosphere changed completely.

His cheerful laughter had disappeared and his entire body was full of energy.

(Well, it is our duty to respond to the situation when the opportunity arises. Now...)

With that sharp look, he grasped the situation again.

A circle formed by a red fire dragon and a blue water dragon.

It shattered and Yanagi read the end of the rotation.

He came to mind with a vision of the core of the Ayaka Islands, commonly known as "Shinoshima", which was currently submerged in his consciousness. It was shaped like a lake surrounding a crater, but the amount of water has decreased considerably compared to the past.

When the rivalry between the two dragons breaks down, the power of the furious fire dragon breaks through that shallow crater lake. No, it passes through the volcano itself and is released. All of Shinoshima shatters and a huge flame rises from the ocean floor, exploding and destroying the Ayaka Islands themselves.

(That's right, after all.)

Yanagi realized that the catastrophe that has been floating in his mind will become a reality in a few months if he ignores it, but he did not flinch.

(It's a natural process, but that's okay.)

He is someone who is far beyond the realm of humans and his way of seeing things is macroscopic. That's why he is a great hermit. But...

(However...)

That doesn't mean he doesn't have a heart.

He knows the people who live on the Ayaka Islands.

He knows their lively days.

He wanted to protect them.

(Then I will protect them.)

Change everything at once and find a solution.

(The point is that we don't have to forcibly correct the unnatural state. How can we restore the imbalance of these dragons to normal harmony?)

The reason why the power of the fire dragon flourished was because the power of fire in the world became stronger due to the development of human civilization. The water dragon that was his counterpart gradually became weaker from the turmoil.

In that case, the correct response would be to restore the water dragon to its normal state and restore its conflict state with the furious fire dragon. Even the fire dragon must be calmed by literally bathing it with cold water.

(But that's exactly the problem.)

No matter how great a sage he is, he cannot directly give power to the water dragon. First of all, the power level is very different from that of a human being. What's more, even a clumsy touch to that unstable rotation could cause the extremely fragile circle to break.

(How can I help the water dragon without offending the rebellious fire dragon?)

Suddenly, an idea occurred to him in his own words.

Yanagi Makoto is a violent person, so he could understand a lot of his feelings.

How to please a troublemaker boy.

That is...

(For now, I won't have anyone to flirt with.)

In other words, separate the water dragon from the circle and help him until he regains some power.

Yanagi thought it was a good idea, and something about it just clicked with him.

This was the work of a hermit who he believed was the right thing to do.

Once he has made a decision, he will feel better and will be able to act quickly.

(I will go home as soon as possible.)

Even in his conscious mind, Yanagi crossed his arms in concentration.

(Man, earth and sky.)

More than an enormous force, it is an action that causes an alteration that spreads like a resonant sound.

It responded to the vitality and was transmitted to the life line, Mitama and the dragons.

(Things mix and rise before heaven and earth.)

A small whirlpool swirled around the edge of half of the distorted circle, the semicircle formed by the fire dragon. The whirlpool borrowed the fire dragon's strength and grew larger, finally entangling the entire semicircle.

What formed was a circle formed solely by the fire dragon.

(Lonely and sleepy, independent and unchanging, going around and never starting.)

And then, the other half of the faint circle, which began to float as if it had been left behind... the water dragon slowly rotated. However, that was not limited to forming a small vortex.

The vortex shrank in diameter and condensed into a single mass.

(We should act like the mother of the world.)

Yanagi's voice worked calmly over the mass, shaping it within the flow of life.

To the human baby that will grow from now on.

The arms that had been crossed were untied and extended toward the baby who had passed.

Yanagi took a deep breath and looked at his face.

An innocent smile appeared in his eyes.

(Yes, you have a nice smile... Please take care of me for a while, Water Dragon-sama.)

After saying that, Yanagi turned his gaze to the circle containing only the fire dragon.

The fierce flaming circle has regained some stability by separating the weakened semicircle. However, the intensity itself remains the same.

(As the circle becomes more intense and healthy, the burden of pacifying the dragon god becomes heavier, but... well, that's okay.)

While he thought about that, Yanagi left the path of life while he held the baby water dragon in his arms.

The fire dragon was receding into the distance... The circle that continued to rotate without an opponent seemed somewhat lonely.

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Yanagi was at the entrance to the Amamiya house in Ninoshima.

"He is my son, please take care of him!"

About an hour passed after he presented the baby to them with a bright smile.

He opened the sliding door of the same entrance.

"Makotoooooooooo! I just heard that...!"

Yanagi's friend Sanji Inou, who is a member of the municipal council, intervened.

After trying to run down the hall with that momentum, he quickly took off his shoes and put them together. It's a house he's been in since he was a child, but he had no intention of being rude.

At the usual time, Momoko Amamiya appeared to say hello.

"Welcome, Inou-san!"

"Hello, Momoko-san, where is that idiot Makoto?"

The scene of Inou running down the hallway while he responded quickly was also a common sight when Yanagi did something. As always, Momoko responded enthusiastically, but this time, as expected, there was a hint of confusion mixed in.

"My grandmother is yelling at him in the living room."

"I guess so, sorry!"

Inou walked past Momoko on his thin legs and entered the living room. In the middle, in front of Yanagi, who was also sitting in seiza, he put his knees together and also sat in seiza.

"Who the hell did I cause trouble for?"

Yanagi's face turned extremely displeased at the first accusation.

"Why, Sanji, are you suddenly so cruel?"

"You must be the one in trouble! You brought a baby out of nowhere!"

For a moment, Inou looked around the room and saw an old crib that he had taken from the Amamiya family's storage room sitting on the damp edge where he had pointed his finger.

Three children were gathered around a baby sleeping inside.

Haruaki Kurama is 11 years old and looks at him warmly, Aka Ibuki is 10 years old and looks at him with surprise, and Jingi Sagawa is 5 years old and looks at him with wide eyes as if he just discovered something strange. They are all disciples of the "great hermit" Makoto Yanagi and live together in the Amamiya family.

Now that the family has added another member, Inou can't help but question the situation. Anyway, it's not just because he was forced to take care of all the baby-related matters. He is a reasonable and kind person who cannot ignore problems caused by his friends as if they were someone else's problems.

"Now, tell me honestly, who is that child's mother, Makoto? How the hell did you kidnap him?!"

"Well, wait, wait, Sanji."

Yanagi, who was about to be grabbed by the neck, turned back as he sat up straight. In that position he spoke in a calm and relaxed manner, trying to remain calm.

"That kid's mother, well, I guess... she's Mother Nature, or something?"

"Who are you kidding?! Spit it out! Go ahead and apologize right now!"

Inou squeezed his neck with all his might as he arched backwards. Not only that, but it also shook him.

"Wait, Sanji, you'll kill him, seriously."

A harsh word except for the "great hermit" who was on the verge of death.

"Stop it, Sanji."

"Hatsu-san, but..."

Momoko's grandmother, Hatsu Amamiya, walked in from the kitchen. The highest authority of the Amamiya family, which is known to exist in Ninoshima, used a dignified voice that made everyone silent and ordered him to stop for the moment.

"I can't let that child become a fatherless child so quickly."

"Yes."

Reluctantly, Inou let go of his hand.

Yanagi barely caught his breath and fell back, sitting upright.

"Oh... you, you should be a little more careful. No, it's nothing."

Even the weakest objections were quickly silenced with a view of social justice.

Hatsu walked over to the wet side and watched as the exchange was about 20% more intense than usual.

"It seems he can't tell who the mother is. Even when I asked him, he didn't tell me. There must be a reason."

In her hand was a baby bottle wrapped in a towel.

"Don't worry, little ones. It's time for him to eat too."

Each of the children responded and they dispersed towards the garden.

"Yes! Let's go, Aka, Jingi."

"I'm not a little boy."

"Yes..."

After the last person ran off, leaving behind a look of regret, Hatsu picked up the baby. When she put the bottle into the baby's mouth in a familiar manner, the baby suddenly woke up and began to suck the milk frantically.

Seeing this situation, Inou finally regained his composure.

"There is a reason... Is that so?"

"Ah. I want to raise my son with everyone on this island. Please, Sanji."

Yanagi said in a serious voice as he sat up straight and fell back.

There was silence for a few seconds as he listened to the sounds of the three of them playing in the garden and the sound of the baby sucking on the bottle.

"I understand. I will do whatever it takes for the child."

Inou said thoughtfully.

Yanagi jumped up, stood up straight, and grabbed his hand.

"Oh, you get it! I'm counting on you, my friend!"

"That must mean you'll continue to cause trouble!"

Hatsu yelled at Inou, who tried to strangle him again.

"I guess there are adults who avoid getting into trouble for their children. Sanji, Makoto and of course me, we all do this for the sake of this child, that's what it means to raise him."

"If that is."

"That's perfectly reasonable."

As they had done since they were little monks, the two large men stood in impressive postures.

Then Momoko entered.

"Grandma, it seems there are no baby clothes or diapers in the closet?"

"I see. I thought you had some left over, but I guess you gave it to your neighbor."

The bottle, milk and clothes she is currently wearing were lent to her by her neighbor. She could have continued to be nice to her, but it's not Hatsu's style to use her reputation for anything other than urgent matters.

"Ok, then I'll buy some more modern tools."

Stroking the baby's back after he finished drinking, she asked a belated question to the prodigal son who had never seemed like a father.

"So, Makoto. Have you decided on a name for this child yet?"

"Yes."

Yanagi proudly pronounced the name.

"His name is Yukito... "Happy Person"."

Momoko kissed the baby, Yukito, on his cheek. She smiled, expressing her surprise at the softness of him.

"Good name. Nice to meet you, Yukito-kun."

After drinking the milk, the baby smiled slightly, perhaps imitating her.

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"It's great, it's great!"

"These are purchases for Yukito-kun, not ours."

"Momoko-nee-chan, you can buy something with yesterday's allowance."

Although shopping was not their goal, the children were very excited.

"Ok. Aka-kun, you did a great job cleaning the garden."

Together with Momoko, he ran towards the front door with a thud.

That was followed by Inou.

"Momoko-san, shall I help you?"

"Thank you, but I'm almost there. Inou-san, you have to get back to work too."

After the sliding entrance door closed, Hatsu poked her head into the living room.

"I'll leave him to you for a while. I'm sure the "big hermit" can at least take care of the baby."

"Ah, well, somehow."

Yanagi responded in an unreliable voice as Yukito returned to the crib.

Not even the "great hermit" has experience protecting babies. Although there may be some errors, the three disciples were adopted at an age when they did not require much care. Although he started it himself, he realized that he had no confidence in the actual task of raising children.

But of course Hatsu won't accept such weakness.

"The first factor in whether or not you can raise that child happily depends on how you, the parent, behave. Now that you've made the decision, prepare for this."

As he headed towards the door, she gave him a warning that wasn't a threat at all.

"If Yukito is in a bad mood when I return home, I'll finish you off next time."

"Ha, sorry. He left him to you..."

Yanagi bowed with all his heart and soul before his already invisible opponent.

A few seconds after the front door closed...

"Bhaaaaaa!"

He finally relaxed and turned around. It's not as if he was trying to gloss over the divine mystery. However, he stopped maintaining a certain technique as a connection. He turned his relaxed face toward the crib next to him.

"Yukito, no, Water Dragon-sama. Even if you are weak, you are still a god."

Yukito's eyes that were innocently looking back suddenly turned into vertically split "dragon eyes".

As if he had been seen by that blue glow, a spherical pattern appeared around him.

It was a seal that Yanagi must have placed strictly to suppress the dragon's power and raise it like a normal human. Under the pressure inside, it burst like a soap bubble.

The "great hermit" smiled bitterly at how fragile his technique was.

"Come on, as soon as I stop sending life force to you, you'll lose confidence."

Ever since he brought him home, he had been secretly sending his life force to maintain the seal, but it was supposed to be just a precautionary measure to hide Yukito's true identity.

However, Yanagi soon realized that he had been underestimating the guardian deity of Ayaka Island. It didn't last long enough and the seal couldn't withstand the pressure inside and nearly broke. From then on, for more than an hour, he maintained the seal by maintaining an indifferent face so as not to be noticed by those around him, but under the thin layer of skin, he continued to send him life force (when Inou strangled him, the spell almost broke down and got very nervous).

"I didn't expect it to go this far. I need to seal him tighter again."

While he was grumbling, he took out a cigarette from his breast pocket and, out of concern for the baby, he didn't light it, he just held it in his mouth and thought. Gather and verify the large number of miscellaneous techniques that he has learned and seen as a "great hermit", and if it doesn't work, assemble them again... that advanced work is...

"Hmm, is the dragon seal a continental technique after all? Or maybe I should try following Daishi-sama's method?!"

He was interrupted after less than a minute.

Before Yanagi could see, Yukito was making a gesture of grabbing the air with his small palm. It was a cute scene on its own, but something extraordinary was happening behind the wet edge of the crib.

The pond water floated as a whole and he kneaded into an amorphous shape in response to Yukito's palm. Not only that, but it floated high in the sky like a balloon.

Finally, the palm he was playing with suddenly lowered and the bundle fell.

"Whooaaa!"

Yanagi instantly twisted his right index and middle fingers intertwined. Just before he settled and was about to be swept away, the mass of water was intercepted by an invisible force and returned to his original pool. If that amount of water had settled in the middle

of the garden at that height, the surrounding area would have been flooded, and even the garden trees that Hatsu had pruned and the morning glory pots that Jingi had planted would have been cut down.

"Ugh~, ah, it's dangerous~"

Yanagi was relieved to have narrowly avoided the attack, but something passed over the edge of his field of vision.

"Eh?"

That was a Mitama.

There were about three floating in the air.

Yanagi can sense even the weakest signs as a connection, so he sees them more often than ordinary people, but it is still rare to see three in the garden of a private house.

"No wait."

Not three.

Five, eight, ten... not even that, more, many more.

"Wait, wait, wait!"

In the bushes of the garden, in the wind, behind the shade of the trees, at the edge of the water, dozens of Mitama sprouted here and there, and hundreds of them appeared as he watched. Of course, the destination where they slowly stray and reunite is...

"Yukito?!"

For just a few seconds, as he took his eyes off the water while processing the mass of water, they appeared in the crib. Around him are what could be described as "countless" Mitama, circling like a school of fish. Furthermore, the number continued to increase at a rapid rate.

"The Mitamas are swarming around there... or was he the one who called them?"

The presence he felt at the Mitama meeting was neither malicious nor evil. They were just trying to snuggle up to big Yukito and spend time with him, that was all.

Yukito, who was freed from the seal, is now a naked dragon god.

However, that alone can't help but have a huge impact on those around him.

There was no way he could hold back or be merciful against the power that was being thrown at him based on his instincts and feelings.

As the Mitamas gathered, their density increased. The Mitamas, which are fragments of life or phenomena, gathered together. The more they come together, the more they

influence the environment. In other words, as it stands now, the air creaks, the wet edges creak, and the main building begins to shake under the pressure.

If left as is, the Mitama will grow to the point of forming divine dragon bodies, albeit incomplete, and fly freely. The nearby Amamiya house will no doubt collapse tragically from the inside... or rather from below.

"Hey, this is not a joke. If something like this happens, Hatsu-san will not only crush my neck, but my entire body. I have to do something..."

Yanagi hurriedly searched for a solution.

"That's all!"

He found a vase lying on the floor.

Immediately, he released his life force and crossed his arms.

"Man, earth and sky."

The vase filled with life force began to shake.

The flow of Mitama surrounding him and the trembling mouth of the vase were connected with a force as small as a thread.

"Although the road is out to sea, if you use this, you will be able to do it."

It soon gained momentum and began to grow.

Finally, the vase began to suck in the swarm of Mitamas that had arrived along with the stream.

"As an abyss, it looks like the sect of all things!"

Yanagi stated sharply and controlled the direction of the force.

Like the Mitama who were swept away, Yukito and Yanagi were completely swallowed by the vase, leaving only silence and the rolled up vase behind.

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Yanagi and Yukito were in the sky, a mysterious scene that looked like an ink painting.

Below his feet, on the ground, was an elegant palace and a pond.

High above, a large hole in the sky could be vaguely seen.

The horizon was covered in mist, and only the shadows of the mountains were blurred into black.

Yanagi took a deep breath as he looked at the jutsu, which formed into a single, somewhat narrow world.

"Fu~, the secret technique "Tsubochuten". Just try it, even if it's an improvisation on the spot."

Everything around him was a pseudo world created inside a vase. He trapped Yukito inside and isolated him from the Mitama, who gathered incessantly. It is a workshop where the sealing work is carried out again, a secret technique that will surely bring life back to the face of the great sage.

However, for Yanagi, the real difficulties... or struggle begin now.

"Well let's get started!"

The "great hermit" raised his voice happily and looked ahead.

There is not only Yukito's birthplace, but also a huge number of Mitamas. To protect the Amamiya family, he had no choice but to incorporate everything he gathered into his technique.

First of all, he never intended to take shortcuts when he applied the strict seal on Yukito, but, in any case, he had to apply an even stricter seal.

"If I don't get serious, you will take revenge immediately."

Yukito seemed to continue growing despite that situation, as he played with his palms in the air and molded the Mitamas group like clay. If he doesn't do it right, he might end up creating a divine dragon body.

"If you regain your sense of self as a dragon, all my plans will be wasted. Now, I will take that disturbing toy away from you and help you grow as a person... Yukito!"

Yanagi put his life force into the kiseru in his hand.

Yukito seems to have noticed too. He raised his hand on the crib, as if asking for a playmate. In response, the group of Mitamas gathered together and formed a dragon hand, large enough to grab Yanagi in one hand.

It was spread casually.

Naturally, the dragon's hands have claws.

"Waah?!"

Yanagi quickly dodged his body.

The last remaining tip of his hair touched his toe as he sped past and cut it cleanly. If he had avoided it a quarter of a second later, his entire body would have been split in half from top to bottom.

As for Yukito himself, he was smiling innocently in his crib. For him, even the "great hermit", who is full of vitality and ready for battle, is probably nothing more than a comforting playmate.

Yanagi, who dodged him, turned around and distanced himself, quickly refining his technique.

"Man, earth and sky."

He held the kiseru of his right hand in front of him like a sword and crossed the index and middle fingers of his left hand forming a cross.

"If you hold him and reveal him, he is as good as he is!"

As soon as he said that, the Kissel received life force from him and turned into a glowing staff. Yanagi swung the staff as hard as he could, turning it into a claw that was just a joke as reality approached again.

A light crack was heard and the nails shattered.

The fragments became more fragmented and scattered all over the place like little Mitama. It was a technique that could be called the application of a calming ritual that erased Yukito's influence and brought the Mitama back to their senses.

"Hey, let's move on... So, in moderation, in moderation!"

Yukito patted the edge of the crib, as if he recognized that he was someone he was going to do something interesting with. When such an innocent move was multiplied several dozen times, it turned into a series of deadly wind-slicing attacks.

Yanagi saw the claws trying to touch him playfully.

"Ah, that's dangerous! Oh?! Ha!"

He did his best to face it, dodge it, and hit it back.

Each time, the tip of his claw got scraped and sometimes the finger broke and shattered.

Finally, the crowd surrounding Yukito thinned out and Yukito's face peeked through the gap.

Yanagi looked at him like a fighter and secretly put his strength into action.

(With the next hit, jump in and grab the entire crib!)

Babies cannot read other people's intentions. In the first place, he didn't even realize he was fighting. No matter what plan the other party has, there is no way they can address it.

That was supposed to happen.

However, the moment Yanagi got rid of the next joke with a cane and jumped as planned...

"Eh?!"

Yukito dodged it, including the crib.

Or, rather, when he saw Yanagi running in, he reflexively ran away. He pulled all the remaining Mitama like a dragon's tail and rushed down. Yukito in the crib was still smiling happily.

Yanagi, bewildered, ran after him.

"Let's chase each other this time!"

Just before hitting the ground, Yukito, who was right at the tip of the dragon god's tail, turned around and flew low into the sky. The slippery high-speed flight was accompanied by a strong wind that cut the water from the pond and tore away the palace.

Cold sweat broke out on Yanagi's cheeks.

(If he had done this outside...)

It's not just that fear.

(My God, if he keeps flying like this, this "Tsubochuten" won't last.)

Yukito's carefree flight alone was enough to bring the small, isolated world to the brink of destruction.

After all, it is a temporary heaven and earth created by magic and does not have much durability. The water of the cut pond, the demolished palace and even part of the blurred horizon, literally lose their color due to changes and shocks that far exceed their tolerance, returning to the ink painting that he had before he could materialize it through the technique. If that continues two or three times, the entire technique will collapse.

The only thing he had to prevent was for him to jump out before he finished the seal.

"Well, even if I'm serious, it's not enough."

Yanagi, whose entire body was filled with life energy, not just his shakujo, spread his black bird-like wings over his back and chased after Yukito. However, that was not easy to grasp.

Yukito's dragon-tailed crib swept across the narrow sky of "Tsubochuten", scraping the false horizon and changing direction.

Not only that, but Mitama's mass flying at high speed had the power to tear apart even the largest immortal if it collided with him.

The current Yukito was like a cannonball with a baby on the loose.

(If you chase too hard, you will be left behind due to a change of direction; if you are not good at it, you will end up in a head-on collision.)

Yanagi chased him and was reunited with the terror of the Dragon God.

For a few minutes, they risked their lives to escape through the clouds and scrape the ground, just for fun. Or maybe it was longer or shorter? The sense of time was becoming vague, but it became clear that the situation was deteriorating.

Yukito seemed to be learning even now, as he gradually moved his playground to a higher place in the sky, where there was no terrain to interfere with his free flight.

Yanagi, who was chasing and evading him, became increasingly irritated.

(Oh, no, if you keep going up like this...)

There is actually a way to escape using the secret technique "Tsubochuten".

Due to the structure of the technique of using a container, it is not very simple, but it is easy, and involves "passing through a large visible hole in the sky". In this case, the large hole is essentially the mouth of a vase. The distance is difficult to measure because of the fog that confuses the senses, as is the horizon, but it is not that far away. On the contrary, now that Yukito had gained altitude, he was approaching the point where he could make a jump.

(If Yukito jumps in his current state, at least the Amamiya family will be destroyed.)

In addition to catching him and locking him up, he faces the challenge of preventing his escape.

The "great hermit" was overcome by a sense of crisis that made him want to scream, but even so he smiled fearlessly.

(But hey, I guess I can do it somehow.)

He smiled and believed in your own strength and intuition.

(Eh?)

Suddenly, Yanagi stopped his reckless pursuit of him.

(Wait a minute.)

Even in the current terrible situation, he feels still, floating in the air, sitting cross-legged, cradling his shakujo, crossing his arms and thinking carefully. Leaving all the circumstances behind, he regained his composure.

(Come to think of it, isn't it wrong to say that human nature is in direct competition with the dragon god?)

The impact of Yukito flying shook the narrow sky and erased the false landscape. Either he realized that the person chasing him was gone or not.

(So, you want to find something else that will make it a winner? However, babies don't even have the brains to know how to use tricks and know what to do.)

Makoto Yanagi noticed what he was trying to do.

(He is not the Dragon God, he is now the baby Yukito Yanagi.)

Although he wields the power of the Dragon God, Yukito Yanagi is the son of Makoto Yanagi. He must have decided to do it and bring it home. Getting carried away by the turmoil caused by the giant dragon god's power, he ended up acting as the usual connection. It was an immediate failure on the part of his inexperienced father.

"The first factor in whether or not you can raise that child happily depends on how you, the parent, behave."

Hatsu's words resonated with him.

Even the "great hermit" of this world still lacks training.

"No, absolutely, that's right."

With a wry smile, Yanagi smiled to himself and the wings on his back disappeared.

He put the shakujo in his pocket and began to sing slowly.

"Man, earth and sky."

Yukito, on the other hand, finally realized that the person chasing him from behind had disappeared. At first, he just had fun running away from him because he was chasing him. Since he was a fickle baby, he got bored of moving around and vaguely thought that he should do something else.

Those eyes reflected a large hole in the middle of the nearby sky.

The barely visible large hole was outside that narrow place.

There was a larger playground outside.

He somehow understood it.

(Come on, he's gone.)

In those eyes, something appeared floating in front of the large hole in the sky.

Yukito could only tell that it was a single bright light. He floated towards the bright light, leading the Mitama.

The light did not shine in the distance like a star, but rather floated in the air.

It increased by a grain.

The largest number of light particles began to revolve around the first. Two or three drops of new colorful light poured out from that increased light, and from each drop of new light many more emerged. Before he knew it, the drops of light turned into hanging toys spinning in the sky.

Yukito's eyes widened at the brightness and he slowly brought the crib closer.

The Mitamas around him also led the way, a small hand reaching out to grab the light particle.

When the tip of an outstretched finger timidly touched one of the grains, it broke and became smaller. Yukito smiled widely and started popping the pimples one after another. The bursting particles turned into multicolored light and filled the surrounding area.

Yanagi, who squinted at the fantastic game scene from a distance, sang quietly and quietly in his own lullaby tone.

"If you take a big elephant and go to heaven, it won't do you any harm."

The light particles surrounding Yukito danced in a pattern. These striking objects are a mass of vitality that has enough power to subdue the ferocious Aramitama in one piece. It was all a manifestation of the seal that suppressed Yukito's power.

The pattern gently wrapped and bound Yukito, bound and wrapped him, and went beyond ten or twenty layers, hiding the true nature of the dragon god within. The pattern that had drained his power disappeared, and new light particles wove into the pattern, enveloping it and binding it together again.

As he continued to repeat that process, the number of light particles that seemed to be a starry sky gradually decreased and the Mitamas that had surrounded him like a school of fish began to separate one by one.

Soon, the lights in the place went out and silence returned, as if the party was dissolving.

The immense power of the seal, which the "great hermit" wielded with all his heart and soul, was finally applied to Yukito's mind and body. It is probably no longer possible to demonstrate power beyond that of a human being.

"Yasuhira Tainari."

After finishing his words, Yanagi held the cradle in his hands.

The Mitamas were nowhere to be seen around him and he had lost the ability to float on his own.

Yukito felt a little irritated, either because of the sealing or because he was simply tired of playing.

"The seal is complete, Yukito... You are a very naughty boy."

Yanagi looked at the child in his arms, feeling satisfied even though he was at the height of fatigue.

The baby's eyes, blinking sleepily, were no longer dragon eyes.

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The entrance of the Amamiya family suddenly became noisy.

"Jingi, could you please open the door?"

"Yes."

"I'm home, Master."

The sliding door opened.

"Aka-nii-chan, take mine too."

"I already have half of it. Take it to the living room."

"Jingi wants to have fun right away. If he leaves it at the door, grandma will be mad at him."

"Yes, I see."

Only the three brothers returned home with their hands full of luggage.

Ibuki entered the living room first and easily set down his large luggage. He immediately looked for his master and his new younger brother, but he couldn't find them anywhere.

"Eh...?"

He noticed that the living room was messier than a disaster. He wondered if something like that would happen if the baby was naughty.

(Has he already been able to get up and walk?)

In search of his younger brother, who still knew nothing of what he is capable of doing and what he cannot do, Ibuki embarked on an adventure. However, when he looked towards the garden, he couldn't see either his master or Yukito.

"I guess he's sleeping in the room upstairs."

Meanwhile, Kurama and Jingi were also putting away their belongings in the living room.

"Huh, powdered milk is surprisingly heavy."

"My hands are tired... I'm going to drink some juice."

Jingi ran to the kitchen to drink as much as he could before his grandmother and Momoko returned home.

In the path...

"Ah..."

He kicked the vase that was lying at his feet.

The narrow vase hit the wall with more force and turned to the side.

Jingi went into great panic.

"What should I do? Grandma is going to scold me."

"As long as it's not broken, it's fine."

Kurama took the vase and examined it, but there appeared to be no cracks or chips. He look around the room, relieved for his little brother.

"But why is it in a place like this? I wonder if Yukito-kun turned the tables on it."

"Um, what about Master and Yukito?"

There, the two finally noticed the absence of Yanagi and Yukito.

Ibuki, who returned to the living room, said a little worried.

"It doesn't look like they're here. The garden is also dug up, so something must have happened..."

Yukito seemed to have been there...

There was a crib on the wet edge, right next to the three of them.

Apparently...

The crib, which had not been there a moment before, suddenly appeared.

After a few seconds, the three of them, Kurama, Ibuki, and Jingi, realized that something unusual had happened.

"Huh?! Yukito-kun, where did he come from?"

"Until now, he was nowhere..."

"Did my master do something?"

Neither brother could answer the younger brother's question.

For now, everyone took a look inside the crib that appeared.

No matter what had happened, Yukito seemed satisfied and slept peacefully.

The three of them stared at the baby's strangely calming expression.

"Babies just sleep."

Jingi said jealously and tried to touch his cheek.

Yukito grabbed the tip of his index finger. He surprised him to find that it was a human, and his small hand gripped it firmly with unexpected strength.

"Wow, Yukito grabbed my finger..."

Jingi was confused, but he made no attempt to break free of his hand. For some reason, he felt that he didn't want to do something so violent to this child.

Kurama smiled kindly at the two.

"Did Jingi like you?"

"Anyway, where did Master go, leaving the baby alone?"

Ibuki once again looked around from the wet edge.

The brothers, who did not know the secret technique "Tsubochuten", could not imagine that Yukito had come out of the vase that they had kicked, much less that someone who could be considered a "great hermit" was growing inside it.

Ibuki's sharp gaze, despite being a child, caught something else.

"Hmm, there are Mitamas."

Several Mitamas floated from the garden and scattered everywhere. The fact that they didn't get attached to Yukito like before was the result of a strict seal, but that was something the brothers didn't even notice.

However, since the three of them had the ability to connect pulses, they could see the Mitama dispersing.

"I wonder what it is?"

Among them, Kurama, who has more knowledge than his younger brothers, noticed the difference.

"It's not the usual spongy feeling. As if..."

"Were they running from something?"

As if to test Ibuki's insight...

Something resembling an insect silently emerged from the rough bushes.

The brothers gasped.

It was about 30 centimeters long, but unusually large for an insect. It was a genuine Aramitama, with a dull color and eyes open vertically on the surface of its head.

Maybe they missed the flow of people gathering at Yukito's side, or maybe they came from far away, but, in any case, the object was the baby sleeping in the crib.

Even if the dragon's power is sealed, the Aramitama will still be a target for the karma that dwells within, or a light that it clings to in agony.

Little by little, he began to close the distance, alternating legs.

The three people, on the other hand, did not move an inch.

On this island where there are many Mitamas, the Aramitamas also appear as an accident. However, the three of them were convinced that the golden rule in such a situation, such as trying to get away with it or running away, was an absolute no-no at this point. The reason is obvious.

Since he appeared, his vertically divided eyes have remained fixed on Yukito.

In other words, the Aramitama is targeting Yukito. If so, they can't get away with it. And if they run away, he will follow them too. He's probably faster than them. The current state of slow dancing is the best way to get the safest moment.

During this time, the three children have not even considered the option of "running away, leaving behind Yukito, whom they just met today for the first time". They are not making judgments based on what is good or bad. However, they are all people of that quality.

Although he is only five years old, Jingi protects his new younger brother who is swaddled in his crib. Just thinking about a small hand holding his fingers made him feel strongly that he had to do that.

(I have to protect Yukito.)

Ibuki slowly stepped forward and stood in his way, becoming the target. He just doesn't want to be a victim. He desperately waits for an opportunity to cast Yanagi's special amulet, which he carries inside his shirt.

(I'm going to defeat this guy!)

Lining himself up next to Ibuki, Kurama calmed his younger brother down and at the same time took the brunt of it. He felt that he was the only one who could defeat the Aramitama and that he had to fulfill his responsibility as his elder brother.

(I'll do something about it.)

When the three of them are in trouble, each remembers the "magic" that Yanagi taught them, "the key word of man, earth, and sky", that their teacher explained to them.

"Man, earth and sky."

From there, Jingi has no idea.

Ibuki can only think of it as a string of characters that must be memorized.

Only Kurama understood the meaning of the teachings and put them into practice.

"Man, earth and sky."

He comes from a family that has been a priest at the Kaizumi Shrine in Minoshima for generations.

His parents died at a young age and his grandfather, who was his only relative, also died when he was six years old. At that time, his grandfather entrusted Yanagi, an old friend, to act as a priest and take care of Kurama.

Since then, a fierce tug-of-war has raged between him, who seeks rapid development so he can immediately work as a connection, and Yanagi, who emphasizes basic training to develop slowly.

Although he had a natural talent as a connection, he had mastered some techniques and improved enough to use them on a daily basis, but of course there were still areas in which he had not been able to put them into practice.

One of them was an act that Yanagi would never allow because it was dangerous in crude military tactics.

It was a ritual to pacify an Aramitama.

However, Kurama has no intention of letting stagnation or laziness stop him.

As the heir of the Kaizumi Shrine, and as a link to protect the people of Ayaka Island, he has put his heart and soul into studying the actions of the "great hermit", in order to fulfill his duty.

Now was the time to make the most of it.

(Be brave and breathe.)

"Phew."

The difficulty of the exorcism ritual is different from that of a simple technique that simply causes a phenomenon to occur.

A delicate control of power was required to return the furious Mitama to his normal state.

He has not slacked off in training him to that end. On the contrary, he did the best he could. Since Ibuki and Jingi arrived, he has worked even harder to protect them from losing. The accumulation of those days made him feel the flow of life force throughout his body as a gentle numbness and pleasant coldness as he breathed evenly.

The Aramitama stopped moving, perhaps sensing the change in his opponent.

Kurama felt a little better at the immediate effect, but panicked and braced himself, thinking that he might be preparing to jump. At the same time, he diligently unearthed from his memory the teachings of his master.

Yanagi told him when that happened.

It was Ibuki and Jingi who made noise while dictating the kanji.

"If you really want to connect, do it correctly, even though it may be difficult. What I am making you memorize now is not a magic spell that can do anything if you remember it. The words themselves are texts of enormous laws and useful lessons left by great characters from the past."

"Why is it useful to memorize that text to make connections?"

Yanagi roughly stroked Ibuki's hair in displeasure and said:

"In Yanagi-ryu, we emphasize the concept of kotodama... that is, words have power. In other words, by chanting a text with a "nuance" close to the required technique, you can make the structure of the technique become clearer and develop your vitality more firmly. Do you understand?"

"Don't know!"

Jingi raised his hands and turned, and Kurama memorized every word.

And now, by daring to remember and repeat those first steps...

"Singing a text with a "nuance" close to the required technique."

He tried to acquire the power to calm Aramitama himself.

"Clarify the structure of the technique and strengthen the life force."

He understands the general structure, but he doesn't know how to build the specific technique. He has often played pretend games with his younger siblings and searches his heart to see what he was like then. Ibuki liked things that were more aggressive, like making fire or throwing lightning, but he didn't like them.

He must put it into practice.

With that in mind, Kurama crossed his arms in the image of his master.

"Man, earth and sky."

The younger brothers were amazed by the power that was overflowing from the older brother's entire body.

Kurama shouted a passage that he remembered with surprising clarity, his favorite words.

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

The moment he finished speaking, Kurama felt that he had caused some kind of mechanism to work, something that could not be described as convincing or sympathetic. It is different from the feeling of throwing power like when you create a phenomenon using magic. He felt as if he were operating a machine whose workings he knew very well for the first time and which had a sense of "reason".

That power comes in a form that Kurama knows well.

Suddenly, a gust of wind rose from the sky and fell like a tornado, immobilizing the Aramitama, or rather crushing it. The wind blew, the stones in the garden shook and the water in the pond splashed.

The Aramitama, located directly below the tornado, struggled as it was suppressed by the calming force mixed with the storm. A crack appeared on the face of the head, which is the manifestation of the Aramitama.

(Please just disappear like this...!)

For the first time in his life, Kurama felt a sense of fear.

That his life force was being squeezed to maintain the calming technique.

As a result, the technique would end in just a few seconds.

(Oh, no...! Would it have been better if I had created the wind from the front instead of directly above... and carried the Aramitama away...?)

As Kurama lamented his carelessness, the technique was interrupted.

The wind stopped suddenly.

The Aramitama was still moving. Most of his mask had fallen off and some legs were missing, but his vertically opened eyes remained stubborn, glaring at them with a snarl.

With all his life exhausted and his conscience confused...

(Not yet... I...)

Kurama still struggled with his mind to protect his younger siblings, but his body could no longer even raise his arms.

The Aramitama mercilessly bared its fangs and pounced on the boy, who could barely support his knees that were about to collapse, but who clearly had malicious intentions.

He swept across Kurama's field of vision, now unable to focus.

"Man, earth and sky!"

With Ibuki's shout, he flew directly to the side.

When he suddenly woke up and looked, he saw Ibuki standing in the garden with his fists clenched. The fist that seems to have directly hit the Aramitama was filled with life force. From what he held he hung a rope.

Kurama let out a surprised cry as he realized what his younger brother had done.

"Aka, you... That's not how amulets are used..."

"Stop lecturing even at times like this, Haruaki."

Ibuki smiled fearlessly and responded. His gaze remained directed toward the edge of the garden where the Aramitama he had knocked down writhed. The fist, containing Yanagi's special amulet, was precisely nailed into the Aramitama's side, but in the end, it was just a punch.

They cannot subdue the Aramitama because they do not master the formal technique of connecting pulses.

Faced with that harsh fact, Kurama still tries to recover his life force,

(Well, even if I know...)

(I can't run away! I can't run away!)

Ibuki's fist was actually numb from the dull pain, but he still clenched it and pushed it forward.

And, sensitively aware of the bad course of events, Jingi did not hesitate to do the best she could while he covered Yukito's crib.

"Help me!"

He put his hand on his shoulder...

"Oh, leave it to me."

Before he knew it, Yanagi, who was right behind him, responded. From a position on one knee, he sharply pointed his kiseru at the Aramitama and muttered.

In an instant the true pacification of Mitama occurred.

"All things carry yin and embrace yang, and use open energy to create peace."

Stunned, the vertically split eyes closed and his face was torn apart.

What used to be the Aramitama turned into particles of light and scattered in the breeze.

Kurama and Ibuki finally sank into place, surrounded by a faint light that even felt like a sense of peace, without the slightest hint of the fear from before.

Being alone, Jingi pouted.

"Master, where were you?"

"Oh, no, that's bad."

Yanagi also sat on his butt and laughed out loud. It wasn't as if he was observing the plight of his disciples and waiting for an opportunity to appear. Really, until now, he had only been growing within the "Tsubochuten". He did not wake up from unconsciousness because he did not sense any serious danger.

After all, the Aramitama's power was so weak that it could hardly cause harm to humans. Trying to reject it required an unnatural effort, that's all.

Even if he had been possessed, at most he would have evoked a feeling of stagnation or unpleasantness... probably, if he had made Yukito cry long enough, he would have naturally faded away.

(It is the so-called lump error.)

The "great hermit" comes up with puns on his own and he uses them.

By the way, the reason why he tried his best to show the Aramitama calm down was because he didn't want Yukito to cry too much after putting him to sleep, and he wanted to look good in front of his disciples.

The laughter that incorporates all those things.

"Even if..."

He noticed the scene around him and felt stiff.

"You did it in a flashy way again. All these guys are too promising."

Naturally, the traces of Kurama's tornado remained even after the Aramitama disappeared. The area from the garden to the living room was in disrepair, like the remnants of a storm, along with the damage that Yukito had created earlier.

The branches and leaves of the trees in the garden were falling apart and the potted plants were overturned. The pond water was also splashed, and dust and mud were splattered with traces of the tornado. The "great hermit" was not sure that he could be restored to their original state with a little cleansing.

(I guess it's a blessing in disguise that the Amamiya family was the only one affected by this problem.)

At least he cheered himself up before beginning that desperate task. Looking at Kurama who was tired and at Ibuki holding his fists, he said with a sigh:

"Jingi, please take care of your brothers and Yukito."

"Yes."

With that completely casual response behind him, he set about cleaning the garden.

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Momoko and Hatsu felt something strange as soon as they opened the front door.

"I'm home...huh?"

"....."

The children who arrived home first never showed up to receive them. It was especially strange that Jingi, asking for candy from her shopping bag, was nowhere to be seen.

"Everyone, what's wrong?"

"....."

In the midst of the suspicious silence, the two went up through the main door and entered the living room, where they were greeted by a scene where it was clear that "something had happened". Momoko realized this and left the room to look for something.

After putting down her luggage, Hatsu first glanced at Kurama, who was sleeping in the corner.

Although he looks quite haggard, his sleeping face seems calm.

"....."

Then, she passed by a carefully placed vase and walked towards Ibuki, who was sitting on the wet terrace.

For some reason, he dipped his dominant arm into a bucket of water.

"....."

Ibuki, who was probably afraid of being attacked, turned his head and looked around the garden.

Yanagi, who was in the middle, showed his white teeth and smiled.

"Yaa, welcome, Hatsu-san."

"....."

When Hatsu looked at the trees in the garden, she noticed that the branches and leaves she had been tending to daily were in poor condition, and that he had worked desperately to straighten them. The same went for the clumsily rearranged potted plants. There were also scratch marks here and there due to rough cleaning. The water in the pond had also decreased considerably.

After confirming everything, Hatsu finally spoke.

"Makoto."

"Oh, oh."

As the time of the trial approached, Yanagi's fake smile grew stronger.

Seeing how far things had gone, Hatsu smiled and showed a genuine smile.

"Are you ready to raise a baby from scratch?"

Yanagi's fake smile crumbled as he followed her changed gaze. That was bittersweet, but it wasn't just that, there was a genuine smile on her face.

"Ah. It's harder than I thought not to avoid trouble for the sake of a child."

What the two were looking at... At the edge of the wet bed, Yukito and Jingi, who was holding his crib, were sleeping.

Just watching the scene gave Yanagi more than just a sense of mission.

"I'll try it somehow."

"I definitely heard it. Momoko is a witness too, that's good."

Hatsu called out to Momoko, who had brought a towel and a first aid kit.

"Yes. Yanagi-sensei will do everything he can to be a father, right? Come on, Aka-kun, show me where it hurts. It's not enough to cool it, you have to treat it properly."

"I understand."

Ibuki obeyed her obediently and received the assignment.

Hatsu also returned to the living room and began to open her shopping bags.

"So, leave the poor garden maintenance behind and help me. I'll start teaching you everything you need to take care of Yukito."

"Yes."

Yanagi obeyed and entered the living room, surprised at how much everyone had brought home.

"Oh, is this all for a baby?"

Just as she had declared before leaving, Hatsu did not hesitate to stock up on modern items for Yukito: underwear, diapers, milk, toys, baby carriers, bathroom items, etc.

"This is just what we need for the moment, and there will be more to come. We are feeding the lives we have entrusted to ourselves. No matter how generous you are, you can never go too far."

Yanagi was both scared and impressed by her thoughtful words.

"Haha... now I understand why you need to be prepared to raise a baby."

"At best, you can learn by experience."

There is no hesitation in Hatsu's words. That was something completely different from paranormal knowledge and abilities; It was a deep and precious conviction that people had accumulated in their daily lives.

"It's everyone's job to raise a comfortable family with the baby."

The "great hermit" laughed at the universal law shown by his predecessors.

"That's so mysterious."

As new parents, they began opening shopping bags together.